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DECEMBER 2021 • KENTUCKY PUBLISHING, INC.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

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Guthrie presented 2021 "Cooperator of the Year Award"

Staff report

Mitchell Guthrie recently was presented the 2021 "Cooperator of the Year Award" for his many contributions to Graves County's Wetland Reserve Easement program. More than 140 acres of Guthrie land is included in the Wetlands program. The conservation easement makes a Natural Resources and Conservation Service water quality study, which surveys reduction of nitrogen,

phosphorus and other sediments, as runoff from a portion of the land.

The Mayfield-Graves County Chamber of Commerce also selected Mitchell Guthrie for its "Farmer of the Year" award, along with his two brothers, David and Cliff. The Guthries have a long history as Graves County farmers. Among their crops are corn, soybeans, tobacco, and wheat. The family includes several generations and currently farms more than 2,500 acres.



Mitchell Guthrie accepts the Mayfield-Graves County Chamber of Commerce Farmer of the Year 2021 Award, sponsored by River Valley Ag Credit, on behalf of himself and brothers David and Cliff. He also was honored recently as the 2021 "Cooperator of the Year" for his many contributions to Graves County's Wetland Reserve Easement program.

Photo contributed

Paducah Omega Psi Phi 2022 Man of the Year: Kenneth B. Hurt, Sr.

By Paul Schaumburg
Editor, West KY News

The Paducah Chapter of Omega Psi Phi's 2022 Omega Man of The Year is Kenneth B. Hurt Sr.

Hurt graduated from high school

in 1969 in Milan, Tenn., where he played football and was a member of the band. He entered Lane College in Jackson, Tenn., where he was on a band scholarship and joined Omega Psi Phi Fraternity in

see HURT, page 3



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HURT

continued from page 1

1970 and the Masonic Lodge in 1971.

In 1973, he graduated from Lane College, with a bachelor's degrees in business and secondary education. He subsequently earned the Master of Business Administration degree from Murray State University in Quantitative Financial Controls in December 2002.

Also in 1973, he was recruited by Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. in Union City, Tenn., as a supervisor. Two years later, he was recruited by the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad. He worked there for ten years, as a telecommunications specialist, and in freight operations administration. He also taught part-time as a business instructor at West Kentucky State Vocational and Technical School and at Draughton's Business College.

In 1986, Hurt joined the U.S. Navy Reserve and rose to the rank of Information System Technician Chief in 2007. He was activated for duty in 2001 and deployed to the Middle East in the Second Gulf War. After serving more than 25 years, he retired from the Navy in 2011, with numerous awards and honors and after extensive world travel.

In 1987, Hurt was commissioned as a Revenue Officer by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. He became the first African-American Revenue Officer and Supervisory Revenue officer in Western Kentucky and managed collection groups in the Kentucky cities of Paducah and Lexington as well as Dayton, Ohio. He retired in 2017, after 30 years' of service and became an IRS Certified Enrolled Agent, founding his own firm, Hurt's Consulting.

In 2018, he spearheaded the fraternity's "Rev. Lawrence Milliken Scholarship."

In 2019, he led reactivating the Undergraduate Omegas at Murray State University, after being



Omega Psi Phi fraternity was founded at Howard University in Washington, D.C., Nov. 17, 1911, as the first African-American fraternity founded on an Historical Black College Campus. Omega Upsilon Iota Iota Chapter in Paducah was chartered in 1992. That graduate chapter recently celebrated its Founders Day and its 2022 Omega Man of The Year, Kenneth B. Hurt Sr. The brothers attended Harrison Street Baptist Church in Paducah together on Sunday Nov. 21, 2021. Pictured in the church sanctuary are, from left, brothers Branden Higginson, Jeffery Liles, Tony Copeland, and presenting Hurt the Man of the Year Award are Ronald Clemons and Brother Robert Hargrove.

Photo submitted

inactive for 14 years.

In 2020, he created the fraternity's "Boyhood to Manhood Initiative" whereby the brothers mentor and tutor students from 10 to 18 years of age. The main goals of the program are to improve the students' grades, test scores, and readiness to secure a higher education, and stop the cycles of poverty and school-to-prison.

In November of 2020, he celebrated 50 years in Omega, as a Life Member. His fraternity brothers say Hurt exemplifies Omega Psi Phi's Four Cardinal Principles: manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift. He serves as basileus (president) of the local chapter, where he led an increase in membership by 65 percent. Under his leadership, the chapter

continues to thrive, grow, and move forward.

Every year, on the 8th of August he partners with area health care providers to present diabetes education at Robert Coleman Park. He guided the fraternity through its inaugural voter registration drive there as well. The Omegas also have a cookout for the kids.

In 2021, he spearheaded the first Omega Psi Phi Clarence "Big House" Gaines Golf Scramble to fund the scholarship program. Later, he started the Youth Omega Talent Show. He prepared and forwarded to Congress and the U.S. Defense Department documentation, on behalf of a local Army Vietnam Veteran's Silver Star Medal, to be upgraded to the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Hurt is a member of Harrison Street Missionary Baptist Church and serves on the Church Security Team Ministry, VFW, Red Cross, Foster Care Review Board, W.C. Young Community Center Board, Paducah Human Rights Commission, McCracken County Juvenile Service, a Life Member of the NAACP, and recently was selected by Gov. Andy Beshear as a member of the West Kentucky Community and Technical College Board.

Kenneth Hurt Sr. and his wife, Varetta, have been married more than 48 years. They have three adult children: Nathan, Kenya Hurt Natsis, Kenneth Jr., and six grandchildren; Ashton, Adian, Savannah, Nathan II, Kennedy, and Kiersten.

OP-ED ARTICLE:

Alleviating the pain of Kentucky's health care worker shortage

PADUCAH, KY - Throughout the pandemic, our health care workers have been our heroes. But we're facing a crisis even these superheroes can't overcome, and that's the dwindling number of health care workers. This is happening in every role in health care, not just nursing, and there are several reasons for this.

The shortage is not new-retirements and career changes have affected the numbers-but the pandemic has exacerbated it and put it in the spotlight. At West Kentucky Community and Technical College, we offer health care programs from short-term certificates for entry-level jobs to associate degrees in nursing and many others. Health care facilities need all of these professionals. An example is in nursing, with needs at all levels from state registered nurse aides to licensed practical

nurses to registered nurses.

Let me be clear about associate degree nurses. They become registered nurses the same way bachelor's degree nurses do, and that is by passing the National Council of State Boards of Nursing NCLEX exam. This allows our graduates to enter the field two years before their university counterparts and at a lower cost of education.

Our 15 sister colleges and WKCTC are the answer to getting more people in the health care field, but we are a bit hamstrung. Here's why.

The cost of these programs is high. Equipment, such as simulators and other technology, comes with a significant price tag.

Instructors command high salaries in these fields, and quite frankly, we can't compete with hospitals, universities, and

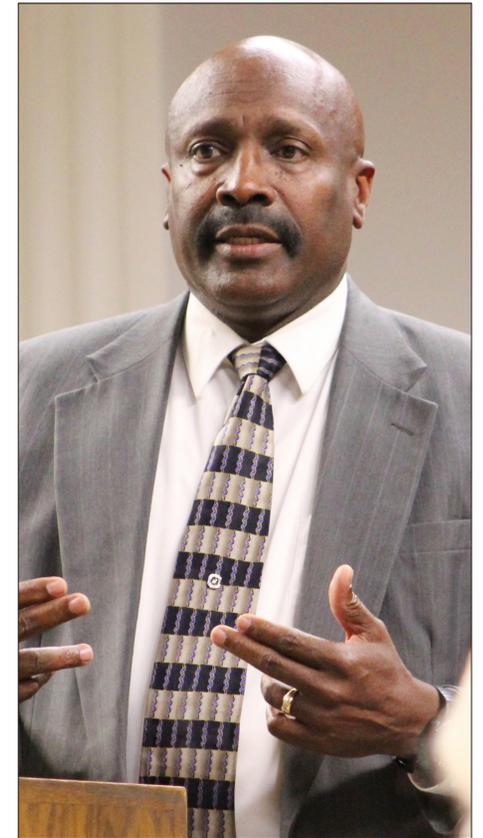
traveling nurses' salaries.

Nursing, dental assistant, surgical technology, diagnostic medical sonography, and several other health care programs have accreditation limits from outside organizations placed on faculty to student ratios. This reduces the number of students we can accept in these critical programs.

There are several ways to alleviate the pain created by this shortage of health care workers. Of course, additional funding from state government would be greatly appreciated. That would allow us to purchase much-needed equipment, provide tutoring for these rigorous classes, hire more faculty and provide competitive salaries.

However, funding alone is not the answer. We also need more partnerships and apprenticeships in the health care field. We are extremely appreciative of our local hospitals that allow us to work with them for our on-site clinical training. Throughout the state, we need to grow these partnerships to include more opportunities for our students to gain hands-on experience. This not only would help our students, but it also would help take some pressure off hospitals by having more help for lower-level tasks so full-time staff can attend to patients.

To address the ever-growing need in nursing and allied health fields, Paducah Junior College (PJC), the charitable foundation for WKCTC, established the Healthcare Education-to-Work Endowment Fund. With a goal of \$3 million, the HealthCare COUNTS campaign is underway to raise funds for the endowment. The purpose of the healthcare fund is to provide ongoing, sustainable operating support for healthcare education at WKCTC, making sure that our area maintains a quality healthcare workforce needed to build strong, healthy communities.



Dr. Anton Reece is in his fifth year as president of West Kentucky Community and Technical College.

Photo contributed

Ending the shortage of health care workers is high on our list of making sure all Kentuckians have the care they need, helping improve Kentucky's workforce participation rate, increasing the state's tax base, and helping our students have better lives through education.

Just like Marvel Comic superheroes fight crime, our health care heroes continue to fight the pandemic. Being a health care worker is a calling, and those who want to answer the call can begin at WKCTC. For more information, visit westkentucky.kctcs.edu

View Online: <http://westkentucky.meritpages.com/news/Corrected-OP-ED-Article-Alleviating-the-pain-of-Kentuckys-health-care-worker-shortage/23333>

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Sports Tourism Commission pursues outdoor complex pact

Staff report

The Sports Tourism Commission hopes to finalize an agreement with a third-party management company named Sports Facilities Management to operate the Greenway Sports Complex within the next month, according to commission members at its last meeting.

The commission and SFM in September entered into negotiations. STC Chairman Jim Dudley expressed optimism concerning his interactions with SFM in contract negotiations as well as interacting with the company to present a public open house to highlight the complex. He said the group, in his view, has helped in public relations and in that the commission and management group have presented a unified message. The estimated cost of the outdoor sports complex ranges from \$38 million to \$42 million.

Upon SFM and the commission reaching an agreement, Dudley said



Sports Tourism Commission chairman Jim Dudley said at the commission's most recent meeting that members are nearing a final agreement with Sports Facilities Management, whereby that company would manage the Greenway Sports complex.

the next step would be to formulate an inter-local agreement between the governments of Paducah and McCracken County. He estimated

Digital rendering by PFGW Architects that could be completed within the next two months.

Once the inter-local agreement is finalized, Dudley indicated PFGW Architects, a local firm, would present a final design bid for STC approval. Once approval is given for design plans, it would take approximately six months to develop construction plans and documents

before breaking ground on-site.

Bottom line, the Greenway Sports Complex could be operational by 2024, Dudley said. That estimate is based on putting all necessary agreements in place, and allowing approximately 12-18 months for construction of all facilities planned for development.

The former Bluegrass Downs site and Stuart Nelson Park, along the Greenway Trail, would be the location of the complex, to include fields for baseball, softball, and soccer. Projections are for the complex, once completed, annually to attract more than 80 sports tournaments and more than 7,000 people per year to Paducah, the project's website says.

Commission members expressed pleasure concerning attendance at its November open house, where members sought feedback from the public concerning proposed plans for the outdoor sports complex. Steve Ervin serves as manager of the McCracken County Community Development Project. He estimated more than 100 people attended and their feedback on the project overwhelmingly was positive.

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Doctor and daughter research published in national peer-reviewed journal

Dr. Thane DeWeese and his daughter, Sarah DeWeese, had a research article published in the Fall 2021 edition of the Journal of Surgical Orthopaedic Advances.

Dr. DeWeese knows maintaining sterility during an operation is of utmost importance. Bacterial contamination of the operative field has been widely studied. Perforation of surgical gloves has been documented. No study had been done to see if perforation in the drape used to cover the X-ray machine (C-arm) occurs during routine hip arthroplasty. Discovering the lack of research in this area, Dr. DeWeese decided to test the idea.

Coincidentally, Sarah DeWeese is applying to veterinary school to become an equine orthopedic surgeon.

“One could say that I am following in my father’s footsteps in a way that reflects orthopedic medicine, but in an entirely different species,” said Sarah.

The father/daughter research team came together to test if tiny tears in the drape covering the C-arm during total hip replacement surgery occur and if it led to a higher rate of infection after surgery. Sarah was on Christmas break from Murray State University in 2019. Between Dr. DeWeese’s clinic and surgery schedule, they were able to sit down on a few weekends at the kitchen

table to analyze their findings. They designed a leak test to find tears in the drape.

The leak test was very similar to testing for holes in tires. A small amount of soapy water was placed into the bag and the bags were inflated with a leaf blower. Tiny holes in the bag were verified by the appearance of bubbles on the bag’s surface.

“I loved working with my daughter in a field I am very passionate about,” said Dr. DeWeese. “She took a statistics class in college, and that helped tremendously with our research.”

“My brain was a little tired from Fall final exams shortly before this research project, but I felt motivated to carry out our project with the notion that our findings could potentially help others and potentially lay the groundwork for future studies,” said Sarah.

The findings of their research showed tears in the X-ray drape occur in about 10% of procedures and are likely due to surgical instruments rubbing against the C-arm. The body mass of the patient and increased operative time increased the risk of tears.

“Tears in the C-arm drape are a rare occurrence, but this study allowed me to adjust the way I perform surgery to better protect my patients,” said Dr.

DeWeese.

The C-arm drapes from 36 procedures were used during the study. Dr. DeWeese and Sarah found very small tears in 4 of the C-arm drapes. Fortunately, the tears did not lead to infection for any of their 9 month follow up appointment.

It wasn’t until March of 2021 they got the news their article was going to be published.

“I felt overjoyed when I first heard the news because it proves that careful, scientific investigation and determination really do pay off,” said Sarah.

“What amazed me is the process we went through before the article was accepted for publication. The revisions, the edits, the communication back and forth. We began the project in December 2019,” said Dr DeWeese.

The research project is the first of its kind, but the bond between the Dr. DeWeese and his daughter will be something the two will forever remember.

“This experience was really special to me in that my dad and I were able to work on the two things we love most while forging ahead with a research project designed to help others,” said Sarah.

Moving forward, Sarah wishes to become a veterinarian and specialize



Dr. Thane DeWeese and daughter Sarah DeWeese. Photo submitted

in equine orthopedic surgery. Her dream is to join the United States Equestrian Federation/Federation Equestre Internationale veterinarian committee for the United States Showjumping Team.

Dr. DeWeese is already brainstorming his next research project on evaluating knee ligament stability when performing knee replacement.

Spread love, give ‘til it hurts!

By Teresa Pearson
KPI Staff

With Christmas just a few weeks away most people have the majority of their Christmas shopping done. Hopefully you shopped local small businesses this year.

Meanwhile, our area has suffered terrible loss due to the recent storms and catastrophic tornado that devastated much of our area.

Can you imagine the loss of your home and or business at this time of the year? Can you imagine being a

child and having lost your home and belongings at this time of year?

While everyone is pitching in to help our friends in local towns recover, remember the children who have lost everything and will not have a good Christmas this year. Please give all that you can to the ones who are devastated and remember to shop local small businesses at the same time.

This is the season for giving so please give until it hurts. Please shop local small businesses, you will be blessed for your giving.



Places like The Giving Tree in LaCenter, Ky. are collecting items for our neighbors in Mayfield and surrounding areas that were devastated by the catastrophic tornado.

Photo by Teresa Pearson

Higher prices and empty shelves

By Teresa Pearson
KPI Staff

High prices and empty shelves are being reported across the country. Rural areas may not be seeing as much of the empty shelves as some of the more populated areas but even in small western Kentucky towns some of this can be seen.

We all see the higher prices on the gas pumps and on some food items like meats, but most all other items are going higher also, even if it is by a few cents or by smaller packaging and smaller portions. We may not even notice some of the things that all together make a huge difference in our total grocery bill. It is not just groceries, but most other items are seeing the

same problem, making it hard for most Americans to get by.

This crisis is in part, due to rising consumer demand with the easing of coronavirus restrictions and the shortage of employees due to the pandemic we have experienced for the past two years.

In most cases, we are not dealing with actual food shortages but with disruptions in the supply chain. When it comes to food imports, other factors come into play. Chinese ports are showing a 7-day average of 206 ships waiting at ports versus 82 ships pre-covid, and with Chinese factories operating at reduced capacity because of power restrictions, supply issues for food products destined to the US market like frozen or dried



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vegetables used as ingredients in soups or ready meals are impacted too.

These issues are not only impacting consumers, but they are effecting small businesses as well. Businesses that require a large supply of food, such as restaurants are beginning to feel the pinch of the shortages and higher prices. They of course, then pass that along to us as customers.

Americans are becoming more worried, according to a U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends Tracker, more than half of consumers surveyed are concerned about rising prices and empty shelves. Customers are watching prices, substituting what they put in their carts and even going without in some cases. Others are stocking up and actually causing some of the shortages to seem worse. Not a bad thing to do, by all means, stock up, but it may be making us think that the shortage

is coming faster and worsening.

Don't fall into the trap of buying just because everyone else is, like the toilet paper shortage. When we can't find a product, we assume shoppers all over the country are experiencing the same shortages and some folks run out and buy a lot of it up worsening the issue. Having some extra on hand is a great idea, just in case of emergency situations, but please be considerate of others and get what you need plus perhaps a little extra, but please, don't be the toilet paper hoarder.

The problems we are seeing could and probably will get worse, and we need to be prepared, but also remember to help others and be compassionate along the way. Consider growing, raising and preserving more of your own food to get you through. Find alternatives for things that become shortages. Even toilet paper has substitutes in hard times!

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Gov. Beshear: 2021 is all-time highest year for new jobs and economic investment

Governor announces more economic development progress, executive order to address nursing shortage

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 9, 2021) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear provided his Team Kentucky update and said 2021 is Kentucky's all-time highest year for new jobs and investment, with more than 17,000 new jobs created and more than \$11 billion in investment announced.

"\$11 billion in yearly investment shatters any previous record," said Gov. Beshear. "Put simply, this has been the best year for economic development in the history of Kentucky. We are no longer a flyover state. We are the destination."

The Governor also said this morning, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved a request from Pfizer to allow individuals as young as 16 to get a Pfizer booster shot. He said the next step is to wait for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to approve. Like adults, 16- and 17-year-olds would need to wait six months after getting their second vaccine dose before getting a booster.

"This is great news, especially after the update yesterday morning on the effectiveness of the booster. Pfizer released preliminary data that suggests a booster provides a strong defense against the delta variant, which is still enemy No. 1 here in Kentucky," said Gov. Beshear. "The data also shows a booster appears to provide real protection against the omicron variant."

Kentucky's COVID-19 indicators have continued to increase making vaccinations and boosters even more important: the week ending Dec. 5, the average test positivity rate was 9.02% and 15,875 new cases were reported.

The Governor said, just yesterday more than 10,000 Kentuckians got

their booster shot. In addition, 61% of all Kentuckians have gotten at least their first vaccine dose.

As of today, 664,339 Kentuckians have had a vaccination booster, approximately 15% of the population.

Gov. Beshear Signs Executive Order to Address Kentucky Nursing Shortage

Gov. Beshear said, even before the pandemic hit nursing shortages were a problem, and now, the situation is dire.

"This threatens not only the health of patients, but the entire health care delivery system," said Gov. Beshear. "We've got to do things a little bit differently to make sure we get the results we need at the time that we need them the most."

Kentucky is currently operating at 12%-20% short of needed nursing staff, and the state is projected to need more than 16,000 additional nurses by 2024.

In response, today, Gov. Beshear signed an executive order declaring that Kentucky's nursing shortage in the midst of a deadly global pandemic is an emergency.

Through this order, Kentucky nursing schools will be able to enroll more students. The order will require the Kentucky Board of Nursing to approve requests for enrollment increases for schools that show sufficient resources to handle more students.

The order also requires schools to report vacant student seats to the Board of Nursing every month. The Board will post those vacancies on its website. This will allow schools without vacancies to refer applicants to schools with programs that have open seats.

Under this order, nursing schools in the next month will send a list of faculty needed to reach full enrollment to the Board of Nursing, the Governor's Office and the Council on Postsecondary Education.

Also under this order: Existing schools that want to open new campuses can do so much more quickly, as long as they have sufficient resources. Under this order, a new campus will be considered an enrollment increase to an existing program, which offers significant savings of time and money. Schools that want to open new campuses alone or as a joint venture can take advantage of this important provision.

The order also allows nurses licensed in other states to come to Kentucky to practice in this emergency. Further, it creates the Team Kentucky Nursing Advisory Committee, which will be composed of individuals with experience in education, health care and nursing, to propose additional solutions for addressing Kentucky's nursing shortage.

"I want to thank the Governor for listening to the voices of nurses," said Kelly Jenkins, executive director of the Kentucky Board of Nursing. "We've been working diligently to place these emergency orders into effect since the pandemic started and to try to recruit more nurses from other states. We thank the Governor for working with us."

UofL Health to Expedite Repayment of \$35 Million State Loan Citing Positive Financial Performance

A \$35 million partially forgivable loan issued to University of

Louisville Health by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2020 now has an accelerated repayment schedule in response to positive financial performance, Gov. Beshear announced today. To learn more, see the full release.

"Our 12,000 health care heroes are the key to UofL Health's success, but we share this credit with the entire commonwealth," said Tom Miller, UofL Health chief executive officer. "Kentucky understood the critical need to preserve health care services, jobs and expand access in underserved areas. Kentucky invested in UofL Health and Kentucky is reaping the return."

Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet Awarded \$5.3 Million from American Rescue Plan Act

As part of the federal American Rescue Plan Act's Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation State Grant program, the commonwealth has been awarded \$5.3 million to further position its expanding tourism industry to be an economic driver for Kentucky.

To foster economic recovery in every corner of the commonwealth, the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet will directly award this crucial funding support to destination marketing organizations and the commonwealth's nine tourism regions.

"My thanks Secretary Mike Berry and everyone at the Kentucky Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet for all the work that goes into securing and distributing these funds," said Gov. Beshear. "And congratulations to the businesses and workers across the commonwealth who will benefit as

JOBS*continued from page 10*

our tourism industry continues to grow.”

Consumer Cellular Inc. to Locate in Louisville, Create Nearly 500 Full-Time Jobs

Today, Gov. Beshear highlighted a major technology business announcement as Consumer Cellular Inc., a provider of cellphones, no-contract cellular plans and accessories, will locate its first Kentucky operation in Louisville, creating 486 full-time jobs with a more than \$15.5 million investment. To learn more, see the full release.

“On behalf of the company I’m excited to announce our expansion to the Bluegrass State. I want to thank Gov. Beshear and Mayor Greg Fischer and their expert teams who helped make this possible,” said Dan Weyland, Consumer

Cellular chief financial officer. “We look forward to doing business here.”

Martin County Solar Project to Locate on Former Eastern Kentucky Coal Mine Kentucky is focused on a future that includes renewable energy, as today Gov. Beshear announced Martin County Solar Project, currently under development by Savion, is moving forward with plans to locate on a former coal mine in unincorporated Martin County, a project that includes up to a \$231 million investment and creation of 11 full-time Kentucky jobs. To learn more, see the full release.

Perfetti Van Melle USA Plans Nearly \$10 Million Expansion, Creation of at Least 16 New Jobs in Northern Kentucky

Today, Gov. Beshear announced Perfetti Van Melle USA Inc., part of Perfetti Van Melle Group B.V., one of the world’s largest candy manufacturers, will expand its presence in unincorporated Boone County with an investment of more

than \$9.8 million that will create a minimum of 16 new full-time production jobs. To learn more, see the full release.

Four Roses Distillery Opens Newly Constructed Visitor Center

On Tuesday, Gov. Beshear joined Four Roses officials to celebrate the opening of a new and expanded visitor center that is ready to welcome travelers and bourbon fans from across the country and the globe to the award-winning Lawrenceburg, Kentucky distillery. The visitor center project is part of Four Roses’ ongoing investment to accommodate for growing demand in the bourbon industry, that has already included an expanded distillery in Lawrenceburg, as well as new bottling lines and warehouses at Four Roses’ facility in Cox’s Creek, Kentucky. For more information, see the company’s full release.

Team Kentucky All-Stars

Today, Gov. Beshear honored Michael Dossett, Director of the

Kentucky Division of Emergency Management (KYEM), as a Team Kentucky All-Star.

On Dec. 3, Gov. Beshear announced Director Dossett’s upcoming retirement after a career of over 44 years in public service to the Commonwealth of Kentucky and Louisville Metro Government.

“Director Dossett is an MVP on Team Kentucky. His leadership has been nothing short of extraordinary,” said Gov. Beshear.

“Government service is a calling, and I am so fortunate to have been able to serve in a long career. Thank you, Governor. I am certainly appreciative of the opportunity to serve on Team Kentucky,” Director Dossett said. “The COVID-19 pandemic has been the challenge of my professional career. Thanks to the remarkable, dedicated KYEM professionals, we activated the State Emergency Operations Center for 462 days in a row. They work in blue skies and gray, just like all of our emergency services responders.”



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Kentucky's agriculture economy thriving; record receipts expected

By: Katie Pratt

University of Kentucky agricultural economists are predicting the state's 2021 agricultural receipts will exceed \$6.7 billion. If realized, this will be a new record, surpassing the previous record of \$6.5 billion in 2014 and the \$5.5 billion average over the past five years. They expect net farm income to approach \$2.5 billion, which is the highest since 2013.

Economists in the UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment shared their predictions for the Kentucky agriculture and forest economies during the annual Kentucky Farm Bureau meeting.

UK agricultural economists predict poultry will be tied with corn and soybeans for the state's top commodity in 2021. Photo by Steve Patton, UK agricultural communications.

Kentucky's agriculture sectors powered through many challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and are in the midst of tremendous economic growth due to increases in grain exports, strong crop yields and a high global demand for meats. As a result, corn and soybeans are tied with poultry as the state's top agricultural commodities in 2021. Each comprises 18% of all projected sales.

"Nationwide, grain inventory was lower at the beginning of 2021, and with increased exports, our stocks dropped even more as the year progressed. This led to higher prices throughout 2021," said Greg Halich, UK agricultural economist. "For the upcoming 2022 crop season, prices are predicted to hold steady or may even increase, but profits will tighten due to rising input costs."

Corn, soybeans and poultry are followed by equine, which had a strong sales season and has a 16% market share. Cattle is next with 11% of projected sales.

"In 2021, the equine market made a huge recovery, and Keeneland

sales were up 35% from 2020," said Kenny Burdine, UK agricultural economist. "Beef exports are expected to set a record in 2021. After several frustrating years for cattle producers, another decrease in beef cow numbers and continued global demand should lead to improved prices for calves and feeder cattle in 2022."

Kentucky's agricultural economy is consistent with national trends. U.S. farm exports will likely finish 2021 at record levels that approach \$175 billion. As of September, corn exports have more than doubled, beef exports are up 37% and forest products are up 29% on the year. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is predicting a 23% increase in net farm income, which will only be surpassed by the all-time record high of \$123.7 billion set in 2013. In 2020, producers' incomes increased by nearly 20%, mostly due to government payments from the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program designed to help farmers work through the challenges of the pandemic and the Market Facilitation Program payments to help export losses evolving from the trade war. While government payments are projected to be 40% lower in 2021, they continue to make up about one-fourth of U.S. net farm income.

"Despite the impactful events of the pandemic, the U.S. farm economy has not only survived, but has experienced remarkable growth, initially on the heels of government financial support, followed by significant export gains, impressive crop yields and a growing global demand for meat products," said Will Snell, UK agricultural economist.

Clients in the Kentucky Farm Business Management program saw record net farm income in 2020, and 2021's profits are expected to exceed those.

"The average, commercial-size crop farm is in excellent financial health in terms of solvency and liquidity," said Jerry Pierce, coordinator for Kentucky Farm Business Management. "Farms in the bottom third of net farm income made huge gains in financial health



Outstanding crop yields, increased exports and good prices have allowed corn and soybeans to tie poultry for the state's top commodities in 2021.

Photo by Matt Barton, UK agricultural communications.

in 2020 and are poised to solidify their position in 2021."

The forest industry, which includes logging, primary wood manufacturing, secondary wood manufacturing, pulp and paper, paper converters and wood residue, continues to trend upward. In 2020, the sector added nearly \$14 billion to the state's economy. High demand for Kentucky hardwood continues to outpace harvest and processing and has led to a seller's market for timber.

"Prices for important species, such as white oak and yellow-poplar, have increased over 50% this year," said Jeff Stringer, chair of the UK Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. "As demand for high quality white oak continues, driven by the cooperage industry supplying white oak barrels to the state's bourbon distillers, prices for white oak timber will remain robust. While supply and demand are closer for other species, pricing will remain on an upward trajectory in 2022."

Higher prices and good yields in specialty crops, which includes produce and nursery, will likely allow the sector to exceed the record revenues of 2020, but rising input costs will limit profitability and sector

growth. Cash receipts for 2021 are expected to be \$16 million for fruit, \$44 million for vegetables and \$118 million for nursery and greenhouse production.

"Strong competitive pressures will continue from outside of the U.S. in the produce market," said Tim Woods, agricultural economist. "While Kentucky growers benefit from strong local demand, and strong local prices may remain in direct markets, import supply will continue to rise. Labor costs are a big constraint for this sector."

Going into 2022, the economists predict commodity prices will continue to be relatively high but increasing input costs will tighten farmers' profits in the next year.

"Farm input costs will likely be up double-digit percentages in 2022, with much higher fuel, fertilizer and feed prices," Snell said. "Labor costs and supplies continue to be a concern, not only among farmers but throughout the entire food supply chain and the rest of economy. Farmers will be advised to monitor input and commodity markets closely in developing purchasing and marketing strategies amidst this turbulent, volatile, and uncertain farm economy."

86% of hotels say supply chain issues impacting operations

WASHINGTON – Supply chain disruptions are impacting the operations of more than eight in ten surveyed hotels, and nearly three in four hotel operators say the disruptions are negatively impacting their business revenue, according to a new survey of American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) members.

Eighty-six percent of respondents reported that supply chain disruptions were having a moderate or significant impact on their operations. More than half (52%) say the problem has grown worse over the past three months. Seventy-four percent say supply chain issues are having a negative impact on business revenue.

The impact on operations could have repercussions for employment, underscoring the need for targeted federal relief for hotel employees, such as the Save Hotel Jobs Act.

“Hotels have a complex supply chain that requires regular procurement of a wide range of goods and services each day. And whether it’s production backups or shipping delays, supply chain disruptions are compounding hotels’ existing problems and increasing operating costs during an already tough time,” said Chip Rogers, President and CEO of AHLA. “This survey highlights just how widespread these challenges are for hoteliers. That’s why now is the time for Congress to pass the Save Hotel Jobs Act, so hotel employees can get the relief they need during these difficult times.”

Respondents do not expect the supply chain disruptions to be resolved any time soon, with 46% saying they expect disruptions to last six months to a year and another 36% expecting them to last more than a year.

Other survey highlights include:

Percentage of hotels experiencing a lack of availability for:
 Linens and other soft goods: 85%
 Food and beverage supplies: 76%
 Day-to-day cleaning and housekeeping supplies: 72%

Percentage of hotels experiencing increased costs for:

Day-to-day cleaning and housekeeping supplies: 79%
 Linens and other soft goods: 77%
 Food and beverage supplies: 77%
 The survey of more than 500 AHLA members was conducted November 8-22, 2021.

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Gov. Beshear: \$5.3 million in federal funding to be allocated directly to Kentucky's tourism industry

FRANKFORT, KY – Gov. Andy Beshear and Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet Secretary Mike Berry has announced the commonwealth will allocate \$5.3 million in federal funding to the tourism industry to promote travel, tourism and outdoor recreation in Kentucky.

“Tourism continues to serve as a way for communities across the commonwealth to generate economic growth,” said Gov. Beshear. “My administration remains committed to supporting this multibillion-dollar industry as we continue to focus our efforts on building a strong post-COVID economy for Kentucky.”

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation State Grant program, the U.S. Economic Development Administration announced that the commonwealth will receive \$5.3 million to further position the tourism industry to be an economic driver for Kentucky.

Tourism is an \$8.9 billion industry that serves as a mechanism for fostering economic growth in all 120 Kentucky counties. In an effort to spur economic recovery in every corner of the commonwealth, the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet will directly award this critical funding support to destination marketing organizations and tourism regions.

“Kentucky is a diverse, welcoming travel destination that is open and ready to safely welcome visitors,” said Secretary Mike Berry. “Through a collaborative effort between the Tourism Cabinet and our local partners, we believe this funding will help support tourism jobs and build a stronger economy for the future of the commonwealth.”

Throughout the pandemic, the Beshear administration has remained committed to promoting Kentucky as a diverse, safe travel destination. Today’s announcement follows a string of positive economic news for the commonwealth’s nationally recognized tourism industry.

In May, the Governor announced his commitment of \$5 million in federal CARES Act funding to the

Kentucky tourism industry. This critical funding support helped strengthen the commonwealth’s promotional and advertising efforts by encouraging safe travel to all 120 Kentucky counties.

Kentucky also received a \$2.8 million Economic Development Administration CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant to support economic growth of the tourism industry. As part of the commonwealth’s promotional efforts, funding was used for the development of marketing campaigns focused on highlighting the commonwealth’s nine tourism regions.

Kentucky’s tourism industry continues to experience historic economic investment that is priming the industry for success in a post-COVID-19 economy. This year alone, the commonwealth has welcomed seven new tourism development projects totaling \$7.4 billion in economic investment.

For the latest Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet updates, follow the cabinet on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn. To learn more about the cabinet, visit tah.ky.gov. To learn more about tourism in Kentucky, visit kentuckytourism.com.

Read about other key updates, actions and information from Gov. Beshear and his administration at governor.ky.gov and the Governor’s official social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

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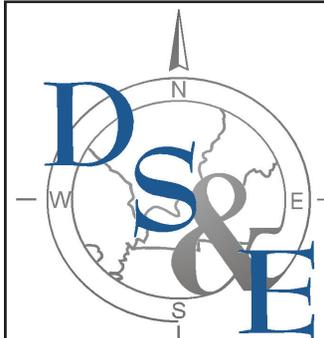
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LAYOUT/DESIGN
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The Paducah Business Journal is published by:

KPI NEWSPAPER GROUP

1540 McCracken Blvd. • Paducah, KY 42001

Phone: 270-442-7389 • www.ky-news.com



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Nonprofits to receive more than \$2 million

United Way of Paducah-McCracken County among organizations receiving funding from LG&E and KU giving campaign

(LOUISVILLE, Ky.) — As area nonprofits begin making plans to assist residents in need in the coming year, additional funding is headed their way. Employees of Louisville Gas and Electric Company and Kentucky Utilities Company are pledging dollars to nonprofit agencies and organizations across the utilities' service territories. Coupled with financial support from the LG&E and KU Foundation, the utilities' voluntary employee-giving campaign, Power of One, raised more than \$2 million in contributions for the fourth time in the company's history.

The contributions are being allocated to United Way of Paducah-McCracken County and 25 additional nonprofit organizations to support programs and services in 2022. Those nonprofits serve nearly all 120 counties across Kentucky, more than 50 counties in Indiana, as well as parts of Virginia.

United Way of Paducah-McCracken County serves Ballard and McCracken counties in Kentucky.

"This year's campaign theme was More Powerful Together, which, while true every year, certainly spoke to the continued need for us to pull together and collectively assist our communities, which still face the challenges of our pandemic-impacted economy," said LG&E and KU Executive Vice President-Electric Distribution and co-chair of the 2021 Power of One campaign, John Wolfe. "We're proud to contribute

these dollars, which will do things like help provide access to health care services, food, shelter and other basic needs; help prepare more children for kindergarten; and offer financial empowerment programs."

Nearly 70% of LG&E and KU employees participate in the campaign through payroll deduction — a participation rate more than twice the workplace employee giving average, according to United Way worldwide data.

Since 2005, the employee-driven campaign has raised nearly than \$30 million through payroll deductions, event fundraisers, retiree donations and support from IBEW Local 2100 and the LG&E and KU Foundation.

Learn more about LG&E and KU's ongoing commitment to the communities we serve.

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