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Investing In Education Pays Off For All

Kentucky has the opportunity now
to improve every element of its future

BY MARK GREEN

Education funding can do more to improve Kentucky's quality of life than anything. With benefits too many to list, the overarching outcome is that it makes nearly all our common problems better while making the common good ... even better.

The very good news is that with the state's finances in the best condition ever, the key political strategy during the 2024 General Assembly session is how much to increase education funding.

The education funding discussion today focuses primarily on increasing teacher pay, and appropriately so. School districts across Kentucky and most states can't find enough people to take the positions they have for what the job pays.

Neighboring Indiana and Tennessee, both states with very conservative governments, have just given teachers large pay increases. Kentucky needs to at least keep pace. Better yet, surpass what the neighbors have done lest we come up short in the competition to improve our workforce.

It is important to understand that it will take time to see the benefits of increased education funding. It may take a decade or a generation to see changes in higher education attainment, more job and business formation, rising incomes, economic growth that creates wealth, less crime, and lower public costs for law enforcement, judicial and correction systems. And the metrics won't power upward in a straight line.

It would be difficult to design a system with more human complexity than public education, with literally every segment of society included and all the social

tasks and functions we have tacked onto it. As with any process that involves our imperfect fellow man, inefficiency, waste and fraud are bound to occur—and should then be addressed and dealt with. But don't lose sight of the goals and benefits.

Political attacks on education are misguided and damaging. Better education outcomes benefit us all. Everyone shares in the winnings of higher incomes, more wealth, more innovation, lower crime and less cost to fight it.

Education funding is good business. And good for business, literally.

But like most of government and public services processes, much of our education system is not exactly a business; the goal is to provide a public service efficiently rather than make a profit.

Kentucky is at a historic point where it has the resources to invest in its future as well as provide for the needs of the present. The bigger the investment, the bigger the return and the better our future. There will be ample credit and political reward to claim and distribute. It's a win-win.

Making education funding into some political football is a mistake. Education funding will go not to anyone's political opponent but to our fellow Kentuckians, who are putting their life energies into helping us all have a better commonwealth.

The 2024 General Assembly session can and should be a class act. Tomorrow's Kentuckians are counting on it. ■



Mark Green is editorial director of The Lane Report. Opinions expressed are those of the writer and not The Lane Report.

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STATE

KENTUCKY SEES HIGHEST COLLEGE ENROLLMENT GAINS IN THE NATION

Newly released data from the **National Student Clearinghouse** (NSC) show that Kentucky had the highest fall-to-fall college enrollment gains in the nation over the last year.

Between fall 2022 and fall 2023, Kentucky experienced 5.6% overall enrollment growth, including 5.5% growth in undergraduate enrollment (ranked second nationally) and 4.9% in graduate enrollment (ranked fourth nationally). Kentucky ranked first in undergraduate enrollment growth and second in graduate enrollment growth among states that are part of the Southern Regional Education Board interstate compact.

“The data strongly suggests that Kentucky was prepared and one of the first states to recover from enrollment decreases caused by the pandemic,” said Aaron Thompson, president of the **Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education**.

NSC data is based on enrollment estimates as of September 2023, as not all data is complete and disaggregated until later in the term. Consequently, there may be differences between the NSC data presented in this report and official enrollment each institution reports to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.



Some national trends the report include:

- Community colleges are the driver for enrollment growth.
- Shorter-term credentials remain popular among undergraduate students.
- Growth at historically black college and universities has outpaced overall undergraduate enrollment growth.
- Enrollment in healthcare programs is starting to rebound after pandemic declines, especially among those seeking undergraduate certificates and associate degrees.

LOUISVILLE

WHAT TO EXPECT WITH AIRPORT SECURITY CHANGES IN LOUISVILLE



The first phase of improvements to the security checkpoint at **Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport** is now underway, part of a project that will see more than \$400 million in enhancements.

During phase one, the temporary queue lines for both TSA PreCheck and general screening will each be reduced to a single-file line reaching beyond the TODAY Store and down the west hall, behind the **American, United, Allegiant** and **Spirit Airlines** ticket counters. This could result in the appearance of longer-than-normal lines with extended wait times, but airport officials say the same number of passengers will continue to be screened during construction.

As part of the security checkpoint expansion project, **Brooks Brothers** and the Kentucky Bourbon Trail stores have permanently closed, while both the **Churchill Downs** and **Louisville Slugger** stores will be remodeled in the coming months. All phase one work is anticipated to be completed in early April, well in advance of this year's 150th anniversary of the Kentucky Derby.

Later construction phases will include a new security checkpoint that will include 10 lanes featuring state-of-the-art technology for passenger screening, increasing speed and efficiency.

The airport has seen significant increases in passenger traffic and in 2023 recorded its busiest year to date, setting an all-time record with more than 4.6 million passengers.

LOUISVILLE

PUBLIX OPENS ITS FIRST KENTUCKY STORE, WITH 5 MORE LOCATIONS PLANNED ACROSS THE STATE

Publix photo



Publix has opened its first Kentucky supermarket in Louisville, the first of six stores planned for the Bluegrass State.

The 55,701-s.f. store is located in the **Terra Crossing Shopping Center** in the eastern part of Jefferson County and features a fresh

pizza kitchen as well as a Pours area, where customers can enjoy coffee, wine, beer, kombucha and smoothies while shopping in-store or within the venue. The store also has a section devoted to Kentucky-made products.

Florida-based Publix is the largest employee-owned company in the nation and will create 900 jobs across the six stores planned for Kentucky.



STATE

FREE LEGAL HELP AVAILABLE ON JUDICIAL BRANCH WEBSITE

Kentucky's judicial branch has launched a legal self-help portal, where the public can access free legal resources. Created through a collaboration between the **Kentucky Court of Justice** and the **Kentucky Access to Justice Commission**, the portal is designed to help people who are handling their own legal matters rather than using an attorney. The portal can be accessed by visiting kcoj.info/SelfHelpPortal.

The self-help portal features an interactive program that assists users in completing forms for common legal situations, including uncontested divorce, probate, child support, small claims, name change, expungement and more. The program—A2J Guided Interviews®—walks users through a series of questions and uses the responses to fill out legal forms that can be filed with the courts.

The portal also provides links to legal information categorized by topic on kyjustice.org, the online legal advice clinic ky.freelegalanswers.org, lawyer referral services and Kentucky's regional civil legal aid programs.

"For non-attorneys, the legal system can be a mystery. A one-stop shop with user-friendly technology is our solution to this challenge. The portal makes it far easier for the many people who can't afford an attorney or choose to handle their own everyday issues," said Chief Justice of the Commonwealth Lurance B. VanMeter.

RICHMOND

EKU LAUNCHES FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A PUBLIC COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

Vecteezy photo



Eastern Kentucky University is conducting a study to determine if a public College of Osteopathic Medicine is needed in Kentucky.

The American Osteopathic Association describes the practice of osteopathic medicine as one that treats the whole person: mind, body and spirit. In the United States,

osteopathic doctors are licensed by the same licensing boards as traditional physicians and must meet the same standards for practicing medicine.

The **University of Pikeville**, which is a private institution, is currently the only university in the commonwealth that has a College of Osteopathic Medicine.

According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, only 47.7% of Kentucky's need for primary care health professionals is met. In fact, nearly all of the state's 120 counties have facilities designated as health professional shortage areas for primary care. EKU anticipates that by offering a D.O. degree, the number of shortage areas throughout the commonwealth could be reduced.

EKU President David McFaddin noted that one of the barriers many students face when considering a career in the medical field is cost: According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, the average medical school debt was more than \$200,000 for 2022 graduates.

"It is our hope that the feasibility study lays out a realistic financial model that enables us to bring another affordable medical degree to the commonwealth," McFaddin said.

LOUISVILLE

SURVEY REVEALS WHAT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FIND IMPORTANT



Vettezy photo

A survey of young professionals conducted by a partnership between **The Young Professionals Association of Louisville** (YPAL) and 15 other Louisville organizations has been released, providing insight as to what the demographic deems important and where they see need for improvement.

More than 700 young professionals participated in the 31-question survey, which was broken up into seven categories: business and local economy, career and workforce, community engagement, current and future outlook, education and skills, lifestyle, networking and relationships.

A sampling of the results is included below. The full survey can be viewed at ypal.org.

What is the most critical issue facing Louisville?

Crime and safety.....	16.6%
Racial and social equity	14.1%
Affordable housing	13.6%
Education quality and access	12.6%
Economic development.....	12.5%

What would keep you in Louisville long-term?

Better job opportunities.....	21.9%
Lower cost of living	18.9%
Safer neighborhoods	12.9%
Improved public transportation ...	11.8%
Better quality of life	11.6%
More cultural activities.....	1.5%

What issues matter most to YPs?

Economic development.....	31.6%
Racial justice	21.6%
Public safety	21.1%
Public health	16.6%

What work schedule do YPs prefer?

Flexible hours	39.1%
Remote work	25.9%
Four-day workweek	14.8%
Traditional 9-5	14.6%

BUSINESS BRIEFS

BEAVER DAM

■ **WPT Nonwovens Corp.** has opened a new 75,000-s.f. manufacturing facility in Beaver Dam that will increase the company's capacity to produce HVAC filtration media and make it the largest nonwovens production line in the nation for air filtration and pleat media. WPT is a family-owned and operated company that has been in business since the 1970s. The company now operates three plants in Beaver Dam that serve global markets in the medical, hygiene, industrial and filtration sectors. WPT manufactures a majority of the fiber optic cable insulation wrap for the North American market and also introduced one of the first commercially successful biodegradable dryer sheets.



WPT photo

BOONE COUNTY

■ **TF-Metal USA** has notified the state that it is closing its manufacturing plant in Boone County, where it has produced seat frames for the automotive industry for more than 20 years. According to the *Cincinnati Business Journal*, the plant had several vehicle programs to end, resulting in a steep decline in revenue and leading the parent company to implement a restructuring that included closing the Boone County plant. The closure, which is expected to be complete by mid-summer, will result in the loss of 49 jobs.



Crown Verity photo

BOWLING GREEN

■ **Crown Verity USA Inc.**, a Canada-based grill and cookware manufacturer, is investing nearly \$10 million to expand its operation in Warren County. The project will expand the facility by 5,000, bringing the total space to 65,000 s.f. and allowing for increased manufacturing and the consolidation of the plant's fabrication operations. The company plans to add 73 jobs to support the expansion.

■ **Morgantown Bank & Trust** has broken ground for construction of its third branch in Warren County, located in the community's fast-growing Rich Pond area. The bank also has two locations in Morgantown as well as a loan production office in Nashville, Tenn.

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Photo taken by Tyler Rocquemore '22. Tyler was a student photographer in the Marketing and Communications department as her work assignment in Berea College's Labor Program.

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GEORGETOWN

TOYOTA INCREASES INVESTMENT TO \$1.3B FOR BRINGING BEV TO KY



Toyota photo

Toyota has announced a \$1.3 billion investment at its flagship Kentucky facility in Georgetown for future electrification efforts, including assembly of an all-new, three-row battery electric SUV for the U.S. market.

The project brings the plant's total investment to nearly \$10 billion, building on the company's May 2023 announcement to invest

\$591 million in future projects and increase its job retention commitment with the state by 700 full-time employees to establish the company's first U.S.-assembled battery electric vehicle (BEV) in Scott County.

The increased investment further supports that commitment and will add a battery pack assembly line at the facility, with batteries to be supplied by **Toyota Battery Manufacturing North Carolina**.

In 2006, **Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky** was Toyota's first plant in the United States to manufacture hybrid electric vehicles and later was selected to assemble fuel cell modules for use in hydrogen-powered, heavy-duty commercial trucks. The plant also plays a critical role in Toyota's global electrification strategy, with the goal to offer electric or hybrid versions of every vehicle model by 2025.

TMMK is Toyota's largest production facility globally and currently employs approximately 9,400 team members.

LOUISVILLE

META TO OPEN \$800M DATA CENTER CAMPUS IN GREATER LOUISVILLE

Meta Platforms Inc. has announced plans to establish a new \$800 million data center campus in Jeffersonville, Ind., part of the Greater Louisville area.

Meta, which powers products such as **Facebook**, **Messenger**, **Instagram** and **WhatsApp**, plans to build

a 700,000-s.f. facility on 619 acres in the **River Ridge Commerce Center**. The project's initial plans call for the construction of two data center buildings, an administrative office and a logistics building, but the size of the lot will allow for future expansion, if needed. The campus will handle the storage of the millions of photos, videos and messages that are posted across Meta's social media platforms.

Local officials said they have been in talks with the company for nearly five years and are optimistic that the Meta brand will encourage other companies to look at locating in the area.

The new facility, Meta's 18th in the United States, will be supported by 100% renewable energy and will create approximately 100 operations jobs, with positions ranging from network engineers, technicians and heating/cooling specialists to janitorial, culinary and administrative support personnel.



Pexels photo

BUSINESS BRIEFS



Jimmy Dean sausage photo

■ **Tyson Foods** has opened a \$355 million facility in Bowling Green that will produce **Jimmy Dean** and **Wright Brand** bacon as well as bacon for the food service industry. The 400,000-s.f. plant will bring nearly 450 new jobs to Warren County and will utilize high-tech robotics to produce over 2 million pounds of bacon per

week. Tyson has partnered with **Western Kentucky University** and **Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College** to establish training programs to equip the workforce with the skills needed in the food production industry.

DAVISS COUNTY

■ Construction is now underway on **Churchill Downs'** new **Owensboro Racing and Gaming** facility in Daviess County that is expected to generate 150 new jobs. The \$75 million project will encompass more than 70,000 s.f. and will include a casino with 600 historical horse racing machines.

ERLANGER

■ The **Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport** has partnered with **zTrip** to offer transportation service at the airport. The service is available 24/7 and also offers wheelchair-accessible vehicles.



zTrip photo

FRANKFORT

■ **MML&K Government Solutions** and the **McBrayer PLLC** law firm are teaming up in a new Frankfort location that will provide more room for collaboration, hosting clients and future growth for both firms. The Frankfort office is a new location for McBrayer, which has operations in Lexington and Louisville. MML&K has moved from its current Frankfort office on Ann Street to the new location at 202 West Main Street.



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NORTHERN KENTUCKY

CVG RAMPS UP ECONOMIC IMPACT TO \$9.3B, TRIPLING ITS 2012 RATE



The **Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport** (CVG) is driving \$9.3 billion in positive annual economic impact for the airport and the Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati region according to a recent study completed by the University of Cincinnati Economic Center.

That figure, based on 2022 data, is nearly triple the \$3.5 billion impact reported in 2012.

Milestone successes in 2023 included a 15.4% increase in passenger traffic over 2022; the addition of two new airlines (**British Airways** and **Breeze Airways**); the addition of numerous new concessions (**Skyline**, **Frisch's**, **Braxton Taproom**, **Wendy's**); the groundbreaking of **Epic Flight Academy**; and the completion of a number of construction projects.

Looking ahead, **Frontier Airlines** plans to open a new crew base in the coming year, which will create a \$27 million economic impact for the region; Breeze Airways has just announced plans to add new nonstop routes to San Diego and Hartford, Conn.; and additional concessions and capital investments are planned for 2024.

ALLEN COUNTY

BELMARK TO HIRE 159 FOR NEW \$99M FLEXIBLE PACKAGING PLANT

A company that specializes in the production of pressure-sensitive labels and flexible packaging is investing nearly \$99 million to open a new plant in Allen County. The new plant will create 159 new jobs with an average wage of almost \$37 per hour, including benefits.

Belmark's 156,000-s.f. plant will be its first facility in Kentucky and will allow the Wisconsin-based company to increase manufacturing capacity to better serve its customer base across the United States. Belmark has been in operation for 46 years and currently employs over 1,300 people across seven facilities in Wisconsin as well as in Phoenix, Ariz. The Allen County plant will be its first in Kentucky.

Construction is expected to begin in June 2025 and be complete in 2026.



Belmark photo

BUSINESS BRIEFS

LEXINGTON

■ Popular Lexington talk-show hosts Lee Cruse and Hayley Harmon are continuing to expand their reach, having now joined the **KSR** (Kentucky Sports Radio) family of podcasts with their new podcast "**Lee and Hayley Overtime**."

The Lee and Hayley Show photo



The duo's TV show, **The Lee and Hayley Show**, launched on **WTVQ/ABC36** in Lexington in February 2020 and has since grown to include audiences in Kentucky, Mississippi, Georgia and North Carolina, giving them a current footprint of 13 cities in seven markets. The new podcast can be found on YouTube or Apple podcasts.

■ **Lincoln Memorial University** has announced plans to launch a nursing program at **Saint Joseph Hospital** in Lexington. LMU—which has its main campus in Harrogate, Tenn., but operates a satellite campus in Corbin, Ky., in addition to four other satellite locations—is renovating space in an office building across the street from the hospital to accommodate classrooms, skills laboratories and simulation rooms for the didactic portions of the curriculum. Hands-on clinical experiences will take place in conjunction with healthcare partners including **CHI Saint Joseph Health** and others.



Louisville Bats photo

LOUISVILLE

■ **The Louisville Bats** have been sold to **Diamond Baseball Holdings**, an organization that owns and operates minor league baseball clubs affiliated with Major League Baseball. The

Bats, which are the Triple A affiliate of the **Cincinnati Reds**, will continue under the local leadership of Team President Greg Gaiette and the existing front office staff.

■ Louisville-based industrial distributor **Air Hydro Power Inc.** has acquired the stock of **Lebanon Power and Apparatus**, a company that remanufactures motors at its locations in Lebanon and Bowling Green. Air Hydro Power has 24 locations across Kentucky, Indiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, West Virginia and Ohio, and employs a staff of 300.

■ **Corona Tools** has completed a significant expansion of its operations in Louisville with the opening of a new 244,000-s.f. warehouse, which is more than four times the size of its existing Louisville distribution center. With more space and increased capacity, the new facility will reduce turnaround time by up to two and half days. The Louisville facility serves approximately 60% of the company's customers, while its Corona, Calif., facility serves the West and remains the corporate headquarters.

LOUISVILLE

STUDY WILL EXPLORE LOUISVILLE TO INDY PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

The **Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency** has been awarded a planning grant from the **Federal Railroad Administration** to assess the viability of re-establishing passenger rail service between Louisville and Indianapolis.

The **Indiana Department of Transportation** has also been awarded a grant through the same program for the corridor between Indianapolis and Chicago. Combined, the two corridors would make for a 313-mile route that would reconnect Louisville to Chicago and be the first intercity passenger rail operation in the Louisville region in decades.

“While this planning grant is only the first step in the process to bring passenger rail back to this region, we could not be more excited about what passenger rail service can add to complement a modern, sustainable, 21st-century transportation system in this region and beyond,” said KIPDA Transportation Director Andy Rush.



Wikimedia photo

LEXINGTON

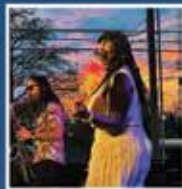
SUMMIT BIOSCIENCES ACQUIRED BY KINDEVA DRUG DELIVERY

Summit Biosciences Inc., a Lexington-based specialty pharmaceutical company, is now part of **Kindeva Drug Delivery**, a global leader in drug-device combination products.

Summit was established in 2009 to develop, manufacture and commercialize nasal spray medications. The acquisition of Summit enhances Kindeva’s existing drug-delivery capabilities by adding a new drug-delivery platform, further expanding Kindeva’s ability to serve biopharma customers across a wider range of complex drug-device combination products (pulmonary, injectable, transdermal and nasal).

“Nasal drug delivery is becoming a preferred dosage format for a growing number of indications, as it allows users to noninvasively administer medications in an acute or emergency setting,” said Kindeva CEO Milton Boyer. “Summit brings a differentiated understanding of how to effectively formulate drugs for nasal delivery and the capability to manufacture them at commercial scale. This addition not only fits Kindeva’s ambition to be a global leader in the drug-device combination products CDMO (contract development and manufacturing organization) market, but also expands the toolbox we can offer our customers to help improve patient outcomes and experience of care globally.”

Summit’s 55,000-s.f. facility in Lexington expands Kindeva’s global manufacturing footprint, which includes nine development and manufacturing facilities across the United States and the United Kingdom.



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LEXINGTON

PRO BASEBALL TEAM GAINS NEW OWNERS, RETURNS TO OLD NAME



Just weeks after it was announced that **Temerity Baseball** and a local investor group had acquired Lexington's minor league baseball team—which played last season as the **Lexington Counter Clocks**—came the news that the team would be returning to the field this year as **The Lexington Legends**.

The decision has been met with widespread public approval: The team played as the Legends for 20 years and Temerity said a return to the Legends name was overwhelmingly requested by fans in a series of focus groups and surveys.

Temerity enters the Lexington market with a reputation of being one of the most experienced owner/operator groups in minor league baseball. The company also owns the **Greensboro Grasshoppers** of the South Atlantic League and the **Kannapolis Cannon Ballers** of the Carolina League.

The local ownership group includes a number of local investors, including former Lexington Legends President Alan Stein and other members of the group that built the Lexington stadium and brought the Legends to Lexington in 2001.

LEXINGTON

AREA BANKS AND DEVELOPERS STRIKE A DEAL TO PURCHASE 12.5 ACRES FROM TRANSYLVANIA FOR NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

A consortium of Lexington-area banks has created a joint entity to purchase **Transylvania University's** Marquard Field complex to create a 12.5-acre affordable housing development.

Marquard Field was home to the university's baseball program for 20 years, but in 2019 Transylvania announced plans to move the team to the home of Lexington's minor league baseball team. The university considered multiple offers for the Marquard Field property but opted to sell the site to the mission-driven bank/development group for the reduced price of \$2.8 million.

The banks involved—which include **Central Bank, Community Trust Bank, Republic Bank, Stock Yards Bank** and **Traditional Bank**—have established a \$3 million revolving capital fund to support affordable housing development. As the project gets underway, developers repay the fund interest free, allowing for reinvestment in future affordable housing projects.

Lexington affordable housing developers collaborating on the project include **AU Associates, Habitat for Humanity, Urban League of Lexington** and **Winterwood**. They worked together with **Commerce Lexington, Lexington for Everyone** and the **Building Industry Association of Central Kentucky** to put a development plan in place.

A groundbreaking for the new development is planned for summer 2025. The final development will include a combination of housing types, including both rental and owned properties, for families earning 30% to 80% of the area's median income.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

■ Louisville-based **BrightSpring Health Services Inc.**, one of Louisville's largest privately held companies, is now a publicly traded company. BrightSpring, which provides health solutions for patients with complex and chronic health needs, marked its first day of trading on the Nasdaq on Jan. 25. The company has hundreds of employees in Louisville and over 37,000 nationwide.



Bintelli photo

■ **Bintelli** is investing over \$4 million to open an assembly and distribution facility for electric golf carts and other low-speed recreational vehicles in the **River Ridge**

Commerce Center. The company currently has the largest LSV assembly facility in the United States in South Carolina and is also a five-time Inc. 5000 company. The River Ridge facility will create up to 67 new jobs with an average wage of over \$26 per hour.

WILLIAMSBURG

■ The **University of the Cumberlands** is now offering a graduate certificate program in entrepreneurship and new venture development as well as a master's degree in business analytics. Both programs are offered in an entirely online format.

WILMORE

■ **Asbury University** and the **University of Kentucky College of Nursing** have announced a dual enrollment agreement for students to complete both an Asbury bachelor's degree and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from UK in under five years.

Each academic year, UK will have allotted spaces for Asbury students as part of the program, which will help meet the growing need for highly qualified nurses both in Kentucky and across the nation.



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TENNESSEE

BIOMATERIALS COMPANY HIRING 230 TO SUPPORT \$350M PROJECT



Genera photo

Genera, a company that produces compostable packaging for food and consumer products, is investing nearly \$350 million to expand the production and

distribution operations at its Vonore, Tenn., campus.

The expansion will add 150,000 s.f. to the existing facility, including more than 60 robotically controlled thermoforming machines, a fleet of autonomously guided vehicles and automated packaging lines.

The expansion will create more than 230 new jobs over the next five years, bringing the company's total headcount in Tennessee to approximately 350.

Initially founded under the **University of Tennessee** system, Genera has grown to become North America's largest vertically integrated manufacturer of circular, compostable packaging solutions. Genera's products are made from locally grown regenerative grasses, offering consumers sustainable alternatives to plastics.

OHIO

OHIO STATE TEAMS WITH HONDA, SCHAEFFLER ON BATTERY CELL R&D

Ohio State University is partnering with **Honda** and **Schaeffler Americas** on a new battery cell research and development center that will be located in Ohio State's innovation district.

Honda will serve as the lead foundational partner for the project and has committed \$15 million for the research and development center. The center will be managed and operated at Ohio State by the **Institute for Materials and Manufacturing Research**.

Schaeffler is developing the next generation of solid-state battery technology to support the automotive industry's transition to electric mobility.

Slated to open in April 2025, the lab will accelerate the domestic development of battery cell materials and manufacturing technologies while providing an experiential learning setting for advanced battery technology workforce development. Once completed, the project will create a strong pipeline of industry talent while also attracting electric vehicle battery manufacturing and supply chain businesses to help support the evolving vision for the industry.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

INDIANA

■ **Toyota Indiana** has started production of the first-ever **Lexus TX**, a new three-row luxury SUV. The 2024 TX is the first Lexus SUV to be assembled in the United States and the first Lexus for Toyota Indiana.



Toyota photo

OHIO

■ **Mobis North America** is building a new battery pack assembly plant in Toledo for electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. The new plant will create 185 jobs with production expected to start later this year.



Wells Fargo photo

■ **Wells Fargo** is moving forward with plans to bring at least 350 financial technology jobs to Columbus, Ohio. The jobs committed by Wells Fargo are expected to pay an average of \$125,000 per year and will help meet the growing demands of mobile banking and the technology necessary to maintain it.

TENNESSEE

■ **NewBasis**, a leading manufacturer of fiberglass and polymer concrete below-ground enclosures and utility pads, is investing more than \$16 million to establish its first operation in Lebanon, Tenn. The new facility, which will be the company's first location outside its California headquarters, is expected to create 249 jobs for the Middle Tennessee community.

■ **Axle Logistics** is investing nearly \$38 million to expand logistics operations at its Knoxville headquarters. The expansion will add 651 new jobs.

■ **Custom Foods of America**

is investing more than \$51 million to expand its manufacturing and distribution operations in Knoxville. The expansion will add 200,000 s.f. of space and 249 new jobs, bringing the total headcount in the region to approximately 500. The Tennessee-based manufacturer produces products such as soups, side dishes, appetizers and sauces.



Custom Foods photo



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BIG MOVES

■ **Ben Crittenden**

has been named a shareholder at Morgan Pottinger McGarvey, a full-service law firm that represents financial institutions, businesses and individual clients throughout Kentucky and Indiana. Crittenden's practice focuses on banking and administrative law, representing banks and businesses in litigation matters. He was recently recognized by Super Lawyers for excellence in administrative law.



Ben Crittenden

■ **Matt Niehaus**

has been named executive vice president of Professional Insurance Agents of Kentucky. Niehaus comes to PIAK from McCarthy Strategic Solutions, where as principal, he lobbied for a variety of trade associations. He previously served as deputy commissioner in the Kentucky Department of Insurance and also ran the Office of Legislative Services for the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet.



Matt Niehaus

■ **Carmine G. Iaccarino**

has joined Sturgill, Turner, Barker & Moloney as a member of the firm. Iaccarino's practice focuses on administrative and regulatory law, representing individuals and entities appearing before regulatory agencies and working with clients to affect Kentucky regulatory legislation, as well as on education and employment law.



Carmine G. Iaccarino

■ **Heather S. Temple**

has joined the Honaker Law Office in Lexington as an associate. Temple previously served as a staff attorney for the Kentucky Public Service Commission and the Kentucky Siting Board and was the lead attorney on numerous complex cases involving the siting of utility scale solar projects and multiple types of cases involving electric and natural gas utilities.



Heather S. Temple

■ **Kami Griffith**

has been promoted to senior associate at the law firm of Morgan Pottinger McGarvey, where she focuses on banking and finance law and commercial real estate law. Griffith, who was named a Super Lawyers Rising Star in banking law in both 2023 and 2024, is based in MPM's Louisville office. She completed Leadership Louisville's Focus Louisville program in 2022 and is a member of the American Heart Association Louisville associate board.



Kami Griffith

■ **Olivia Wilhoit**

has joined Fifth Third Bank as a business banking relationship manager, where she works with business owners and decision-makers across the state to develop customized financial solutions to help meet their specific financial goals. Wilhoit, a graduate of Liberty University's School of Business, comes to the position having worked at PNC for seven years in various departments, including retail banking, commercial real estate and commercial banking.



Olivia Wilhoit

vice president, cash management officer II; **Joshua Bly**—assistant vice president, image processing manager; **Diana Webb**—assistant vice president, deposit services manager; **Kerry Bickett**—retail banking officer II; **Ben L. Little**—retail banking officer II; **Ben Pelfrey**—retail banking officer I.

■ **Community Trust Bank** has promoted **Mark Smith** to executive vice president, chief credit officer. Smith succeeds **James J. Gartner**, who retired from the position at the end of 2023. **Jeremy Clark** has been promoted to senior vice president, loan review manager. **Nicholas Antimisialis** has been promoted to vice president—corporate information security, resilience and data officer.

■ **Andy Mayer** has been named senior vice president and Louisville market president for Cumberland Valley National Bank & Trust.

CONSTRUCTION

■ Messer Construction has announced the following new appointments: **Clint Berry**—operations vice president; **Ryan Crew**—senior project executive; **Justin Berning**—project executive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

■ **Helen Hacker** has been named director of government affairs and public policy for Greater Louisville Inc. **Abigail Fletcher** has joined GLI as director of economic development. **Emily Drexler** has been named manager of economic development.

■ **Terri Bradshaw** has been named vice president for the Kentucky Association for Economic Development.

EDUCATION

■ **Kathryn (Katie) Cardarelli** has been named dean of the School of Public Health and Information Services at the University of Louisville, effective April 8, 2024.

■ **Greg J. Feeney** has been named president and chief executive officer of Bluegrass Community and Technical College.

■ The Kentucky Community and Technical College System has announced the following appointments: **Anthony "Tony" Newberry**—senior advisor to the president; **Shannon Rickett**—special assistant for institutional planning and strategic alignment; **Bridget Canter**—acting vice president, human resources.

■ **Shannon Tivitt** has joined the University of Louisville as vice president of government relations.

ART/DESIGN

■ **Mikelle Bruzina** and **Harald Uwe Kern** have been named artistic directors for the Louisville Ballet. **Helen Daigle** has been promoted to principal repetiteur and senior rehearsal director.

■ **Amanda Hunsucker** and **Kyle Wilson** have been named principals at the Tower Pinkster design firm in New Albany, Ind., part of the Greater Louisville area.

BANKING/FINANCE

■ Central Bank has announced the following new appointments: **Allison Carter**—vice president, cash management officer I; **Jenny Foley**—vice president, personal trust officer II; **Brad Noel**—vice president, commercial lending officer IV; **Danny C. Noland**—senior vice president, auditing manager; **Matthew Ratliff**—senior vice president, retail sales executive; **Ashley Rodgers**—vice president, cash management officer I; **Tim Sprague**—

■ **Tess Burns** has been named vice president of advancement at Gateway Community and Technical College in Florence. **Christi Godman** has been named Gateway's vice president of operations.

FOOD/SPIRITS/HOSPITALITY

■ **Mike Carr** has been named executive vice president, general counsel and secretary for Louisville-based Brown-Forman Corp.

■ **Joe Park** has been promoted to chief digital and technology officer at Yum! Brands Inc. Park succeeds **Clay Johnson**, who will continue with the company as a senior advisor.

GOVERNMENT

■ **Dr. Mark Roosen** has been named deputy state veterinarian.

■ **Elizabeth Strojan** has been named executive director of the Louisville Metro Housing Authority.

■ **Russell Webber** has been appointed to serve as Kentucky's deputy treasurer.

■ **Katie Bing** has been named clerk of the Supreme Court of Kentucky.

■ The following individuals have been appointed to serve in the Kentucky Department of Agriculture: **Warren Beeler**—deputy agriculture commissioner; **Mark Bowling**—chief of staff for the Kentucky commissioner of agriculture; **Heather Becker**—general counsel; **Jay Hall**—executive director of marketing; **Dana Feldman**—executive director, Office of Consumer and Environmental Protection; and **Lee McIntosh**—executive director, Office of Administrative Services.

■ The following individuals have been named to executive leadership positions in the office of the Kentucky attorney general: **Christopher Evans**—executive director, Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission; **Rewa Zakharia**—criminal chief; **Richard Ferretti**—commissioner of the Department of Criminal Investigations; **Matt Kuhn**—solicitor general; **Justin Clark**—civil chief; **Chris Bowlin**—counsel to the civil chief.

■ The following individuals have been named to the executive leadership team of the Kentucky auditor's office: **Alexander Magera**—executive director, office of special examinations; **Matt Frey**—executive director, office of state government audits and technology; **Jim Royse**—executive director, office of local

government audits; **Jonathan R. Grate**—executive director, office of planning and management; **Maira Gomez**—deputy general counsel; **Joy Pidgorodetska Markland**—communications director; **Jocky Christian Denguessi Kwin**—director, constituent services; **Brian Ingle**—director, financial and administrative services; **Noah Wilson**—director, information technology; **Jane Harper**—special assistant; and **Daniel McQuerry**—executive assistant to the auditor.

HEALTHCARE

■ **Whitney Heet** has been named executive director of inpatient nursing for Baptist Health Lexington.

■ **David Pankotai** has been named president and chief executive officer of Seven County Services, a Louisville-area community mental health center.

LEGAL

■ **Olivia C. Keller** has joined the Covington office of Stites & Harbison. **Harlee Havens**, **Brandon Lira**, **Drake W. Staples**, **John Paul Stilz** and **Conner Wehrle** have joined the firm's Lexington office. **Alexandra Dunn** and **Lucy McIntire** have joined the Jeffersonville (Ind.) and Louisville offices, respectively. **Katie M. Glass** has joined the Lexington and Frankfort offices.

MANUFACTURING

■ **Jerry Dolan** has been named aftermarket regional sales manager for CLARK's Northern region.

MARKETING

■ **Kenny Friedman** has joined Louisville-based Leap Group as executive creative director.

MEDIA

■ **Chris Mossman** has been named general manager for WTVQ/ABC36 in Lexington. Mossman succeeds **Chris Aldridge**, who has retired.

NONPROFIT

■ **Gary Cobbs** has been named president and chief executive officer of the YMCA of Greater Louisville.

■ **Brianne B. Smith** has been named director of community engagement for United Way of Central Kentucky.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

■ **Sarah Bowling** and **Corey Elder** have joined Cornerstone Government Affairs in Frankfort as vice presidents.

■ **Maddie Daily** has joined the Lexington-based Piper | Smith lobbying, publications and crisis communications firm as government relations manager.

TECHNOLOGY

■ **Troy Bradley** has been appointed chief technology officer for Paducah-based CSI.

■ **David Moore** has joined Paducah-based PreventScripts as chief operating officer.

■ **Tom Signorello** has been named chief executive officer of Hebron-based Pomeroy Technologies.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

■ **Tiffany Reeves** has been named director of workforce services for the Bluegrass Area Development District.

OTHER

■ **Katelyn Bunning** has been named executive director of Dependable Power First Kentucky, a coalition of businesses, associations and advocacy groups that focuses on securing reliable and affordable energy in the commonwealth.

■ **Laura Boison** has been named executive director of the LEXPARK/Lexington and Fayette County Parking Authority.

■ Louisville consulting firm Ashley|Rountree has appointed **Don I. Tharpe** to lead the firm's expansion into Lexington and the Central Kentucky area. **DeVon Hankins** has been named to lead the firm's strategic planning division—nonprofits organizations.

DEPARTURES

■ **Candace McGraw** has announced plans to retire as CEO of the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, effective June 2025.

■ **Tori Murden McClure** has announced plans to retire as president of Spalding University effective June 30, 2024.

■ **Todd Boggess** has resigned as president of Secat Inc., a metallurgical research lab in Lexington.

■ **Thomas Mitzel** has announced that he will retire as president of Kentucky Wesleyan College in December 2024.

AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL WORLD

■ **Candace McGraw** has been named chair of the Airport Council International World governing board. McGraw is the CEO of the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport.

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF REAL ESTATE LAWYERS

■ **Barry Hines** has been named president of the American College of Real Estate Lawyers. Hines is a partner with the law firm of Frost Brown Todd.

BARREN COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

■ The Barren County Chamber of Commerce has announced its new board members for 2024: Chair—**Matt London**, Kentucky Farm Bureau; Immediate Past Chair—**Scott Kerley**, Kerley Construction; Chair-Elect—**Nicole Randall**, SCRTC; Vice Chair—**CheyAnne Fant**, Barren County Board of Education; Second Vice Chair—**Trevor Phillips**, Phillips Family Grocery & Butcher Shop; and Secretary/Treasurer—**Janis Turner**, Peoples Bank. New board members include: **Ale Gomez**, Garcia's Grill; **Dr. Angie Harlan**, Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College; and **Kevin Myatt**, Joint City County Zoning and Planning Commission.

BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN KENTUCKY

■ The Building Industry Association of Northern Kentucky has announced its 2024 officers and directors: President—**Matt Curtin**, Paul Hemmer Co.; Immediate Past President—**Chris Cook**, TKOR Holdings; Vice President—**Mitchell Deaton**, Ashley Building Group; Secretary/Treasurer—**Randy Acklin**, Fischer Homes; Associate President—**Joe Schlimm**, Republic Bank; Associate Vice President—**Dan Riegler**, Riegler Blacktop. Directors: **Jill Bezold**, Arlinghaus Builders; **Michael Blackburn**, Fischer Homes; **Nikki Hayden**, Team Herr Realtors; **Manny Hernandez**, First Financial Bank; **Nathan Madden**, Pella; **John Voorhees**, AE Door & Window; **Stacy Art**, ReMax Realtors; and **Matt Maines**, The Drees Co.

CASA—RIVER REGION

■ Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of the River Region, an organization that trains and matches volunteers to be the voice for abused and neglected children in Family Court, has named **Jennifer Henry Jackson** to its board of directors for a four-year term. Jackson is an attorney based in Stites & Harbison's Louisville office.

CENTRAL KENTUCKY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

■ **Janna Clark**, **Jake Darabos** and **Tom Husted** have been named to the board of directors at Central Kentucky Community Foundation, a philanthropic organization that serves Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, Hart, LaRue, Marion, Meade, Nelson and Washington counties. Clark is executive director at Elizabethtown Tourism and Convention Bureau. Darabos is the chief financial and administration officer at Abound Credit Union. Husted is the CEO and co-founding partner of the Referent Group.

COMMUNITY TRUST BANCORP INC.

■ **Lillian (Kay) Webb** has been appointed to serve on the board of directors at Community Trust Bancorp Inc. Webb is director of the Center for Career, Vocation and Leadership at the University of Pikeville.

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF CLEVELAND

■ **Mary Meixelsperger** has been appointed to the board of directors of the Cincinnati branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Meixelsperger is chief financial officer at Lexington-based Valvoline Inc.

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ST. LOUIS

■ **Conrad Daniels**, president of HJI Supply Chain Solutions in Louisville, and **Carrie A. Warren**, president of Bank of Buffalo in Hodgenville, have been appointed to serve on the Louisville branch board of directors of The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Also serving on the board are: **Dave W. Christopher Sr.**, executive director of AMPED Louisville in

Louisville; **James A. Hillebrand**, chairman and CEO of Stock Yards Bank & Trust in Louisville; and **David E. Tatman**, assistant plant manager and director of engineering at Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems in Bowling Green.

GATEWAY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE FOUNDATION

■ **Justin Vanderglas**, **Lisa Desmarais**, **Gina Douthat** and **Ryan Gentil** have been appointed to serve on the board of directors of the Gateway Community & Technical College Foundation. Vanderglas is the senior manager at the accounting firm of Clark Schaefer Hackett. Desmarais is the retired director of technology services for Kenton County. Douthat is general manager of Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK). Gentil is vice president of state government affairs for Ohio and Kentucky at Duke Energy.

KENTUCKY BOURBON FESTIVAL

■ **Cordell Lawrence** has been named chair of the Kentucky Bourbon Festival for 2024. Lawrence is CEO of Eastern Light Distilling, a new venture coming to Morehead.

KENTUCKY DISTILLERS' ASSOCIATION

■ The Kentucky Distillers' Association has announced its new officers and board members for the coming year: Chair—**Jessica Pendergrass**, Heaven Hill Distilleries; Vice Chair—**Ken Lewis**, New Riff Distilling; Secretary—**Gigi DaDan**, Louisville Distilling Co.; Treasurer—**Ryan Ashley**, Four Roses. Board officers: **Chris Morris**, Brown-Forman; **Ray Franklin**, Garrard County Distilling Co.; **Lynne Dant**, Log Still Distillery. Board members: **Mark Erwin**, Bardstown Bourbon Co.; **Will Arvin**,





Castle & Key Distillery; **Antoine Smith**, Diageo North America; **Crady deGolian**, James B. Beam Distilling Co.; **Erika Lapish**, Lux Row Distillers; **Andrea Wilson**, Michter's Distillery; **Kaveh Zamanian**, Rabbit Hole Distillery; **Tyler Harris**, White Dog Trading & Storage; **Marco Barassi**, Wild Turkey; **Britt Kulsveen**, Willett Distillery; **David Salmon**, Jackson Purchase Distillery; **Jade Peterson**, Kentucky Artisan Distillery; **Robert Krass**, Lexington Brewing & Distilling Co.; and **Clay Smith**, Moonshine University.

KENTUCKY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

■ The Kentucky Historical Society has installed four new officers and added four new board members. President—**Cynthia Torp**, Corydon, Ind.; First Vice President—**Shelia Mason**, Frankfort; Second Vice President—**Alicestyne Turley**, Clay City; and Third Vice President—**Lora K. Suttles**, Staffordsville. New board members include: **Bobbie Smith Bryant**, Middletown; **Jeff Hoover**, Jamestown; **Thomas Collier Hines**, Woodbury; and **Barry "Scott" Keadle**, Prospect.

KENTUCKY STATE BOARD OF CHIROPRACTIC EXAMINERS

■ Lexington chiropractor **Michael Newell Pugh** has been appointed to the Kentucky State Board of Chiropractic Examiners.

MAYSVILLE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

■ **Jason Slone**, **Brian Biddle** and **Maggie Denham** have been appointed to serve on the board of directors at Maysville Community and Technical College. Slone, of Morehead, is a member of the Morehead-Rowan County Chamber of Commerce. Biddle, of Maysville, is

a veterinarian and owner of Town and Country Veterinary Hospital & Pet Resort. Denham, also of Maysville, is a Title X Coordinator at Lewis County Primary Care.

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

■ Centre College President **Milton C. Moreland** has been named to the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division III Presidents Council.

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

■ **Kevin Kramer**, a member of the Louisville Metro Council, has been appointed to chair the information technology and communications committee of the National League of Cities 2024 Information Technology and Communications Federal Advocacy Committee.

PEDIATRIC CANCER RESEARCH TRUST FUND

■ Dr. **Kayla LaRosa** and **Tracy Peck** have been appointed to serve on the board of the Pediatric Cancer Research Trust Fund. LaRosa is a pediatric psychologist with Norton Healthcare in Louisville. Peck, of Lexington, is a technology support professional at the University of Kentucky.

PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

■ The Public Relations Society of America—Bluegrass Chapter has announced its board of directors for 2024: President—**Tamara Davis**, PriceWeber; Immediate Past President—**Jonathan Wahl**, Atria Senior Living; President-Elect—**Chris Nation**, RunSwitchPR; Secretary/Treasurer—**Katrina Helmer**,

Kentucky Derby Museum; APR Chair—**Ameerah Palacios**, HDR Inc.; Communications Chairs—**Tristin Schifferdecker**, PriceWeber, and **Sydni Stratman**, Atria Senior Living; Landmarks of Excellence Awards Chairs—**Berry Craig**, Parsons Corp., and **Tom Lally**, C2 Strategic Communications; Membership Chairs—**Jody Hamilton**, Louisville Metro Government, and **Alexus Richardson**, Dare to Care; Directors at Large—**Becca Hunnicutt**, UPS, and **Kaitlynn West**, Heaven Hill Brands; and Chapter Administrator—**Andy Ahern**, AJA Financial Services.

RAISING HOPE

■ The following individuals have been named to the advisory council of Raising Hope, an initiative established by former Commissioner of Agriculture **Ryan Quarles** to provide farmers with information about mental health resources: **Ryan Bivens**, Hodgenville, farmer; **Kendal Bowman**, Owenton, Owen County agriculture and natural resources agent; **Elizabeth Gordon**, Frankfort, director of education and outreach, Kentucky Department of Agriculture; **Susan Jones**, Bowling Green, professor emerita, Western Kentucky University School of Nursing and Allied Health; **Dave Morris**, Frankfort, deputy executive director, Office of Agricultural Marketing, Kentucky Department of Agriculture; **Babette Overman**, Lancaster, Raising Hope program coordinator; **Savannah Robin**, Lexington, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture lecturer; **Marcie Timmerman**, Lexington, Mental Health America of Kentucky executive director; and **Jessica Wilkerson**, Lancaster, farmer and attorney.

ST. CLAIRE HEALTHCARE

■ St. Claire HealthCare in Morehead has announced its new slate of medical staff officers: President/Chief of Staff—Dr. **Phillip B. Baker**; President-Elect—Dr. **Thadis Cox**; Secretary-Treasurer—Dr. **Amber D. Sexton**. Dr. **Megan Dillon** will serve as member-at-large. Dr. **Michael E. Vega** (chair) and Dr. **Eric Dennis** (vice-chair) represent the Department of Surgery. Dr. **Ahmad H. Abuarquob** (chair) and Dr. **Davin Barnett** (vice-chair) represent the Department of Medicine. Dr. **Aaron Parker Banks** has completed two terms as president and will continue to serve as immediate past president.

STATE LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

■ **Jeffrey Taylor** has been named to serve on the State Labor Relations Board. Taylor, of Fisherville, is a real estate professional with Dream JP Pirtle Realty and is also a firefighter with Louisville Fire and Rescue.



Staghorn photo

GARRARD COUNTY DISTILLING COMPANY OPENS NEW \$250 MILLION FACILITY

Production is now underway at Atlanta-based spirits company **Staghorn's** first distillery, the **Garrard County Distilling Co.** in Lancaster.

Touted as the “largest all-new independent distillery in Kentucky,” the \$250 million facility is capable of producing up to 150,000 barrels of whiskey a year and will create more than 60 new jobs. The facility is the first commercial distillery in the formerly dry county since the 1800s.

Located 30 minutes south of Lexington, the 210-acre site includes the 50,000-s.f. distillery as well as two 20,000-s.f. rickhouses. Future plans call for a total of 24 aging warehouses by 2030, each holding nearly 25,000 barrels.

A visitor center with a tasting room and restaurant is scheduled to open by

the end of this year. The company already has nearly 17,000 sourced whiskey barrels aging on-site.

On-site production will utilize limestone-rich water from the Lancaster Public Spring aquifer, first tapped by settlers in 1776. Whiskey will be crafted using proprietary yeast and grain sourced locally from within 50 miles of the distillery. Barrel resources will be provided by **Independent Stave** and **ZAK Coopersage**.

Garrard County Distilling Co. will be home to All Nations Whiskey, which is already available in select markets nationwide, in addition to several soon-to-be announced whiskey and other spirits brands. The inspiration for the All Nations moniker comes from the posters that hung in bars in the late 1800s during Carry Nation's temperance crusade. The tongue-in-cheek posters read: “All Nations Welcome Except Carry.” Travelers to the distillery on the Kentucky Bourbon Trail will be able to visit Carry Nation's Garrard County birthplace home, which was transported and reconstructed stone by stone on the site.



RD1 photo

RD1 SPIRITS SAYS PLANNED \$4.8M BRAND DESTINATION WILL ANCHOR 40-ACRE SITE

RD1 Spirits, a distillery that counts University of Kentucky football coach Mark Stoops among its shareholders, has unveiled plans to create a \$4.8 million brand destination that will anchor **The Commons**, a 40-acre mixed-use site near downtown Lexington that will include office, retail and industrial properties.

Covering over 10,000 s.f., the new site will more than double the size of RD1's existing tasting room and gift shop on Manchester Street in Lexington.

The two-story RD1 Distillery at The Commons will feature outdoor seating areas and an interactive experience of Lexington's bourbon milestones; a fermentation-to-distillation tour; four private tasting rooms; a research and development lab; a VIP speakeasy tasting room; a craft cocktail bar; a gift shop; and space for private events.

The distillery will house an 800-gallon pot still in addition to a 175-gallon pot still, a 750-gallon fermenter and a 1,000-gallon mash cooker. The project is expected to be complete by 2025.

RD1 will continue to produce its Kentucky Straight Bourbon at **Western Kentucky Distilling** in Beaver Dam under eighth-generation Master Distiller Jacob Call.

TARIFF INCREASE ON KY BOURBON EXPORTS DELAYED UNTIL 2025

The European Union has announced that a 50% tariff set to hit the American bourbon and whiskey industry at the beginning of 2024 has been delayed for at least 15 months.

The EU rebalancing tariffs, which were first implemented in 2018, were a response to the U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum. The **Kentucky Chamber of Commerce** reports that from 2018-2021, when added tariffs were in place, American whiskey exports dropped 20%.

The efforts to delay or temporarily pause the EU's whiskey tariff first came in 2022, when the American spirits industry rebounded over 2017 pre-tariff levels.

A December 2023 statement released by the **Kentucky Distillers' Association (KDA)** said, “We strongly urge EU and U.S. officials to permanently end the tariffs sooner than later. Our signature industry has worked hard to recover and regain footing from the last short-term suspension of tariffs. As bourbon takes years of aging to perfect, a permanent solution will bring certainty to our distillers as they look to continued growth and investments in international markets.”



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Laurance B. VanMeter

Laurance B. VanMeter became chief justice of the Kentucky Supreme Court in January 2023. He was elected to the Supreme Court in 2016 and is only the third justice to have served at all four District, Circuit, Appellate and Supreme levels of the Kentucky unified court system. VanMeter practiced law with the Lexington firm of Stoll, Keenon & Park from 1983 to 1994 and is a member of the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States and the Kentucky and Fayette County Bar Associations. He has also served on the vestry of Christ Church Cathedral in Lexington, the Vanderbilt University Alumni board of directors, and the Sayre School board of trustees. A native of Central Kentucky, VanMeter has been actively involved in numerous community organizations, including Little League Baseball, Lexington Youth Soccer, Boys' and Girls' Clubs of America, Parents' Place, and the University of Kentucky Libraries National Advisory Board.

A Judicial Review

As he prepares to step down as chief justice of the Kentucky Supreme Court, Laurance VanMeter reflects on a legal career spanning more than 40 years

Mark Green: After growing up on a tobacco farm in Clark County, you've been a district, circuit and appeals court judge and now are at the top of Kentucky's judiciary and legal system. Why did you go into law and then the judiciary?

Laurance VanMeter: My journey to the law was: I was sitting on a tractor the summer before my senior year in college. I was a history major, thinking, 'What am I going to do? I do not want to do this.' My dad was a farmer, my granddad was a farmer. Farming is honorable work, but it was not what I wanted to do. My mother suggested law school. Ultimately, I decided to pursue that path and graduated from UK Law with honors.

My only law firm job was at Stoll Keenon and then Park, now Ogden, one of the preeminent law firms in Kentucky. My mentor, "Buddy" (William T.) Bishop III, had an equine law practice, including Keeneland and a large number of horse farms all around Central Kentucky. He had about five (clients) he really liked to

work for and I got the overflow. It was a very broad transactional law practice: big business organizations, planning, real estate, taxation, estate planning, probate. In a transactional law practice, your goal is to draft agreements—organizational documents for business organizations, corporations, limited-liability companies, contracts, stallion syndications—that other lawyers and judges will read and interpret the same way you have and your clients' goals will be accomplished. I read enough cases over the 11 years I was with Stoll Keenon that I wasn't completely sure our appellate judges were doing this. A lot of judges had a lot of litigation experience, a lot of criminal law experience, but maybe not so much transactional law experience. I thought I could do better than that.

There was a vacancy for Fayette District Court and I put my name in and was fortunate enough to be appointed. I won my first election and that got me going; I was a district

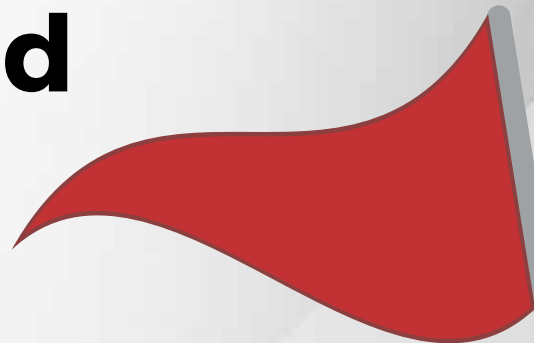
judge for five years. Then a vacancy came up for Circuit Court. I applied for that; I got appointed. Then four years after that there was a vacancy on the Court of Appeals, and that's where I wanted to be. I then served on the Court of Appeals for 13 years. When Justice Mary Noble retired in 2016, I ran for that position so here I am. At the end of this term, I will have been on the Kentucky Supreme Court for eight years.

My goal was to be in the appellate courts. I want to have a positive impact on what the law of the Commonwealth of Kentucky is from a transactional law point of view. I will have done that for 21 years.

You have to make decisions without fear of criticism or public clamor.

Laurance VanMeter

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MG: You have announced that you will not seek another term on the Supreme Court, meaning you will complete your term at the end of 2024 and you will be chief justice for a much shorter time than your predecessors. Why?

LVM: Bob Stevens was chief justice for 16 years; he became the chief justice when he was 54. Joe Lambert was chief justice for 10 years; he became chief justice when he was 50. John Minton became chief justice when he was 56. I became chief justice at 64, having already served almost 30 years in the Kentucky judiciary. There's a time-of-life difference there.

If we had had this interview in July (2023) I would have said, 'Yeah, I'm running. I have my campaign team ready to go.' In August, the wife of a good friend died at 65 years old. She died very suddenly of liver and kidney failure. I thought about not running but do you stop being chief justice after two years? But the more I thought about it, it ultimately became an issue of work-life balance. How many good years do I have left? Not how many years—how many *good* years. Are there other things I want to do?

When I talked to reporters from NPR, The Associated Press, the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, they wanted to talk about how nasty judicial races have gotten. I like running for election; you get to go out. In our line of work, we're in an 'ivory tower' and don't get a lot of interaction. But ultimately, it's: 'Am I willing to commit to serve a full eight-year term starting at age 66 when I've been a judge for 30 years?' And the answer is: No. There are people who want to run, who want to serve on the Kentucky Supreme Court. And good luck to them all.

MG: The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated existing trends across society, especially in use of technology to interact socially and conduct business. What were the pandemic impacts on the courts in Kentucky?

LVM: We shut down the court systems and thankfully there were video

products available that enabled courts to be conducted remotely; not so much jury trials. We shut down jury trials for almost a year and a half. Family courts don't have jury trials, so in some ways family courts weren't as impacted. But we had to conduct the courts because things still happen: crimes, civil disputes, family disputes. We were able to develop remote hearings statewide.

MG: Did the Supreme Court have to be directly involved? Sign off on it?

LVM: Absolutely. The Supreme Court has two functions. The one most people think about is the adjudication part, the decisions we render every month. The other part is administrative. The Supreme Court by constitution runs the court system of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and all the justices on the Kentucky Supreme Court do administrative work. The chief justice does a whole lot of administrative work.

In the five years before 2020, we averaged 20 administrative orders a year. During 2020, the COVID year, that shot up to 84 administrative orders. Almost all of the increase was COVID-related: whether the courts were going to be open, under what parameters were judges permitted to conduct remote hearings or in-person hearings, what was the required distancing, what were the parameters of not only witnesses but people who wanted to observe?

Now, we're trying to give local judges the flexibility to make good decisions about when a remote appearance is called for but also when an in-person appearance is more appropriate.



Justice VanMeter with his wife, Lucy, who is a circuit county judge in Fayette County.

MG: Are there any special issues you are hearing from the business community?

LVM: We're moving to an electronic filing system and we are going to be adopting a trial court case management system that is going to be vendor oriented as opposed to in-house. It's very difficult to get in-house tech people to work for government; basically, they are contractors. We procured a \$38 million grant from COVID funds given by the federal government to develop a new case management system. It's not going to be done this year, maybe not even next year, but that's what we're working towards.

MG: Jefferson County a few years ago launched a pilot business court program. Where does that stand and are others around the state looking at adopting this model?

LVM: We have 60 circuits in Kentucky, and a lot of these circuits are one judge. So, does it make sense to have a 'business court' when you're just going to have the same judge anyway? It was not met with overwhelming enthusiasm. We talked about would it make sense to pull in business cases from the six counties that surround Fayette, which are Bourbon, Clark, Madison, Jessamine, Woodford, Scott. In Northern Kentucky, would it make sense to create business court for Boone, Kenton and Campbell, maybe add in Pendleton? It's an ongoing process. Aside from Jefferson, there is not volume and practicality.

MG: Are the courts seeing any increases in litigation?

LVM: No. If you look at the case numbers systemwide for the last 20 years, this is true not only for civil cases and family cases, it's true for criminal cases, circuit courts, family courts, district courts. The numbers are a slow, slow tick down. Why that would be I'm not sure, but my guess is that litigation is expensive and you're making the results of the outcome uncertain. It's easier (to avoid litigation) with either arbitration or mediation. A lot of retired judges do mediation law. Lawyers do mediation, and we have some really good ones.

MG: Many sectors of the economy just cannot find enough people to fill their positions. Do the courts have any trouble filling the positions?

LVM: Yes. The chief justice is like the CEO of a corporation because we have millions of square feet of office space, 3,500 employees and 300 judges. But we depend largely on the legislature for our funding. There was a time due to the recession and the contraction of state budgets and funds that judicial branch personnel didn't get a pay increase. Not only judges but staff employees, circuit court clerks and deputy circuit clerks. The emphasis over the last five to six years has been trying to increase those

salaries. Our employees were being poached by the executive branch, which has better salaries, and by private employers. The emphasis has been to increase judicial salaries because you want to entice good lawyers who are in the prime of life. But they have a mortgage, kids in college and all the expense that goes with that, and you take them out of

their prime earning years. And we're going to make them run for election. The idea behind judicial salaries is you want to entice the better lawyers to become judges. Lawyers who might have a harder time earning a lucrative income are always going to be enticed by whatever salary might be offered.



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MG: What is the budget that you're overseeing for the courts? What have been some recent requests to the General Assembly?

LVM: It's basically 3% of overall state government, and a lot of that is salaries. All the courthouses are owned by the counties, but the judicial branch is responsible for the upkeep. One of the problems we have is that we have a maintenance pool that's very deficient, so we've made a request in our budget to increase that this year. We have dozens of courthouses built in the past 25 years. The life expectancy of an HVAC system is probably not 25 years. What's the life expectancy of a roof? Of an electrical system? All that has to be taken care of.

What we're trying to do now is only make two requests for new buildings. One is for the courthouse in Owsley County, which is our smallest, poorest county. The Owsley roof is failing, their HVAC system is failing. They have one courtroom. They have very poor security for the judges and the jurors. They need a building, but we have a protocol given the size of the county and the caseload as to how big a building is going to be.

The other building request is a new Court of Appeals building in Frankfort on land already owned by the Court of Justice. The prior building was infected by black mold, so they're in a temporary building in Frankfort.

We make recommendations but what ultimately gets into the judicial budget is a legislative political process.

MG: Do you think there needs to be a change in the existing structure of the Kentucky Bar Association, which has been proposed in the General Assembly?

LVM: If you go to the Kentucky secretary of state's website—where we form corporations, professional service corporations, LLCs, any



Laurance VanMeter is sworn in by former Kentucky Supreme Court Chief Justice John D. Minton Jr.

number of business organizations—you will not find one called the Kentucky Bar Association because it is a judicial branch agency wholly under the purview of the Kentucky Supreme Court.

Section 116 in the Kentucky Constitution states the Supreme Court shall govern admission to the bar and the discipline of members to the bar. The discussion I have had with members of the legislature is, no other profession is required to be a member of an association to practice their profession. Why is the bar different? Because of Section 116 of the Kentucky Constitution. The regulation and supervision of the practice of law in our court system and the admission and discipline of members of the bar has long been a function of the judicial branch of government.

Will they pass that bill this year? Maybe. Then the question will be for the Kentucky Supreme Court, do you go forward with this? Every federal court that has looked at this has said a uniform bar is not unconstitutional; it does not violate the rights of lawyers' associations. That's every state within the 6th Circuit: Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. The 6th Circuit has said that this is OK.

Unless they can get it to the U.S. Supreme Court, the way we do it right now will be upheld.

There is the idea that if we can make our elections more partisan that would be another piece of information for people. My take is that what people want is experience. They are used to nonpartisan judicial elections and appear to have rejected appeals to partisanship. If the legislature decides to adopt a constitutional amendment to make our judicial elections overtly partisan, we would change the rules. Right now, we don't raise money for

ourselves, don't ask people for money, don't give monies to other candidates and don't endorse other candidates. Those rules would have to change. Unless you're going to change the scope of Judicial Review, the seven judges on the Kentucky Supreme Court will have final say on everything that the governor and the legislature does because we do right now. Do we want to create a system where we have this class of seven super-overtly partisan officials ruling?

MG: What do you wish the public and or the business community better understood about how the court system and the judiciary operates?

LVM: Courts are reactive, not proactive. If I head down Main Street and see a pothole, I can't fix the pothole. I might call my council representative, but it's not up to me to fix that. My wife—who's a judge—brought home a poll about the most powerful people in Lexington. No. 1, Gov. Beshear; No. 2, the mayor; No. 3, (UK President) Eli Capilouto; No. 4, (UK basketball coach) John Calipari. One person not on the list was the chief justice of the commonwealth, and that tells me I'm doing my job.

We're not supposed to make decisions based on our personal views of the issues. We're supposed to look at what the law is, what the facts are related to that and make a decision based on the constitutional

law. My oath of office is to support the constitution of United States and the constitution of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, not to the principles of a political party. We're all against crime, but every once in a while we're required to make decisions which have the effect of reversing a criminal conviction for a new trial, even though we know with 94% certainty that he or she did it. We issue opinions.

I was the trial judge when the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government issued the ban on indoor smoking because of second-hand smoke. I was running for Court of Appeals at that moment and issued a ruling that that was permitted by the local government because it related to health—and local governments have the ability to pass ordinances related to health. I got such a hard time from tobacco farmers who did not like the opinion. One of my law clerks said, 'Do we need to issue this opinion before the election?' I said, 'If I can't issue this opinion, not only do I not need to be a judge on the Court of Appeals, I don't need to be a judge at all.'

MG: Is there a case over your career that sticks out that was the hardest to render a decision on?

LVM: That smoking ban case was one. I come from a line of tobacco farmers; I don't smoke but I disclosed that. That was a hard case. On the Supreme Court, the right-to-work case that said a worker didn't have to be a member of a union or pay union dues to work in a union shop: I had friends on both sides of that case. And I wrote the opinion in the historic horse racing (machines) case; that was hard. My legal career was formed with a background in the equine industry and I have a lot of friends in the equine industry. But legally it was the right decision. I wrote a concurring opinion in the pension case in 2018 that I got some very strong pushback from someone who had supported me, but again, it was the right decision. You have to make decisions without fear of criticism or public clamor.

MG: Why did the Supreme Court vote to replace the Uniform Bar Exam test in 2027 with the NextGen bar exam?

LVM: In 2020, we decided to go to with the Uniform Bar Exam, which was for the benefit of our applicants. If they pass the Kentucky Bar exam with score a 266, they can also be admitted in Indiana (and other states where that is a passing score). In Northern Kentucky, lawyers might want to be licensed in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana, so they can take one bar exam instead of three. It's a benefit to the students and for the business community. You need to be able to practice in multiple states and understand what's going on. So, the National Conference of Bar Examiners is changing the format and making it more integrated. They're trying to focus on the tasks a new lawyer in the first three years of practice will need to know to demonstrate competence to be a lawyer. Beginning in July 2027, we have adopted that.

MG: Does Kentucky need another law school?

LVM: No. I think we have three very good law schools. I don't think we need another.

MG: What legacy does Laurance VanMeter hope to leave behind?

LVM: I hope it's that I did my job. I followed 'my rulebook' (the Constitution); I've made decisions without fear of public clamor or criticism. When I ran (for Supreme Court) in 2016, there was a block on a Lexington street where there were houses four doors apart with one having signs for Donald Trump, Rand Paul, Andy Barr and me and the other had me and Hillary Clinton, Jim Gray and the Democratic candidate for Congress. People would say, 'I hear you're a certain political party but we thought you were the other party.' That tells me I have done the job that the people hired me to do. ■



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Making a Statement through Community Involvement

Kentucky banks say giving back to the communities they serve is an integral part of their business



Habitat for Humanity photo

BY SHANNON CLINTON

As bank representatives across the commonwealth will attest, financial institutions don't merely focus on numbers and bottom lines—they also give back in numerous ways to better the lives of their neighbors, customers and others in the communities they serve.

This “giving back” is genuine, but it also has a business benefit. It creates a visibility and thus a branding. It creates a two-way flow of information by word of mouth and by observation about bank services and products as well as what clients and potential clients are doing and

planning. That, in turn, creates opportunities to enhance or open lines of business. It builds insight and trust.

And of course, a thriving community is one that grows its economy—and bank business.

Cathy Taylor says her employer, Community Trust Bank Inc., doesn't have a flashy marketing campaign about all the ways associates donate their time and money toward different charitable causes, but still, the impact of their good works is clear.

“Our folks put in endless hours to serve on boards, to work in the community and to make change, and that's a great story that we have to tell,” said Taylor, who serves as vice president, Lexington market and central region security representative with CTBI, where she's worked for 25 years.

CTBI has 79 locations reaching to Northern Kentucky, Louisville, Knoxville, Tenn., and western West Virginia. Taylor said bank employees support organizations like Bluegrass Crime Stoppers, which helps solve crimes; Habitat for Humanity, which works to increase opportunities for affordable housing; and other organizations impacting youth, including working with area school systems and groups like Junior Achievement, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and Shriners Hospital. The Pikeville-headquartered bank has also donated funds toward the development of Town Branch Park in downtown Lexington, one of many organizations and individuals helping to make that dream a reality.

“Some of our contributions may not come in the form of money; some of our contributions may come in the form of spending time,” Taylor said.

Bank of Lexington President Cindy C. Burton is a board member with the Lexington Humane Society, a cause especially dear to her heart as she owns a beloved shelter dog.

“We are a preferred partner with LHS,” she said. “We sponsor many of their events, but one of our most unique contributions comes in the form of a \$100 donation in the name

of every customer who closes on their primary residence with Bank of Lexington. We have also done dog/cat food drives for LHS.”

Burton said her philosophy has always been if the bank, which has three locations, is going to give money, its associates are also going to give their time.

“I think it is important to support groups my employees have ties to, whether it's their child's ball team or if they sit on a board of a local nonprofit,” she said. “If it is important to them, it is important to me.”

Some of the groups with which the bank and its associates are involved include Sweat 4 Surgeries benefiting Surgery on Sunday, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts troops, Little League sports teams, UK Leads Scholarship, Swing for Soldiers, Oktoberfest, Catholic Action Center, Psalm 8:23 Mission and numerous golf outings for various charities.

Around Christmas, Bank of Lexington becomes a drop-off location for Operation Secret Santa, and employees and customers donate toys, too.

At the other end of the size spectrum is Cincinnati-headquartered Fifth Third Bank, which has 69 Kentucky locations and over 1,000 others outside the commonwealth. Vice President, Community Impact Manager Adam Hall outlined some of the ways his bank encourages team members to be involved and engaged in their communities.

“We have team members who volunteer with causes as wide ranging as coaching youth sports leagues, out-of-school-time tutoring programs, the Humane Society, Habitat for Humanity and many other activities,” he said, adding that full-time employees can take up to eight hours paid time off annually to volunteer for these and other organizations.

As a financial institution, Fifth Third also strives to make an impact through supporting United Way's annual giving campaign, and rallies bank volunteers for the organization's Day of Action.

Fifth Third Day, held each May 3, is a chance for the bank to help alleviate food insecurity in communities served.

“During the month, we support nonprofit food pantries and meal centers with cash donations, food drives, and in-person volunteer support,” Hall said. “In 2023, we provided over 10 million meals across our footprint.”

Being a supporter of the arts is another way to positively benefit the community, and Hall said Fifth Third Bank pools corporate grants along with employee pledges benefiting Fund for the Arts in Louisville and LexArts in Lexington.

In 2021, Fifth Third launched its Empowering Black Futures Neighborhood program, which Hall said focuses on nine neighborhoods in the bank’s footprint that are majority African American and have historically suffered from racist policies like redlining and urban renewal.

“The bank is investing \$20 million in each neighborhood to improve upward mobility among Black residents, promote prosperous small Black-owned businesses, develop healthy built environments, create more equitable, connected systems, and build an inclusive civic infrastructure,” he said.

The Russell neighborhood in Louisville, located west of downtown,

was selected as a program target area for Kentucky, Hall said. In response, Fifth Third has dedicated investments and volunteer hours toward affordable housing, homeownership preservation and aging-in-place initiatives, small-business technical assistance and neighborhood improvements there.

German American Bank Senior Regional President Adrian Brown said his Jasper, Ind.-based bank operates a successful School Spirit Check Card program, in which customers can choose a favorite area school’s logo for their check card and for each purchase, the bank donates 2 cents toward their school of choice.

The funds really add up, Brown said, as nearly \$100,000 in donations have been made to schools thus far. German American has 28 Kentucky locations and 47 more in the rest of its footprint.

Brown said it’s embedded in the bank’s culture to give back to communities served, and employee interests and passions often help determine where funds are donated.



PNC Bank photo

Yajaira West, PNC’s director of client and community relations for Lexington, shares a moment with Daniel Tiger during a 2023 Be My Neighbor Day event at the Lexington Public Library. A collaboration between PNC Grow Up Great, Fred Rogers Productions and local public television stations, Be My Neighbor Day events are held throughout PNC’s coast-to-coast footprint to help children learn how to be caring neighbors.

“It’s really hard to make these decisions sometimes,” he said. “Our bank and our employees are extremely generous, but a community’s needs



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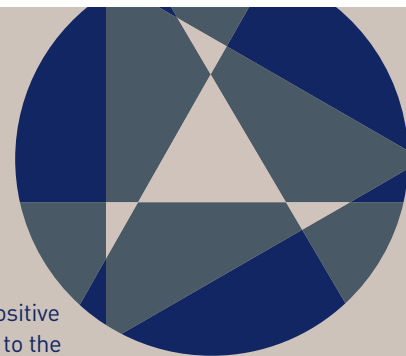
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can outweigh any one organization's resources."

"At City National Bank, our commitment to our customers goes well beyond serving their financial needs," said First Vice President/Region Retail Manager Michelle Buerger. "We serve our communities through charitable contributions, volunteerism, financial education efforts and developing special products that meet the needs of those in our communities."

These include supporting hundreds of charities annually, she said, including social service agencies, community and economic development groups, cultural and arts organizations, and others, with many employees serving as trustees, directors and advisors on boards for local organizations.

One particular passion for the Charleston, W. Va.-based bank, which has 24 Kentucky locations and 75 outside the state, is promoting financial education for all ages.

"Our employees spend time in schools, community organizations

and senior centers, leading financial education programs like Teach Children to Save, Get Smart About Credit and Safe Banking for Seniors," Buerger said.

Providing opportunities for those who may struggle financially is another way the bank helps the community. CNB offers Bounce Back Checking to those who've been denied the opportunity to open a checking account "and are looking for a fresh start," she said.

And the City Start Mortgage program at City National Bank offers first-time buyers with low to moderate income buy homes with little to no money down, low flat-rate closing costs and a flexible credit score requirement.

"We also offer special accounts for seniors and community heroes like veterans, first responders, teachers and medical professionals," Buerger said.



German American Bank photo

In January, German American Bank sponsored the German American Bank Basketball Shootout, an event hosted by the Bowling Green Purples that brought girls and boys teams throughout the area together for a day of friendly competition. Pictured presenting the sponsorship check to Bowling Green Independent School District Superintendent Gary Fields (far left) are German American Regional President Todd Kanipe, Senior Vice President Commercial Banking Carrie Taylor and Regional Senior Vice President Retail Banking Kim Thomas.



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Pittsburg-based PNC Bank has Kentucky's largest deposit market share with \$10.8 billion at its 67 commonwealth locations, according to a 2023 report from the FDIC. One of the nation's top 10 banks, PNC has another 2,374 locations outside the state.

John Gohmann, PNC regional president for Lexington, said PNC "collaborates closely with community-based nonprofit organizations, with a pronounced emphasis on early childhood education and economic development."

This is done via grant funding from PNC Foundation, charitable sponsorships from PNC Bank and employee volunteerism, he said, adding that a number of associates are involved with community and charitable organizations' boards and committees.

The bank even allows employees to take paid time off doing good

works, up to 40 hours annually to volunteer with approved organizations.

For the past 20 years, the \$500 million, multiyear bilingual initiative PNC Grow Up Great has focused on early childhood education and plans to celebrate this year's milestone anniversary are underway, Gohmann said.

"Helping prepare young children for success in school and life accomplishes several objectives that create economic impact, both now and in the future," Gohmann said.

Just as the number of organizations served are diverse, the reasons for supporting them are as different as the individuals involved, bank representatives say.

"PNC's commitment to strengthen the communities and neighborhoods in which we operate is core to our business model," Gohmann said. "Our communities are so much

Fifth Third photo



In 2021, Fifth Third launched its Empowering Black Futures Neighborhood program, which focuses on nine neighborhoods in the bank's footprint that are majority African American and have historically suffered from racist policies like redlining and urban renewal.

more than places where we do business. Our communities are where our employees and customers live and raise their families. When our communities succeed, PNC succeeds."

He adds that philanthropic/community relations activities are tailored to each market, with senior leaders empowered to make grant funding and sponsorship decisions for maximum impact.

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PNC's client and community relationship directors focus on local sponsorship activities, business development, philanthropic initiatives and community engagement activities and community development bankers strive to positively impact low- and moderate-income neighborhoods with affordable housing, community development lending, economic development and financial education, Gohmann said.

Burton said upon becoming president of the Bank of Lexington three years ago, she made community involvement a priority. Most recently, she joined the board for the Realtor Community Housing Foundation and will be participating in fundraisers to provide wheelchair ramps for people in need statewide.

"These are causes you don't really think about or understand until you get involved," she said. "This kind of work is about changing lives, which is so important and fulfilling."

Sometimes the means by which help is offered must change to ensure those who need it most are best able to receive it. Fifth Third's Hall said before COVID, the bank worked with a variety of organizations to provide in-person financial empowerment workshops, but as the world changed during the pandemic, so did their programs. The outcomes, he reports, have been positive.

"During COVID, we pivoted to virtual sessions," he said. "While we are able to convene in-person again, many organizations prefer the virtual format because it removes barriers like transportation and child care for a client to participate in a session."

Hall said other programs are being refreshed and relaunched, including Finance Academy, which launched in 2017 as a digital education platform for high schoolers to address topics like savings, budgeting and bank account types, and the Fifth Third financial empowerment mobile, a 40-foot bus with computers onboard to bring banking services directly to underserved areas.

Recently, the bus was rewrapped and rebranded and its interior

remodeled with new technologies so bankers can help visitors access information even more efficiently, Hall said.

Community Trust Bank Inc.'s Taylor expressed pride in the myriad ways her colleagues so generously step up to fill community needs for the betterment of so many.

"We work here but we also raise our families and live here, and it takes all of us to make a strong community," she said. ■

Shannon Clinton is a correspondent for The Lane Report. She can be reached at editorial@lanereport.com.

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Beating Heart Disease

Kentucky providers know that ‘time is muscle’ so they stress avoiding cardiac issues and quick response in treating symptoms, events when they happen

BY SHANNON CLINTON

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and in Kentucky. According to the American Heart Association, about 10,000 of the state’s 4.4 million residents die of heart disease annually, the eighth highest rate nationwide.

But these poor statistics are reversible. In fact, individuals are making choices every day to lessen their risk factors, and the state’s top cardiovascular experts are here to help with their best advice for prevention, what to do in a potential

emergency and if there is one, what treatment options are saving lives and preserving quality of life more than ever.

Healthy tips

Focusing on a heart-healthy lifestyle should be foundational in a person’s wellness journey, said Dr. Steve Lin, a cardiologist with CHI St. Joseph Health.

There are many ways to do this, he said, including knowing and heeding the American Heart Association’s “Life’s Essential Eight” checklist for lifelong health. That list includes actions toward

keeping blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol levels in optimal ranges, along with healthy diet, exercise, stress management and other lifestyle choices like avoiding or stopping smoking and getting enough quality sleep.

Regular checkups with primary caregivers and/or cardiovascular specialists are also important so that you know where your health metrics stand. Making it a priority to keep those numbers in check can reap many rewards, including the likelihood of fewer medical tests, procedures and pills to take now and in the future.

“I’ve been feeling lightheaded lately.
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Lin said regular exercise — at least 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise weekly — is recommended to avoid the health pitfalls accompanying a sedentary lifestyle, like obesity and diabetes.

“Regular exercise is one of the most effective therapies,” Lin said. “It has numerous benefits,” including elevating mood and boosting metabolism.

He recommends starting where your abilities allow and gradually building on progress toward these recommended levels. Look for ways to get small bursts of exercise into each day, like taking the stairs versus the elevator or parking farther away from destinations.

Even if you have a strong family history of heart disease, it’s not inevitable that you will have heart disease as well, said Dr. Raymon Nelson, a cardiologist at Pikeville Medical Center. One simply must be more proactive and take risks seriously.

“You’re going to need to be more aggressive in your protection methods,” Nelson said. “One of the things that is important is knowing your cholesterol level. At an early age we should know what our cholesterol level is.”

Nelson recommends keeping close track of cholesterol levels with yearly bloodwork and then managing with medications if needed.

Some heart disease risk factors can be changed, he adds, such as diet, customs and lack of exercise.

“It’s not a death sentence,” Nelson said. “Just because your father had a heart attack doesn’t mean you are going to have a heart attack. You can alter it by altering environmental factors, and you can alter it with medications that your father didn’t have.”

There now are medications that are injected twice yearly that are proven effective in lowering cholesterol.

What to do in an emergency

Heart illness and life-threatening crises do happen, but there are



How to Keep Your Heart Healthy The American Heart Association’s “Life Essential 8”

- Eat Better
- Be More Active
- Quit Tobacco
- Get Healthy Sleep
- Manage Weight
- Control Cholesterol
- Manage Blood Sugar
- Manage Blood Pressure



effective actions to take in a potential cardiac emergency, said Dr. Vincent L. Sorrell, acting chief for the division of cardiovascular medicine and acting director of the Gill Heart & Vascular Institute at UK HealthCare.

Sorrell notes that women often have different heart attack symptoms than men and this often creates delays in seeking care, which worsens the odds for recovery or survival.

“Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of women, taking one in three women’s lives annually,” he said.

More people should take the time to learn CPR so that they can help others experiencing a cardiac arrest emergency, and know how to use a defibrillator, which today is often available in public places.

Sorrell said that of those who experience cardiac arrest in a community setting, 60% do not

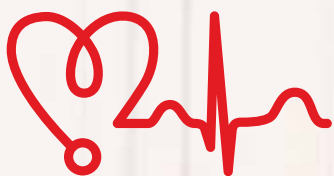
get CPR. For those who do and are correctly administered defibrillation within a minute, the survival rate is around 90%.

Sorrell said people wait an average of three hours to seek help after symptoms arise. Those symptoms may include tightness or fullness in the center of the chest, or discomfort affecting the shoulder, neck, jaw, teeth, back, stomach or arm lasting 15 minutes or more.

“We know ‘time is muscle,’” he said. “Because when you’re having a heart attack, muscles die.”

He advises people who notice symptoms to call 911 as soon as possible.

Those without an aspirin allergy or potential side effect from it may benefit from taking an aspirin right away. If the person has had a past blockage and is prescribed nitroglycerin, that can also help buy time until emergency care is available, he said.



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Loved ones of someone experiencing potential symptoms of a cardiac event should insist the person seek emergency care. In the meantime, encourage them to relax and loosen any tight clothing while monitoring for lightheadedness, change in mental status or loss of consciousness.

Dr. Lin said not everyone experiencing a heart attack has obvious signs like chest tightness—30% of men and 50% of women don't. Fatigue and shortness of breath can be warning signs, too, among others.

His best advice is "that they seek attention quickly."

If a stent is placed in a blocked vessel within an hour of onset of a heart attack, full recovery is likely, Lin said. If six hours elapse, chances are moderate, and after 12 hours, full recovery is highly unlikely.

Treatment and recovery

At UofL Health, interventional cardiologist Dr. Chandhiran Rangaswamy holds an optimistic view of modern heart disease treatments.

"Just about every (cardiac illness) is treatable. How much recovery there will be is what's in question," he said.

A heart attack—which is loss of adequate blood flow to the heart muscle—can be treated with angioplasty or bypass surgery, depending on the severity of blockage, and congestive heart failure is often treatable with medication, also depending on severity. Arrhythmias

can be treated with medication or an ablation procedure, depending on type.

Recent innovations such as drug-eluting stents (DES) placed during angioplasty deliver medication directly to the arterial wall to prevent growth of scar tissue and reduce the risk of narrowing of the stented area after treatment, Rangaswamy said. Robot-assisted surgeries are helpful, too.

In addition, cardiac rehabilitation can recondition the heart after a heart attack, diagnosis of heart disease-related conditions or certain arrhythmias. Rangaswamy said such programs are helping patients live longer with diet and exercise programs and smoking cessation.

Innovations in cardiovascular care are helping patients combat heart disease, Lin said.

"This field has the largest number of innovations—from device therapy to medical care—in all subspecialties of cardiovascular medicine," he said.

These include a type of balloon angioplasty used in Europe and available soon in the U.S. that contains chemotherapy to prevent arterial re-narrowing. Drug-coated stents can also contain chemotherapy to prevent re-narrowing and help patients remain symptom free after placement, Lin said.



New, safer placement sites for pacemaker leads are showing promise as well. Remote monitoring devices can be implanted for patients with unexplained fainting or strokes to better pinpoint a cause.

Drugs unavailable five to 10 years ago for heart failure are working well today, Lin adds.

While stress isn't a clearly quantified contributor of heart disease, it is known that the stress hormone cortisol can lead to insulin resistance, inflammation, poor dietary choices and sedentary tendencies, so it's important to actively manage stress not only for emotional health but cardiovascular wellness.

And it's not all based on medication and technological intervention.

Lin sees common threads in patients doing well at age 90 and older. Most are women with a normal body build and they have

Dr. Li Zhou of Norton Heart & Vascular Institute specializes in women's cardiology and is the medical director of the women's heart program for Norton Healthcare. He offers the following four key tips for heart health:



1. Talk to your doctor about your risk factors for heart disease.
2. Know your numbers and get your risk factors under control.
3. Eat a healthy diet.
4. Exercise routinely.

an air of gratitude, purpose in life, are active, have strong personal connections with friends and family and enjoy their lives.

Striving for that mindset and lifestyle may well be the secret to longevity.

"I think that aspect of their health is a very important part of overall cardiovascular health," Lin said. ■

Shannon Clinton is a correspondent for The Lane Report. She can be reached at editorial@lanereport.com.

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University of Kentucky/Mark Cornelison photo

The Numbers Tell a Story

How Kentucky colleges climbed to the top of the nation in enrollment growth

BY JEFF MCDANALD

Recently released data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) indicate Kentucky had the highest fall-to-fall total enrollment gains in the nation this past school year.

Between fall 2022 and fall 2023, Kentucky's colleges experienced 5.6% overall enrollment growth. This compares to a modest 2.1% average rise in colleges across the United States.

A quick look at the growth numbers of a few schools in the commonwealth

tells the story of Kentucky's rise to national prominence. The University of Kentucky is seeing a 21% enrollment growth trend since 2010. Murray State's 2023-24 freshman class was the largest in history, reflecting a 21% increase. Eastern Kentucky University saw a nearly 30% increase in freshman enrollment.

And while U.S. community colleges have been struggling in the post-COVID climate, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) is seeing enrollment gains of 7.8%, well above the recent national average of 4.4%.

Like many other Kentucky colleges, the Gordon Ford College of Business at Western Kentucky University is adapting to change and promoting the commonwealth as a top-drawer higher education choice.

"We've listened intently to the business community's needs and expanded our course offerings to include majors and certificates in high-demand fields such as supply chain management, cybersecurity, data analytics, sales and certified financial planning," Interim Dean Evelyn Thrasher said.

"This sustained growth and success are not just about numbers but the transformative experiences we offer at Western Kentucky University and Gordon Ford College of Business, empowering students to thrive in an ever-changing global landscape," Thrasher said. "As we continue to evolve and innovate, we remain dedicated to nurturing talent, fostering excellence, creating thought leaders, and shaping the next generations of business professionals."



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Eastern Kentucky University has helped make a college education more affordable through its BookSmart program, which provides free textbooks to all students. The program has decreased the total cost of attendance by nearly 10%.

Shaping critical thinkers

Asbury University welcomed a near-record number of traditional undergraduate students in the fall 2023 class and is seeing continued growth in online and graduate programs.

"We continually hear from people who are eager for a liberal arts, Christian education that emphasizes academic rigor, mentorship and whole-person development," said Asbury Director of Strategic Communications Abby Laub. "We also continue to hear from employers that the type of student this setting produces is an ideal fit for their workforce. They need well-rounded, critical thinkers and our alumni move on into impactful careers and professions. We've also prioritized the needs of Kentucky's workforce with programs like pharmacy, nursing and engineering mathematics and these have made a direct impact on our enrollment."

The University of Kentucky has played a significant role in the recent enrollment growth data trend with overall enrollment growth between fall 2022 and fall 2023 of more than

1,000 students—resulting in a record enrollment of nearly 34,000 students at UK.

This most recent growth is an example of a larger trend at UK over the past decade and a half. Since fall 2010, UK's overall enrollment has grown by about 21%, from just over 28,000 in fall 2010 to the nearly 34,000 in fall 2023.

"We have seen increases across both graduate and

undergraduate students," said UK Chief Analytics Officer Todd Brann. "For graduate students, the growth has been due in part to an increased number of online programs and enrollment. In the undergraduate space, UK has increased the number of freshman students from Kentucky coming to UK and increasingly become a destination of choice for out-of-state students as well. And perhaps, most importantly, increased retention and graduation rates have helped to drive enrollment, illustrating UK's commitment to student success. Last year, for the first time in our history, we reached a six-year graduation rate of 70%, a number that places us among the top 100 public institutions (and top 20%) in the country, based on the most recent data."

Affordability and support create growth

University of the Cumberlands has the third largest enrollment in Kentucky, with a total enrollment for fall 2023 of 20,504, representing a 14% increase in terms of the NSC data study period. Much of this growth can be attributed to Cumberlands' focus on student success, specifically being transfer-friendly and focusing on retention. According to Leslie Ryser, executive vice president for institutional advancement.

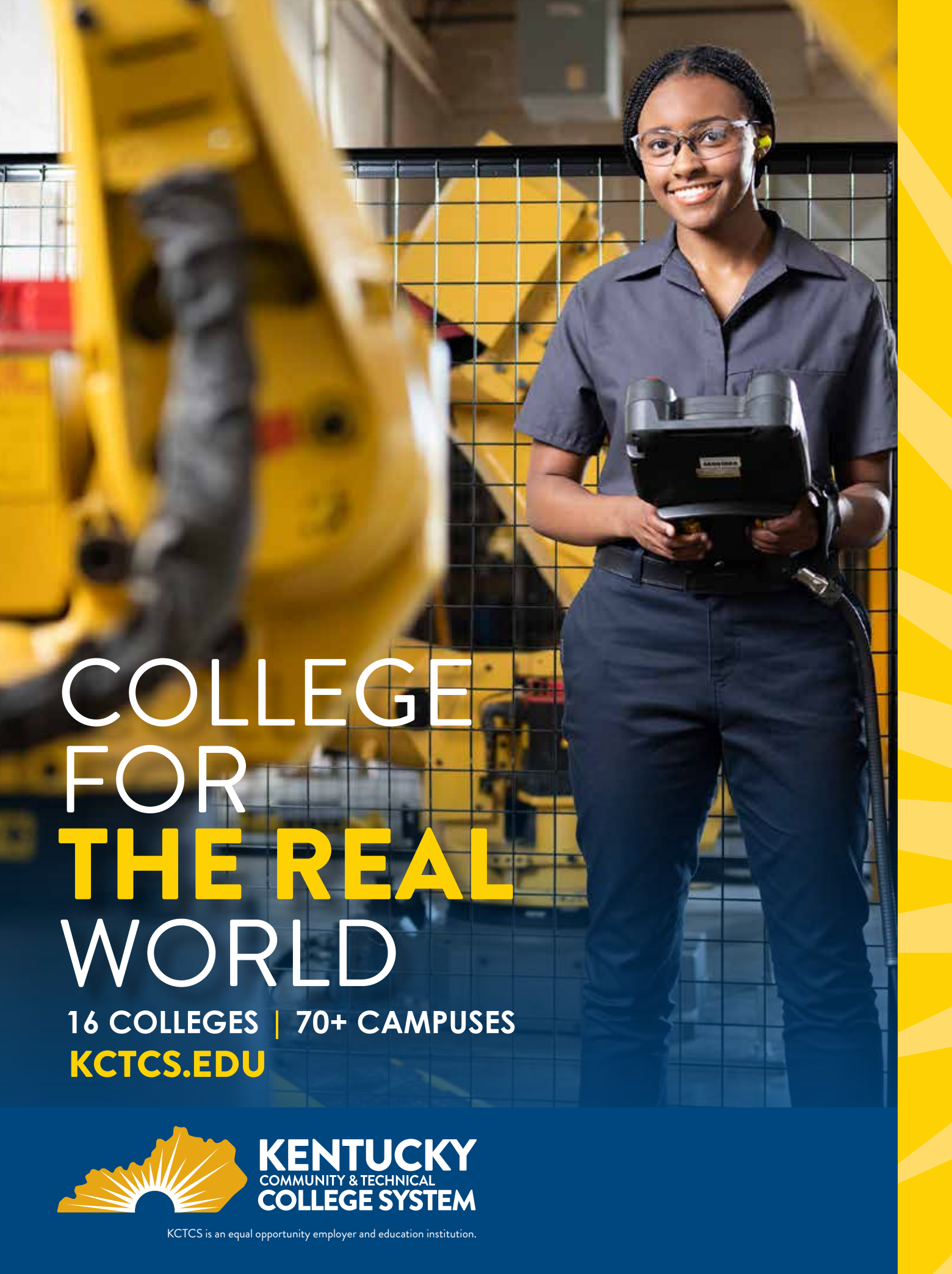
"We focus on putting students first, from the first point of inquiry all the way through graduation," said Jonathan Shores, Cumberlands' executive vice president for enrollment management. "We offer quality academic programs that are often innovative and align with the needs of the workforce, especially here in Kentucky, creating greater opportunity for our graduates. And our programs are probably some of the most affordable in the state. Prospective students and families want to know there is value in their

Kentucky is first in the nation for enrollment growth between fall 2022 and fall 2023

Based on preliminary enrollment estimates



Source: National Student Clearinghouse



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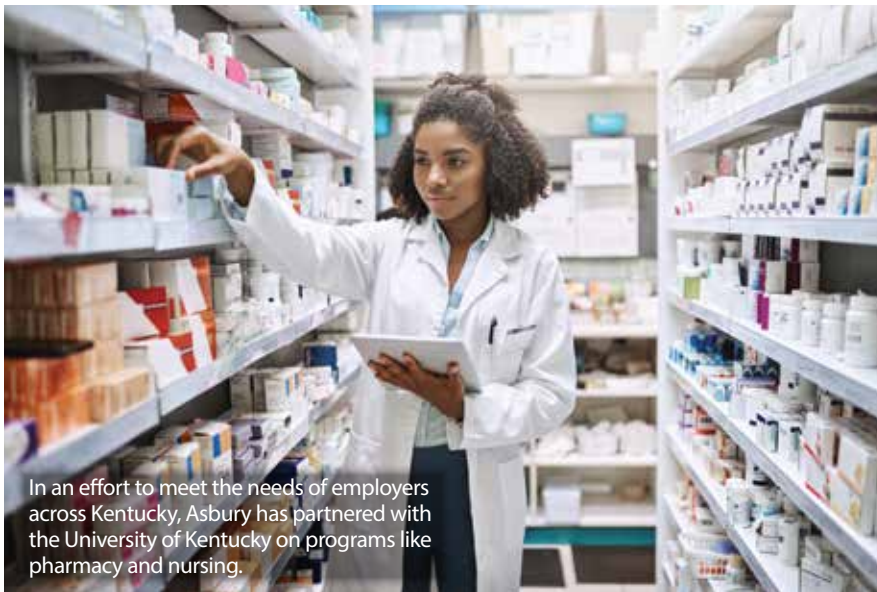
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In an effort to meet the needs of employers across Kentucky, Asbury has partnered with the University of Kentucky on programs like pharmacy and nursing.

investment in education, and we make sure to prove that value exists here at Cumberlands.”

Eastern Kentucky University’s growth has been strategic and intentional, with priorities focused on affordability, support services and

its innovative Exceptional Eastern Experience (E3) program. These priorities inspired the creation and expansion of cost-saving programs for students, the addition of new and innovative programs to the university’s repertoire, and a campus

environment bustling with student events.

In an effort to remove the financial barriers that stand in the way of higher education, ECU expanded its free textbook program, ECU BookSmart, to include all degree-seeking students. With its data showing the average undergrad spent more than \$1,200 annually on textbooks, ECU BookSmart has decreased the total cost of attendance by 9.7% from 2019 to 2024 and saved students a combined \$43 million.

In addition to providing free textbooks, ECU awarded more than \$38.5 million in scholarships and fellowships last year.

“Education propels individuals toward personal growth, societal progress and the continuous pursuit of knowledge, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to their communities,” ECU President David McFaddin said. “Our commitment is to serve as the ‘School of Opportunity,’ providing an accessible and cost-effective choice for residents



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of Kentucky and ensuring that the investment in education yields significant returns and long-lasting benefits for our students and the commonwealth.”

Within the past year, Murray State University has been recognized nationally for quality and value by *U.S. News and World Report*, *Forbes* and *Washington Monthly*. This year, Murray State awarded a record \$127 million in financial aid and scholarships, with 99% of first-year students receiving financial aid or scholarships.

Both affordability and accessibility continue to be key pillars and priorities for Murray. An impressive 53% of Murray students graduate debt-free, and they lead the state in this metric.

“Our 2023-24 freshman class is the largest in Murray State history and reflected a 21% increase from the previous year—the largest percentage increase among the public universities in Kentucky and our largest overall enrollment since



Murray State University photo

Nearly all Murray State University freshman receive financial aid or scholarships and 53% of Murray graduates leave the school debt free.

2017,” said Murray State University President Bob Jackson.

“Despite enrollment headwinds nationally, we continue to experience significant enrollment growth through the hard work of many areas across campus. We have seen record

enrollment in specific programs, such as our Statewide Program of Distinction in Cybersecurity and Network Management as well as our Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, which recently admitted its largest cohort ever.”



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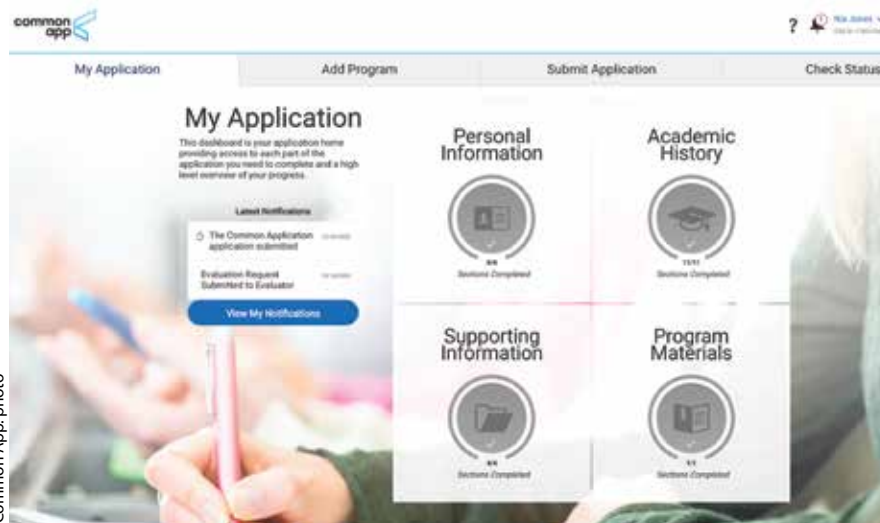


Kentucky colleges and universities say adopting the Common Application has played a role in increased enrollment. The Common App enables students to apply to over 1,000 colleges and universities in all 50 states. Currently, 14 Kentucky schools are part of the Common App.

Strong online learning presence

Adopting the Common Application is among the recent enrollment procedural changes implemented at Western Kentucky University. The Common Application is the most widely used college application across the county. Undergraduates can apply to over 1,000 member colleges and universities in all 50 states.

“We’ve seen a lift in terms of applications submitted to our institution,” said Ethan Logan, WKU’s vice president for enrollment and student experience. “So, we have some really good momentum now, which is expanding our market



penetration in terms of where we’re recruiting students.”

“We have to work very hard to get out and meet with students and provide the opportunity to introduce them to Western Kentucky; this is true for all of our schools in the state. Louisville and Kentucky, for example, are well-known institutions, nationally

recognized research universities. Some have heard about Western Kentucky because of our history and legacy, but it’s incumbent upon us to reintroduce that to each new generation of students. All of Kentucky’s colleges are collectively working hard ensure that we engage students so that we can continue to cultivate participation.”

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Kentucky colleges and universities have been expanding programs in areas like supply chain management to help meet the needs of the business community.

Thomas More University in Northern Kentucky has endeavored to “keep it local.”

“For our 2023 incoming class, we focused on centering local recruitment and enrolling strong students from our backyard here in Kentucky,” says Justin Vogel, dean of enrollment at Thomas More University. “By doing that, we managed to raise our academic profile and increase the number of Kentucky residents in our first-year cohort by over 10%.”

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System focuses on expanding access and closing opportunity and workforce gaps through a wide range of high-quality academic and technical programs at an affordable cost.

“It was terrific news to see that Kentucky led the nation in enrollment gains this year,” said KCTCS President Ryan Quarles.

“Our investment in a strong online learning presence certainly was a silver lining during the

pandemic when we quickly shifted to online learning, and it has continued to grow,” Quarles said. “The noteworthy increases in hybrid options have helped us retain current students and attract new ones. As the largest provider of online learning in the state, KCTCS now has 63% of students taking at least one online class and 36% of students enrolling exclusively online, based on the most recent data.

“This collective achievement is rewarding since it represents very strategic policies and intentional efforts that were literally years in the making by many.” ■

Jeff McDonald is a correspondent for The Lane Report. She can be reached at editorial@lanereport.com.

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Finding Effective Representation

A top lawyer knows your business as well as you

BY MARK GREEN

With economic indicators rising, Kentucky law firms anticipate strong demand in 2024 and advise clients looking for representation to find a legal partner who understands their business as well as they do.

This approach “is one of the reasons I’ve been very lucky in my career,” said Doug Barr, managing partner at Stoll Keenon Ogden (SKO), whose practice has specialized in complex litigation.

“Part of the reason I’ve had

success is because I’ve told clients this, and it’s true, ‘I worry more about their matters than they do,’ Barr said. “When they go to sleep at night, they should know their lawyer is worried about whatever it is they’ve entrusted to him.”

That quality is what SKO also looks for when hiring.

“The most important legal skill is curiosity and the desire to be a great lawyer for your clients,” Barr said.

Long one of Kentucky’s largest firms with 170 attorneys in 40-plus practices, SKO sees the economy

in 2024 continuing to improve, with more employment and more manufacturing jobs in Kentucky, which will bring client inquiries regarding all the things associated with economic growth, Barr added.

If interest rates go down, as anticipated, Barr expects to see a rise in inquiries related to contracts, employment, business, financing and various areas of real estate.

“Everybody is waiting around for the rates to go down and it looks like they’re going to,” Barr said.

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A deep understanding of clients' business is the most important element of satisfying their needs efficiently, said Brian Johnson, the Lexington-based group chair in the South litigation practice for Dickinson-Wright, a Detroit-based firm with 475 lawyers in 19 offices.

"We know our clients' businesses in depth, including in areas that we're not actively representing them on at the moment," Johnson said. "The reason for that is things happen really quickly now. If a client has an issue pop up in an area that we're not directly involved with, we still want to be able to jump in and address that for them."

The efficiency that results is a quality the 13-person Lexington office prides itself on, he said.

"We've been pretty successful in expanding our work for clients to a regional or national basis by doing good work for them here," Johnson said. "Costs are certainly

much better than they would get from Chicago and New York law firms."

Clients always want quality legal skills but also efficiency, he said, so they understand that from a cost perspective, they benefit from a team of a few younger attorneys working with an experienced colleague.

From startups and mom-and-pop businesses to Fortune 100 members, Johnson said there is demand for intellectual property work that ranges from traditional protections to emerging areas arising from artificial intelligence.

There is also an increase in litigation. The upturn in cases going to trial—"that's not just here in Lexington, we're seeing that everywhere"—is a product of backlogs that grew when the COVID pandemic had many face-to-face courthouse activities restricted, he said.

Fundamentals remain important

An effective modern law practice still requires mastery of traditional fundamentals.

"The ability to work as a member of a team is an underrated and highly valuable skill, especially in a field such as law, where it is easy to fall into an every-person-for-themselves mindset," said James H. Frazier III, managing member of McBrayer. "This is a holdover from traditional ways of practice that have been part of the industry for generations. What a team effort does in a law practice, however, is to delegate each piece of a matter to the right attorney, so each matter is handled efficiently and at a reasonable cost."

Grahmn N. Morgan, Lexington office managing partner for Cincinnati-based Dinsmore, echoed the efficiency theme in business-related practice.

"With more than 120 attorneys in our Kentucky offices and 750-plus across the country, Dinsmore has a wide reach and can assure our clients the attorneys working on their cases have the right legal and industry experience to resolve their matter as efficiently as possible," Morgan said.

Dinsmore ensures its attorneys meet with one another regularly to discuss what they are working on, locally and in distant departments, he said, so they have the insight "to be able to immediately point a potential client to someone in the firm whose experience is suited to solving that client's problem."

Morgan recommends clients confirm attorneys working on their matter have the legal and industry skill required



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“From fairly simple transactions to deals that throw us curveballs, RCSM is our trusted guide who meticulously advocates for our best interests. They are our go-to recommendation for legal counsel.”

Stith Keiser, RCSM Business
Transactions Client

The partners at Rose Camenisch Stewart Mains provide personalized attention and decades of combined experience to every client matter. Whether guiding business or real estate deals, crafting estate plans, or resolving complex disputes through litigation, our firm shares one paramount goal: achieving the most favorable outcomes possible for those we represent. We endeavor to deliver our clients confidence and peace of mind that we are representing their priorities to the fullest extent of the law.

What recent estate planning insight has changed how you advise your clients?

Kentucky's Uniform Trust Code has given me the ability to help clients modify old, irrevocable trusts causing unintended tax or administrative burdens. Our firm's streamlined process for making these changes preserves the intent of the trusts while reducing costs and complications. We enjoy giving our clients flexible solutions to achieve their estate planning goals.

Melissa Stewart
on Estate Planning

What unique value does RCSM provide to commercial real estate clients?

Our attorneys not only have decades of experience in commercial real estate transactions and litigation, we also have extensive experience as successful real estate investors ourselves. This gives us a unique and valuable perspective benefitting our clients.

Dan Rose
on Commercial Real Estate

What motivates you during tough cases?

My motivation in complex cases stems from a commitment to achieving justice and favorable outcomes for my clients. Legal complexities fuel my passion for strategic problem-solving. Navigating legal intricacies that make a positive impact in challenging situations drives me to seek successful resolutions in the face of adversity. At our core, our duty as lawyers is to uphold the principles of the legal system through integrity, determination and resilience.

Mel Camenisch
on Litigation

Is it more rewarding for you to help startups or established businesses?

Representing new ventures and established businesses are both rewarding in their own ways. Guiding startups through launching and raising capital to help them realize their vision is deeply worthwhile. And assisting existing enterprises through challenges or exit strategies that culminate their years of hard work also brings great fulfillment. We help businesses at any stage thrive.

Rich Mains
on Business Transactions

Have recent advancements in technology changed the way RCSM litigators approach their cases?

Technological advancements like AI research tools can streamline aspects of litigation and provide economic value to our clients while we pursue their cases with the aggressive diligence they expect from us. But no matter how technology evolves, litigation will always be about the fight. At the end of the day, representation requires passion, resolve and determination technology can't replace.

Wes Harned
on Litigation

to address their issues. The knowledge and work to litigate a contract dispute, acquire or sell corporate assets, or negotiate a deal can vary greatly depending on whether the client is an individual, large corporation, farm or hospital.

“Seek out attorneys who ‘speak your language’ and understand the nature of your business, not just how to answer a complaint or fill out a form,” he said.

“That means always looking beyond the asset acquisition or current piece of litigation to consider how what we are doing for clients impacts those clients’ larger goals,” Morgan said.

Clients are increasingly interested in real-time access to information on their cases and Dinsmore offers a number of platforms in which clients can access case-related documents whenever they like.

“At the beginning of an engagement, we ask a lot of questions about how our clients prefer to get information and how often they want to receive updates on our work,” Kennedy said, noting that good communication is perhaps *the* most essential skill in creating effective legal relationships.

“The request I get from clients is that we be highly communicative

inside out and we are here to be an advisor for you.”

The efficiency of legal services is perhaps most important for fledgling operations, whose resources tend to be limited and must be maximized.

After the initial idea stage—which can benefit from legal input but does not require it—the second phase is early-stage formation.

“In that stage, you certainly do need legal, but in a very limited fashion,” Bahorik explained. “You don’t need all the legal things at once. Companies at that stage have pretty strict budgets. They don’t have a fully formed product probably. They almost certainly don’t have revenues.

“You want to target and be surgical with the way you approach their legal needs as opposed to throwing everything against the wall and seeing what sticks. It’s about identifying top priorities, doing those in the most efficient way possible, and then mapping out for them, ‘Here are the things you’re going to need leading up to and getting to the revenue stage, which is the next stage.’”

What to ask an attorney

When selecting a legal team, Bahorik says the vetting process is relatively basic: Look for someone who has experience doing the type of work you need, understands your goals, and is able to be a strategic partner.

Most attorneys can prepare documents, but a good fit is somebody who can strategically talk you through how to get from A to B and then what legal work needs to be done to get there.

“That’s the vibe that they should be getting from their counsel,” Bahorik said. “The client should feel the attorney can put themselves in your shoes and help chart a path, answering questions like: What should I be looking at here? What should I be seeing down the road that I can’t see because I’ve just never been there before?”



Communication is key

Ellen A. Kennedy, a bankruptcy, corporate and equine partner attorney with Dinsmore, said data security has become a big priority for clients because legal relationships often include very sensitive personal and business information.

Dinsmore is constantly upgrading and monitoring its systems to ensure all the data it manages is protected, she said.

and that we are very transparent with the cost and what we’re actually doing, so they can understand it as best they can and plan for us,” said Zach Bahorik, partner at Frost Brown Todd and co-lead of Venture Law team, based in Cincinnati.

For the startups and early-stage companies that the Venture team deals with, Bahorik said, the essential message is “that we will get to know your business



Leslie P. Vose is an accomplished attorney with a passion for fostering peaceful resolutions. A graduate of University of Kentucky Rosenberg Law and a member of the Kentucky Bar since 1978, Leslie brings a wealth of legal knowledge to the mediation table. She has appeared regularly in state and federal courts as a civil litigator during her tenure as one of the Partners of Landrum and Shouse. Leslie has earned an AV Rating: Preeminent Attorney with Martindale-Hubbell since 1990, a Kentucky Super Lawyer since 2008, and Best Lawyer in America since 2011. She has also been awarded a spot on the Top 25 Kentucky Female Lawyers list from Super Lawyers in 2015, 2017, and 2021-2024.

What initially drew you to pursue a career in law?

I've always had a strong sense of fairness and an interest in helping people by finding solutions or resolution of problems. The law touches so many of the issues people and businesses deal with, so a legal career seemed a good way to become involved with things that matter.

What values or principles guide your professional decisions and actions as a mediation lawyer?

As a beginning lawyer I was lucky to be mentored by lawyers who embodied ethical conduct and a reputation for doing the right thing. I learned that integrity, a reputation for being truthful, and being respectful of other folks' positions or points of view even when those differ from mine or my clients, are bedrock foundations that never fail. As a mediation lawyer it is critical to appreciate the forces, beliefs and facts that shape the parties' legal positions. It is essential that individuals are heard and their values, apprehensions and goals are recognized during the process of mediation. Mediation is the process of resolving a dispute between people or entities. Being a successful mediator requires excellent listening, tactful candor, and enough experience in the legal arena to be both respected and humble. It requires a culture of collaboration as the parties work through their issues to a place that is acceptable for all sides. I personally find my ability to see and appreciate both or multiple sides to an issue a strong asset. And it's nice to have represented folks on "both sides of the v", by that I mean having represented both plaintiff and defendant over my legal practice.

How do you navigate the challenges involved in mediation?

The most important job is to remain neutral, so that I can help the parties and their counsel recognize and evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of their positions. Whether or not a dispute is resolved at the end of the mediation, I believe that both sides should have received value from the mediator. It is the mediator's job to help the parties see beyond their own points of view, to consider the realities of the legal system and what it can achieve, sometimes to recognize that others have strong and valid opinions and feelings even though we do not agree with them. When the parties find that the mediator is listening, cares about the outcome of the dispute, and is willing and able to articulate clearly thoughts and opinions that the parties may not want to hear, the pathways to resolving the dispute can merge.

How do you value the success and effectiveness of your mediation services?

I measure this in two basic ways—were we able to reach an agreement that folks can live with, and if not, did the parties feel heard and understood and did the mediator help give the parties better understanding of the nuances of their positions as they move forward in the legal process. My goal is to resolve the dispute if possible, and to give the parties value in my analysis and questions that will help them move forward.

When working with entrepreneurs who are starting a company, Bahorik said the two main areas attorneys must focus on are intellectual property and correctly establishing the kind of business structure needed.

“In determining whether we are the ‘right fit’ with a prospective client, we think it’s important to discuss the prospective clients’ ultimate objective and then collaborate to develop the best strategy to achieve that objective,” said Brian Wells, partner and an executive committee member in the Lexington office of Wyatt Tarrant & Combs. “We find that creating alignment on strategy leads to a successful attorney-client relationship more often than not.”

The 125-plus attorneys at Wyatt’s five offices cover the gamut of business practice: contracts, dispute resolution, employment,

intellectual property, mergers and acquisitions, bankruptcy, startups, finance and more.

“In 2024, the firm is getting lots of questions about artificial intelligence, data privacy and security, and the Corporate Transparency Act,” Wells said. “And real estate transactions continue to be a strength for our firm. We’re hoping inflation will continue to cool, which should ultimately reduce interest rates and increase deal flow, in both the corporate and real estate markets.”

“As the economic conditions hold,” said Frazier, the McBrayer managing member, “we’re seeing upward trends in most every area of practice concerning business, from corporate transactions to employment law to litigation. We are seeing excellent growth in our economic development practice, which is picking up tremendous steam in assisting with site

selection, incentives and more for several projects throughout the state.”

Seeing growing opportunity, McBrayer recently opened a new office in Frankfort, which will focus heavily on clients interacting with state government and its agencies, from regulatory and licensing issues to investigations and state constitutional challenges, “all of which we believe will see an increase in the coming years,” Frazier said.

“What clients want is a positive outcome coupled with great value,” he said. “We have the experience and the bench to provide services from our most experienced practitioners, but we use a team system to ensure that clients are getting the best service at the best price. It is this collaborative model that drives our client economics—great work, great value.” ■

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What SPEDA project has been most memorable?

The work we did in securing the Horse Soldier Distillery location in Somerset! Watching SPEDA President Chris Girdler and his board, Mayor Keck and the Pulaski County officials make this pipe dream a reality was almost surreal for our community. There has been a palpable excitement surrounding this project. Not to mention, meeting the Horse Soldier guys and hearing some of their stories was a real treat for us!

What is your favorite and least favorite part of practicing law?

My favorite part of practicing law would have to be cross-examination in a hearing or trial. There is something really rewarding about having a successful cross of an important witness. What I hate most about the practice is seeing folks at the worst moments. Whether it is someone charged with a crime or someone who has been injured, you feel for those folks. It drives you to help them, but it also takes a toll at times.

What advice would you give to young lawyers?

One of the most important things to remember is that you can zealously represent your client but leave it at the courtroom door. Because of the adversarial system, litigation is a zero-sum game. Fight as hard within ethical bounds, but do your best to not make it personal with opposing attorneys. There are enough stressors in the practice of law, as attorneys we should strive to remain civil with each other.

What do you do outside of the practice of law?

A large part of the time, I am watching my kids on a court or field. I also enjoy working out, boating Lake Cumberland, and rooting on the Wildcats.



THE LAW OFFICE OF JEREMY A. BARTLEY, PSC

SOMERSET, KENTUCKY

**LAW OFFICE OF JEREMY A. BARTLEY, PSC
OUTSIDE GENERAL COUNSEL TO SPEDA**

I am a native of Virgie in Pike County, Kentucky. I attended Eastern Kentucky University where I received a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy (1995-1999). In 2003, I graduated Magna Cum Laude from Chase College of Law at N.K.U., was a Member of the Order of the Curia (Top 10% of class), and Law Review.

Following a stint with a mid-size Louisville firm, I accepted a job as an Assistant Rockcastle County Attorney. In 2004, I was named an Assistant Commonwealth Attorney for the 28th Judicial Circuit. I served that role full time for a decade, then moved to part-time prosecutor while I also served as an in-house attorney for Southern Petroleum, Inc. in Somerset.

After the company's merger with another company, I hung my shingle as a solo-practitioner in 2017, while initially still serving the Commonwealth simultaneously.

Somerset Pulaski County Economic Development Authority (SPEDA) was formed in 2019, and I began serving, and continue to serve, as its first outside General Counsel. It has been such a rewarding experience to play a small role in, and watch this group challenge the status quo and make some really exciting things happen in our community!

In 2020, I resigned from my role as part-time prosecutor and my wife Kerri, also an attorney, joined my practice. Along with an outstanding staff of six, we concentrate on Personal Injury, Criminal Defense and Business Law.

We have four children: Kayleigh (18), Jakob (16), Prince (5) and Jude (2).



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Maximizing Tax Reform

Kentucky is becoming more business friendly, but it takes a pro to maximize this 'friendship'

By Mark Green

Kentucky is one of the states at the fore of tax reform, shifting from income tax to consumption tax as its revenue cornerstone. The tax reform laws now on the books aim to take the income tax to zero, a transition that will take place over time, in one-half-percentage-point annual decreases, and only when revenue and state budget surplus targets are achieved.

In contrast, when Kansas abruptly eliminated the tax on pass-through income a decade ago, the decision proved unwise both financially and politically. Swaths of businesses and individuals

reclassified themselves as pass-through entities. Nine rounds of state budget and public service cuts were followed by the governor's resignation and tax increases.

With many states in the process of adjusting their tax rates and which commercial activities are taxed, it takes expertise to comply with tax filings while aiming for lower obligations.

"We're always looking for opportunities to apply changes in the tax law whether that be at the state or the federal level," said Byron Largen, a partner in the Louisville office of Cherry Bekaert. Cherry Bekaert is a national professional services firm that last year acquired Louisville-

based Mountjoy Chilton Medley, where Largen worked for 24 years. "The difficulty is that a lot of the laws that are getting passed become retroactive. They would pass something in 2023 that was retroactive to 2022 or they could pass something in '24 that would have impact upon 2023 filings."

The income tax rate reductions Kentucky has applied already and look likely to continue in coming budget years probably will bring the commonwealth recognition as a tax-haven state like Florida, Tennessee and Texas, said Chris Kramer, a tax partner with FORVIS.

And FORVIS is making recommendations to clients about how to improve their tax position.

"Tax-rate reductions in Kentucky provide for year-end tax planning opportunities, where deferral of gains and taxable income into the lower rate year produce permanent tax savings," Kramer said. "Income deferrals may be accomplished by delaying taxable gain transactions across taxable years, use of gain recognition deferral techniques (installment sale deferrals, for example), and tax accounting method changes."

Kramer made some criticism, though.

While Kentucky enacted small-business friendly Pass-Through Entity (PTE) legislation like most states, the state Department of Revenue is applying an interpretation of the applicable PTE tax base "that seems needlessly punitive to small-business owners living in Kentucky, because it results in more federal tax owed by Kentucky business owners while not providing Kentucky with additional revenues."

Lisa DeVaughn Foley, managing member of Baldwin CPAs, cites the retroactive application of the pass-through tax rate as beneficial but a move that "caused quite the administrative burden."

Overall, Foley said, the change is welcome as now businesses will be able to deduct the state income tax

on the federal level. That deduction had been essentially eliminated with the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 that limited individual tax deductions to \$10,000 as an itemized deduction.

“Other states addressed this early on after 2018, but Kentucky did lag behind four years compared to other states on this change,” she said. “As of now, this limitation at the federal level is slated to expire at the end of 2025 so it will be interesting to see how long this benefit Kentucky reacted to will remain viable.”

Kentucky’s expansion in the sales-and-use tax applications has led Baldwin to work with its clients to make sure they update their systems properly to collect tax on new services and changes that have been enacted.

“I anticipate we will see more audits in the sales tax area to improve compliance with all the changes,” Foley said, “and I expect

small businesses to owe more under these audits than in the past until the compliance and education about the many changes becomes more widespread.”

Tax planning continues to be more complex, she said. Most businesses now touch multiple states in their revenues, and the tax laws and rates that apply to each state are very different. Planning appropriately for state and local apportionments is a key part of what Baldwin does for clients.

“Kentucky has one of the most cumbersome local tax compliance systems in the nation,” Foley said. “We have construction companies that travel the state and end up filing 80-100 local tax returns given the 120-county make-up of Kentucky. It is hard to explain to business clients that we spend more time on 100 local returns with tax rates of 0.75% to 2.5% rather than on their federal and state compliance that normally approaches 40% rates.”

Kentucky is among the majority of states that have enacted PTE taxes as a workaround for the cap on the federal deduction for state and local taxes, said Melissa Hicks, tax director for Dean Dorton.

Hicks said pass-through entities and their owners need to consider several factors when deciding whether to elect to pay tax at the entity-level. Those factors include the state of residence of the entity’s owners, whether the PTE does business in other states, whether nonresident owners are able to claim a credit for PTE taxes paid to Kentucky, and other credits available to the PTE or its owners.

“Changes in tax law are always expected,” Hicks added, “which is why it is absolutely necessary to have a tax advisor who understands your business, your unique needs, and your industry to proactively advise you regarding your individual scenario and goals, personally or as a business.” ■

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Plans for the new Brent Spence Bridge show a double-deck, cable-supported structure that will accommodate multiple lanes for both I-71 and I-75 traffic.

Rosales + Partners, Inc. photo

Northern Kentucky's \$5 Billion Mile

A cluster of generational projects on the riverfront is keeping construction companies busy

BY MARK GREEN

Northern Kentucky's Cincinnati-facing urban riverfront has begun one of the densest concentrations of construction action in the country, a cluster of long-sought and generational projects that inspired Covington Economic Development Director Tom West to dub the area "The \$5 Billion Mile." West, in fact, has a PowerPoint by that name.

Four projects comprise the burst of activity that is invigorating the infrastructure, landscape and economies of Covington and Newport. They are a massive shot in the arm for a construction sector that is growing new workforce and skills as it dives ever deeper into transformative

projects expected to bring ongoing development to Northern Kentucky for the rest of this decade and beyond. Dozens of construction companies—local, regional and national—are or will be required to complete some of the most complex projects in the region's history.

- The Brent Spence Bridge Project will add a companion Ohio River crossing for I-71 and I-75 and local traffic, affecting 8 miles of approaches, interchanges and infrastructure.

- Ovation, a 25-acre multiuse development of office, residential, hotel, retail and event space in Newport.

- The Central Covington Riverfront project is a 23-acre redevelopment of the former IRS processing center campus.

- OneNKY Center, a new building that will house all of Northern Kentucky's major growth organizations.

Furthest along is the \$1 billion-plus multiuse Ovation project in Newport, a private investment by local developer Corporex. It is creating an urban community unto itself on 25 acres at the southeast intersection of the Ohio and Licking River with prime views of downtown Cincinnati.

Ovation will have 1,000-plus residential units (condos and apartments); 500,000 s.f. of office space; multiple hotels; 150,000 s.f. of retail and entertainment space; surface and underground parking; and access to a private-membership social, health and wellness club.

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Ovation project apartments nearing completion at the confluence of the Licking and Ohio rivers in Newport face the Cincinnati skyline directly across the river.

Corporex photo

Having already built Covington's most prominent modern riverfront structures over the past several decades, Corporex is the master developer of the Ovation project. It is the largest nonindustrial private project in Northern Kentucky history and was initially announced more than 15 years ago, before the Great Recession of 2008 knocked projects off track around the world.

Tom Banta, chief real estate officer for Corporex, has been with the company for 36 years. When asked to characterize the impact of Ovation, a project that has been many years in the making, Banta reaches for words such as "transformative vision." He agrees with descriptions of Ovation as an anchor for further Northern Kentucky development.

Commercial and residential Ovation property buyers from not just Ohio but California, North Carolina, Florida and Nevada certainly believe in the vision of a prosperous Northern Kentucky, Banta said.

"People are returning to the urban areas," he said. "They want walkable communities. They want amenity-rich developments where everything is convenient and walkable, and this caters to that. Frankly, we made quality of life at the forefront of what we are creating here."

Around 100,000 s.f. of completed office space is mostly leased now. Corporex, which has projects in 22 states, first completed the MegaCorp Pavilion venue in August 2021. The venue can accommodate up to 2,700 people for indoor events and 7,000 for outdoor shows.

Ovation will eventually have 125,000 s.f. of retail space, more than 500,000 s.f. of Class A office space,

and at least three hotels. It will have several thousand parking spaces, most in the lower foundational structure levels.

"Everything we're building down there is built on parking structures," Banta said. "Because you have to build the parking structures first, you have to anticipate and design all the structures that go on top. Even if you're not going to build them for two or three or four years, you have to anticipate it and put the foundations in place for those buildings."

Corporex estimates Ovation construction involves 4,400 direct jobs and another 3,800 indirect jobs and is creating a ripple effect of expertise and skills growth for the region's construction sector. While national companies are performing some of the contracts, there is not outside workforce involved, Banta said.

Monumental bridge project

Meanwhile, even larger in dollar terms is the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor (BSBC) project, the largest construction undertaking of any kind in Northern Kentucky history. Upgrading the 60-year-old bridge has topped the region's wish list for 15 years. Long beyond its designed capacity to carry Interstate 75 and Interstate 71 traffic across the Ohio River, this \$3.6 billion megaproject has \$1.6 billion in federal dollars committed through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill that emerged from Washington in 2022.

Some 3-5% of U.S. gross domestic product flows across the Brent Spence annually but gets backed up—usually to a standstill—every rush hour. The American Transportation Research Institute in February rated it as the

14th worst truck traffic chokepoint in the United States. Others have ranked it in the top 10 or even top five.

Current planning and traffic analyses indicate that additional capacity is needed to support more efficient national, regional and local travel for drivers who use I-71/75. The BSBC project includes 5 miles of roadway improvements on I-71/75 in Kentucky, 3 miles of roadway improvements on I-75 in Ohio and updates to the existing Brent Spence in addition to a new companion bridge.

Designers and planners are now finalizing blueprints for the companion structure for interstate traffic just west of the current double-decker bridge. Getting there requires reconfiguring and building major new highway approaches on both sides of the Ohio, major utility changes and creating buffer space.

The existing bridge will be used to carry the local traffic entering and/or exiting the interstate in Cincinnati and/or Covington, thus separating local traffic from regional and national travel across the river. This separation will also improve safety and support better access to the Covington and Cincinnati business districts.

The BSBC project represents a historic federal investment in the region and brings the opportunity for unprecedented involvement by dozens of contractors and suppliers. It includes participation by small, minority and women-owned businesses certified as Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms in Ohio and Kentucky, as well as tremendous workforce development opportunities for all.

BSBC is being built by the Walsh Kokoshing Joint Venture formed by Walsh Construction, of Chicago, and Kokoshing Construction, of the Columbus, Ohio, suburb of Westerville. Walsh had a major role in the Ohio River Bridges Project in Louisville while Kokoshing has a long history filled with major transport, industrial and marine projects, including 2023's record-fast repair of the Brent Spence after an intense traffic accident fireball damaged it.



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Dozens of subcontractors will get BSBC work. The DBE goal for Phase 1 of the BSBC project is 9 percent; the draft target for Phase 2 is 7 percent, which will be established closer to construction. The project also has an on-the-job training target of 15%, which will also be established closer to construction.

The project will open opportunity to invest in local businesses and grow the workforce while improving safety and travel along one of the nation's most important corridors for commerce and freight.

In addition to improving access to the Covington and Cincinnati business districts, Cincinnati and western neighborhoods will be better connected with new and improved bike and pedestrian paths for local streets.

Both states will address stormwater runoff issues as part of this project to reduce flooding and combined sewer overflows. Noise walls will be built in multiple locations to reduce sound levels throughout the corridor. The project will fund measures to offset impacts and add amenities in parks in Kentucky and Ohio.

Construction is expected to begin in late 2024 with substantial completion expected by 2029.

"The bridge project and continued development of CVG (Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky International Airport) are critical to this vision (of regional growth)," said Paul Hemmer, CEO of Paul Hemmer Co., a century-old builder based in Fort Mitchell, Ky. "Now that the access points to the interstate are defined, the development activity will continue to evolve in Covington and Newport. The Ovation project is already well underway, and the Covington projects are starting. What makes this unique is the partnership between the public and private investment; these are key to maintaining relevance. Both cities are bringing new energy and life to the urban core. I expect these to create generational changes."

Central Covington Riverfront

Covington officials in February were assessing request-for-proposal submissions to rebuild the city street grid on the 23 acres the Internal Revenue Service occupied for six decades.

Tom West, Covington's economic development director, said the area—which is roughly four blocks wide and reaching about four blocks in from the riverfront—will be offered for redevelopment in as many as 50 individual parcels rather than in one block that might have a uniform appearance as an end result.

"We're hopeful that the Phase 1 infrastructure can be completed in less than a year; at the latest, early next year," West said. "That includes putting in a new sanitary sewer line, all of the storm water, the water, gas, electricity, communications, streets, alleys, sidewalks and a green space."

The Northern Kentucky Convention Center adjoining the northeast corner of the property is slated to get 1.7 acres so that it can expand.

For the rest of the property, West said, "We're going to weave this back into the urban fabric."

There is a high interest level from potential developers, ranging from large national operators to very small local interests.

"One of the benefits to doing these parcel sizes like this is we can make sure that there are opportunities for developers of all scales and types

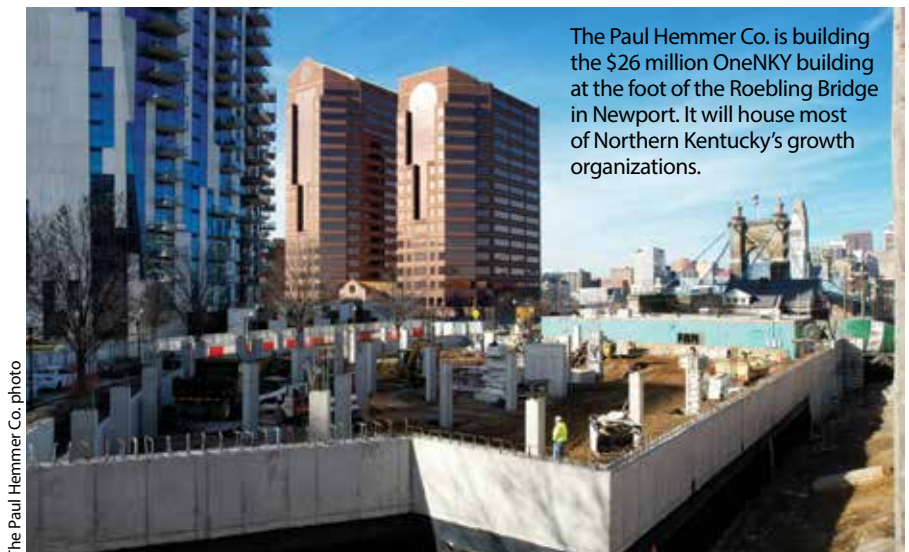
to be involved," West said. "I think you're going to see significant work done within the next three years. For the whole thing to be built out, you're probably in the five- to six-year range from now."

Covington paid more than \$20 million for the property and spent \$4.5 million on demolition to prepare the property for its pending resurrection, which will include hundreds of millions of investment for commercial and residential projects.

OneNKY

A smaller project but one with high visibility is the OneNKY Center project that Paul Hemmer Co. is building on the west riverfront corner of the Licking and Ohio rivers. The \$26 million project is creating an office building that will house most of Northern Kentucky's growth organizations, such as the NKY Chamber of Commerce, meetNKY, OneNKY Alliance, The Catalytic Fund of Northern Kentucky, BE NKY Growth Partnership, Horizon Community Funds of Northern Kentucky and the Northern Kentucky Bar Association.

It also will house the offices of The Ports of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, an inland jurisdiction that includes 226.5 miles of commercially navigable waterways of the Ohio River and Licking River in Kentucky along 15 counties in Ohio and Kentucky. ■



The Paul Hemmer Co. is building the \$26 million OneNKY building at the foot of the Roebling Bridge in Newport. It will house most of Northern Kentucky's growth organizations.

The Paul Hemmer Co. photo

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This amazing sun-inspired quilt by Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry—which was awarded Best of Show by the American Quilting Society in 1989—is one of around 650 quilts housed at the National Quilt Museum in Paducah. The museum is one of many sites tourists can explore when visiting the riverfront city, which is on the “path of totality” for the upcoming April 8 solar eclipse.

X Marks the Spot in Paducah

The riverfront city is ready to welcome guests to share the April solar eclipse

BY KATHERINE TANDY BROWN

Wow! Paducah does it again...landing in the path of totality for the upcoming spring eclipse of the sun. Pretty cool!

On April 8, 2024, the riverfront city will experience this rare natural phenomenon for the second time in seven years: The sun’s path also included Paducah during the 2017 Great American Solar Eclipse. With the artsy community located at the intersection of the paths of totality for both the 2017 and 2024 eclipses, an event and watch party named “X Marks the Spot” is sure to draw locals and visitors from across the country this year.

“We are extremely lucky to see another total solar eclipse here in Paducah,” says Mary Hammond, executive director of the Paducah Convention and Visitors Bureau. “According to NASA, any given point on the planet will only experience a total solar eclipse about once every 375 years, so Paducah is beating the odds.”

Big time.

A solar eclipse occurs when the moon is directly between the sun and the Earth, casting a shadow on the Earth. On April 8 in Paducah, a partial solar eclipse begins at 12:42

p.m., with totality beginning at 2:00 p.m. and lasting approximately one minute and 31 seconds. The eclipse event will end at 3:18 p.m. After 2024, the next solar eclipse in the U.S. won’t appear until 2044.

A UNESCO Creative City and national heritage destination, Paducah is located at the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee Rivers and is known for its deep-rooted creative culture. That culture informs intriguing, educational and fun events for guests who come to ogle the eclipse.

The aforementioned “X Marks the Spot” is a two-day community street festival in historic downtown, extending from Broadway to the riverfront. Stores will sell merchandise in street tents, the National Quilt Museum will have a booth with crafts and activities, and local bars and restaurants will serve their finest food and drink.

At the Inland Waterways Museum, formerly the River Discovery Center, you can learn all about the behavior

of light and what can be observed during a solar eclipse. Celebrating the city’s maritime legacy, this treasure of an attraction will offer interactive and educational programs on eclipse day.

During the two-day downtown festival, Paducah’s Wildhair Studios’ Rock Shop, purveyor of New Age and metaphysical products, will host a Heaven and Earth Psychic Fair and retreat with energy healers, eclipse-themed activities and related merchandise. The city’s Dry Ground Brewery—the first tenant in the city’s refurbished, historic 1939 Coca-Cola bottling plant—will partner with a dozen breweries located on the path of totality from Maine to Texas and all the breweries involved will brew special beers for the eclipse and host a variety of events on the days leading up to and on the day of the eclipse itself.

Current tenants that share the art deco former bottling plant include Pipers Tea and Coffee, a super sipping spot to ogle changing art exhibits and a hand-drawn “behind the scenes” mural; True North Yoga, which offers classes, workshops, Bend and Brew, a partnership with Dry Ground, and a spoken-word poetry showcase; and Mellow Mushroom, which has been decorated by 30 artists, including residents

from the Lower Town Arts District and students from the Paducah School of Art and Design. One iconic image in Mellow Mushroom features Paducah's 1937 Ohio River flood, which led to the building of the Coke plant and the city's floodwall, now known for its remarkable murals.

The Floodwall Murals were designed and painted by acclaimed muralist Robert Dafford and his team between 1996 and 2007 and feature 50 panels of the city's history with a plaque on each. The murals represent one of numerous ways Paducah sustains its cultural heritage.

"We're an authentic destination," Hammond says. "From the streets to the river to the land to the buildings, all are part of our cultural heritage. The murals are a wonderful example. If you see nothing but those, you can know that's who we are. We have quilters, fiber artists, historians. In our small Civil War museum, you can learn that the battle here was over the port of Paducah. We're still a center for trade.

"If we don't sustain who we are and instead focus too much on consumerism, who will we be? It's about taking what we've learned from the past and creating our future. I believe that people want to share that with their families."

Another storehouse of cultural heritage is the National Quilt Museum (NQM), where stories of the human experience come to life through fiber art. The history of America can be seen in the history of quilts. The museum collection has grown from 85 at its opening in 1991 to its present-day total of 650, which range from invaluable antiques like grandma used to make to unique, amazingly creative contemporary designs.

A terrific place to view the eclipse is on a quilt (of course!) at the NQM. Guests are invited to bring their eclipse-viewing glasses and picnic quilts to spread on the lawn, where Mother Nature will provide wide sky views.

Other locations on the path of totality in the commonwealth are slated to experience longer periods of duration. For instance, Monkeys Eyebrow, the northernmost community

in the Jackson Purchase area of Western Kentucky, will experience totality for over three minutes. But you'll want to make Paducah your home viewing base because of its solar eclipse-related activities...and for the fact that you can see three eclipses here:

1. Talented quilter Caryl Bryer Fallert-Gentry's creation, *Corona II: Solar Eclipse*, 1989, won the AQS (American Quilting Society) Best of Show and has the distinction of being the first machine-quilted quilt to win the top award. You can admire its blazing colors at the NQM.

2. Quilt City USA Murals is a privately funded floodwall mural series featuring paintings of actual quilts. This 24/7 public art project is on the 332-foot floodwall adjacent to the Schroeder and Carroll Convention Center, the location of Paducah's AQS Quilt Week convention, which draws 30,000 visitors each year. *Corona II: Solar Eclipse*, 1989 is featured on a mural here.

3. And of course, you'll see the real eclipse. Founded in 1827 by William Clark (of Lewis and Clark fame), Paducah embraces culturally and historically who it is and where it came from.

"We have the amenities of a big city—a symphony, world-renown restaurants like the farm-to-table Freight House—yet our downtown still has that Americana, small-town feel," says Liz Hammonds, director of marketing and communications for the Paducah Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). "One of our CVB colleagues says, 'You can go to the symphony on Friday night and tend to your chickens on Saturday.' You're going to be treated like family here."

For more info on eclipse-related events in Paducah, check out paducah.travel/events/solar-eclipse-2024. To find out all you need to know about planning a visit, take a peek at paducah.travel or call 1-800-PADUCAH (723-8224). ■

Katherine Tandy Brown is a correspondent for The Lane Report. She can be reached at editorial@lanereport.com.



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Kentucky's Aerospace Industry is Soaring

Bills would ensure commonwealth has the workforce needed to keep the industry flying high

BY BOB BABBAGE AND
REBECCA HARTSOUGH

With a geographic location that primes Kentucky as a logistics and transportation giant, the aviation industry has become a burgeoning category for the Bluegrass State.

Aviation, avionics, and aerospace logistics and freight brought more than \$16.2 billion in revenue to Kentucky in 2022. To add context, the state's famed bourbon and equine industries produce over \$15.5 billion in combined annual revenue.

With aerospace giants like Lockheed Martin, GE Aviation and Raytheon, Kentucky ranks No. 3 in the country for total aerospace exports, only behind Washington and California. The manufacturing arm alone supports over 23,000 jobs.

What's more, Kentucky is the only state in the country with two cargo freight airports that rank in the top 10. Louisville International Airport (SDF), home to UPS WorldPort, is No.3 in North America for cargo handling. The Amazon and DHL air hubs make Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG) the No. 6 cargo airport in North America. Altogether, SDF, CVG and their on-campus companies are some of the state's largest employers.

The businesses operating at airports, the capital projects, and induced visitor

spending contribute more than \$80 million in revenue to local and state governments in Kentucky.

While the industry growth is undeniably positive, the rate at which it's happening does present potential workforce challenges in the near and far future. For example, CVG airport supports more than 49,000 direct and indirect jobs and is expected to need thousand of new employees in the next five years.

So, the most pertinent question becomes: How do we support the industry and ensure these jobs are filled, companies stay, and the growth continues?

Two bills up for consideration in this year's legislative session are designed to help address those issues. Rep. Ken Fleming (R-Louisville) and Sen. Brandon Storm (R-London) have filed House Bill 345 and Senate Bill 127, companion bills designed to promote aerospace and aviation education programming.

If passed, the Aerospace Education Reinvestment Opportunity Act (AERO) would establish a public-private partnership to fund industry education. The majority of the fund (65%) would go towards aviation training scholarships, promoting a new generation of pilots, mechanics, engineers and other professionals. The intent is for educational institutions and industry-related companies to collaborate and offer these

scholarships, potentially guaranteeing jobs to recipients and providing a clear career path. The other 35% of the fund will be used to grant public aviation programs the resources to purchase or lease modern training equipment.

The Council for Postsecondary Education would oversee the fund's operations, ensuring responsible spending and transparency. The bill has a sunset clause in 2030, at which point lawmakers would assess its impact and decide on its future.

Ideally, the AERO Act would work in conjunction with other aerospace and aviation industry programs already established and growing in enrollment across the state.

Eastern Kentucky University's aviation program trains pilots and students in aerospace management and technology. ECU reports that over 800,000 pilots will be needed in the next 20 years.

Morehead State University's Space Systems Engineering bachelors and master's programs continue to draw students. Students there train to design, build and operate spacecraft—think drones and satellites, the ones that are launched into space. MSU graduates have gone on to jobs at NASA and other top aerospace companies, many with operations in Kentucky.

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System is also investing in aerospace and aviation programs. Jefferson Community and Technical College and Somerset Community College both offer aviation maintenance technology programs. Madisonville Community College offers helicopter and fixed wing flight training programs along with other certifications.

Of all the industries in Kentucky with initiatives being considered in Frankfort, the data does show that investment into the already thriving aerospace and aviation industries will pay lofty dividends in terms of jobs and revenue well into the future. ■



Bob Babbage and Rebecca Hartsough, Ph.D., are with Babbage Cofounder, a leading government relations firm.

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