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16

ADVANCING RURAL KENTUCKY

The Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development, or KCARD, supports farmers and rural small businesses across the state. Learn more about how KCARD staff offer insight on everything from business plans to marketing strategy, and read about some of the small farms and businesses they've served.

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A TRUSTED RESOURCE

Kentucky's Cooperative Extension Service extends practical, research-based learning to residents in each of Kentucky's 120 counties. A multitude of free, local resources range from sewing classes to agriculture research to estate planning. Learn more about Extension resources near you.

ON THE COVER Fred Noe, seventh generation master distiller at James B. Beam Distilling Company, was named Distinguished Rural Kentuckian during the Kentucky Electric Cooperatives annual meeting. The award is the highest honor bestowed by the commonwealth's electric cooperatives. Photo: Wade Harris

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OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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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Better together

Co-ops are committed to Kentucky's farm communities

WHEN EDDIE MELTON CALLED me a few years ago and asked me to meet him for lunch, I knew something was up. Now serving as president of the Kentucky Farm Bureau, Eddie has always been someone I admire for his commitment to Kentucky agriculture—and his commitment to getting other people involved for the greater good.

It turned out Eddie did have an ulterior motive when he asked me to meet. He wanted me to serve on the board of an organization called KCARD—the Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development. At first, I said I was too busy. But Eddie persisted, telling me how important it was for Kentucky's electric cooperatives to be engaged in the work KCARD was doing. I'm so glad he didn't give up. I did end up serving on the board, and I'm so grateful for that experience.

KCARD has been important to Kentucky's electric cooperatives for a long time, and we've had a representative on the board going back about 30 years. Our current representative is Linda Grimes, a director at Nolin RECC.

We are great partners because we share a common commitment to Kentucky's farming communities. It goes back to the very roots of our first mission as cooperatives—bringing power to rural areas. We wanted to make life better, bringing modern conveniences and tools to help everybody on the farm do their jobs better, from lighting to refrigeration to cooking and even farm operations. Everything we did was intended to help the agricultural community, and in a nutshell, that's what an electric cooperative is. We make life better in the places we serve.



Hinton's Orchard & Farm Market is one of many KCARD success stories. Photo: Morgan Worley

KCARD provides expertise and resources to help farms and farm-related businesses thrive, working on everything from processing plants to business plans, economic analysis and resources to help young farmers get going. You can read more about KCARD on page 16, along with another outstanding rural partner, the Cooperative Extension System, on page 22. Our Business Spotlight on page 15 highlights Blueprint Kentucky, which offers economic development resources to rural communities.

The future of rural Kentucky is bright, and Kentucky's young farmers are doing amazing things. Partners like KCARD have our loyal support, and we are cheering for their success, because we serve the same people. Their mission is our mission—helping Kentucky communities thrive.

Chris

CHRIS PERRY
President/CEO

KENTUCKY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES



FROM THE EDITOR

WELCOME

TO 2026 with *Kentucky Living*!

Our magazine is moving into its 78th year, but I don't want to take for granted that you know who we are.

Kentucky Living is published by Kentucky Electric Cooperatives. About 97% of you receive our magazine because you are a consumer-member of a rural electric cooperative, and you can find news about your co-op in our center pages.

We print monthly with an average circulation of 518,000. Many of you pass us along to a friend or neighbor, so our readership is over 1 million. It's our goal to be in your home around the first of each month. This issue, for instance, mailed out from our printer on December 30.

We are grateful to the exceptional United States Postal Service workers who do their best to get your magazines to you in a timely fashion. Our magazine adds to their load, so we want to say thank you. Also, thank YOU, our loyal readers. We're glad you're here.



SHANNON BROCK,
EDITOR

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DISTINGUISHED RURAL KENTUCKIAN

Fred Noe awarded highest cooperative honor

Fred Noe is a seventh-generation master distiller, the great-grandson of Jim Beam and a global ambassador for Kentucky's native spirit. In August, he was named Distinguished Rural Kentuckian by Kentucky's electric cooperatives. View a video celebrating Noe's contributions at KentuckyLiving.com.



BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Community economic development

Kentucky's Cooperative Extension Service offers a multitude of resources for individuals and communities. Blueprint Kentucky offers community-focused economic development services. Learn more at KentuckyLiving.com.



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Want the inside scoop on Kentucky travel? Get travel tips from locals on page 36, with ideas for nature and wildlife, scenic settings and sips, food, natural attractions and more—then visit us online for a link to the Official Kentucky Visitors Guide.



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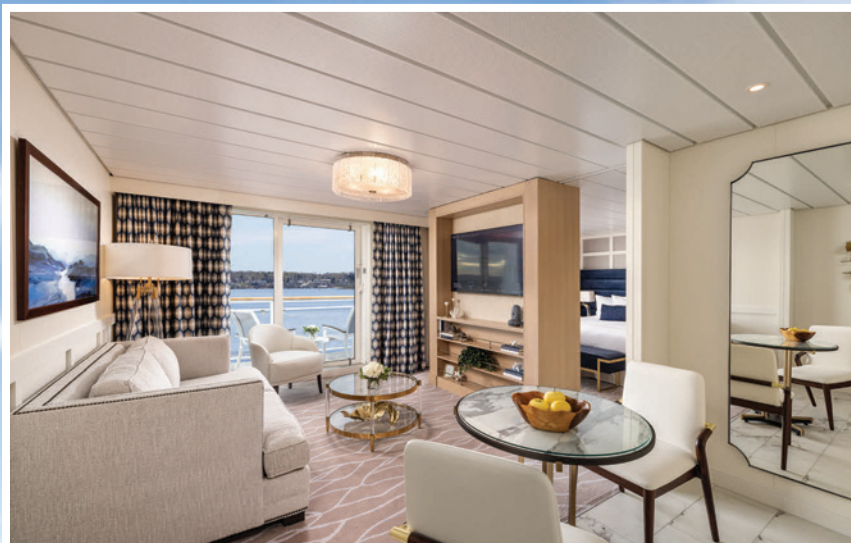


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Coaching legend

In Kentucky's long and storied love affair with basketball, few names garner as much respect as that of the late high school coach Billy Hicks. Hicks left a legacy of positive influence on all who interacted with him.

Harlan County native John Wiley Bryson is one of those Hicks influenced. Bryson played for Hicks in his early coaching days and maintained a lifelong friendship with him afterward. "Billy didn't just tell stories—he lived them," Bryson says. "He invited people in, made things happen, and turned ordinary moments into lasting memories."

To honor those memories, Bryson has written *Billy: Coach. Leader. Legend. Friend*, a collection of stories, stats, quotes and reflections from family, friends, colleagues and former players.

"My hope in these pages," Bryson explains, "is that we are impressed by the wins and losses, titles and championships—you cannot help but be impressed—but also, that we will be amazed by and driven to emulate who Billy was as a man. This man was a special human being who had much to teach us. We need heroes; Billy was a hero. Billy was my hero, and a hero to many, many others."

Both on and off the court, Hicks left an indelible mark. His wife, Betsy, was his biggest supporter and estimates only missing maybe 10 of the

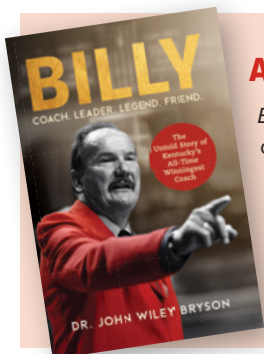
more than 1,200 games he coached during his career. Players both old and young speak of feeling seen by their coach, who always insisted on calling his players by their first names and treating them like family, often cooking for them or taking them fishing. His biggest coaching rival, Clay County's Bobby Keith, even left instructions requesting that Hicks speak at his funeral.

On the court, the stats speak for themselves. Of the 1,289 games he coached across his career that included Evarts, Harlan, Corbin and Scott County teams, 1,021 resulted in a win. Add to that 24 district titles, 11 regional finals, 33 state tournament wins, seven state championship appearances, two state championships and being named Kentucky Coach of the Year three times. In 2016, Hicks was inducted into the Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame, securing his place among the state's basketball elite.

Despite his success, Hicks always valued his roots. Following his 1,000th win while coaching at Scott County High School, he said, "A lot of people think I'm a central Kentucky guy. My roots will always be and always have been in the mountains, and I'm really proud of that."

Hicks retired from coaching in 2019 and often spent his days fishing, his favorite pastime. He died in 2023 at the age of 71.

» Penny Woods



About the author

Billy: Coach. Leader. Legend. Friend, (Elite Publishing, \$14.99) can be found on Amazon or at local booksellers.

John Wiley Bryson is a leader, pastor, businessman, coach and storyteller at heart. He is the founding pastor of Fellowship Memphis and lead writer and co-presenter of Authentic Manhood's "33 the Series." Connect with the Harlan resident at www.johnwileybryson.com.

tip

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Cold weather can cause your home heating system to work overtime. Check for air leaks and drafts around doors and windows, then seal them with weather stripping or caulk. Close fireplace dampers when not in use, and consider installing insulating curtains to help keep warm air inside. Small adjustments can help reduce heating costs during the coldest months.

Source: energy.gov

NATHAN DUMLAOUNSPASH



"I'm telling you ... it says 'mouse included'."

All-Kentucky journalism all-stars

Both recipients of awards presented during the 2025 Al Smith Awards dinner in November are Kentuckians, a rarity considering one category is open to rural journalists nationwide.

Bill Estep, recently retired from the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and a South Kentucky RECC consumer-member, received the Al Smith Award. The award is presented annually and honors public service through community journalism by Kentuckians. The award is named after the late Albert P. Smith Jr., rural newspaper publisher and founding producer and host of KET's *Comment on Kentucky*.

Lisa Stayton and Roger Smith, of *The Mountain*



Citizen in Inez, received the 2025 Tom and Pat Gish Award for courage, integrity and tenacity in rural journalism. This award is presented in honor of Tom and Pat Gish, who published *The Mountain Eagle* in Whitesburg for more than 50 years.



This year's keynote speaker was Dee Davis, president of the Center for Rural Strategies in Whitesburg.

Kentucky Living and Kentucky Electric Cooperatives are proud sponsors of the Al Smith Awards dinner.



From left, Al Smith Award winner Bill Estep; Tom and Pat Gish Award recipients Roger Smith and Lisa Stayton; and keynote speaker Dee Davis.
Photos: Shannon Brock

featured FRAMES



Whiskey, an Australian shepherd pup, truly lives a dog's life, says photographer Colton S. Rudd, of Frenchburg, a Clark Energy consumer-member.

**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.

The ambassador from Beam country

Fred Noe's lifelong devotion to community, craftsmanship and storytelling earns him the co-ops' highest honor

JOE ARNOLD



▲ **AFTER THOUSANDS OF INTERVIEWS**, speeches, presentations and public appearances, Fred Noe, seventh generation master distiller at James B. Beam Distilling Company, is seldom at a loss for words. But when Kentucky Electric Cooperatives President and CEO Chris Perry encouraged Fred to say a few words after receiving the Distinguished Rural Kentuckian award at the co-op's annual meeting banquet last August, Fred had to take a moment to collect himself.

Placing the engraved silver platter on a table near the lectern, he pulled off his glasses to "clean my eyes out" after watching a video tribute and said, "I'll try."

Distinguished Rural Kentuckian is the highest honor bestowed by the commonwealth's electric

co-ops, recognizing outstanding individuals who have devoted their lives to Kentucky in a way that matches the co-op mission of enhancing the quality of life here.

Leaders at Salt River Electric, the cooperative that serves the landmark Jim Beam property in Clermont about 30 miles south of Louisville, nominated Fred, citing his lifetime of contributions to Kentucky economic development and tourism.

"Fred was hosting travelers, travel writers and bourbon aficionados 30 years ago, before that was really a big thing in the bourbon industry," says Nicky Rapier, a longtime friend and economic development leader at Salt River Electric. "He's just always been genuine and very nice."

As a global ambassador for Jim Beam brands,

Fred Noe sits on the porch of the historic Baker Beam home in Clermont. Photo: Wade Harris



Fred tells his family's distilling story, which includes Jacob Beam's settling in Nelson County in 1788, James B. Beam's rebuilding the Clermont distillery after Prohibition was repealed in 1933 and pioneering products and visitor experiences that continue to the present day.

"I think Fred Noe is one of the biggest ambassadors for Kentucky overall. Not just from a bourbon standpoint, not just from a tourism standpoint," says Kentucky Tourism Commissioner Mike Mangeot.

Fred is the 41st Distinguished Rural Kentuckian. Since 1982, the association has honored recipients from the worlds of the arts, politics, journalism, business, education, religion, athletics and agriculture. Previous business leader recipients include Smith D. Broadbent (1987), W.T. Young (2001), Jim Host (2004) and Ervin Houchens (2010).

Humble beginning

"As Jim Beam's great-grandson, my dad taught me the business from the ground up—it wasn't handed to me," Fred says. "A big part of that was learning how to connect with the community, get involved and share the stories behind our bourbons, which are all about community and family."

When Fred graduated from a Tennessee military academy in 1975, the bourbon industry faced an uncertain future.

"Dad said, 'You're going to have to go to college because this deal might not be here,'" Fred recalls. "Bourbon was on the decline in the '70s."

During Fred's college years, his father, legendary Master Distiller Booker Noe, asked him to come home and help care for his beloved Great-Aunt Mimi, who had doted on Fred throughout his childhood. Fred moved in, did her chores, drove her around town, heard stories about her father—Jim Beam—and listened to her advice. He was holding her hand when she died in 1983.

Fred worked six nights a week while completing his business administration degree from Bellarmine College (now University), then hit the road as what he terms a "jack of all trades" with Hank Willams Jr. and his band.

A job offer to become road manager for the band prompted Fred to call his dad, who encouraged him to return home and consider a future at the distillery. It didn't take long for Fred to choose his family's legacy. His first job was on the night shift bottling line where Fred says he made friends "once the employees figured out I wasn't a spy."



Eight generations have led the James B. Beam Distilling Company.
Photo: Wade Harris

Freddie Noe, left, and Fred Noe stand beside a statue of Booker Noe. Photo: Wade Harris



THE NOE FAMILY LEGACY

Down a gentle slope from Fred Noe's office in the historic Baker Beam house on the Clermont campus, a bronze statue of Booker Noe sits in a rocking chair, looking out over the rickhouses that hold the bourbons he helped define. It's here that Fred and his son, Freddie, reflect on the family legacy—one that now spans more than 230 years and eight generations.

Booker changed the direction of American whiskey in 1978 when he revived the tradition of making bourbon in small batches.

Today, Freddie is the eighth master distiller in Beam family history, leading innovation at the Fred B. Noe Craft Distillery—a facility he helped surprise his father with at its groundbreaking in 2020.

"He's a lot like his grandfather," Fred says. "He's always testing the envelope. What's something new that can we do."

"Thank you, honestly for your dedication to not only our family's history and this industry, but as I just mentioned, Kentucky and people in general," Freddie said to his father at the groundbreaking. "To allow me to have the opportunity I have, and future Kentuckians, future Americans, to enjoy our product and see and hear this story."



▲
Kentucky Electric Cooperatives
President and CEO Chris Perry presents
Fred Noe with the Distinguished Rural
Kentuckian award. Photo: Tim Webb

"I learned from the folks that had been here for decades before me," Fred says. "And they learned that I was just here to get the job done like they were."

"I think that's what makes him grounded," says DeeAnn Hogan, grounds and facilities manager at the Clermont plant. "He appreciates everything. Nothing was handed to him. And the employees respect him for that."

Meanwhile, Fred was also learning the distilling craft from his father. Throughout the 1980s and '90s, Booker Noe developed the small batch bourbons that would reinvigorate the industry.

"And that was when bourbon kind of got its ... I guess you'd say, renaissance," Fred says.

Despite that progress, by 1999 the overall production of Kentucky's bourbon distilleries was at its lowest point since prohibition.

Global ambassador

Booker's health was declining about that time, and his barnstorming promotional tours slowed. The spotlight shifted to Fred.

"This was one of the most critical times in the history of Kentucky bourbon," says Eric Gregory, president of the Kentucky Distillers' Association.

"I hadn't been much out of Kentucky and Tennessee my entire life except for a few family vacations," Fred says. "You start getting on planes and flying around the world and all of a sudden you're landing in places like Russia and Australia, and you're there to talk about the products, which was a great experience for me."

Gregory says Fred "becomes one of the most significant and beloved bourbon ambassadors this state has ever seen," at every stop, inviting bourbon fans to Kentucky.

"We get up in front of crowds and just tell the stories of Kentucky, growing up here," Fred says. "We were just being ourselves."

"It's authentic," says Mangeot, a former executive director of the Bardstown-Nelson County Tourism Commission. "That's what people look for."

"We couldn't ask for a better representative from Kentucky than Fred," says former Gov. Steve Beshear. "That's the picture we want people to have of us."

Boosting Kentucky

Fred credits Beshear with helping boost bourbon tourism by changing state laws to allow distillery tastings.

"He said we can use these distilleries and do the same thing in Kentucky that they've done with Napa Valley in California," Fred recalls.

In 2000, Kentucky counted bourbon tourists in the tens of thousands. By 2019, bourbon tourism surpassed 2 million annual visitors.

"Fred Noe was a big part of that from the very beginning," Beshear says. "He's a celebrity now, but he's never lost that down-home touch."

Economic development leader Kim Huston calls him her "secret weapon." When traveling to recruit companies, she says, "I bring Fred Noe with me and it's always standing room only."

"He was born and raised in the industry and has just devoted a lifetime in it," says Bardstown Mayor Dick Heaton. "And that has really helped define bourbon here in Bardstown and Nelson County and helped put us on the map."

"It's just like the slogan for Jim Beam," says longtime colleague Linda Hayes. "'You come as friends, you leave as family.' You meet Fred, you're automatically friends. He's just a good person at heart."

At the end of a long interview on the porch of the historic Baker Beam home in Clermont, Fred tilts back in a rocking chair.

"You don't realize how beautiful this state is till you come back when you've been gone for a while, when you've been in another part of the world or another part of the United States. The friendliness of the folks who live here—I mean everybody will help you out. We are one big community here. It's kind of rural, and especially right in here if you need something, everybody steps up." **KL**

Goal met

▶ Vicky Payne and the beautiful scenery in Patagonia, South America. Photo: Jennifer Falloway

Vicky Payne displays her medals, including the Seven Continents Club Finisher medal. Photo: Vicky Payne

Payne runs marathons on all seven continents

OWENSBORO

Vicky Payne had a mission: to complete a marathon on each of the seven continents. Last year, she achieved her goal. In May, Payne, Big Rivers Electric Corporation's manager of fuels procurement, raced in Patagonia in South America—the sixth continent she crossed off her racing list.

At first, it seemed like the perfect running day. Then about halfway in, the wind kicked up to 40 miles per hour, the temperature plummeted and rain began to fall.



Conditions were so brutal, a few racers dropped out due to hypothermia. “So, it was a tough course, but I finished it,” Payne says.

Three months later, Payne landed in Sydney, Australia, where she not only checked off her seventh continent, but it was also her seventh world major and 27th marathon. “Sydney was somewhat of a hilly course, but absolutely amazing,” says Payne. “We couldn’t have asked for better running conditions there, so I got to go out on a really, really good note for the seventh continent.”

Even so, Payne found herself feeling emotional as she neared the finish line in Sydney. She recalls, “I was already tearing up for the last half mile to a mile of the race just because it was such a huge accomplishment.”

Since she returned from Australia, people keep asking Payne the same question: “What’s next?”

Well, she recently competed in her first Tough Mudder competition in Nashville, Tennessee.

There, Payne participated in an infinity loop, where competitors have nine hours to run the course as many times as they can. In total, she ran nearly 21 miles. Payne plans to enter future races in locations that are also vacation destinations to spend time with her 14-year-old son Levi. An African safari is already on her radar.

Five years passed from the time Payne first set her goal of running on all seven continents to crossing the finish line in Australia. How did she stay motivated? “My love for running and the friendships I made along the way,” she says. She also had supporters—her mom and biggest fan, Carman, as well as her running partner, Jennifer Falloway.

Whether running marathons or embarking on any new venture, Payne says, “I always say that sometimes the hardest part is just getting out the door. Just take the first step.” **KL**

AMY COBB is the author of two book series for children, *Band Geeks* and *Libby Wimbley*.



Blueprint Kentucky

Rural report: Data shapes the future in co-op areas

JOE ARNOLD

A NEW STATEWIDE REPORT

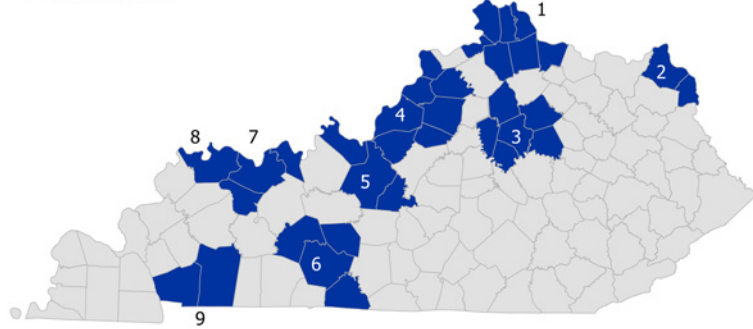
from Blueprint Kentucky is giving community leaders, local businesses and electric cooperatives insight into rural Kentucky's future.

Kentucky's Rural Economy report, produced by the University of Kentucky's Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, tracks population, jobs, income, broadband, housing and more in all 120 counties. After years of decline, rural population began to grow again in 2020, especially in counties near urban and micropolitan centers where people can combine small-town life with access to jobs and amenities.

Blueprint Kentucky Executive Director Alison Davis, a consumer-member of Blue Grass Energy, says the findings confirm what she's seen working in communities for two decades: rural Kentucky is diverse, resilient and full of possibility.

The report reveals a pattern of regional bright spots. Some areas in Appalachia and western Kentucky

■ Urban Counties
■ Rural Counties



continue to struggle, but other rural counties are emerging as growth hubs close to urban centers.

The report reinforces how important rural Kentucky is to the state's bottom line. "Kentucky is a manufacturing state. We tend to make things and that's really important for our growth because [of] money coming from outside in, and so a lot of those industries are located in our more rural places," Davis says.

She also sees opportunity in nurturing more homegrown businesses. Rural communities,

she notes, are often cautious about risk, which can discourage would-be entrepreneurs. That's why she believes local success stories, like those told in *Kentucky Living*, matter. "Anytime we can tell stories where folks can talk about some of the risks they took, some that may have not worked out, but how they learned and adapted, I think is really critical."

In that storytelling, she sees electric cooperatives as key partners. Davis recalls Jackson Energy quickly stepping up to collaborate on a workforce program, and praises co-ops and telecom cooperatives that foster broadband development. "They were national leaders in the deployment of broadband. And that was so critical, particularly when COVID hit," she says.

For Davis and Blueprint Kentucky, the message to rural Kentucky is simple: the challenges are real, but so are the strengths—and data can help communities, co-ops and businesses keep building on what's working. **KL**



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Statewide

INDUSTRY:
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**ELECTRIC
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◀ Metro areas shown
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3. Lexington
4. Louisville
5. Elizabethtown
6. Bowling Green
7. Owensboro
8. Henderson
9. Hopkinsville

Image: Rural-Urban
Continuum Codes/
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Service/U.S. Department
of Agriculture

Data and outreach for rural communities

Blueprint Kentucky—formerly known as the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky—is a research and outreach center at the University of Kentucky focused on community and economic development, leadership, design and rural health access. The organization partners with local governments, nonprofits, cooperatives and community groups across the state.

As Executive Director Alison Davis explains, Blueprint Kentucky welcomes requests from communities looking for support or guidance. "We are public institutions, so we're always happy to respond to any requests or if folks want us to come chat and see how we can help," she says.



Advancing rural Kentucky

Kentucky farmers, ag businesses
have a friend in KCARD

BY ROBIN ROENKER



Nathan and Michelle Howell, owners of Need More Acres Farm in Scottsville, are living their dream as successful, full-time farmers. The parents of five launched their 20-acre farm in 2002 as a means of part-time income, before shifting to full-time farming in 2013.

Today, the Howells distribute their freshly harvested produce and locally raised beef, pork and chicken through traditional means, including sales at area farmers markets and through Community Supported Agriculture memberships.

But they've also embraced some newer business models, including developing a robust, grant-funded food box delivery

program—an initiative to connect residents with fresh, healthy foods—in partnership with several area school systems and county health departments.

Through every step of their business evolution, the Howells have had a ready source of support and guidance: the Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development, more commonly known as KCARD.

▲
The owners of Hinton's Orchard & Farm Market say the Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development helped bring their business ideas to life.

◀
Hinton's Orchard & Farm Market has become an agritourism destination and is a Hall of Fame winner in *Kentucky Living's* Best in Kentucky awards. Photos: Hinton's Orchard & Farm Market

Need More Acres Farm has embraced new business models, including grant-funded food box delivery, with expert guidance from KCARD. Photos: Need More Acres Farm

“When we became full-time farmers, we really brought KCARD along with us from the very beginning,” Michelle Howell says. “They helped us form an LLC, establish what our market would be like, and how we would operate our business. They were there for every part.”

Tailored support

Founded in 2001, KCARD, as its full name suggests, supports agriculture and rural business development across Kentucky.

The nonprofit’s services are available to any Kentucky farmer or rural, ag-related small business. While KCARD employees work remotely throughout Kentucky, the organization also utilizes office and meeting space at the headquarters of Nolin RECC in Elizabethtown.

“We work with anybody from small-scale producers of jams and jellies to full-time grain farmers, produce farmers and meat producers,” says Brent Lackey, who has worked at KCARD since 2006 and has been its executive director since 2022.

From helping farmers develop their initial business plan and identify target customers to assisting small businesses in fine-tuning their marketing outreach, KCARD staff serve as a go-to source of insight on all manner of operational challenges.

“KCARD is at its best doing one-on-one work with farmers or rural business owners,” Lackey says. “We’re able to sit across the kitchen table with that family, or sit across the manager’s desk with that business owner, and really dive in on the struggles they’re facing and their goals for the future.”

Strategic partnerships

KCARD receives its main financial support through grants from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board and the United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program. KCARD also works with the Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy, Kentucky Farm Bureau, Kentucky Electric Cooperatives and other statewide partners to support agricultural development initiatives across Kentucky.

“KCARD and the cooperatives share a similar mission to help people in rural areas of Kentucky,” says Linda Grimes of LaRue County, who serves on the KCARD board and holds a seat on both the Kentucky Electric Cooperatives and Nolin RECC boards. “There have been so many agribusinesses that have gotten started across the state whose owners didn’t initially know how to fill out a grant or do a financial statement. Those are the types of tasks that KCARD can help them navigate.”

Kentucky Farm Bureau president Eddie Melton is also keenly aware of KCARD’s





impact on the state, having served as its board president from 2019 through 2024. “KCARD is really skilled at helping people develop a road map for their business and connect with available grant dollars to help those businesses get off the ground,” he says.

In fact, the Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy routinely directs would-be applicants to work with KCARD first, before applying for state agricultural development funding, says the office’s Deputy Executive Director Bill McCloskey.

“They may call us with thoughts on what they want to do, but we send them to KCARD to develop a true business plan,” McCloskey says. “That’s KCARD’s expertise.”

John Edwards, co-owner of Trackside Butcher Shoppe, a meat processor in Campbellsburg, credits KCARD for helping get his business off the ground in 2015.

“KCARD supported my business partner, Chris Wright, and me in writing our business plan. They helped us incorporate data from an earlier feasibility study showing the demand for a meat processor in the area,” says Edwards, a Shelby Energy Cooperative consumer-member. “We were just regular guys with no prior experience in this field.

They could have laughed us out of the room, but that’s not the reception we received. They were very welcoming and supportive. They walked us through finding grant funding and securing low-interest loans to finance the business. They worked with us each step of the way.”

Looking ahead

For those making the leap to launch a new farm or ag-related business, the cost demands can feel daunting—from ever-escalating land

Students learn about farms and food during a Farm to School event at Needmore Acres. Photo: Shelley and Portugal

Below, KCARD staff members Logan Crawford and Kati Bowman meet with participants during a workshop. Photo: KCARD

MORE ABOUT KCARD

KCARD staff regularly offer free classes and workshops across the state on topics like Growing Your Farm and Food Business and Planning for Farm Diversification. Check for upcoming event dates at kcard.info/events. For more information about KCARD’s full services and offerings, visit kcard.info.



▲ Above, Jeremy and Joanna Hinton with children Joslyn, left, Joel and Jacob. At right, guests enjoy the pumpkin patch. Photos: Hinton's Orchard & Farm Market

Below, KCARD staff pose for a group photo at Trackside Butcher Shoppe. Photo: Lora Kurtz/KCARD

prices to rising costs for seed, chemicals and even labor.

To provide support in navigating those financial challenges, KCARD recently launched a Beginning Farmer Mentor Program. The program connects new farmers seeking funding through the Kentucky Agricultural Finance Corporation with a designated KCARD staff mentor who will meet with them routinely for support and guidance.

Introduced in July, the program already has 40 active mentorship pairings in place.

In December, KCARD unveiled another initiative, the Kentucky AgriLegacy Solutions Program, to provide one-on-one estate planning assistance for producers who want to transition ownership of their farm to their heirs.

Throughout all of its work, KCARD remains committed to delivering the services—and honest feedback—that ag producers need to make their dreams a reality.

“Farmers, for the most part, get into this field because we’re passionate about it, but when we’re passionate, we don’t always make the best-informed business decisions,” says Joanna Hinton, a Nolin RECC consumer-member who owns and operates Hinton’s Orchard & Farm Market in Hodgenville with her husband, Jeremy. The business is a Hall of Fame winner in *Kentucky Living’s* annual Best in Kentucky contest.

Now serving as KCARD’s board president, Joanna Hinton is a fierce advocate for the power of KCARD’s work across the state. After all, it’s something she’s experienced firsthand, since the Hintons used KCARD’s support to grow their orchard into a successful agritourism destination and to launch their more recent storefront offshoot in Elizabethtown.

“KCARD and their staff, for years now, have been experts in having hard conversations with people who have big ideas [for an ag-related business], but who maybe just need a little help to figure out how to make them work,” she says. **KL**



KCARD'S STATEWIDE IMPACT

While KCARD maintains an Elizabethtown office space in a rented portion of Nolin RECC’s headquarters, its 14 staff members primarily work remotely from home offices across the state, a system that enables them to connect more closely with farmers and small businesses in their areas.

In 2024, KCARD assisted 753 distinct agricultural producers or business clients across 105 Kentucky counties. Over its nearly 25 years in operation, KCARD has supported more than 3,800 Kentucky farmers or ag-related small business owners, says Executive Director Brent Lackey.



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A trusted resource

Cooperative Extension brings research to rural Kentucky

BY KIM KOBERSMITH

No matter where you live in Kentucky, there's a Cooperative Extension Office nearby—and a multitude of free, local resources, from sewing classes to agriculture research and estate planning.

"Extension isn't for profit and is strictly there to help," says Dayna Fentress, a Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agent in Hardin County. "It has done such a great job staying true to that trust for so many years."

The history of Cooperative Extension traces back to the federal Morrill Act of 1862, which established land grant institutions. We have two of them in the commonwealth: the University of Kentucky and Kentucky State University. The development of Kentucky's Extension Service during the 1910s extended practical, research-based learning to rural Kentuckians. That tried and tested information, combined with a grassroots network of local staff who are known as community neighbors, generates a deep sense of trust.

The Be Healthy Bash offers health screenings, wellness resources and more. Photo: UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

At far right, Taylorsville Lake park ranger Conor Lyons speaks to students during Elementary Ag Day at Taylorsville Elementary School. Photo: Mollie Tichenor/Spencer County Extension Office





Today, the University of Kentucky's Cooperative Extension Service has offices in each of the state's 120 counties. The federal USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture provides oversight, and extension faculty and staff at the university develop relevant programming in partnership with local Extension staff, who are called agents.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Fentress, a consumer-member of Meade County RECC, first experienced Extension as a 4-H member, showing hogs to pay for college. Now her daughter is a young 4-H Cloverbud looking forward to her first camp experience next summer.

As a Family and Consumer Sciences agent in Hardin County, Fentress serves community members at every stage of life. One Extension offering that has seen increased interest is estate

planning. Encouraging families to have tough conversations now, Fentress says, can help avoid conflict around possessions after a death.

Old-fashioned homemaking skills are also drawing in participants. Beginning sewing classes often fill up the day registration opens. Cooking and canning classes are also trending, with a focus on food safety and building confidence in the kitchen for all generations.

"The next generation is wanting to learn these homemaking skills," says Fentress. "When finances are tight, they want to be more self-reliant, and having these kinds of skills is a mental health boost."

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Agriculture and Natural Resources is another high-visibility Extension arm. County offices offer soil testing and water quality assessment, in addition to distributing farmers market vouchers

What's in a name?

Electric cooperatives and Cooperative Extension share a word in common, but "cooperative" means different things to each. For electric cooperatives, the word refers to organizational structure: Co-ops are owned by the consumer-members who purchase electricity. For Cooperative Extension, "cooperative" refers to the way national, state and local governments cooperate to make research-based information available to communities.

Spencer County 4-H Cloverbuds members, volunteers and families participate in a nature walk in October. Photo: Mollie Tichenor/Spencer County Extension Office





Cooperative Extension's Be Healthy Bash is an example of its mission to connect Kentuckians with research-based education. Photo: UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

for seniors. Education is the main focus for Reed Graham, the Agriculture and Natural Resources agent in Breathitt County and a consumer-member of Licking Valley RECC. He leads fruit orchard tours, tree grafting workshops and country ham classes. He also conducts more than 100 farm visits a year to help farmers solve problems and make management decisions.

A popular two-year homesteading series in Breathitt County shared skills, best practices and personal experiences. Through a partnership with the public library, a gardening program offered tillage, seeds, plants and cover

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Blueprint for success

Cooperative Extension's offerings aren't just for individuals. Read page 15, then visit KentuckyLiving.com to learn more about Blueprint Kentucky, a statewide Extension program focusing on economic development in rural communities.



Participants learn about innovative weed control methods during the University of Kentucky's Mechanical Weed Control Field Day in September. Photos: UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

crops to 50 families. Three counties—Morgan, Wolfe and Breathitt—collaborated on a horseman training series.

Now in its 26th year in Breathitt County, a canoe trip on the north fork of the Kentucky River welcomes 40–50 people annually. Participants learn about the fish in the river and techniques for managing stream banks, but Graham says it is mostly just a lot of fun. The event has increased the county's pride in the river, generating the construction of boat ramps and organized stream clean-ups.

Research

UK faculty develop most of the curriculum for Family and Consumer Sciences, using recognized expert sources like the National Center for Home Food Preservation and a University of Illinois program on healthy aging. Extension also has a collaborative culture, with states and localities offering to share exemplary programs they have developed.

Much of the research for Agriculture and Natural Resources is performed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27



The University of Kentucky and Kentucky State University hosted the 65th annual Farm City Field Day in Frankfort in July.

At top right, guests learn about health and wellness during the 2025 Be Healthy Bash, presented by UK HealthCare and UK Cooperative Extension Service.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

here in Kentucky by UK's agricultural experiment stations. Established by the federal Hatch Act of 1887, these facilities are research laboratories for faculty and students. Current studies include a long-range forage variety pasture trial and an investigation of hemp yields.

Extension offices sponsor on-site field days and educational workshops for producers to see the practical applications of the farms' research. The Robinson Center Research Station in Breathitt County offers both farm and forest programming, like a forestry field course for high school students and a mechanical weed control field day.

"It is easier to get landowners to adopt new practices or methods if we can show them how it works," says Graham. "Trials show them it can work on their farm."

Local needs, local solutions

The Extension system is nimble. Farming looks different across Kentucky's

diverse geographies, and local offices can share region-specific information. Agents select programs from a cafeteria of options that best meet local needs.

Community needs assessments, local focus groups and advisory councils inform programming. In 2018, communities across Kentucky identified substance abuse prevention and recovery as the top need. While Extension is not typically involved in that particular arena, state leaders could see how many existing program areas aligned with recovery and prevention goals.

As a result, UK established the nation's first Extension faculty position to support substance abuse prevention and recovery. The specialist develops programming for agents and leads local activities that require more expertise.

"We are doing prevention and recovery work that naturally fits into the Extension wheelhouse," explains Jennifer Hunter, who directs the UK Cooperative



4-H Military Teen Adventure camps serve the children of military service members, offering activities like rafting, climbing and rappelling. Photo: UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

Other Extension services

Community Arts Extension promotes support for arts education and development in eight counties and at the state level. Program-ming creatively engages commu-nities through art activities, events, public art and performances.

Horticulture Extension provides educational programs that serve home gardeners and horticulture businesses. Technical services include soil testing; disease diag-nosis; and plant, weed and insect identification.

4-H Extension promotes pos-itive youth development experi-ences so that all youth experience belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. Youth are involved in county-based activities and summer camp programming.

Extension Service. “That includes forming relationships with youth, re-search-based prevention programming and building recovery assets like money management, healthy eating and work-force development.”

From homemaking classes to horti-culture to health, Cooperative Extension makes research-backed information

available and useful.

“We view it as the front door of UK,” Hunter says. “Extension is many people’s first, and sometimes only, interaction with the university. It brings university resources to an individual’s kitchen table and to a farmer’s field. We are keenly positioned to meet people where they are with resources they need.” **KL**

COMING SOON

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See contest details on KentuckyLiving.com and in the February issue of *Kentucky Living*.

Etched in stone

Artists' legacies take many forms.

Musicians, actors and dancers might create moments on stage that linger in the minds of an audience. But for sculptor Rich Griendling, his legacy is literally etched in stone, as well as bronze, steel, plaster and much more.

Griendling, a consumer-member of Nolin RECC, is an accomplished visual artist and graphic designer who's produced art for schools, hospitals, businesses, halls of fame and public spaces, like the Elizabethtown Nature Park, home of the Hardin County Veterans Tribute.

"Thirteen years later," Griendling says, "I still have people coming up to me, thanking me ...".

For him, the process of making art starts with ideas. "I'm always designing in my head," he says, a trait he demonstrated as a child in Philadelphia, where his parents encouraged his artistic side. After college, Griendling and his wife, Sylvia, moved around before they came to Hardin County in 1977.

"Living in rural Kentucky has been an inspiration for my designs," he says. "The rolling hills, the wide-open landscapes, the colors, the textures and most of all the people here made Sylvia and me feel at home from the get-go."

Now retired, Rich Griendling's art is serving him in a way he never imagined. In 2021, he was diagnosed with Primary Progressive Apraxia of Speech, a neurodegenerative condition that makes it difficult to speak. "I'm fortunate that I can draw images to get my ideas across," he writes via email.

Rich Griendling may create art on a smaller scale these days, but each work adds to a legacy that's on display in Elizabethtown and elsewhere. And while his literal voice may be limited, "my work carries on," he says, "and speaks for itself."

Story: Graham Shelby

Photo: Joe Imel

UNIQUELY
Kentucky





Grow lights

Keep your houseplants healthy this winter

GROW LIGHTS ARE USED

to replicate natural light for plants and for growing seeds that are not being exposed to sunlight or need more light than available. Most plants need both warm or red light, and cool or blue light, which are absorbed by chlorophyll.

Natural light is always preferred for indoor plants, but grow lights may be needed, especially in winter, if the plants are a spot that doesn't get natural light. Even a spot 3 feet away from a window or natural light source may not have enough usable light for the plant. Likewise, artificial lighting also loses impact the farther from the source.

Choose a full spectrum or specialty grow light designed for horticultural use—a standard LED bulb is not a grow light. Place most LED grow lights 12 to 14 inches away from the plant or seed bed, but check the package for specific directions. Placing a light too close can burn the leaves.

Multiple lights may be necessary to adequately cover all leaves. If only one light is used, rotate your plant regularly and adjust the height of the light as the plant grows.

Most plants require a long day or more sunlight than dark, with exceptions like Christmas cactus and poinsettias that need less daylight. Generally, if you have some natural light, run the grow light for 12 hours a day, 12 off. With little or no natural light, run your grow light for 16 hours, eight off. **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.



SHELLY NOLD

ASK THE gardener



Are variegated boxwoods a desirable shrub for zone 6?—Clyde Whitt

A Variegated plants provide contrast in the garden, and an evergreen one will do so year-round. Variegated boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Variegata') is hardy to zone 6. The average minimum temperatures in zone 6 fall between zero and minus 10 degrees. Since we live in the lowest range of the hardiness zones, winter damage is possible if we experience lower than average temperatures. This is especially true for broadleaf evergreens, so choose a planting space that offers a bit of protection to prevent potential damage. Boxwoods are adaptable to most growing conditions but prefer full to part sun.

» Angie Oakley



7MONARD/ADOBE STOCK

Have a gardening question?

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

READER
recipe

A hearty warmup

Ruth's homemade beef stew**Submitted by Ruth Stephens, South Kentucky RECC consumer-member**

Ruth has prepared this stew for her family for years. It is easy to fix, and her family absolutely loves it, along with some fried hoecakes to eat with it. It is great on cold days. It warms you up with a smile.

1 (1-lb) pkg of choice beef for stew**2 Tbsp oil****7 medium potatoes, peeled and sliced into wedges****16 oz bag baby peeled carrots****¾ of medium onion, diced****3 C hot water****8 Wyler's beef broth cubes**

Place boneless beef stew meat in a crockpot. Add potatoes, diced onion, carrots and 3 cups hot water. Drop in all beef bouillon cubes. Cook on high for four hours, stirring after two hours. Reduce crockpot to warm until you are ready to eat. Serves 8-10.



HEATHER BILYEU

**SEE
VIDEOS**at KentuckyLiving.com/Cook[Go to KentuckyLiving.com/submit-a-recipe](http://KentuckyLiving.com/submit-a-recipe)

Winter warmth

Comfort foods for cold nights

WHEN THE CHILL OF JANUARY settles in, nothing brings comfort quite like a warm and stick-to-your-ribs meal shared at home. This month's recipes are all about simple, hearty dishes that fill both the belly and the soul—my kind of winter dinner!

Crispy and golden skillet-fried cornbread (also known as hoecakes) and a rich, slow-simmered beef stew are on the menu this month, and I know y'all will love them. Together, they're the kind of classic comfort foods that make cold winter nights feel a little warmer and a whole lot cozier!

Skillet-fried Cornbread Cakes

1 C cornmeal**1 C flour****1 Tbsp sugar****1 Tbsp baking powder****1 ¼ tsp salt****1 C buttermilk****¼ C butter, melted****2 eggs****Bacon grease for frying****Butter and honey for serving**

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, whisk together wet ingredients. Pour wet mixture into the dry ingredients and whisk just until combined. The batter should be thick yet pourable.

Heat a cast-iron skillet over medium heat and add about 1–2 tablespoons of bacon grease. Once the skillet is hot, drop about ¼ cup of batter into the skillet, gently spreading it into a small circle. Cook until golden brown around the edges and bubbles start to form around the edges like a pancake, then flip and cook the other side until golden brown and cooked through, about 1-2 minutes more. If cake is cooking too fast, reduce heat to medium-low.

Remove cake and place on paper towel-lined plate. Repeat with remaining batter, adding more bacon grease as needed. Serve warm with butter and honey, or alongside beef stew or any soup or chili. Makes 12-15 cakes.

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



A crowded table

Backroad Burger Co. is a Marion County favorite

JOEL SAMS

ERIN BALLARD AND ANGIE LEAKE were standing outside a dilapidated building in Raywick, considering whether to take the leap and open a restaurant, when longtime mayor Phyllis Troutman decided for them. “She pulled up that night and was like, ‘Go for it. Do it. We need you,’” Leake remembers.

They opened Backroad Burger Co. in May 2023, pooling years of food industry expertise to create made-to-order burgers, wings, nachos, homemade sauces and more in an inviting atmosphere. The venture steadily outgrew its space in Raywick, and in October, moved to a new facility inside Good Buddies Brewing Company in Lebanon. They have 21 employees, including Cloe Blair and Payten Newton, shown at left.

After Troutman passed away in August, Ballard and Leake renamed their best-selling All-American burger in her honor—the Mayor Phyllis. Other items include the Pope Burger, named for UK basketball coach Mark Pope, and the Dirty Bird for the Louisville Cardinals. “We’re a split house over here,” Ballard says. The John Dutton burger uses homemade bacon jam made with Yellowstone Whiskey (jam recipe below).

The pair pride themselves on a family-friendly environment, complete with big TVs for game day and an outstanding lineup of craft brews made by their host site. Inspired by their own tight-knit families, Ballard and Leake aim to extend a family welcome to their customers. “It’s hard, in this day and age, to get everybody around the table at the same time,” Leake says. “Our LLC is literally called The Crowded Table for a reason. It’s to be able to facilitate that for other people.”

Served by Inter-County Energy, Backroad Burger Co. is located at 104 Independence Drive in Lebanon. During the winter, the restaurant is open 4–8:30 p.m. Wednesday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–9:30 p.m. Friday–Saturday and closed Sunday–Tuesday.



ERIN BALLARD

Backroad Burger Co. Yellowstone Bourbon Bacon Jam

Serves 24

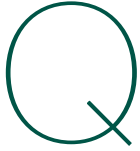
3 lb bacon, diced
1 medium white onion, diced
1½ C brown sugar
½ C apple cider vinegar
½ C Yellowstone bourbon

Cook diced bacon over low heat, stirring frequently. Once bacon turns translucent, add onion and stir. When onions are softened, but not browned, remove from heat. Stir in brown sugar, apple cider vinegar, and Yellowstone bourbon. When ingredients are incorporated, return to medium heat and simmer, stirring frequently, until mixture is caramelized and reduced to a jam-like consistency. Serve as a hamburger topping or a savory dip.



ERIN BALLARD

Wood stoves: the newer, the better



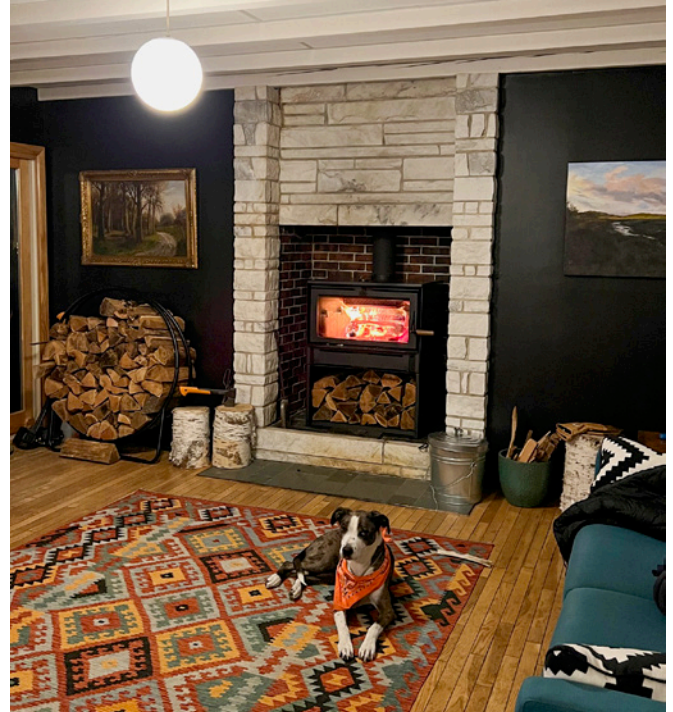
We've had our wood stove for a long time—how do I know when to replace it?

MIRANDA BOUTELLE
writes on energy efficiency
for the National Rural Electric
Cooperative Association

A The United States Environmental Protection Agency recommends replacing wood stoves manufactured before 1990 with cleaner, more efficient models. This can save you money, make your home safer by reducing fire risk, and improve indoor air quality.

Modern wood stoves require less wood, produce less ash and emit almost no smoke. They come in catalytic and noncatalytic options. Catalytic models increase burn time and reduce air pollution. The operation of noncatalytic models is more standard. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the amount of heat released by new catalytic wood stoves is higher than that of noncatalytics.

A pellet stove burns compressed pellets made of wood or other biomass materials. Like a wood stove,



there are free-standing units or inserts. It can burn cleaner and doesn't require hauling wood. Pellets are loaded into the hopper, which feeds them into the combustion chamber for burning. Most pellet stoves use electricity for the hopper and a fan to push warm air into the room. An EPA-certified pellet stove releases about the same amount of heat as a catalytic wood stove.

▲
New wood stoves release more heat from the same amount of wood while reducing indoor air pollution.
Photo: Miranda Boutelle/
Pioneer Utility Resources

SMOKY SIGNS

Signs your wood stove may need to be replaced, according to the EPA:

- You often smell smoke in the house with all the windows closed.
- Smoke comes out of the chimney more than 15 minutes after a cold start or reload.
- Watery eyes and stuffy noses are common in your household when operating the wood stove.
- You must continually feed the stove with wood.

Fuel costs

Consider the cost of the fuel source—whether you have to buy wood, harvest it yourself or stock up on a specific type of pellet. Reduce fuel consumption and smoke by burning wood that is dry and seasoned, meaning it is split, covered and aged for at least six months.

Installation by a certified technician ensures the job is done right, preventing chimney fires and indoor smoke. The stove should be cleaned and inspected annually by a professional. Make sure your home has carbon monoxide detectors. **KL**

Keeping warm—and safe

Heaters and electric blanket hazards

DURING THESE WINTER MONTHS, when space heaters and electric blankets come out of hibernation, home fires increase.

Heating equipment is the second leading cause of home fires in the United States. More than 65,000 home fires are attributed to heating equipment each year, resulting in hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries and millions in property damage.

Remember: An electric space heater is a temporary option for supplemental heat. Many homeowners may use this option to heat specific rooms while they sleep, but this is unsafe. When you leave a room or go to sleep, it is important to turn off your electric space heater. It could overheat or fall if unattended.



TRAVIS MAYS
is safety and compliance coordinator at Clark Energy

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY: 12

WHEN I'M NOT WORKING I'M:
Spending time with my wife and three sons. I also love to hunt and watch sports.

Do's and Don'ts

- DO read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels carefully before using any space heater or electric blanket.
- DON'T leave a space heater or electric heating blanket unattended. Turn it off when you're leaving a room or going to sleep.
- DO inspect heaters for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections before each use.
- DON'T use the heater if plugs are frayed, worn or damaged.
- DO keep heaters at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, including papers, clothing and rugs.
- DON'T use electric blankets while sleeping or as a mattress pad.
- DO plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet; don't use an extension cord or power strip, which could overheat and result in a fire.
- DON'T fold an electric blanket when it's in use. Folded or tucked blankets could overheat and cause a fire.

Always plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet; to avoid overheating, never use an extension cord.

Electric blankets and heating pads are also popular during the cold months. Never fold them and avoid using them while sleeping. Inspect them for dark, charred or frayed spots, and check to see if the electric cord is cracked or frayed. Be sure to read the manufacturer's instructions and warning labels carefully before using them in your home.

While there is no risk for carbon monoxide poisoning with an electric space heater, it holds many other safety hazards if not used properly. To be safe, install smoke alarms on every floor of your home and outside all sleeping areas. If you already have them, be sure to test them once a month.

Don't let your guard down if you keep yourself or your home warm with an electric space heater, electric blanket or heating pad. By following these tips, you and your family have a better chance of avoiding significant fire and electric shock hazards. **KL**

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International

Brain health habits

Your mind deserves a New Year's resolution, too



RAWPIXEL.COM/ADOBESTOCK

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT

New Year's resolutions, we often focus on our waistlines, budgets or calendars. But what about our brains? Protecting your memory and thinking skills deserves a spot on your list for 2026.

At the University of Kentucky's Sanders-Brown Center on Aging, researchers are finding that what's good for your heart and body is also good for your brain. While there's no single way to prevent Alzheimer's

disease or dementia, decades of research point to several powerful habits that can help keep your brain healthy as you age.

Move more. Regular physical activity increases blood flow to the brain and supports the growth of new connections between brain cells. Even a daily walk can make a difference.

Sleep well. Quality sleep gives your brain time to clear toxins and consolidate memories. Aim for seven to

nine hours of consistent rest each night.

Stay social. Spending time with friends, family or community groups helps protect against isolation, which is linked to cognitive decline. Join a class, volunteer or simply reach out to an old friend.

Challenge yourself. Reading, learning a new skill or playing strategy games keeps your mind active and adaptable.

Manage your health. High blood pressure, diabetes and

high cholesterol all increase dementia risk—so staying on top of your medical care matters more than ever.

Healthy brain aging isn't about perfection—it's about consistency. This year, make one small change that supports your mind. Your future self will thank you for it. **KL**

ELIZABETH RHODUS, PH.D., is assistant professor in the UK College of Medicine's Department of Behavioral Sciences and faculty with the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging.



Visit like a local

Travel tips from co-op consumer-members

BY KATHY WITT



NATURE, WILDLIFE, ONE-OF-A-KIND

landmarks and laid-back gathering spaces under the stars or around a table: these Kentucky attractions are among the nearest and dearest to the hearts of the state's residents. Not only are they the go-to places to take out-of-town family and friends but they're also among "must" recommendations for visitors who ask what to see and do in the Bluegrass State.

"Lakes, caves, mountains, rivers—we got it all," says Pat Hargadon, agency manager at Shelby County Farm Bureau and a director on the Shelby Energy board.



Scenic settings and sipping

When it comes to hosting visitors, bourbon distilleries are No. 1 on Hargadon's list. "My first choice to take guests is a bourbon distillery—fascinating places and classic Kentucky, with each distillery varying in setup, level of technology and history," he says.

Come for the tasting and tour at Jephtha Creed Distillery; stay for cocktails and signature pizza at the Creed Café.
Photo: Kentucky Tourism

Among his favorites is Shelbyville's Jephtha Creed, one of a handful of women-owned bourbon distilleries in the state and famous for the use of its farm-grown bloody butcher corn in its spirits along with other all-natural ingredients.

Another top choice: Kentucky State Parks for their scenic settings and variety of activities, everything from boating, caving, fishing and golfing to hiking,



Downtown Cynthiana offers unique shops, plus the Cynthiana/Harrison County Museum in the old Rohs Opera House building.

SHOP LIKE A LOCAL IN CYNTHIANA

Smalltown shopping? That's right up Lesha Munich's alley—or main street—when it comes to entertaining visitors.

"I take visitors to all the local shops in downtown Cynthiana," says the Berry resident, a consumer-member of Blue Grass Energy.

Appalachian Root Works, Institute Records & Curiosities, Tay's Cloth Peddler, Mollie B's Boutique: Each shop beckons with a medley of irresistible merch. Bonus: the Cynthiana/Harrison County Museum in the old Rohs Theater building is chock-full of yesteryear treasures and worth a good long browse.

An artist who grows her own broomcorn for making brooms and other works, Munich also makes sure one of the stops is Boyd's Station Art Gallery, where her creations are on display.



Kellie Wilferd owns Whippoorwill Manor in Mayfield. Photo: Kellie Wilferd

camping, paddling and horseback riding. At the top of Hargadon's list? Natural Bridge State Resort Park.

"Natural Bridge is special because my wife and I are avid hikers, and there is no place more beautiful," he says.

Good nature and good food

Kellie Wilferd, the owner of Whippoorwill Manor, a gracious Mayfield event space with bungalow and vacation home lodgings, loves to steer guests to the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area for a full day of nature, history and lakeside fun.

"Take the scenic loop through the Elk & Bison Prairie—and keep your camera ready for grazing herds and wide-open views," says Wilferd, a consumer-member of West Kentucky RECC. "Make time for Golden Pond Planetarium, where you can enjoy an immersive show about Kentucky's night skies, before crossing



DESTINATIONS

more to
explore

Share these local favorites with out-of-town guests—or make repeat visits on your own.

Featured favorites

Ark Encounter

1 Ark Encounter Drive, Williamstown; (859) 727-2222, arkencounter.com; and sister attraction, the Creation Museum, 2800 Bullittsburg Church Road, Petersburg; (888) 582-4253, creationmuseum.org.

Grand Rivers Tourism Commission

(Badgett Playhouse, Green Turtle Bay Resort & Marina, Patti's 1880's Settlement, T. Lawson's Grill), 1858 JH O'Bryan Avenue; (270) 362-0152, grandrivers.org.

Jeptha Creed Distillery

500 Gordon Lane, Shelbyville; (502) 487-5007, jepthacreed.com.

Land Between the Lakes

238 Visitor Center Drive, Golden Pond; (800) 525-7077, landbetweenthe lakes.us.

Natural Bridge State Resort Park

2135 Natural Bridge Road, Slade; (606) 663-2214, parks.ky.gov.

Woodbury RV Park

Lock 4 Road, Morgantown; (270) 532-1083, woodburyrv.com.

Other favorite places

Bernheim Forest and Arboretum

2075 Clermont Road, Clermont; (502) 955-8512, bernheim.org. "I have gone to Bernheim since I was 4 or 5 years old, and it's cool to visit a place that has such long-dated memories," says Pat Hargadon, who includes this 16,000-plus acre wild forest and arboretum on his go-to list.

Morgantown Tourism Commission

117 N. Main Street, Morgantown; (270) 526-3557, morgantown-ky.com, Facebook: Morgantown Tourism Commission. "Some of the most amazing scenery is right here, on the backroads of Butler County," says Janeen Taylor. "Rochester is an interesting old river town; in its heyday, it was a lifeline for Butler County. Some of the old stores still stand and it's filled with beautiful Victorian homes."

Hub's Restaurant

1802 S. 7th Street, Hickman; (270) 236-9858, Facebook: Hub's Restaurant. "Hub's is a little dive I love for good drinks and an awesome steak," says Kellie Wilferd.

Pendleton County Tourism

233 Main St., Falmouth; (859) 654-4567; pendletoncountytourism.com. One of Leshia Munich's favorite places to share is "anywhere on the Licking River—no matter the time of year. "In the winter, the water turns a clear emerald green that is so beautiful," she says. "In summertime, the river water is the best for sitting in and relaxing with your favorite drink and friends. I love the Licking River, and you will, too."



Bible stories come to life at the family-friendly Creation Museum, which also features botanical gardens, a planetarium and zip line course. Photo: CreationMuseum.org



In western Kentucky, Grand Rivers is home to numerous attractions, including Patti's 1880's Settlement. Photo: Kentucky Tourism

over to Grand Rivers, a picturesque resort town nestled between Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley."

Here, Wilferd likes to introduce her guests to the culinary delights of Patti's 1880's Settlement, known far and wide for the house specialty, perfectly seasoned 2-inch pork chops grilled over an open flame, and decadent sinker pies that are top-heavy with whipped cream. This resort village also offers a variety of overnight accommodations and fun shopping options.

"Spend the afternoon browsing the boutique shops at Patti's or unwind at Green Turtle Bay Resort & Marina's Jade & Earth Spa," says Wilferd.



In the evenings, she suggests the shows at the Badgett Playhouse and live piano music and cocktails at T. Lawson's Grill or Pier 32, the Commonwealth Yacht Club at Green Turtle Bay Resort, with views over the water.

Manmade and natural attractions

Diana Morgan, president of the Grant County Extension Homemakers and a consumer-member of Owen Electric in Dry Ridge, encourages visits to Williamstown's Ark Encounter for several reasons: "The actual size and beauty of the Ark; the grounds that are kept so clean with beautiful flowers; and the good food, great playgrounds and petting zoo."

Morgan even volunteers at the Ark Encounter's summertime 40 Days of Christian Music—the world's largest Christian music festival. (In 2026, the

Find the great outdoors at Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area—170,000 acres of forests, wetlands and open lands on a peninsula between Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley. Photo: Land Between the Lakes

KentuckyLiving.com

Get more ideas here

Need ideas for fun and memorable places to take out-of-town family and friends? Visit KentuckyLiving.com for a link to the latest Official Kentucky Visitors Guide.

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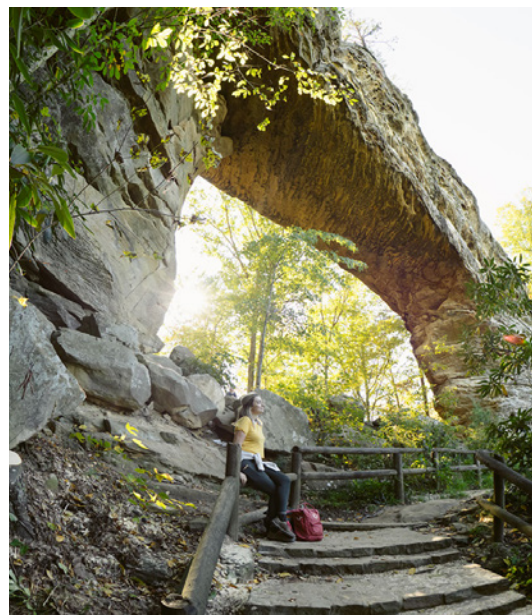


One of Paducah's attractions for locals and visitors alike is the Market House Theatre. Photos: Kentucky Tourism

PLAY LIKE A LOCAL IN PADUCAH

Kellie Wilferd's perfect day with visitors in Paducah begins with a stroll along the Paducah Wall to Wall Murals, followed by unhurried exploration of the National Quilt Museum and a hands-on experience at the Pour Room to create a custom candle.

Dinner possibilities include Doe's Eat Place for a classic Southern steak-house experience or the farm-to-table ambiance at Top Chef finalist Sara Bradley's Freight House. Nightlife? Cocktails at Barrel & Bond or FoxBriar Cocktail Bar followed by a show at the Carson Center for the Performing Arts or Market House Theatre, a nationally acclaimed and award-winning community theater.



Hiking, canoeing, fishing, swimming, birding, pedal boating, picnicking—it's all here at Natural Bridge State Resort Park, along with the famed natural sandstone arch that stretches more than 75 feet long and 65 feet high.

event is planned for July 28-September 5.) "I love gospel music," she says.

When Janeen Taylor's family visits from out west, she drives them along the backroads of Butler County, through the tiny river town of Rochester and into Morgantown, a Kentucky Trail Town and home of Woodbury RV Park, a tranquil hidden gem surrounded by forest.

"The mighty Green River connects these three communities," says the Morgantown resident, a consumer-member of Warren RECC. "This river offers boating, fishing, kayaking or just relaxing on the banks.

"I really don't think I could take my guests anywhere else to showcase Kentucky." **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*.



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EVENT CALENDAR



1 GO FISH!

Kentucky Fishing Expo, January 9–11 at the Corbin Arena, is a fisherman's haven. See the newest model boats and fishing gear. Hawg Trough demos and seminars with fishing pros, including outdoorsman Hank Parker on Friday and Saturday, plus Paw Patrol characters for the kids. Hours: 1–7 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m.–7 p.m. Saturday; noon–5 p.m. Sunday. Tickets: \$5; free for 12 and under, veterans and first responders. Info: Kyfishingexpo.com.

2 HOME & GARDEN

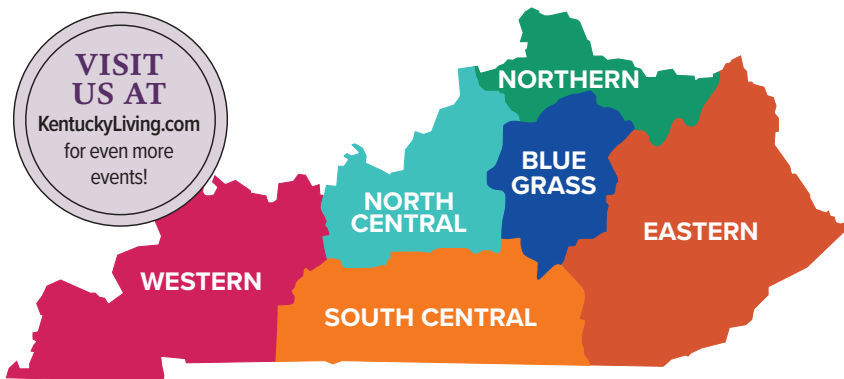
Stroll through a lush garden in January? You can at Louisville Home & Garden Show, January 9–11 at the Kentucky Expo Center. Garden vendors, speakers, an array of home improvement providers from heating/cooling to flooring and more. Hours: 10 a.m.–8 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Sunday. \$10 adults, \$8 online (50% off with promo code KENTUCKYLIVING); free 12 and under, vets, military, first responders; seniors free Friday. Louisvillehomeshow.com.

3 MLK AND SERVICE

Kenton County Public Library's Latonia Branch hosts a day of service and kindness for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 19 at 11 a.m. Participate in creating emergency shelter care packages, writing a kind note to a senior citizen, preparing books for a school library or contributing to a community art installation. A story walk features the book *I Have a Dream* by Kadir Nelson. Details, (859) 962-4000, kentonlibrary.org, click Events.

4 R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Celebrate 50 years of chart-topping music at Cece Teneal's Divas of Soul concert January 30, 7 p.m. at Madisonville's Glema Mahr Center for the Arts. Vocalist Teneal wows with hits from disco to Motown to R&B and pop from artists like Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight, Tina Turner, Chaka Khan, Whitney Houston and more. Tickets: \$15–\$25, available at glemacenter.org—click on 2025/26 Season, Center Stage Series. More info: (270) 821-2787.



BLUEGRASS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9

Modern Western Square Dance Lessons, 23rd, 30th, (443) 745-3261, Beaumont Presbyterian Church, Lexington

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16

Nathan Meltzer, (877) 448-7469, Norton Center for the Arts, Danville

TriState MX, (859) 233-4303, Alltech Arena, Lexington

American Spiritual Ensemble, (502) 352-7469, The Grand Theatre, Frankfort

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

Jokers of Magic, (859) 233-3535, Lexington Opera House

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

Frankfort Comic Con, (502) 227-5100, Capital Plaza Hotel

EASTERN

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1

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

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8

Henry Clay: Divided We Stand, (606) 329-8888, The Highlands Museum & Discovery Center, Ashland

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

Winter Adventure Weekend, thru 25th, (606) 286-7009, Carter Caves State Resort Park, Olive Hill

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

David Parmley Band, (606) 945-5999, Meadowgreen Appalachian Music Park, Clay City

Elvis: The Concert of Kings!, (606) 256-2664, Renfro Valley Entertainment Center, Mount Vernon

NORTH CENTRAL

SUNDAY, JANUARY 4

Bluegrass Brunch, 11th, 18th, 25th, (502) 482-3373, 3rd Turn Oldham Gardens, Crestwood

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10

The Dinner Detective True Crime Murder Mystery Dinner Show, 24th, (866) 496-0535, Tempo by Hilton NuLu, Louisville

Hardin County Farmers Winter Market, (270) 765-2175, Hardin County Extension Office, Elizabethtown

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical, thru Feb. 8th, (502) 584-7777, The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts, Louisville

Indoor Farmers Market, (502) 348-4877, Nelson County Cooperatives Extension, Bardstown

Bluegrass World of Wheels, thru 25th, (502) 558-9653, Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30

John Lennon and Me, thru Feb. 8th, (502) 633-6388, Shelby County Community Theatre, Shelbyville

NORTHERN

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1

All Four Seasons in Equal Measure Exhibit, thru March 7th, (859) 957-1940, The Carnegie, Covington

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11

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

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27

Antarctica: Landscapes of Ice and Light (and Penguins!), (859) 962-4149, Kenton County Library, Erlanger

SOUTH CENTRAL

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1

First day Hikes, (270) 646-2151, Barren River Lake State Resort Park, Lucas

Tiki's Winter Wonderland, thru Feb. 15th, (606) 679-7946, SomerSplash Waterpark, Somerset

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2

Pink Floyd's The Dark Side of the Moon: 50 Years in a Heartbeat, thru July 26th, (270) 745-4044, Hardin Planetarium, Bowling Green

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17

An Acoustic Evening with Bryan White, (270) 361-2101, Plaza Theatre, Glasgow

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

Lettice Pierce Bryan: Kentucky Homemaker, (606) 451-6763, Somerset Community College, Somerset

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

Nature Watch Weekend: Sandhill Crane Tours, thru 25th, (270) 646-2151, Barren River Lake State Resort Park, Lucas

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

Snow Flurry Scurry 5K, (270) 303-2617, Lost River Cave, Bowling Green

WESTERN

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1

Guided Hike: New Year Hike, (270) 584-9017, Mahr Park Arboretum, Madisonville

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10

Americans Exhibit Opening Reception, (270) 827-3712, Henderson County Public Library

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

Overture Series: Prism & Mozart, (270) 444-0065, Williams Family Symphony Hall, Paducah

Behind the Notes with Raffaele

, (270) 442-2510, McCracken County Public Library, Paducah

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

John Hartford Days, (270) 926-7891, Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Owensboro

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1 SCHOOL'S OUT

Eli Westerfield takes full advantage of his snow day, enjoying the blustery outdoors in Elizabethtown. Photo by mom, Elizabeth Westerfield, a Nolichucky RECC consumer-member.

2 THE WOODS IN SNOW

Bessie watches the woods fill up with snow in western Kentucky. Photo by owner Sarah Ezell, Symsonia, a consumer-member of Jackson Purchase Energy.

3 NOSE TO NOSE

Grace the dog and Ellie the horse share a special moment during the snowfall in Taylorsville. Photo by owner Emily Voirin, a Salt River Electric consumer-member.

4 AURORA KENTUCKIENSIS

Danielle Huffines captured this image of the Northern Lights in McQuady on November 11. Huffines is a consumer-member of Meade County RECC from Hardinsburg.

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

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KENTUCKY kids

Cardboard Creations

Instead of throwing away single-use items, like cardboard boxes, use your creativity to turn them into fun craft projects.



SMART STEPS FOR STREET SAFETY

Stop, look and listen before you cross the street.

Stop and look all ways for traffic that is coming (not just two ways), then cross the street.

Never run into the street for any reason. If a ball, pet or toy goes into the road, stop right away and ask an adult for help.

Play safely by keeping games and toys away from the street.



Did You Know?

Johnny Appleseed was a real person! His name was John Chapman, and he planted apple trees across the American frontier.



Green Team Tip

Walk instead of driving when possible. It can help you stay healthy, feel happier and keep the planet clean.

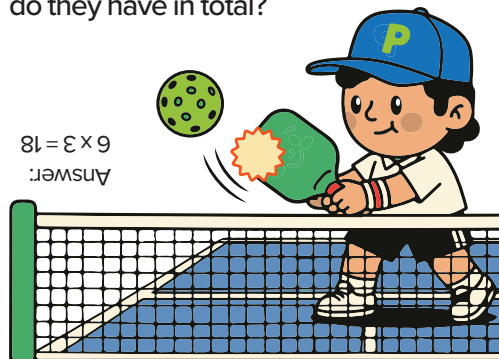
— Clyde Garrett, age 7



Pickleball math

Six friends are playing pickleball together. They each brought three pickleballs to the court. How many pickleballs do they have in total?

Answer:
 $6 \times 3 = 18$



Tell us a joke!

Why does the chef laugh when she cooks breakfast?

Because the egg always cracks a yolk!

— Alannah Reisz, age 8



GREAT OUTDOORS

Shed hunting

Family time in the great outdoors

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD of shed hunting? If so, you might already know how much fun it can be. If not, allow me to explain. It just might be your next outdoor adventure.

Male whitetail deer and elk shed their antlers each year. These antlers drop throughout a buck's wintering areas as early as mid-January, continuing through the prime months of February and March. Shed hunting is simply the activity of hunting for these antlers, and it makes a great family activity.

Shed hunting has become more popular in recent years, which means it can be harder to find shed antlers, especially during warmer spells. That said, increased popularity also means there are now countless videos and articles online to help you fine-tune your skills in shed hunting. Some common tips include focusing on bedding areas and food sources, using binoculars and going shed hunting earlier in the season to beat your competition.

Always secure permission before looking for sheds on private land, and check regulations and season dates before searching on public land. It's legal to keep antlers that have been naturally shed, but if you find antlers attached to a skull, you must obtain a carcass disposal tag. Contact the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources conservation officer in the county where the skull was located. The skull and antlers cannot be moved until this tag is obtained.

Humans aren't the only ones on the hunt. Some critters like to gnaw on antlers, and they might get to them before you do. Squirrels and mice are the main consumers of shed antlers, but other larger mammals, like beavers, foxes and opossums, will also chew on antler bone—both for nutrition and

to keep their ever-growing teeth in check. Deer themselves also have been known to chew on shed antlers for the minerals they contain. For this reason, you might want to photograph the shed and leave it for the critters.

This is something my wife and I are doing. We are planning an extended family outing this year to hunt sheds—with cameras only—and spend a day together, complete with a picnic and a photo contest. Kentucky has many great shed hunting opportunities on public land near you. Consider giving it a try. Pack a lunch, load up the family and spend a day exploring the great outdoors. **KL**

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



► Emma Ratliff poses with her prize of the day in eastern Kentucky. Photo: Trevor Coffey

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	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
30	8.77	7.56	9.71	8.60	13	11	18	16	58	27.70	21.98	50.43	36.04	89	62	169	116
36	8.77	7.93	10.35	9.44	14	13	22	18	59	30.37	23.51	55.50	38.76	98	67	186	126
37	8.77	8.15	10.52	9.81	15	13	22	20	60	33.49	24.28	60.76	41.71	109	73	206	136
38	8.77	8.16	11.19	10.18	16	14	24	21	61	36.49	25.09	66.43	47.10	122	83	236	154
39	9.13	8.31	11.62	10.55	17	15	25	22	62	39.88	27.91	73.90	51.32	136	92	262	166
40	9.55	8.48	12.04	10.98	18	16	27	24	63	43.69	34.01	81.54	57.25	153	102	287	187
41	10.05	8.72	13.10	11.58	20	17	30	26	64	47.91	38.28	90.20	62.32	170	112	323	200
42	10.48	9.01	14.21	12.30	22	19	33	29	65	52.81	40.88	100.33	68.23	191	125	361	223
43	10.98	9.36	14.72	13.18	23	20	38	31	66	58.71	44.61	114.29	75.40	211	135	392	242
44	11.58	9.73	15.67	14.10	25	22	41	34	67	64.59	49.08	125.27	83.64	234	146	436	261
45	12.17	10.15	16.86	15.16	28	24	45	38	68	72.24	59.65	143.07	105.55	254	173	485	322
46	12.84	10.64	17.85	15.83	30	25	49	40	69	79.34	64.22	158.23	129.28	288	188	547	352
47	13.43	11.16	19.03	16.68	32	27	54	44	70	86.85	68.11	177.24	147.66	318	203	595	375
48	13.48	11.88	20.27	17.37	35	29	58	47	71	102.45	82.60	203.10	159.34	374	235	702	443
49	13.69	12.33	21.73	18.32	37	31	63	52	72	113.68	93.16	232.46	172.23	427	272	807	512
50	14.36	12.98	23.00	19.82	40	33	69	57	73	127.55	106.68	267.15	188.15	493	319	937	596
51	15.37	13.75	25.30	20.65	45	35	78	62	74	142.08	119.36	303.50	204.84	562	367	1074	685
52	16.36	14.87	27.63	22.13	49	38	87	67	75	159.25	140.48	346.45	224.56	644	424	1235	789
53	17.46	15.88	30.95	24.81	54	42	98	73	76	200.03	168.51	418.29	276.67	785	530	1489	982
54	18.68	16.72	33.99	26.20	60	46	110	81	77	249.54	216.74	505.52	339.94	956	658	1797	1215
55	20.70	17.50	37.13	27.85	67	50	121	90	78	310.70	268.40	613.27	418.11	1167	817	2179	1504
56	22.69	19.48	42.01	31.07	74	53	138	96	79	374.78	322.52	726.16	500.00	1389	983	2578	1807
57	24.69	20.63	45.81	33.43	81	58	150	107	80	450.50	386.47	816.15	596.78	1625	1180	3050	2164

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
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The list of 65

A birthday of new beginnings



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.

SHE HAD TAKEN EARLY RETIREMENT

from state government and had recently gone through a divorce. Her home had been burglarized, and she later sold it and built a home closer to her sister. Then the COVID-19 pandemic struck and, during the months that followed—prior to her father's death from an extended, unrelated illness—she'd spent much of her time with her parents in rural Shelby County.

As her 65th birthday approached in July 2024, Sandy Waits Phillips realized that she was becoming something of a hermit.

"So the birthday kind of gave me a reason to force myself to 'reclaim me,'" she says. "I had 10 or 15 things I wanted to do, and then things just started coming to me. I would see things on the computer, things other people had done. I mean, it was just so easy."

dated and accompanied with names of friends or family who joined her on the trips. She had photos, as well.

It began with a visit to the Paul Sawyer Library in Frankfort for a book signing by former University of Kentucky basketball great—now broadcast personality—Jack "Goose" Givens. Then came a backyard campout with four young great-nieces and nephews, Shakespeare in Central Park in Louisville, *The Stephen Foster Story* at Bardstown, hiking the Red River Gorge and a cave tour. She saw her first pro rodeo in Madison, Indiana, gave carrots to two Kentucky Derby winners at Old Friends thoroughbred retirement farm near Georgetown, and fed honeybees for the winter with Shelby County beekeeper Pat Hornback.

"There's so much to do, and it's inexpensive," says Phillips, a consumer-member of Shelby Energy. "Most everything I've done has been less than \$50, and a lot of it has been free. It was way better than I ever dreamed it would be."

She visited the Rabbit Hash General Store in Boone County, toured coal mine Portal 31 in Harlan County, fired a shotgun for the first time at a skeet shooting range in Henry County ("I hit one on the sixth try"), saw the Madison, Indiana, unlimited hydroplane regatta, took a broom-making class at Shaker Village in Mercer County, went zip lining with her great-niece over the Red River Gorge, toured Winchester's Ale-8-One bottling company, and attended UK basketball games and the SEC tournament with friends and family. Sixty-five events in all.

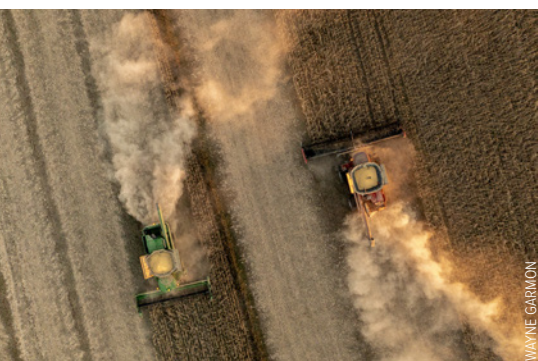
Her 66th birthday in 2025 was spent with family at the movie *Superman*.

Phillips is already filling a list for the new year with her first ride in a small plane—in which the flight instructor let her take the yoke (or steering wheel).

Plans for the coming months include fly-fishing, a helicopter ride and skydiving. **KL**



The result was the "list of 65" places she visited or events she experienced during her 65th year. When I overheard her discussing it with friends last summer, I asked to see the list and hear some of her stories. She sent more than a page and a half of single-spaced listings, each



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