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HIGH-TECH TRAINING

SKILLS FOR A MODERN WORKFORCE

ON THE GRID

The value of being connected

LITERARY LANDMARKS

Honoring Kentucky writers

Eye Doctor Helps Tennessee Legally Blind To See



High Technology For Low Vision Patients Allows Many To Drive Again



For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision related conditions, the loss of central vision detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence: driving. A Lebanon optometrist, Dr. James Gillispie, is using miniaturized telescopes that are mounted in glasses to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and other eye diseases.

Imagine a pair of glasses that can improve your vision enough to change your life. If you're a low vision patient, you've probably not only imagined them, but you have been searching for them. Bioptic telescopes may be the breakthrough in optical technology that will give you the independence you've been looking for. Patients with vision in the 20/200 range can many times be improved to 20/50 or better.

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and vision loss in people over 50. Despite this, most adults are not familiar with the condition. As many as 25% of those over the age of 50 have some degree of macular degeneration. The macula is only one small part of the retina; however, it is the most sensitive and gives us sharp central vision. When it

degenerates, macular degeneration leaves a blind spot right in the center of vision, making it difficult or impossible to recognize faces, read a book, or pass the driver's vision test.

Nine out of ten people who have macular degeneration have the dry form. New research suggests vitamins can help. The British medical journal BMC Ophthalmology recently reported that 56% of patients treated with a high-dose combination of vitamins experienced improved vision after 6 months.

While age is the most significant risk factor for developing the disease,



A scene as it might be viewed by a person with age-related macular degeneration.

heredity, smoking, cardiovascular disease, and high blood pressure have also been identified as risk factors. Macular degeneration accounts for 90% of new legal blindness in the U.S. While there is currently no cure, promising research is being done on many fronts.

"Our job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning, especially driving," says Dr. Gillispie of Low Vision of Tennessee.

When Beth, 62, of Greenville, TN came to Low Vision of Tennessee she wanted to keep her Tennessee driver's

license and was prescribed bioptic telescopic glasses to read signs and see traffic farther away. Dr. Gillispie also prescribed microscope glasses for reading newspapers and menus at restaurants.

As Beth puts it, "My regular glasses didn't help too much – it was like looking through a fog. These new telescopic glasses not only allow me to read signs from a further distance, but make driving much easier. I've also used them to watch television so I don't have to sit so close. I don't know why I waited to do this; I should have come sooner."

"Bioptic telescopes can cost over \$3,000," said Dr. Gillispie. "especially if we build them with automatic sunglasses."

"The major benefit of the bioptic telescope is that the lens automatically focuses on whatever you're looking at," said Dr. Gillispie, "It's like a self-focusing camera, but much more precise."

To learn more about bioptic telescopes or to schedule a consultation with Dr. Gillispie, give us a call at (615) 948-9185. You can also visit our website at:

www.lowvisiontn.com



For more information and a FREE telephone consultation, call us today:

(615) 948-9185
James Gillispie, O.D.

404 N. Castle Heights Ave.
Lebanon, TN 37087





JANUARY

VOL 79 | NO 1

16

HIGH-TECH TRAINING FOR CAN-DO PEOPLE

ON THE COVER Founded in 2017, eKentucky Advanced Manufacturing Institute trains workers with the high-tech skills needed to thrive in the modern manufacturing industry. Five and 10-month programs offer technical skills, soft skills and industry-recognized certifications.

ON THE COVER eKAMI students Sam Turner, left, and Ethan Hill learn how to set up and program a pick-and-place operation with the Yaskawa HC10 robotic arm. Founded in 2017, eKAMI teaches high-tech manufacturing skills, as well as soft skills like communication, financial management and professionalism, resulting in industry-recognized certifications. Photo: Barbie Bussey/eKAMI

24

ON THE GRID

What's the true value of reliable electricity? After living off the grid, Tim and Katie Riley now have a new appreciation for power at the flip of a switch. Learn more about the Rileys' experience, as well as energy resources offered by Kentucky cooperatives and tips to avoid bad actors in the solar industry.

CONTENTS



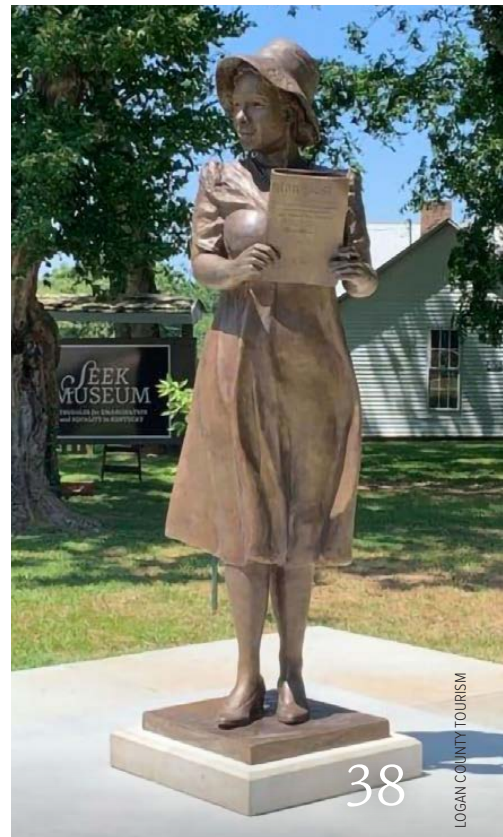
10

WADE HARRIS



33

HEATHER BILYEU



38

LOGAN COUNTY TOURISM

DEPARTMENTS

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 5 CO-OP COMMUNITY
- 6 FROM THE EDITOR
- 6 KENTUCKYLIVING.COM

CURRENTS

- 8 COMMONWEALTHS
New take on Bluegrass Conspiracy, energy efficiency, letters and more
- 10 OUR POWER
Co-ops honor Tony Brannon
- 14 OUR PEOPLE
Like father, like daughter
- 15 BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT
'Major milestone' for Shady Rays

26A LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEWS

HOME

- 32 LET'S GROW
Alternative evergreen
- 33 AROUND THE TABLE
Southern spice
- 34 KENTUCKY EATS
The Ninety and Nine Cafe, Scottsville
- 35 CUTTING COSTS
Saving with a DIY energy audit
- 36 SAFETY MOMENT
Winter storm safety
- 37 SMART HEALTH
New year, new habits

TRAVEL

- 22 UNIQUELY KENTUCKY
Louisville's link to *The Great Gatsby*
- 38 WORTH THE TRIP
On Kentucky's literary trail
- 42 EVENT CALENDAR
Outdoor Expo, dino DNA, lip sync battles and ice skating.
- 44 SNAPSHOT

BACK OF THE BOOK

- 45 KENTUCKY KIDS
- 46 GREAT OUTDOORS
Remembering John Gierach
- 48 MARKETPLACE
- 50 BYRON CRAWFORD'S KENTUCKY
Game warden stories

EDITORIAL

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Kentucky Living is published to create a community of people who take pride in thinking of themselves as Kentuckians and as knowledgeable electric co-op consumer-members, in order to improve their quality of life.

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Lightbulb moment

Keeping you informed

WHEN YOU WOKE UP this morning and started to go about your day, one of the first things you probably did was turn on a light switch. How often do the lights come on when you flip the switch? Almost always. And in the rare case of an outage, you know a dedicated co-op crew is working around the clock to restore your power.

That's the relationship we want you to have with your electricity—it's there when you need it, any time of day, no questions asked.

As simple as it seems, we all know the electric business is highly complex. Your local co-op, and all of us at the statewide association, have a front-row seat to everything going on behind the scenes to keep your power reliable and safe. You might have noticed we're doing our best in *Kentucky Living* magazine to share more of that information with you. While we want you trust that your lights will come on at the flip of switch, we also want to help you become an informed member of your cooperative.

Last February, we talked about how federal regulations were gambling with the grid by limiting reliable generation sources while demand continues to rise. That article launched a conversation in our pages about energy sources and the grid. We are thrilled to see that conversation continue to unfold. Not everyone who writes to us sees things like we do, and that's OK. We are facilitating a civil conversation about energy, because it touches almost every facet of our modern lives.

In October, we shared with you about how our Safety and Loss Prevention Team trains co-op



SCOTT VAN OSDOL

lineworkers, keeping them up to date on trends and best practices. We also share electrical safety tips every month. Safety is our priority, both in the field and in your home.

You'll see more informative content throughout 2025, starting with this edition. On page 24, you'll read about the Riley family, who lived off the grid—twice—and now see the value of connecting again. You'll also read about energy resources offered by Kentucky's electric cooperatives and the red flags to look out for when exploring rooftop solar.

No matter how complex the energy environment might be, you can count on *Kentucky Living* magazine to speak up on the issues that matter to you, and you can rely on your local co-op as a trusted source of information.

We're here for you every time you flip the switch. No questions asked.

Chris

CHRIS PERRY
President/CEO



KENTUCKY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

FROM THE EDITOR

JANUARY—THE FIRST MONTH

of a new year—is often a time to set goals and aim to change things we think need changing. New year, new me. But the truth of it is, any day can be a chance to start over. New day, new me.

We don't need a holiday to start taking better care of ourselves. We don't have to open a new calendar to pick up a new hobby. And we don't have to beat ourselves down because maybe one of those January 1 goals already is not going the way we planned. We do the best we can today, and we try again tomorrow.

Maybe you have a goal to read more or to learn more about your state. For either of those, you're at the right place. Read about the value of being connected to the electric grid (page 24), learn about innovative job training (page 16) and embrace Kentucky's literary history (page 38).

As we roll into our 77th year of production, thank you for being here, just as you are.

SHANNON BROCK,
EDITOR

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DISTINGUISHED RURAL KENTUCKIAN

Tony Brannon honored for agriculture leadership

For nearly 40 years, Tony Brannon's vision, passion and dedication shaped the agriculture program at Murray State University. Brannon was named the 40th Distinguished Rural Kentuckian during the 78th Annual Meeting of Kentucky Electric Cooperatives. Read more on page 10, and visit us online to view a tribute video and Brannon's acceptance speech.



TOM EBLE/CARNEGIE CENTER

LITERARY KENTUCKY

Writers to read ... and watch

Use our guide on page 38 to follow in the footsteps of Kentucky writers like Sue Grafton, Harlan Hubbard, Jesse Stuart and more. Before you hit the literary trail, get inspired with videos and links to more information at KentuckyLiving.com.



SKILLS FOR LIFE

Job training and transformation

The high-tech training offered by eKAMI isn't just a path to good jobs. For some students, it can mean a whole new life. Visit KentuckyLiving.com to hear from Michael Cockerham, who entered the program after serving a prison sentence.



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Cruise Guide



Different take on the “Bluegrass Conspiracy”

The movie plots of good folks gone bad are plentiful and popular. What happens, though, when it's not a movie, but instead is a conviction against a family member? Back in 1985, one of Kentucky's most prominent families experienced such a nightmare, and Erin Chandler, niece of one of the accused, is attempting to set the record straight in *Bluegrass Sons: A True Crime Memoir*.

Many Kentuckians (and beyond) may remember when news of the so-called Bluegrass Conspiracy scandal broke. It involved two blueblood socialites, Andrew Thornton and Bradley Bryant, military academy grads who went on to become, respectively, a police officer and a Marine, and allegedly had become entrenched in an international drug smuggling operation involving millions of dollars in marijuana and cocaine. Bryant was arrested and imprisoned when a cache of weapons and stolen goods were traced to him. Thornton parachuted to his death with weapons, drugs and money strapped to himself.

Now, almost 40 years later, Chandler has reopened the discussion. Interviewing the key players involved and hearing firsthand her Uncle Brad's side of the story after decades of silence, Chandler writes that Bryant was actually doing

contract work for the CIA in an attempt to infiltrate the heart of a drug cartel. When things didn't go quite as planned, he was disavowed by the agency to which he was so loyal, according to his niece. He was repeatedly questioned, without success, for CIA information while incarcerated, moved over 130 times across the country to different prisons and passed over for parole after three years, according to the book. Chandler writes that Bryant's attorney presented proof of his association with the CIA, but the agency still claimed never to have heard of him.

Chandler and her brother grew up with an almost ringside seat to her uncle's world. Divorced parents led to summers being spent with their dad, Dan Chandler, in Las Vegas with Caesar's Palace, where Dan Chandler worked, as their playground. Here, their father massaged the egos of the Chagra brothers, who were allegedly the targets of Bryant's mission.

Despite all this, Erin Chandler loves her uncle unquestionably.

“Brad Bryant dove into a den of vipers and remained true to his pledge and the missions given him ...,” she writes, “... but a line of fence just standing out alone doesn't keep anything in or anything out.”

» Penny Woods



Based (loosely) on a true story

The movie *Cocaine Bear* stemmed from events that led to Andrew Thornton's demise. When Thornton tossed bags of cocaine out of the plane from which he parachuted to his death, they landed in the Chattahoochee National Forest, where they were consumed by a black bear.

“Cocaine Bear” was preserved through taxidermy and, after an adventurous circuit of various owners, now resides at the Kentucky for Kentucky Fun Mall in Lexington.

Bluegrass Sons, (Rabbit House Press, \$17.95) can be purchased online at www.rabbithousepress.com.

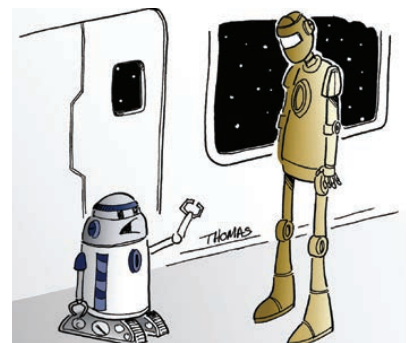
tip

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Check to see if any air vents around your home are blocked by furniture or other items. An obstructed vent can cause your heating unit to run harder than necessary. Consider purchasing a vent extender, which can be placed over a vent to redirect air flow from underneath furniture or other obstructions. Source: energy.gov.



PIXEL SHOT/ADOBE STOCK



“They say ‘the memory is the first to go,’ so I backed myself up with three external drives.”

LETTERS TO THE *editor*



More space required

In November 2024, Byron Crawford wrote the most amazing and touching short article I have ever read. As a 77-year-old, retired emergency physician, it seems medically nearly impossible. As a thoughtful, rational human being, I was deeply moved and in awe of the spirit and achievements of both Judy Harrison and Kristina. Truly humanity at its highest. Byron's initial three lines made me wonder. His gift of expression is phenomenal. The later sentence, "This is where I must skip ahead and leave you to read many unwritten words

between the lines," referred to that opening remark. After reading to the end of the article, I was angry that more space was not made available for "more space, for the telling." A LOST opportunity to completely tell a remarkable story. Maybe next time.

**PETE GOODWIN, BURLINGTON
OWEN ELECTRIC
CONSUMER-MEMBER**

The seriousness of food allergies

I read with much interest your November article, "Food for Thought," regarding food allergies. I could not help but laugh when I read Alex Sohn's statement, "The

number of allergen-free products in stores and restaurants is starkly different than it was even five years ago."

I had my first serious allergy attack about 81 years ago. A few people actually argued with my dad that I just had "hay fever." The number of times that relatives have assured me that a dish they made was safe is astounding only to learn the hard way that it was not. Until you have had an episode of no pulse or respiration, you simply cannot imagine the fear of eating anything that you did not personally prepare yourself. To an allergy sufferer the scariest words in the

Have a question or comment for the editor?

Please address letters to the editor to: Letters, *Kentucky Living*, P. O. Box 32170, Louisville, KY 40232 or email by going to KentuckyLiving.com and clicking on "Contact Us." Letters may be edited for style, length and clarity.

English language are "now new and improved."

**LOIETA R. PAGE, TOTZ
CUMBERLAND VALLEY
ELECTRIC CONSUMER-
MEMBER**

featured FRAMES



What is normally a waterfall was turned into a wall of ice during the cold temperatures last January at Mammoth Cave National Park, says photographer George Gootee, Bowling Green, a Warren RECC member.

Co-ops honor Tony Brannon

Retired Murray State dean is Distinguished Rural Kentuckian

JOE ARNOLD



▲ **ON THE SAME FAMILY FARM** where his parents, Harold and Dorothy, taught life lessons to him and his brother Tim, Tony Brannon hunches over a vintage orange Allis-Chalmers tractor, willing its engine to turn over.

Distinguished Rural Kentuckian Tony Brannon defined Murray State University's agriculture program for nearly four decades.
Photo: Wade Harris

As smoke sputters from the exhaust stack, the signature smile that defined Murray State University's agriculture program for nearly 40 years spreads under Brannon's white mustache.

"I cut my teeth on the steering wheel of a Model B Allis-Chalmers," Brannon says. "I love to farm. If I could have farmed for a career, I probably would have. At the time, my dad and uncle were farming together, and my dad said, 'Son, go use your education. You can always come back to the farm.' And I was fortunate enough I was able to do both."

Propelled by an encouraging FFA advisor in high school, Brannon found his second home 11 miles up the road at Murray State. His parents scraped together the resources to enroll him in 1977.

After receiving his undergraduate and master's degrees in agricultural education, Brannon taught high school agriculture for four years, "then packed everything in the back of my dad's truck and headed to Oklahoma State" for his doctorate.

In 1988, Brannon returned to Murray State as an assistant professor known for his sense of humor and boundless energy.

"Before you go in the classroom you get outside, and you crank up your motor," Brannon says, yanking back an imaginary pull-start rope and growling like his stubborn tractor.

Brannonisms

“He really ignited the fire for me,” says Bob Wilson, one of Brannon’s early students. “He was so inspirational, so conversational. I just wanted more. I couldn’t wait every day to go see Dr. Brannon and to be a part of his class.”

Brannon has delivered his Dr. Seuss-inspired *On Beyond Zebra* presentation to hundreds of audiences and his lectures were liberally sprinkled with what came to be known as “Brannonisms:”

Strive to have a good say-do ratio.

Plan your work, work your plan.

The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary.

“His mantra is, ‘Come to Murray State to get

an education, not a degree,’” says 2011 graduate Sheila Phillips, a veterinarian.

Between classes, Brannon advised student clubs and alumni agricultural chapters, co-authored articles on ag education and developed cooperative ventures with manufacturers.

In 2002, he crafted a long shot \$2 million perpetual funding grant request for the Kentucky Future Farmers of America Foundation.

“Probably nobody in the state thought it was even possible at the time,” says Matt Cauliff, executive secretary of Kentucky FFA. “I don’t know what strings he pulled, but that’s money that’s going to be impacting ag education and FFA all across the state, forever.”



◀ Kentucky Electric Cooperatives President and CEO Chris Perry presents Brannon with his award during the association’s 78th annual meeting. Photo: Tim Webb

DISTINGUISHED RURAL KENTUCKIAN

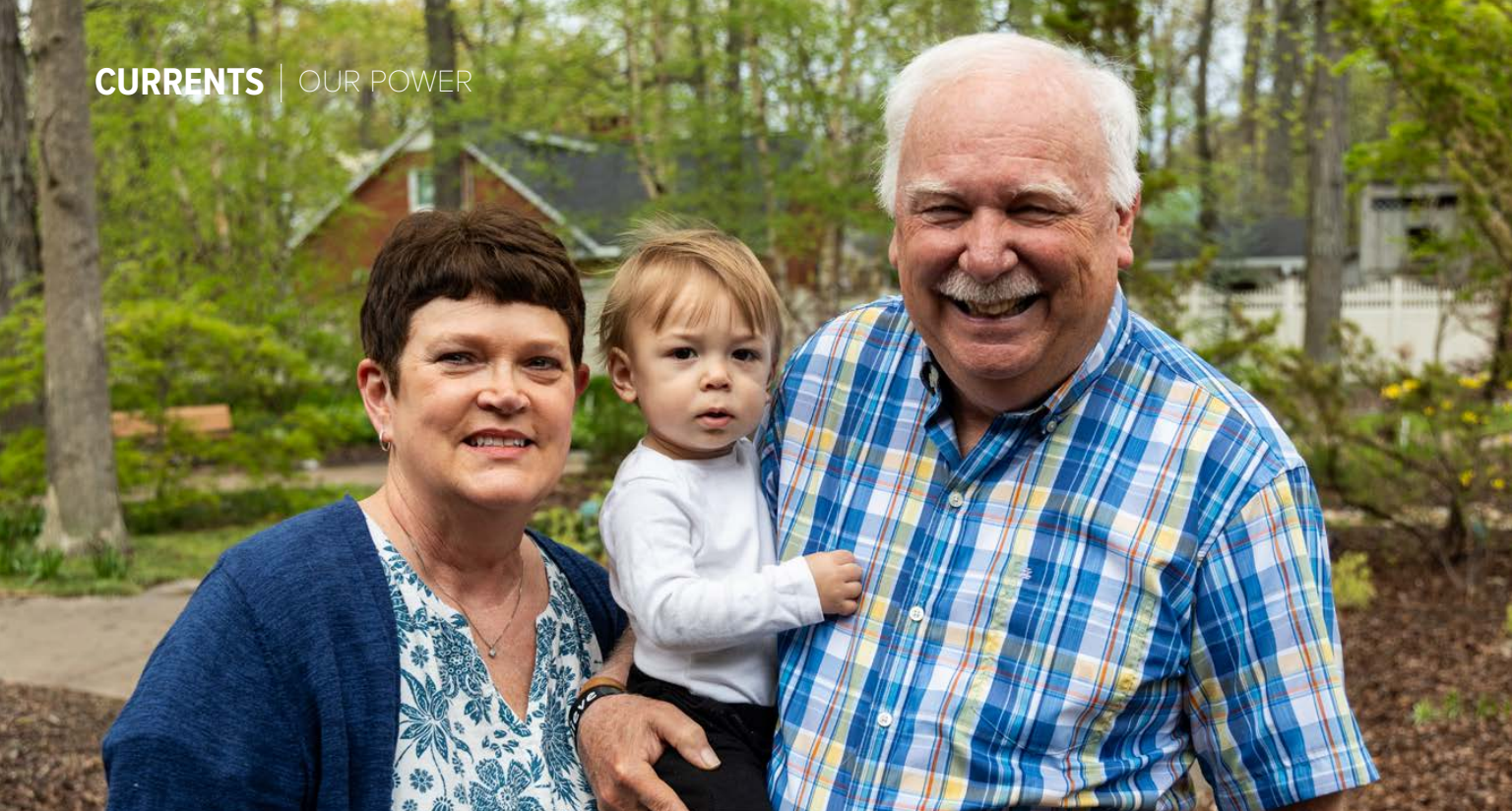
Former Murray State University Hutson School of Agriculture Dean Tony Brannon was named the 40th Distinguished Rural Kentuckian at the 78th Annual Meeting of Kentucky Electric Cooperatives.

“I’ve seen Kentucky agriculture up close and personal through its people,” Brannon told the co-op gathering. “I’m so fortunate that the people that I’ve met have stood me up.”

“With what he has done for rural America, he is richly deserving of this honor,” says Bob Hargrove, who serves on the West Kentucky RECC Board of Directors, which nominated Brannon for the award.

Watch a tribute video and Brannon’s acceptance speech on KentuckyLiving.com or at this QR code:





▲
Brannon with his wife, Lisa, and grandson, Ramsey.
Photo: Wade Harris

At the request of then-Gov. Ernie Fletcher, Brannon led a group of agriculture leaders to develop Kentucky's first Strategic Plan for Agriculture, recognized nationally as a model, as well as the subsequent strategic plan five years later.

Middle name: Recruit

Brannon was also tasked with coordinating student recruitment curriculum.

"His middle name ought to be recruit," says Deputy Agriculture Commissioner Warren Beeler. "Because it doesn't matter where he's at, he's recruiting all the time. His passion, his excitement, his enthusiasm, are just contagious."

"I had a great mentor, Eldon Heathcott," Brannon says. "He never met a stranger. He knew everybody's name. I tried to emulate some of that."

When Heathcott retired in 1996, the university named Brannon interim department chair. A series of promotions culminated with his becoming dean of the new school of agriculture in 2004.

Under his leadership, Murray State developed the Racer Academy dual-credit program for high school students. Various bachelor's and master's degree programs now include online programs for students throughout the world to earn a degree from Murray State. In 2014, working with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Brannon pushed for Murray State to plant the first legal agricultural hemp research plot.

When Brannon retired in 2023, ag enrollment had climbed to nearly 1,200, among the top 10 non-land grant institutions nationwide.

Family man

"It just makes my heart happy that others recognize him for all that he's done for agriculture in Kentucky," says Lisa Brannon, who married Tony in 1989. "It means the world to us."

Proudly hanging on the garage wall at the family farm are the signature blue FFA jackets worn by Tony and his sons, Jonah and Caleb. Brannon and his brother Tim, an Allis-Chalmers dealer, continue to operate the farm, which is served by Gibson Electric.

"My dad was a lifetime veteran farmer," Brannon says, rocking in a swing on his porch. "My brother and I vowed that we would keep the family farm going. So, it's kind of the nucleus of our family."

Son Caleb says, "Dad is a God-fearing man that really wants the best out of everybody. He will do anything that it takes in order to grow them personally and professionally."

"I knew how he was as a parent and how much he cared for us," adds son Jonah. "But he had almost that same level of care for each and every single one of his students."

"Plant seeds of knowledge," Brannon advised a university crowd. "Fertilize with kindness and understanding. Spray everything with a sense of humor and you'll harvest a happy and successful life." **KL**



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Like father, like daughter

The Thompson family—Mark Desmond, Lyndsey, Mark and Ellen—at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida, following Lyndsey Thompson's promotion to lieutenant colonel in 2021.

Major Thompson serves as Commander of Troops during the 311th Military Intelligence Battalion Change of Command at Camp Zama, Japan, in 2018. Photos: Thompson family

Army careers run in the family

RADCLIFF

Lyndsey Thompson didn't intend on a lifelong military career. But like father, like daughter.

Lyndsey is an active-duty lieutenant colonel serving as the battalion commander of U.S. Army Mission Support Battalion in Fort Knox. Her father, Mark Thompson, a Nolin RECC consumer-member, is a retired U.S. Army master sergeant who began and ended his military career in Fort Knox.

Lyndsey, a self-described "army brat," moved multiple times during her childhood before her parents decided to settle down in Radcliff, when Lyndsey turned 14. She graduated from Fort Knox High School in 2000 and attended Western Kentucky



University on an academic scholarship.

Mark thought his six-foot-three basketball player daughter was bound for the WNBA. But shortly after 9/11, Lyndsey received a letter in the mail about a two-year scholarship through the ROTC.

Lyndsey reflected on her upbringing and realized she wanted to pursue a military path. Her parents' initial reaction was total shock.

"It kind of rocked my world," Mark says. "But Lyndsey said 'Dad, if it was good enough for you and provided for our family, why isn't it good enough for me?'"

Lyndsey's first hurdle was the physical fitness test, specifically the running portion. She struggled initially, but her dad was there every step of the way.

"My dad poured everything into getting me ready," Lyndsey says. "He was 100% in. It was an opportunity for us to share in something."

When Mark had a work obligation and was unable to run with Lyndsey during her test, he called on a friend who was a drill sergeant. Not only

did the friend show up, he brought his whole company to run with her.

Lyndsey's military career has taken her across the U.S. and through two tours overseas. During a previous station in Fort Knox, Lyndsey remembers running into her mom at the commissary store on base. The encounter left Lyndsey in tears.

"I cried in the car because of how special that was," she says. "You spend so much time away, getting to come home is an event. I knew how lucky I was to come full circle and be back here."

Returning to Radcliff meant a homecoming to her parents and being closer to her brother, Mark Desmond, and her nephew, Mark Ethan. Lyndsey will be able to retire from the military in 2027 and is once again following in her father's footsteps. Just like him, she wants to end her career where it started—in Radcliff. **KL**

KATIE SALTZ is an eastern Kentucky native transplanted to North Carolina. She brought her accent with her.



'Major milestone' for Shady Rays

Simpsonville headquarters focuses on customer experience

JOE ARNOLD

"WHEN I FIRST STARTED

SHADY RAYS, I was just a guy who saw an opportunity to solve a problem for people—losing and breaking sunglasses."

Initially operating in 2012 out of a bedroom at his parents' house in Louisville, Chris Ratterman implemented his business plan: quality and affordable sunglasses with exceptional customer service, highlighted by a protection program he says customers "desperately craved."

He was on to something. As online orders swelled, the business expanded to the formal living room which became a makeshift warehouse and processing center. Chris' parents helped deliver the packed orders to the neighborhood post office.

Buoyed by online buzz and national marketing, Shady Rays debuted storefronts and hired dozens of people. After outgrowing even real warehouse space, in March the company opened a new 75,000-square-foot warehouse and headquarters in Simpsonville, served by Shelby Energy.



"We are so excited to count Shady Rays as a member of our co-op," says Mary Beth Dennis, Shelby Energy's communications and member services director. "We love their durable and stylish sunglasses, and their shared commitment to community is equally impressive."

Jenny Howard, the company's strategic communications director, says giving back to the community has always been a core part of its DNA: "Whether it's partnering with local nonprofits, supporting small businesses or spearheading sustainability initiatives, we're constantly looking for ways to use

our success to make a positive impact."

"Shelby Energy has been an incredible partner in making our Simpsonville headquarters a reality," says COO Dan Ratterman, Chris's brother. He calls the co-op's commitment to sustainability and renewable energy solutions "a perfect match for our own environmental priorities."

"Beyond just supplying power, Shelby Energy has been a true collaborative partner, offering strategic guidance and support to ensure the facility is optimized for our needs."

Chris Ratterman calls his company's team "the real secret sauce," describing them as "driven, creative individuals who share my entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to the brand."

"Together, we've been able to take calculated risks, quickly capitalize on emerging trends, and make big moves that have positioned Shady Rays as an industry leader. It's been an incredible journey, and I'm so proud of how far we've come." **KL**

SHADY RAYS®

ShadyRays.com

LOCATION:

Simpsonville

INDUSTRY:

Lifestyle and adventure eyewear

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE:

Shelby Energy



Chris Ratterman, founder of Shady Rays, set out to create quality and affordable sunglasses, focusing the business on customer service and a great protection program. Shown is the classic timber style in black. Photo: Shady Rays

New, expanded facility

Shady Rays COO Dan Ratterman says the company's new facility in Simpsonville is a "a major milestone" and "an absolute game-changer for our operations."

"With significantly more warehouse space, upgraded logistics and cutting-edge fulfillment systems, we'll be able to process and ship orders faster than ever before," he says.

"But beyond the practical benefits, this facility is a symbol of how far we've come as a company. It's a physical representation of our growth, our ambition, and our dedication to providing an unparalleled customer experience."





HIGH-TECH TRAINING FOR CAN-DO PEOPLE

Eastern Kentucky
program transforms lives,
fills employment gap

BY TOM WILMES | PHOTOS BY BARBIE BUSSEY/eKAMI

In the heart of eastern Kentucky, where coal mining once served as the economic lifeblood of many communities, a training initiative is bridging the gap between new high-tech manufacturers setting up shop there and the local workforce that needs the skills to get their jobs.

Ryan Ward, left, and Jacob Harless work on a precision measurement lab exercise.

That initiative, Paintsville-based eKentucky Advanced Manufacturing Institute, or eKAMI, was founded in 2017 by Kathy Walker, who was raised in Lexington and graduated from the University of Kentucky. She relocated to eastern Kentucky from the Washington, D.C. area in 1986 following a successful career in the banking and coal industries. As a longtime member of the National Coal Council, a federal advisory committee to the United States energy secretary, Walker was acutely aware of the structural changes and challenges affecting fossil fuels. She saw those impacts firsthand living in Paintsville, where she and her husband raised their two children.

“The industry had taken a turn for the worse, and it totally decimated these communities in Appalachia,” Walker says. “Coal mining had been the economic engine for this region for generations, and when the bottom fell out, it not only took the mining jobs but

also many restaurants, beauty shops and other small businesses that supported the community.”

Instead of focusing on courting new businesses and plants, as previous efforts have done with uneven results, Walker chose to tackle the region’s economic challenges by equipping individuals with the skills they need to succeed in modern manufacturing. This approach aims to prepare workers not for factory-line jobs but for well-paid positions with benefits and career advancement opportunities.

“We have so many talented, industrious and innovative people here,” Walker says. “I think, as an outsider, I saw even more clearly the strengths and incredible raw skills these people possess. They’re can-do kind of people.

“I did some research, and I thought if we could overcome the educational hurdle—bringing people up to speed on geometry, trigonometry and fractions—this would be a great fit.”



▲ Michael Cockerham, foreground, learns alongside Bobby Andre. Cockerham now works for a Fortune 500 company.

◀ Kentucky native Kathy Walker founded eKAMI in 2017, following a career in the banking and coal industries.

With financial backing from Gene Haas, founder and president of computer numerical control machine tool manufacturer Haas Automation, Walker and her supporters renovated a 40,000-square-foot building into a state-of-the-art workforce development center. The center focuses on training in advanced manufacturing skills, particularly computer numerical control machining, robotics and quality inspection.

Workplace skills, technical and soft

eKAMI offers both five- and 10-month programs, blending technical skills with



soft skills like communication, financial management and professionalism. Graduates earn industry-recognized credentials, including those from the National Institute of Metalworking Skills, preparing them for careers in industries like aerospace, robotics, construction and automotive manufacturing.

The program also emphasizes workplace traits such as accountability, interpersonal communication skills and punctuality. "It's a very intense program—not for the meek," Walker says. "You get two tardies, and you're out."

eKAMI operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with federal funding, and qualifying students pay no tuition to participate. Since graduating its first class in 2018, more than 300 students, ranging in age from 18 to 65, have completed the program, with a 100% job placement rate. Walker says starting salaries average in the mid-\$60,000 range, with full benefits. "We have employers standing in line

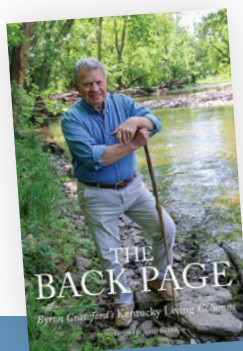
KentuckyLiving.com

A life turned around—and trained

The eKAMI training gave Michael Cockerham a new lease on life after he served his prison sentence. Go to KentuckyLiving.com to watch a video of his story.



Kentucky, collected

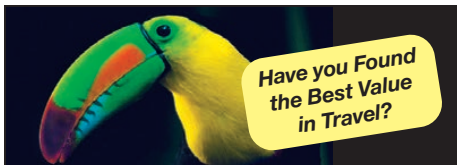


Kentucky Living readers have enjoyed Crawford's back page columns for more than 12 years—and in this keepsake edition, his stories will continue to delight for years to come.

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Students learn to program universal robots. Shown are eKAMI Instructor Matt Hicks, left, Michael Castle, Jason Holland and Craig Griffith.

COMING SOON



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and in the February
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to hire from this little place here in the center of Appalachia,” she says.

eKAMI’s innovative and unconventional approach to workforce development has garnered national attention, positioning it as a successful model for transforming Appalachia through education and skills training. Representatives from the White House, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard, Yale, the University of Southern California, international dignitaries and others have visited, Walker says.

While the positive attention is gratifying, it’s the personal impact on graduates’ lives that leaves the deepest impression, Walker says.

In a recent video for the organization, Michael Cockerham, surrounded by his smiling family at his eKAMI graduation, says, “I want to leave a legacy of hope and inspiration. I want my kids to be proud of me because I’m proud of myself. All you have to do is

“These guys take real pride in their work and are driven to improve their lives,” says Tharan Green, a MiR field

“We need the engineers from the MITs and Carnegie Mellons who come up with these incredible inventions and technology, but what good is the technology if you can’t get it deployed and working on manufacturing floors? That’s our sweet spot. We’re the boots-on-the-ground people. The roll-up-your-sleeves and get-it-done people. That’s what we’re doing.” **KL**



Whitney Caudill prepares to machine a part for a program she wrote. The project was part of her National Institute of Metalworking Skills Mill Operator certification.

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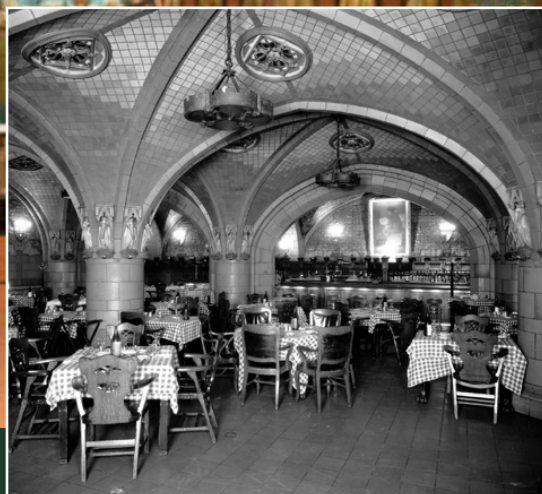
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UNIQUELY *Kentucky*



Louisville's link to *The Great Gatsby*

Readers familiar with *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece marking its 100th anniversary this spring, know the story is set in Jazz Age New York. What they may not be aware of is the key role Kentucky played in the novel.

Louisville and its attractions, particularly the historic Seelbach Hilton (the Muhlbach of the novel) with its Grand Ballroom, Old Seelbach Bar and Rathskeller Room provided the inspiration for the story and setting.

In 1918, an unknown Fitzgerald was a soldier stationed at Louisville's Camp Zachary Taylor—one of 16 national Army training camps created during World War I. On weekend passes, the aspiring author

frequented the Seelbach, scribbling notes on cocktail napkins and rubbing elbows with the likes of George Remus—known as “The King of the Bootleggers” and on whom Fitzgerald based his character of Jay Gatsby.

Though Fitzgerald spent only a month in Louisville, the city made an impression. He chose it as the hometown of the book's wealthy socialite, Daisy Fay Buchanan—the Belle of Louisville and Gatsby's great obsession. The Seelbach's Grand Ballroom is the site of Daisy's lavish wedding to Tom Buchanan. Other ballrooms featured in the book are drawn from Fitzgerald's experience of the Rathskeller Room, shown,

an ornate gathering space modeled on a German biergarten in the hotel's basement and made entirely of Rookwood pottery—possibly the largest such collection in the world.

Great Gatsby events are planned in Louisville for this spring. At the Seelbach Hilton, the newly redesigned Gatsby suite will immerse guests in the décor and style of the day as will tours of the hotel. On Louisville Tourism's “Guide to Gatsby's Louisville,” guests can explore sites, including Union Station and Whiskey Row, connected to the author and the era. See additional photos and more information at KentuckyLiving.com.

Story: Kathy Witt

Photos: Louisville Tourism; Seelbach Hilton

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On the



Katie Riley and Isaac, 14, pasteurize fresh milk on an electric stovetop—power at the push of a button.

g

A photograph of a woman with glasses and a plaid shirt laughing with a child in a kitchen. The woman is wearing a red, white, and blue plaid shirt over a black t-shirt. The child is wearing a red and blue striped shirt. They are in a kitchen with wooden shelves in the background holding various items like a white pitcher, a blue container, and a white bowl. A window with brown curtains is visible in the background.

Grid

What's the true
value of reliable
electricity?

BY DERRILL HOLLY | PHOTOS BY TIM WEBB



Tim and Katie Riley homeschool their eight children and operate a farm near Liberty. From front left, Elizabeth, Maria and Simeon. Back row, Tim, Lois, Hannah, Isaac, Abigail, Katie and Neco.

After demonstrating pasteurization for the photo shoot, Tim and Isaac prepare to feed the cooled milk to a calf. On the farm, nothing goes to waste.



Editor's note: Kentucky Living's articles about the electric grid and the value of your co-op's electric service being available around the clock struck a chord with readers. Your electric bill doesn't just reflect the kilowatts your home uses when you turn on the lights or plug in an appliance; it helps ensure the entire grid—the poles, wires, transformers and the crews who maintain them—stands ready to deliver power whenever you need it, day or night. You're not just paying for electricity; you and your fellow co-op members are investing in a reliable service that powers your life, even when the lights are off.

One of the many letters to the editor we received about our coverage of reliable electricity and energy sources came from Katie Riley, who explained what her family learned when trying to live off the grid. We reached out to learn more about their story.

KATIE AND TIMOTHY RILEY graduated from University of the Cumberlands in 2010 determined to farm and pursue energy independence for their family. Their commitment to living off the grid was so strong that they tried it twice, making it work for several years.

Buying 31 acres in Elliott County in 2013, they were inspired by a magazine article to include solar power in their

plans. With limited resources, the young couple with two small children and a third on the way chose to start small.

"We moved out there in a tent, and within a few months we built a 16-by-10-foot shed, so we spent our first winter living in it with a newborn," Katie recalls. "We wanted to be completely self-sufficient, so we didn't want to add easements for utilities."

Continued on page 27

Continued from page 26

That spring, they drilled a water well and bought a pair of 24-watt marine batteries and their first solar panel, which powered two small lights.

“We got a wood stove so we could stop cooking everything on an open fire,” says Tim.

New job opportunities in 2018 brought them back to Williamsburg where they rented a relatively new house in town.

“It was like staying in a hotel. Our older kids couldn’t believe that when you turned on the tap, hot water came out,” Katie says.

But they still wanted to farm, so they rented a few acres in Whitley County and built a small house they



Katie demonstrates the old-fashioned method of pasteurizing milk with a wood-heated stove.

Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman's office has taken action against solar scams. Photo: Office of the Attorney General

Preventing “solar scams”

Beware of deals that sound too good to be true

With more Kentucky consumers considering solar panels, state agencies are working to protect their interests.

Between 2014 and 2021, the amount of solar energy tied directly to the state’s power grid rose from about 12 megawatts of power to more than 60 MW. Most of that has been from residential installations.

State and federal subsidies, primarily tax credits, are among the marketing incentives frequently mentioned in sales presentations, but it pays to understand their limitations.

Any tax incentives offered are based upon the actual tax liabilities of the buyer, according to the office of Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman. They cannot exceed the actual amounts owed in taxes and are often paid out over several years.

“We have taken public action in federal and state court against three entities on behalf of Kentuckians,” says Kevin Grout, a spokesman for

the AG’s office. One of the companies involved, Solar Titan, has been barred from doing business in Kentucky. A second, Power Home Solar, is in bankruptcy, and the third was compelled by court order to cooperate with the state’s investigation into residential solar complaints.

The attorney general’s office is focusing on consumer education to arm Kentuckians with good advice aimed at preventing what they describe as “solar scams.” The office has developed a nearly 20-point plan addressing many of the issues consumers should consider before they buy.

“Kentucky, like many states around the country, has seen a high number of complaints related to residential solar installers and affiliated entities,” says Grout, adding that he can’t discuss any active investigations.



The Kentucky Office of Energy Policy has also developed informative and easy to understand materials for consumers, designed to address consumer motivations and individual circumstances for considering residential solar.

“Do you just want to reduce your energy bills or are you looking to be energy independent and prepared for emergency disasters? Or do you just want to support solar growth?” says John Mura, an agency spokesman. “Answers to these questions will guide you and your contractor.”

Co-ops: your trusted energy advisors

When it comes to using electricity safely and economically, your electric cooperative—and your co-op's energy advisor—are your source for reliable information.

"I encourage members not to sign contracts until after they call me," says Roy Honican, Blue Grass Energy's residential services coordinator since 1998.

Honican regularly uses the PVWatts Calculator app developed by National Renewable Energy Laboratory to project potential solar power generation based on location, climate and long-term power usage. "It's rare that the data projections show members producing more than 48% of what they typically use," he says.

Blue Grass Energy installed two solar panels near its headquarters in 2015 to gain experience on its performance. Honican uses data from that 500-watt array to give members an idea of what they can expect.

"I don't know if I've ever seen a roof big enough to hold enough panels to power a house," he says. "A hair dryer uses about 1,500 watts, so it would take the output of three panels just for that."

Alan Coffey, energy services manager at South Kentucky RECC, fields between five and 10 inquiries a week about residential solar.

While interest in solar was limited 10 years or so ago, more members now see it as a viable renewable energy alternative for offsetting the costs of their utility bills, Coffey says.



"People think they'll receive more power than they'll actually get," he cautions. "They also think they'll have access to solar power when the grid goes offline, which is not always the case."

Coffey says many members are surprised to learn that solar power systems they've bought don't fully offset their co-op electricity costs.

"People are often told one thing in the sales pitch, only to find that the system underperforms," he says. "If a member is told that what they're buying will cover 100% of their monthly bill, and actual return is just 30% to 50%, they're going to be disappointed."

South Kentucky RECC received a grant in 2017 to install a 30-kilowatt system outside of its headquarters and has compiled more than six years of data on

performance, maintenance and operation.

"With 60 to 70 panels on our site, we've learned a lot about cleaning and servicing the panels and other components in our system," says Coffey. "These are devices that can degrade over time, decreasing the actual output of energy each panel produces."

The co-op's Solar 101 guide offers tips to help members make informed decisions about residential solar.

Depending on where co-op members live, several programs may be available for those who are interested in solar energy but don't want the hassle or financial risks of installing their own panels. Programs include Green Switch, a voluntary solar purchasing agreement available from co-ops served by the Tennessee Valley Authority and licenses for solar panels at Cooperative Solar Farm One,

East Kentucky Power Cooperative's Solar Farm One, built in 2017, gives members of Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives the opportunity to invest in and use solar energy without having to place panels on their home. For more information go to cooperativesolar.com.

a 60-acre facility operated by Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives.

"We work for our members, so when they have questions, we want to provide sound guidance," says Coffey. "That not only strengthens our bond with our members; it also helps them get more value for their investments in residential solar. People only buy or build homes once or twice in a lifetime, so making good choices is worth taking the time to talk about it."

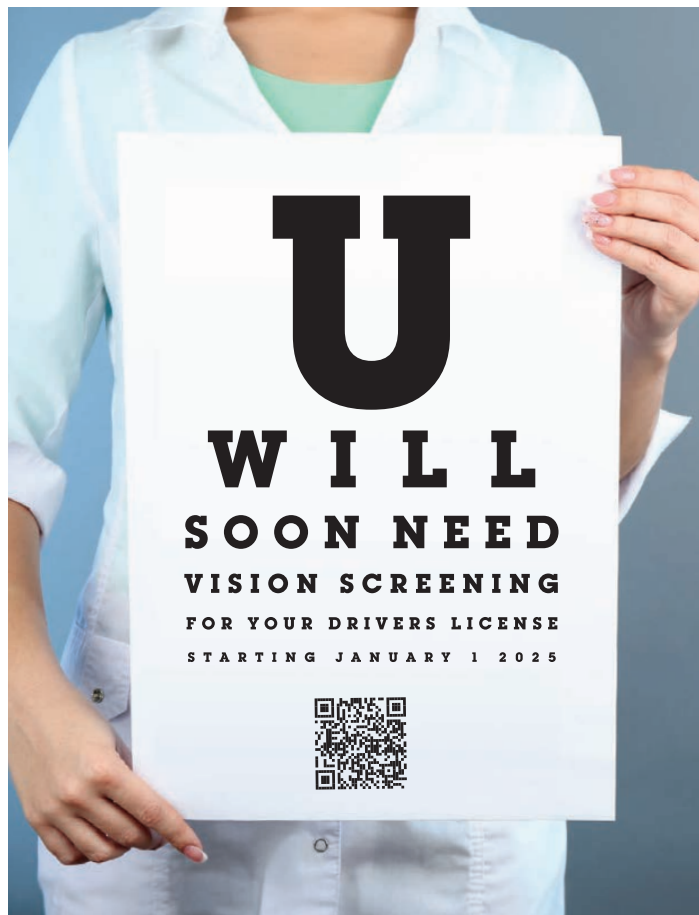
never connected to utilities. “It was like camping, or 19th century homesteading, in the 21st century,” Tim says. “If it wasn’t for our relationship with God, I don’t think our marriage would have survived living without electricity.”

Power from two 45-watt panels on their roof pumped water from their well, and three marine batteries charged during the day provided energy for small appliances and some lighting. They also used propane to run their stove and refrigerator.

But issues—including frequent solar equipment breakdowns and the overall costs of supplemental propane or generator fuel—were vexing challenges. After five years, they bought a farm near Liberty and joined South Kentucky Rural Electric



▲
The Riley children do school around the kitchen table, with the convenience of electric light that no one takes for granted.



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Look before you leap

If you're thinking about investing in solar, do your research. Visit KentuckyLiving.com to learn more about the Beneficial Electrification League, a nonprofit that promotes beneficial electrification of the economy. While you're there, read about how two Kentucky families incorporate solar energy in their homesteading lifestyles.

Isaac bottle-feeds a calf. The family's farm lifestyle, says Tim, would be prohibitively difficult without reliable electricity.



Abigail, 10, feeds the goats on the family's 61-acre farm near Liberty.



Cooperative in 2020. They currently farm 61 acres and live in an 1,800-square-foot, grid-connected home.

"Running a full-sized house with solar isn't cheap if you're constantly having to upgrade and replace batteries and panels," says Katie. "We've never spent more than \$85 a month for co-op electricity. When my kids come in wet and dirty, they can bathe and I can wash without worrying about it. When I want to charge my cellphone, I can just do it."

The Rileys appreciate their South Kentucky RECC membership and electric reliability from their co-op connection.

"Salesmen and politicians can make green energy sound great, and even though the technology is improving, it often falls short," says Katie.

Tim agrees: "You can have wind, or solar, but for now, safety and dependability here in Kentucky still relies on coal [generation]. Most people really wouldn't enjoy living like we used to." **KL**

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Alternative evergreen

Try this globe-shaped arborvitae

FOLLOWING THE SEVERE

WINTER damage to boxwoods in December 2022, I am seeing a lot of hesitation among gardeners to plant boxwoods as extensively as they have in the past. This opens the opportunity for using other small evergreens that may have been underused or overlooked because of the popularity of boxwoods.

One such alternative is the globe arborvitae Fire Chief. This almost perfectly globe-shaped evergreen is slow growing and eventually matures to only 3 or 4 feet tall and wide. It prefers to grow in full sun but tolerates a little shade. Plant it in average well-drained soil, but avoid areas that are particularly dry.

In the spring and summer, Fire Chief has bright gold foliage with a green undertone, and in the fall the foliage turns a deep red that persists but becomes slightly duller in winter. The foliage may visually appear sharp or prickly, but it is soft to the touch, making it suitable around walkways and steps.

Globe arborvitae Fire Chief is not prone to insect or disease problems and requires little maintenance. These evergreens look good planted



SHELLY NOLD

singly, in a row, as a border or as a grouping, and they can stand on their own as a foundation planting. Their winter color really shines if they are planted in front of a dark green backdrop. Fire Chief is a great alternative to boxwood, with the bonus of a year-round pop of color in your landscape. **KL**

SHELLY NOLD is a horticulturist and owner of The Plant Kingdom. Send stories and ideas to her at The Plant Kingdom, 1000 E Market St., Louisville, KY 40206.

ASK THE gardener



How can I lower the pH around my blueberry bushes?—Mike Kelly

A Blueberries require full sun and soil that is rich in nutrients and drains well, and thrive in acidic soil. The ideal soil pH for blueberries is between 4.5–5.2, which means any Kentucky garden will likely require amendments, such as aluminum sulfate. The first step is to have your soil tested to know the current pH. This can be done through your County Cooperative Extension Service. The results will provide current soil conditions and recommendations for obtaining the desired pH. Let your extension agent know what the test is for so they can also test for calcium levels.

» Angie Oakley



EIKE/ADOBE STOCK

Have a gardening question?

Go to KentuckyLiving.com, click on Home & Garden, then “Ask the Gardener.”

READER
recipe

Hearty one-pot rice

Cajun Andouille Rice

Submitted by Jud Lee

Nolin RECC consumer-member

Jud's family enjoys this recipe. It's easy, with delicious, bold flavors the whole family loves. They hope you enjoy it as much as they do.

- 1 (12-oz) pkg andouille sausage**
- 1 Tbsp olive oil**
- 1 bell pepper, diced**
- 1 tsp smoked paprika**
- ½ tsp dried oregano**
- ½ tsp dried thyme**
- ¼ tsp garlic powder**
- ¼ tsp onion powder**
- ⅛ tsp cayenne pepper**
- ⅛ tsp cracked black pepper**
- 1 (15 oz) can fire roasted diced tomatoes**
- 1 C long grain white rice**
- 1½ C chicken broth**
- 2 green onions, sliced**

Slice sausage into half-inch thick pieces. Heat oil in deep skillet or Dutch oven, then sauté sausage over medium heat until well browned.

Once sausage is browned, add bell pepper to the skillet and continue to sauté about one minute more. Add spices and cook one minute. Add fire-roasted diced tomatoes (with juices), rice and chicken broth. Stir to combine, making sure to scrape up any browned bits from bottom of skillet.

Cover pan and increase heat to medium-high. Bring broth to full boil, then reduce heat to simmer. After 20 minutes, remove pan from heat and let it rest, with lid on, for an additional 5 minutes.

Remove lid and stir to redistribute the rice and sausage throughout. Top with sliced green onions and serve. Serves 4.

*Southern spice**Recipes to warm up your winter*

AS WE WELCOME THE NEW YEAR, the chill of winter calls for cozy meals that bring warmth and comfort to our tables—my only favorite thing about the cold months. There's no better way to embrace the season than with bold Southern flavors that satisfy both souls and bellies. This month, we're turning up the heat with two flavorful recipes. These dishes are sure to warm you up and kick off the year with the heartiness we all crave.

Bacon and Cheddar Cornbread

- 2 C self-rising cornmeal mix**
- 1⅓ C buttermilk**
- ¼ C oil**
- 1 egg**
- 1 C cheddar cheese, grated**
- 6 pieces bacon, cooked and finely diced**
- 4 green onions, sliced**
- 1 Tbsp reserved bacon grease**

Preheat oven to 500°. Place a cast iron skillet in the oven while it preheats. This step is important—the skillet needs to be smoking hot.

In a large bowl, add the cornmeal mix. Add buttermilk, oil and egg to a separate glass measuring cup and whisk to combine. Pour into bowl with cornmeal and gently mix with a spatula. Add cheddar, cooked bacon pieces and green onions. Mix gently until just combined.

Once the oven is heated, carefully remove the hot skillet. Add bacon grease to coat bottom of skillet. Pour cornbread mixture into hot skillet, then return to oven and bake 20 minutes. Remove and let cool for 5 minutes in pan before cutting and serving. Serves 8.

HEATHER BILYEU, raised in southern Kentucky, is the owner and voice behind the food blog, *Fueling a Southern Soul*.

**SEE
VIDEOS**
at KentuckyLiving.com/Cook

Go to KentuckyLiving.com/submit-a-recipe



Food for the soul

The Ninety and Nine Cafe in Scottsville is on a mission

JOEL SAMS

CUSTOMERS MIGHT LOVE the flatbread pizzas, salads, sandwiches, soups and homemade pies—but at the Ninety and Nine Cafe in Scottsville, the main course is something deeper. “God gave me a job to do,” says owner Tiffany Jones. “My main goal is to reach people on the streets. Food is a byproduct to people’s hearts.”

Jones opened the restaurant, which is served by Tri-County Electric, on Oct. 22. She sees her business as an opportunity to care for others, no matter their situation in life or their ability to pay. She’s equally likely to pull up a chair and ask locals about their day, stop by out-of-towners’ tables to explain the restaurant’s name or cook a free meal for someone in need.

Ninety and Nine, if you haven’t guessed, is a reference to Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep. “Our motto on our shirts is ‘I was the one,’” Jones says. “We were all ‘the one’ at some point.”

In addition to serving day-to-day customers, the restaurant is now the host site for Care Village, a monthly community event offering free hot meals, as well as supplies like coats, socks and sleeping bags. Jones created Care Village with the help of a friend, Hannah Brooks, who is executive director of Heart of Scottsville, and she credits its success to the unwavering support of her church, her husband, Josh, and other family members.

Beyond the breakfast fruit and yogurt parfaits, the fresh deli sandwiches and the always-popular fettuccine alfredo, Jones’ greater mission is never far from her thoughts. You can hear it in the way she answers the phone—“This is the Ninety and Nine Cafe. I was the one.”

Located at 135 E. Main St. in Scottsville, The Ninety and Nine Cafe is open Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m. **KL**



TIFFANY JONES

The Ninety and Nine Cafe Peach Cobbler

Serves 8-12

1 C butter, melted
1 C self-rising flour
1 C sugar
1 C milk
2 (15-oz) cans sliced peaches, drained

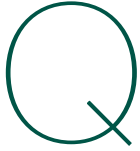
The best recipe, Tiffany Jones says, is loving and serving others. But if you insist on food, she wants to share her late grandmother’s peach cobbler recipe. “Cup of flour, cup of sugar, cup of butter, cup of milk,” Tiffany says. “I used to call her and listen. I knew the recipe. I just wanted to hear her voice.”

Preheat oven to 350°. Add melted butter to a 9x13-inch casserole dish. Combine flour, sugar and milk, then pour on top of melted butter. Add peaches on top of the crust mixture. Do not mix. Bake for 30 minutes, or until crust is golden brown.



TIFFANY JONES

Saving with a DIY energy audit



How do I perform an energy audit on my home?

MIRANDA BOUTELLE

writes on energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

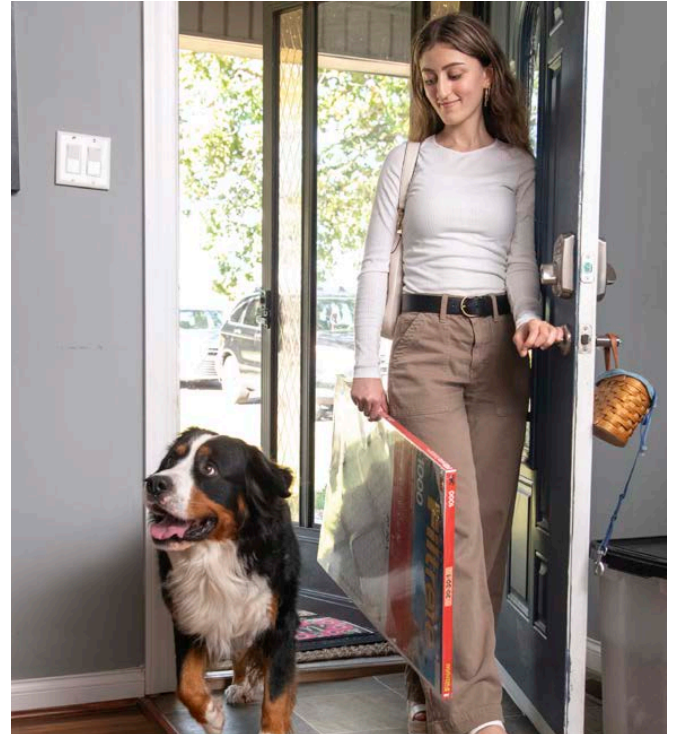
A home energy audit may sound daunting, but it can be as easy as creating a checklist of improvements based on what you see around your home.

Here's what you'll need to find opportunities to save energy and money: a flashlight, dust mask, tape measure and cooking thermometer. It's a good idea to take notes on your phone or a notepad. For step-by-step instructions, visit www.energy.gov/save.

First, check the heating and cooling equipment. If your equipment is older, it may be time to budget for an upgrade. Check the filter and replace it if needed.

Exterior walls should be insulated. If your home is older than the 1960s, the walls probably are not insulated; houses from the 1960s or 1970s likely need more insulation. Adding wall insulation is a job for a professional.

Check for leaking faucets and make sure aerators and showerheads are high-efficiency models in



good condition. Run the faucet closest to your water heater for three minutes, then fill a cup and measure with a cooking thermometer. If it's more than 120 to 140 degrees, reduce the temperature on your water heater.

Of course, make sure to replace incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs with the more efficient LEDs.

Above and below

Don your dust mask and look in the attic to check the insulation. Make sure any

When inspecting your heating and cooling equipment, check the filter and replace it. A dirty furnace filter can cause your system to work harder than necessary, decreasing efficiency and shortening its life. Photo: Mark Gilliland/Pioneer Utility Resources

CLOSE THE ENVELOPE

Don't forget your home's exterior weaknesses—check for drafts and air leakage around windows and trim. Pay special attention to spots where different building materials come together. Check under sinks for gaps around pipes. Seal with weatherstripping, caulk or expanding foam as needed.

insulation is evenly distributed and adequate for your area and type of insulation.

If you have a basement or crawl space, head there next. At minimum, unfinished basements should have insulation on the rim joists—the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the home's first-story floor.

Crawl spaces should have insulation on the underside of the floor between the floor joists, with no air gaps. Water pipes and ductwork should also be insulated. **KL**

Winter storm safety

Downed power lines are a chilling sight

NO, IT'S NOT THE CLASSIC severe storm season here in Kentucky, but winter creates severe snowy and icy weather, which can cause the same dangers as the tornadic kind. Remember the 2009 ice storm that crippled parts of the commonwealth—and all those downed power lines?

The weather's unpredictability means we need to keep safety in mind year-round, whether it's after an ice storm or a high wind event. Downed and damaged power lines are among the top dangers, during and even after the storm. Take the time now to review some basic safety tips.

If you see a downed power line, which could be making contact with tree limbs, vehicles and puddles/ice/snow, stay about 40 feet away. You won't be able to tell whether the power line is still live, and if you touch one that is, consequences could be deadly. Large overhead power lines can carry more than

700,000 volts of electricity and fatalities can occur when someone comes in contact with a live wire of only a couple hundred volts. The bottom line is: always assume a downed power line is live.

Other tips

If you see someone in direct or indirect contact with a downed line, do not touch the person. You could become energized as well, and you can't help if you become a victim. Immediately call 911 for assistance, and then contact your local electric utility to turn off the power.

Never try to move a downed power line or anything else in contact with it using an object such as a broom or stick. Non-conductive materials like wood or cloth can conduct electricity if slightly wet.

Finally, don't step in water near downed lines or drive over a downed power line. **KL**



WES POYNTER
is Compliance
Coordinator at Nolin
RECC

**YEARS IN THE
INDUSTRY:** 12,
with 7 of those at the
co-op

**WHEN I'M NOT
WORKING I'M:**
deer hunting. If
season isn't open,
I'm preparing for the
next one. My kids are
old enough to go with
me now, so I enjoy it
more than ever. Our
family enjoys a home-
steading lifestyle
producing and pro-
cessing many of our
own foods. Mostly, my
family and I live and
enjoy a quiet, low-key
life in the country on
our family farm.



PATSY WHITEHEAD

Safely escape from downed power lines

If you are caught outdoors during a storm and your car comes in contact with a downed power line, stay in the vehicle until help arrives. Call 911 or honk your horn to get help, but tell those rendering aid to stay away from the vehicle.

However, sometimes due to fire or another imminent threat, you have to get out. Here's how to do it:

1. Do not touch the vehicle and the ground at

the same time with any part of your body or clothing.

2. Open the door to your vehicle without touching the metal door frame.
3. Jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and so both feet land at the same time.
4. Shuffle away so that the toe of one foot shuffles forward along the length of the other foot, ensuring that both feet are in constant contact and always touching the ground.

New year, new habits

Kick-start the new year with healthy eating

AS 2025 BEGINS, many of us feel inspired to set new goals, especially around health and wellness. While fad diets often promise quick results, they're not sustainable or healthy in the long run. Instead, consider making gradual changes that support physical health and long-term well-being.

Focus on whole foods

Whole foods are foundational. Choose foods as close to their natural state as possible, like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, beans and lean proteins. They provide vital nutrients, fiber and energy without the added sugar, salt and saturated fat that often come with processed options. Start by using more whole foods in your daily meals and snacks, and try adding a serving of vegetables to every lunch and dinner.

Protein and fiber

Pairing protein with fiber is a simple yet powerful way to stay full and energized. Protein supports muscle repair and growth, while fiber aids digestion and helps maintain stable blood sugar levels. Both nutrients digest slowly, keeping you satisfied longer. Combine lean proteins like chicken or beans with fiber-rich vegetables, fruits or whole grains.

Balance your plate

Instead of restrictive eating, focus on creating balanced meals. Learning to recognize appropriate portion sizes can also help you control calorie intake without feeling deprived. Try the plate method by filling half your plate with vegetables, a quarter with lean protein and the remaining quarter with whole grains or starches. This approach ensures a variety of nutrients and can help keep portions in check.

Snack smart

Smart snacking can prevent overeating at mealtimes and help you maintain steady energy levels. Look for snacks that combine protein, fiber and healthy fats, like yogurt with berries, apple slices with peanut butter or veggie sticks with hummus. Keep healthy options on hand—things like nuts, yogurt or fruit are great to have around when hunger strikes.

Plan to cook at home

Meal planning and cooking at home are powerful tools for maintaining healthy habits. By planning your meals and snacks in advance, you can avoid last-minute unhealthy choices like fast food or processed snacks. You will also have greater control over ingredients and portions. Even small prep steps, like chopping vegetables or cooking grains ahead of time, can make a big difference when it's time to cook.

Balance, not perfection

Balance is the key to healthy eating. All foods can fit into a healthy diet if enjoyed in moderation. Focus on nourishing your body, not restricting it, and allow yourself occasional indulgences without guilt. Try setting realistic goals that can become permanent lifestyle changes. For example, start by cutting down on sugary drinks, adding more vegetables to your diet or eating a nutritious breakfast every day. Goals like "I will eat two servings of vegetables at dinner" or "I will drink eight glasses of water daily" are specific and achievable. Remember, healthy habits need to be sustainable, not flawless. **KL**

LAUREN BATEY, MS, RDN, is a program coordinator for the University of Kentucky Food as Health Alliance.

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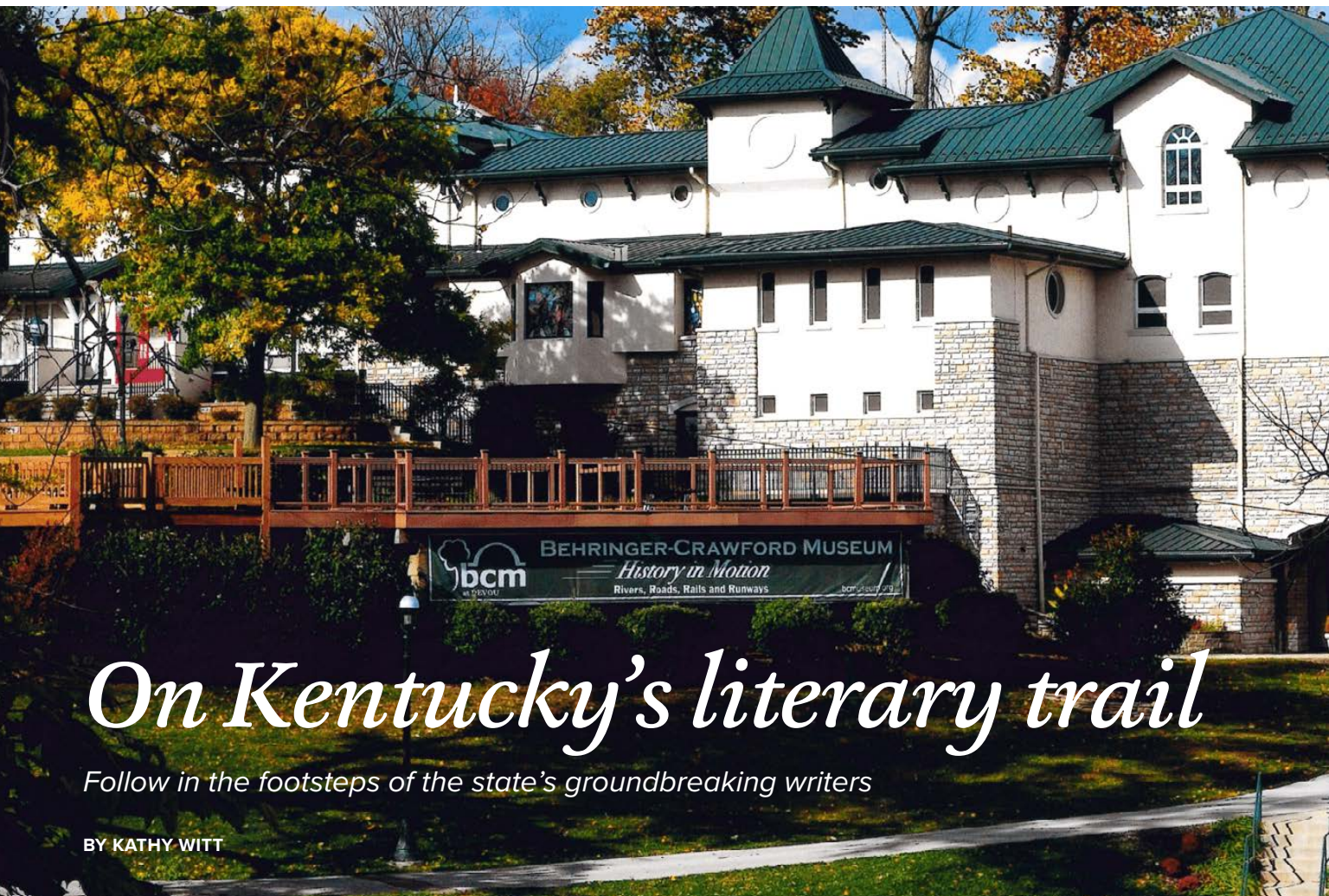
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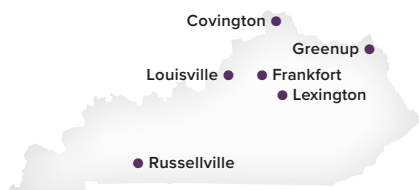
On Kentucky's literary trail

Follow in the footsteps of the state's groundbreaking writers

BY KATHY WITT

ALICE ALLISON DUNNIGAN, the first African American woman White House correspondent. Sue Grafton, creator of the bestselling 25-book series known as the alphabet series. Harlan Hubbard, philosopher, naturalist, author, artist. Jesse Stuart, poet, short story writer, novelist, essayist. Thomas D. Clark, historian, preservationist and keeper and teacher of Kentucky's story.

Each of these Kentucky-born writers left their mark on the Bluegrass State and far beyond, earning a spot in the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame and creating a lasting legacy with their extraordinary body of work. Learn more about each of these writers and others through the landmarks that pay tribute to their enduring impact and appeal.



Alice Allison Dunnigan

This Russellville journalist (1906-1983) is memorialized with a life-size bronze statue at the Struggles for Emancipation & Equality in Kentucky Museum. SEEK is a complex of seven historic buildings located in two districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places in her hometown.

"Alice Allison Dunnigan was way ahead of her time," says Dee Dee Brown, executive director at Logan County

The Behringer-Crawford Museum is located in Covington's Devou Park. Photo: Behringer-Crawford Museum

Tourism. "She with boldness paved a way for herself as well as others. The first female African American to be admitted to the White House and Congressional Press Corps, she knocked down many walls with her works."

Dunnigan's works include *The Fascinating Story of Black Kentuckians: Their Heritage and Tradition* and *A Black Woman's Experience: From Schoolhouse to White House*, as well as hundreds of news stories and columns that appeared in dozens of Black newspapers across the country.



The Frazier History Museum has an extensive display on Sue Grafton featuring her “Alphabet Series” and many more artifacts displaying her importance as a writer and a Kentuckian. Photo: The Frazier History Museum

Sue Grafton

It began with *A is for Alibi* and, for the award-winning author of the alphabet series, it spelled smashing success. Born in Louisville in 1940, Grafton would make it through the alphabet all the way to *Y is for Yesterday* before her death in 2017.

“This author is one of the most successful authors to come out of Kentucky,” says Greg Schoenbaechler, senior marketing manager at the Frazier History Museum. “Her ‘alphabet series’ won many awards, inspired movies, and the books of the series were on the *New York Times* bestseller list for about 400 weeks.”

See Grafton’s books, awards and personal memorabilia, including fiction’s most famous black dress—that all-purpose, wrinkle-resistant number Grafton’s detective Kinsey Millhone deemed “suitable for most occasions”—on display at the Frazier.

Harlan Hubbard

A man who walked the talk, Bellevue-born Hubbard (1900-1988) with his new wife, Anna, launched a boat in 1944 for an eight-year journey on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers—an experience he wrote about in *Shantyboat*, published in 1953. Committed to simplicity and self-sufficiency, the couple continued their rustic lifestyle at Payne Hollow in Trimble County, which Hubbard wrote about in *Payne Hollow: Life on the Fringe of Society*, published in 1974.

“He wrote in a timeless fashion that resonates with today’s population,” says Laurie Risch, executive director at the Behringer-Crawford Museum. “He lived, borrowing from artist Keith Haring, a ‘Life is Art and Art is Life’ philosophy.”

The Covington museum is the largest public holder of Hubbard artworks—paintings, watercolors, woodcuts—and has first editions of his books and diaries penned by his mother, Rose.



Bobbie Ann Mason presents a reading at Kentucky Native Cafe in Lexington on January 29, 2024. Photo: Tom Eblen/Carnegie Center

THE KENTUCKY WRITERS HALL OF FAME

Novelist Bobbie Ann Mason. Poet George Ella Lyon. Playwright Sam Shepard. These distinguished wordsmiths have all been inducted into the Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame. Located at the Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning, the Hall of Fame was created in 2012 to “recognize Kentucky writers whose work reflects the character and culture of our commonwealth, and to educate Kentuckians about our state’s rich literary heritage.”

Sixty-six living and deceased writers have been inducted into the Hall of Fame. The classes of inductees, their bios and bibliographies, as well as videos and other resources, may be found at www.carnegiecenterlex.org/kentucky-writers-hall-of-fame.



Learn more about some of Kentucky's literary giants at sites connected to them:.

Featured writers

Thomas D. Clark

Kentucky Historical Society/The Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History, 100 W. Broadway, Frankfort; www.history.ky.gov, (502) 564-1792

Alice Allison Dunnigan

SEEK Museum, 517 E. 6th St., Russellville; www.seekmuseum.org, (270) 726-0908

Sue Grafton

Frazier History Museum, 829 W. Main St., Louisville; www.fraziermuseum.org, (502) 753-5663

Harlan Hubbard

Behringer-Crawford Museum, 1600 Montague Road, Covington; www.bcmuseum.org, (859) 491-4003

Jesse Stuart

Greenbo Lake State Resort Park, 965 Lodge Road, Greenup; <https://parks.ky.gov>, (606) 473-7324
Jesse Stuart State Nature Preserve, W Hollow Road, Greenup; www.discovergreenup.com, (606) 473-6440; www.jsfbooks.com, (606) 326-1667 (Jesse Stuart Foundation)

Other notable writers

Wendell Berry, novelist, poet, essayist and author of *Jayber Crow* and *The Unsettling of America*, among many other works. Learn more at The Bookstore at the Berry Center, 129 S. Main St., New Castle; www.berrycenter.org

John Fox Jr., author of *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. Visit Kingdom Come State Park/Little Shepherd Trail, 502 Park Road, Cumberland; <https://parks.ky.gov>, (606) 589-4138

Thomas Merton, writer, poet, theologian and author of *The Seven Storey Mountain* among other works. Abbey of Gethsemani, 3642 Monks Road, Trappist; www.monks.org, (502) 549-3117. Bardstown Art Gallery and Thomas Merton Books, 214 W. Stephen Foster Ave., Bardstown, (502) 348-6488

Helen Thomas, journalist and White House correspondent who covered 10 presidents over five decades. Her birthplace, at 17 E. Broadway in Winchester, is on the Downtown Walking Tour. Info: www.visitwinchesterky.com, (859) 744-0556. To download tour brochure: www.visitwinchesterky.com/contact/downtown-walking-tour

Robert Penn Warren, poet, novelist and author of *All the King's Men* and *Band of Angels*—and the only person to have won Pulitzer Prizes for both fiction and poetry. Robert Penn Warren Birthplace Museum (Pennyrile Electric), 122 Cherry St., Guthrie; www.robertpennwarren.com/birthpla.html, (270) 604-7760. Note: Tours by appointment only. Call ahead.

The Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History is the headquarters for the Kentucky Historical Society, which manages the Old State Capitol, among other sites, in Frankfort. Photo: Visit Frankfort

Jesse Stuart

Not only is the Jesse Stuart State Nature Preserve named for this poet laureate from W Hollow in Greenup County, but the fieldstone lodge at Greenbo Lake State Resort Park, served by Grayson RECC, honors him as well. Additionally, Stuart's works and personal mementos—original writings, a typewriter, newspaper and magazine articles, photos, his mother Martha's egg basket—fill the lodge reading room.

"The fact that he was a teacher, superintendent, mentor, author and poet laureate from a small rural community explains Stuart's enduring appeal," says Park Manager Brenda Danner. Danner counts *A Jesse Stuart Reader* and children's book, *Old Ben*, as her favorites among Stuart's extensive writings.

The author published nearly 60 major works over his lifetime (1906-1984), including 11 novels, 17 collections of short stories and 11 collections of poetry, including the 1934 award-winning *Man with a Bull-Tongued Plow*.

Thomas D. Clark

The Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History, featuring *A Kentucky*

KentuckyLiving.com

Writers to watch

If novelist Sue Grafton is a mystery to you, go to KentuckyLiving.com for a link to a video about her, as well as links to videos with more information on Alice Allison Dunnigan and more great Kentucky writers.



The 36-room fieldstone lodge at Greenbo Lake State Resort Park is named in honor of Jesse Stuart. Photo: Kentucky State Parks

Journey and the Kentucky Hall of Governors exhibits, is named for the man who devoted his life to the preservation of Kentucky's historical records.

The Center is the headquarters for the Kentucky Historical Society as well as a museum dedicated to the state's history from pre-settlement to current times. Located in downtown Frankfort, KHS also manages the Old State Capitol, the Kentucky Military History Museum and the Martin F. Schmidt Research Library, on the second floor of the Thomas D. Clark Center.

Clark (1903-2005) taught history at the University of Kentucky for 37 years, authored or edited more than three dozen books on historical topics—including his most popular book, *A History of Kentucky*, published in 1937—and in 1990, was appointed Kentucky Historian Laureate for life. **KL**

KATHY WITT is an award-winning travel and lifestyle writer based in northern Kentucky and the author of seven books, including *Perfect Day Kentucky* and *Secret Cincinnati*.



Round Table Literary Park is located on the campus of Hopkinsville Community College. Photo: Visit Hopkinsville

CAMELOT IN HOPKINSVILLE

One of the most enduring figures in literature is King Arthur—and though his roots are firmly planted across the pond, the legendary medieval British king has a strong presence in Kentucky.

Round Table Literary Park, on the campus of Hopkinsville Community College, not only has a replica of King Arthur's sword, Excalibur, in a large stone, but it also has a 22,000-pound replica of King Arthur's Round Table with the names of Arthur, Sir Galahad, Sir Lancelot and knightly company etched in stone and encircled by 24 stone seats. www.visithopkinsville.com/listing/round-table-literary-park

EVENT CALENDAR



ANDY CRAWFORD



JACK DOBBS



1 OUTDOORS EAST

The first Eastern Kentucky Outdoor Expo is January 31–February 1 at Morehead Conference Center. Browse fishing and camping equipment and more. Food trucks on site. Bassmaster Classic pro and Kentuckian Matt Messer (shown) and survivalist and hunter Trinity Saner give presentations both days. Hours: 10 a.m.–8 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m.–7 p.m. Saturday. \$5 per person, \$8 for both days; 6 and under free. easternkyoutdoorexpo.com, (606) 776-3502.

2 DYNAMIC DINOS

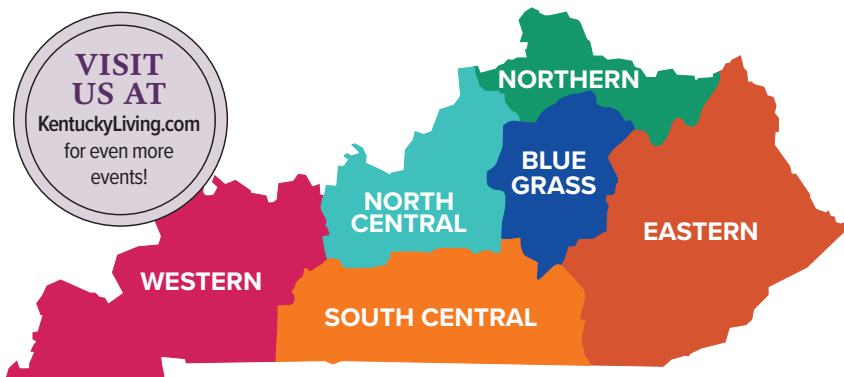
No dino DNA needed: puppeteers and performers bring dinosaurs and other creatures to life in Erth's Dinosaur Zoo Live, 2 p.m. January 25 at Boyle County Performing Arts Center. Designed with paleontologists' help, the 19-plus human-powered prehistoric critters, like the T. rex, titanosaur and triceratops, are presented in a fun and educational show. Designed for kids grades K–8. Tickets: \$20–\$55, available at thebcpac.com, (859) 439-5143. Advance purchase recommended.

3 SYNCING FOR A CAUSE

Local teams compete January 11 in the Hometown Showdown Lip Sync Battle, 6 p.m. at Glasgow's Plaza Theatre. Watch teams from groups like health care facilities, schools, local businesses and first responders enthusiastically compete for the golden microphone. Proceeds benefit T.J. Community Mission Foundation's Sampsonville Square, providing unique rehabilitation services for all ages. The fun starts at 6 p.m. Tickets: \$40, available at hometownshowdown.com.

4 ICY FUN

From splashing to skating: Somerset's SomerSplash water park transforms into Tiki's Winter Wonderland, with an ice rink offering 90-minute sessions through January 19. Open daily through January 5, and Friday–Sunday January 6–19. Plus concessions with hot cocoa and coffee, and fire pits for warming up. For schedule, see somersplash.com/winter. Admission with skate rental, \$15/session; viewing during skate hours, \$5; group rate, 15 or more: \$12/person/session. Info, (606) 679-7946.



BLUEGRASS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2

TNT Truck and Tractor Pull, thru 4th, (859) 233-4303, Alltech Arena, Lexington

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10

Cyrano de Bergerac, thru 18th, (859) 756-0011, The Spotlight Playhouse, Berea

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11

The Dinner Detective Comedy Mystery Dinner Show, 25th, (866) 496-0535, Hilton Lexington/Downtown

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17

Hanzhi Wang, (859) 618-6433, Norton Center for the Arts, Danville

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

The American Rodeo East Regional Finals, thru 25th, (859) 233-4303, Alltech Arena, Lexington

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

Clue: Live on Stage, thru 26th, (859) 233-4567, Lexington Opera House

EASTERN

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1

First Day Hike, (606) 286-7009, Carter Caves State Resort Park, Olive Hill

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9

Grandpa Jones: Country Musician and Comic, (606) 329-8888, Highland Museum and Discovery Center, Ashland

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18

The McLain Family Band, (606) 945-5999, Meadowgreen Appalachian Music Park, Clay City

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

Harlem Globetrotters, (606) 258-2020, The Corbin Arena

NORTH CENTRAL

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10

Louisville Build, Renovate, & Landscape Show, thru 12th, (502) 595-4381, Kentucky International Convention Center

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18

Bluegrass World of Wheels Custom Car Show, thru 19th, (502) 367-5000, Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22

Boat, RV and Sportshow, thru 26th, (314) 287-6102, Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

Whole Hog Workshop, thru 26th, (502) 845-9200, The Berry Center, New Castle

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

Shenandoah, (270) 234-8258, The State, Elizabethtown

NORTHERN

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1

The Road to the Bengals, thru Feb. 1st, (859) 491-4003, Behringer-Crawford Museum, Covington

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12

An Epiphany Epilogue, (859) 431-2060, St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16

Growing & Propagating Houseplants, (859) 586-6101, Boone County Extension Enrichment Center, Burlington

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

Seussical, thru Feb. 16th, (859) 957-1940, The Carnegie, Covington

SOUTH CENTRAL

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10

Sweet Baby James: The James Taylor Tribute, (270) 904-6040, The Capitol, Bowling Green

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

One Night in Memphis: Tribute to Presley, Perkins, Lewis and Cash, (270) 904-1880, SKyPAC, Bowling Green

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

Rickey Medlocke Band featuring Peacemaker, (270) 834-8147, The Plaza Theatre, Glasgow

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

Harriett Tubman: Straight Up Outta' the Underground, (606) 677-6000, The Center for Rural Development, Somerset

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

Son of a Gun: Premier Tribute to Guns N' Roses, (270) 904-1880, SKyPAC, Bowling Green

WESTERN

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1

A Galaxy of Glass, thru Feb. 23rd, (270) 685-3181, Owensboro Museum of Fine Art

First Day Hikes, (502) 782-9727, John James Audubon State Park, Henderson

Joe Mallard: Threading his Grandmother's Needles, thru Feb. 25th, (270) 442-8856, National Quilt Museum, Paducah

FRIDAY, JANUARY 10

West Kentucky Hunting & Fishing Expo, thru 11th, (270) 408-1346, Paducah Exposition Center

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18

Little Landscapes: Winterscapes, (270) 753-4059, Murray Art Guild, Murray

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

Owensboro Symphony: Beethoven, Brahms, Haydn, Hooten, (270) 687-2770, RiverPark Center

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1 POINTING THE WAY

German shorthaired pointer Nellie surveys her scenic domain from a haybale perch. Photo by owner Sophie Gooding, Flemingsburg, a Fleming-Mason Energy consumer-member.

2 PUPSICLE

It may be cold outside, but PhePhe is keeping warm with a winter vest—and with hugs from Lainey Jo London. Photo by mom, Amber London, Edmonton, a consumer-member of Farmers RECC.

3 WINTER WONDERLAND

Faye and Reed Wilson brave the cold to enjoy play time in the snow with dad, Dan Wilson. Photo by mom, Sage Wilson, Williamsburg, a consumer-member of Cumberland Valley Electric.

4 THE WATCHER

Dubbed Todd, this fox “has taken his seat as spokesman for our farm in Eastern Pulaski County,” says photographer Teresa Nix, a consumer-member of South Kentucky RECC from Somerset.

SEND US YOUR SNAP SHOTS! We're looking for spring photos.

Submit up to five photos monthly for a chance to **BE FEATURED IN KENTUCKY LIVING**. Photos with people work best, as well as those with seasonal interest. Remember to identify people or pets in the photo left to right and tell us their relation to you.



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KENTUCKY kids

Smart sledding

Sledding can be a great time as long as you're sledding safely. Make sure the hill does not end anywhere near cars on a road.



ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Can you arrange these words in alphabetical order?



MEERKAT



ZEBRA



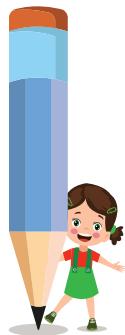
LION



HIPPOPOTAMUS



WARTHOG



Answer: 1) Hippopotamus 2) Lion 3) Meerkat 4) Warthog 5) Zebra

Green Team Tip

By choosing a reusable bottle or mug instead of disposable bottles, you can reduce waste and energy consumption.

— Olivia Ellis, age 9



Send us your green team tips!

Enter KIDS Contest

Submit a Green Team Tip or Joke online at KentuckyLiving.com:Magazine/Submissions for a chance to win a prize!

Hockey Math

The hockey team is practicing for their big game. In Monday's practice game the team scored 14 goals. In Tuesday's practice game they scored 27 goals.

How many goals did they make in all?



Answer: 41 goals.

Tell us a joke!

What do you get when you cross a pig with a T. rex?

Jurassic pork!

— Josephine Roberts, age 10



Did You Know?

Winter is the season with the shortest days and the lowest temperatures.

GREAT OUTDOORS

The passing of an inspiration

Remembering John Gierach



John Gierach, right, with a guide at ATA Lodge in Alaska. Photo: Wayne McGee/ATA Lodge Alaska

▲ **ONE OF MY HEROES**, the outdoor writer John Gierach, passed away in October at the age of 77. Since then, I've been reflecting on how his work has inspired me through the years.

As the author of books like *Trout Bum* and *Dumb Luck and the Kindness of Strangers*, John's topic of choice was fly fishing, but his work is so much more than that. His stories are so vivid you can almost hear the stream trickling in the background or smell the coffee that he brewed streamside in a small coffee pot. He wrote simply but effectively, with an immersive style that drew me and so many others to his writings.

Many years ago, when I was new to fly fishing, I was watching a trout rise on Colorado's South

Platte River when I heard an old pickup coming up the gravel turnoff. The tires deadened the rattling and popping sounds of gravel until it rolled in to park. A scraggly, bearded man emerged and stood to the side, waiting his turn at the pool. He wore hip waders and no vest. As I watched, he pulled a small box from his flannel shirt pocket, tied on a fly and tilted back a timeworn fishing hat. It had the shape of a fedora, but had seen many days in the Colorado weather, turning it from something fancy into a comfortable fishing hat.

I wanted to give that cutthroat a run for its money as it teased me by rising and gulping a bug I didn't recognize. The man who'd just arrived probably knew what kind of bug was hatching and was there because of it. I did not—and I was not. So instead of spoiling the pool with my ignorance, I decided to relinquish it and the rising trout. I stepped out, told the man a fish was rising and wished him luck. He pulled his

fishing hat down to shade his eyes and thanked me, then entered the pool. I left to find a more secluded spot where I could learn fly fishing without an audience to see the debacle.

A few years later, I was in a tent in Chicken, Alaska, reading one of Gierach's books. He described an old pickup truck and one of his favorite rivers, the South Platte. I had a few of Gierach's books in my bag and rummaged through it to find one with him on the cover. When I saw the photo, I gasped: It was the man I had shared a trout with in Colorado.

That was the very moment, nearly 30 years ago, that I decided to give writing a shot. Rest in peace, John—and thank you for the inspiration. **KL**

KEN MCBROOM, an outdoors writer/photographer, created *RamblingAngler.com*. McBroom grew up in Lynchburg, Tennessee, and now lives in western Kentucky.

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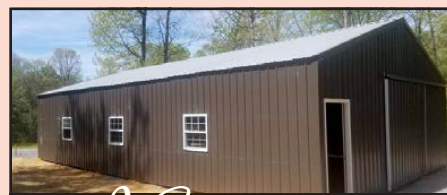
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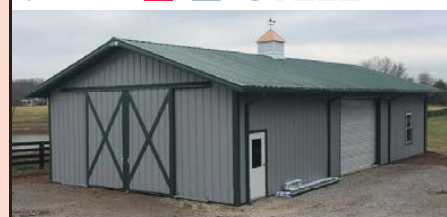
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Game warden stories

Tales from a life outdoors



BYRON CRAWFORD is Kentucky's storyteller—a veteran television and newspaper journalist known for his colorful essays about life in Kentucky. Contact Byron at KentuckyLiving.com: About/People.

LAST SUMMER, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources officially changed the name of its law enforcement officers from conservation officer back to the original title, game warden, which dates to 1912.

The name change comes at a perfect time for retired game warden Jeff Finn of Logan County, a consumer-member of Pennyrite Electric, who has authored three books of “game warden” stories from actual cases across Kentucky.

Finn grew up hunting and fishing on his family's farm in Simpson County, where his father, a true outdoorsman of the old school, taught him well in the ways of nature. But he would need all he had learned, and then some, during 27 years with the department.

lawbreakers, the wardens share numerous strange cases: Finn tells of answering a call to find a deputy sheriff and an older gentleman named Hardin, who lived alone in a cabin in northeastern Logan County, standing beside a lifeless, overweight coyote wearing a dog collar.

Hardin's clothes were in tatters, and he was covered with bites after being attacked by the animal when he arrived home and stepped onto his porch in the darkness. Kicking the animal away as best he could, he'd gotten in the door, but realized that the coyote was in the house with him, and still attacking in the dark. He said he'd finally managed to knock it senseless with a stick of firewood, then had dragged it to the yard, assuming it might be dead. But the next morning when he stepped outside, it had regained consciousness and attacked again. This time, Hardin managed to get to his rifle in a nearby camper.

Trying to raise wild animals as pets can be dangerous, Finn said. The coyote had lost its fear of humans, but not its wild nature.

On the humorous side, there was the man Finn suspected of poaching trophy deer, only to discover that the pictures the suspect was posting of himself with trophy bucks on social media had been taken at a friend's legal deer farm with animals that had been temporarily sedated for treatment by a veterinarian.

Later in his career, Finn worked in special investigations involving the illegal trade in poisonous snakes in eastern Kentucky, shipment of poisonous snakes through the mail, and shipments of small alligators and live piranhas to several Kentucky counties.

“If you think you've seen it all,” he wrote, “you haven't.”

His books, available on Amazon, are: *From the Game Warden's Desk*, *From the Game Warden's Campfire* and *From the Game Wardens Volume 3*. **KL**



In his fourth year as a game warden, fellow officer Bob Banker of Christian County, with whom Finn had worked a few weeks earlier, was shot in the back and killed by a man Banker had just cited for fishing without a license.

“It brought home the dangers of the job,” says Finn. “It made us all stop and think a lot more.”

Beyond their stories of run-ins with well-armed poachers and a variety of other



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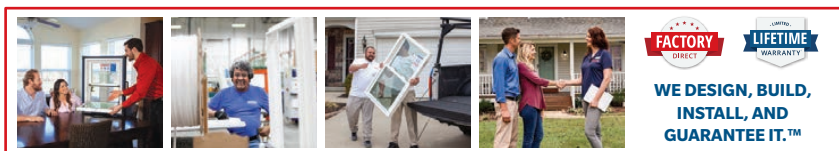
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