

Power returning and roads clearing, but Beshear asks Kentuckians to stay home

By TOM LATEK
Kentucky Today

FRANKFORT, Ky. (KT) – Gov. Andy Beshear said during a press conference that a lot of progress was made to restore power and clear Kentucky roads and expects more during the day but advises

people not to go out if they can avoid it. “Folks need to stay indoors as much as possible and limit outdoor exposure,” he said during the press conference at the Emergency Operations Center in Frankfort. “Even 10 to 30 minutes outside can cause frostbite or



Gov. Andy Beshear is flanked by Kentucky Emergency Management Director Eric Gobson, left, and Transportation Secretary Jim Gray on Tuesday in Frankfort. Beshear was giving a weather update.

hypothermia. We also need Kentuckians to make sure they’re bringing their pets inside. This cold is dangerous for them as well.” He noted four deaths around the state that may have

see **BESHEAR**,
Page B3



ONLINE / NO RESERVE
AUCTIONS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT

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ES5671 '12 CAT 12M2 VHP Plus motor grader



EE5090 '24 Atlas Copco XAVS 650 JD8 air compressor

SNOW DAY

Smiling faces
across the region
despite recent
winter storm

Reader submitted
photos



Tayler Owens



Charlie Chandler



Sa'Riyah Davis



Aiden and Ivy Mowery



Kyce Al Fatayri & Lilly



Birdie Brown



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Beasley & Brock Ballard



Addy Jean & Charly Mae Stover



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Lilly Lambert



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Emma Toon



Kyler Brown and Ryan Pillow

UK Graphite Center receives \$2 million in federal funding



By Tom Latek
kentucky Today

LEXINGTON, Ky. (KT) – The University of Kentucky Graphite Center, a research initiative to advance graphite technology and manufacturing innovation, has been given \$2 million in federal funding.

Kentucky Sixth District Congressman Andy Barr, R-Lexington, says he pushed the funding through the Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment Appropriations Act, 2026. He voted for the appropriations package earlier this month and President Trump recently signed the funding bill into law.

“This investment is about bringing manufacturing back to America and putting Kentuckians to work in good-paying jobs,” Barr said. “By pairing the Made in America tax credit with workforce training and cutting-edge research at the University of Kentucky, we’re rebuilding domestic supply chains, strengthening our manufacturing base, and preparing Kentuckians for the jobs of the future.”

The funding will be used to purchase specialized equipment for analytical characterization and prototype manufacturing

of graphite at the University of Kentucky’s research facility. The investment would strengthen the university’s capacity to conduct advanced materials research and support domestic supply chain development for critical materials.

“The University of Kentucky plays a critical role in helping the Commonwealth prepare for the industries shaping our future,” UK President Eli Capilouto said. “Support for this work at the Center for Applied Energy Research strengthens Kentucky’s capacity for innovation, workforce development and economic resilience in a rapidly changing global landscape. We greatly appreciate Congressman Andy Barr’s continued partnership in advancing opportunities that benefit communities across the Commonwealth.”

The Graphite Center plays a key role in supporting research, commercialization, and collaboration between academia and industry. Enhanced equipment capabilities will allow researchers to accelerate creation, improve material performance, and support prototype development for emerging technologies.

Go to <https://research.uky.edu/news/demand-graphite-grows-uk-caer-positioned-lead-material-sourcing>, for more information on the University of Kentucky Graphite Center.

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Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers will be on the scene at Calvary Baptist in Glasgow for a feeding operation to support The Salvation Army's efforts in South Central Kentucky and in four Tennessee communities on the state line hit hard by frigid weather and ice that have caused power outages.

(File photo)

KYDR setting up feeding operation in Glasgow to support Salvation Army efforts in Ky., Tenn.

By Mark Maynard
Kentucky Today

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (KT) - Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief will be setting up a feeding operation in Glasgow to service three counties in Kentucky and four in Tennessee for those dealing with the extreme temperatures and ice.

KYDR will set up its mobile kitchen and feeding team at Calvary Baptist in Glasgow starting with feeding 800 per day. They were asked to support

the efforts of the Salvation Army to feed those affected by the winter storm in south central Kentucky and four Tennessee counties - Mason, Sumner, Clay and Robertson along the Kentucky-Tennessee border.

Three dozen volunteers are expected to be on the site.

"Things are in motion and once again our volunteers are stepping up to bring help, hope and healing to those in crisis," said KYDR Director Ron Crow.

Crow said it is

not expected to be a long deployment, but KYDR will remain until power is restored to communities.

Also, Luke Cumberland Associational Mission Strategist Tommy Floyd is leading an eight-person team to Jamaica on Saturday and returning Feb. 7. It will assist with the rebuilding from Hurricane Melissa that devastated Jamaica in late October. Follow Kentucky Today for more details on the trip to Jamaica.

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BESHEAR,
from front page

been related to the winter storm, and officials are working to determine the cause of death in each case.

As of 9 a.m. (ET) Tuesday, there were 27,014 power outages across Kentucky, which is down from the peak of 73,590 on Sunday. The hardest hit counties are Pulaski, Allen, Monroe, Barren and Russell counties, Beshear said.

"There are more than 130 warming

centers set up across the commonwealth," he said. "That means if your home is without power and you're cold, there is a place for you to go and get warm. Right now, there are about 950 people sheltered at one of those warming centers, or a Red Cross Shelter."

He said law enforcement agencies such as the Kentucky State Police are working hard to help people who are in need of assistance. "KSP has received 6,679 calls for service related to the

winter storm. They have conducted 364 wellness checks and responded to 521 requests for motorists' assistance. State Police continue to urge Kentuckians to call 911 only for emergencies. Kentucky Emergency Management has also received 400 calls to our unmet needs line, and they have responded to each of them."

That unmet needs number is 502-607-6665.

Beshear noted, "State highway crews, nearly 1,500 trucks, have worked since the weekend to clear as many roads as possible. Since Friday, state and contracted plow crews have traveled 670,000 miles. That's enough to circle the Earth 26 times."

His advice to Kentuckians: If you're traveling, clean off your car, go slow. If you're without power, go to a warming center. Keep your phone charged, make sure you have a weather safety kit ready."

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Psalm 136:1

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BALLARD

Gary Payne Sr., 69, of Wickliffe, Kentucky, passed away on January 26, 2026, at his home. Services will be held at a later date. Milner and Orr Funeral Home of Wickliffe are in charge of arrangements.

George Shinn, 77, of Kevil passed away on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at Mercy-Health Lourdes Hospital in Paducah. He will be cremated per his wishes and no services are scheduled at this time. Lindsey Funeral Home is honored to serve the Shinn family.

Randy Gibson, age 66, of Kevil passed away Thursday, January 22, 2026, at Ray and Kay Eckstein Hospice Care Center in Paducah, KY. Visitation will be held on Friday, January 30, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. at Morrow Funeral Chapel in LaCenter, KY. Funeral Service will be held on Friday, January 30, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at Morrow Funeral Chapel in LaCenter, KY. with Rev. Wes Peeler officiating. Interment will follow at Bethlehem Baptist Church Cemetery in Wickliffe.

Rexanna Ashcraft, age 77, passed away on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. Visitation will be held on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at Morrow Funeral Chapel in LaCenter, KY. A Memorial service will be held on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 12:00 with Brother Glen Dunn officiating.

CALDWELL

Jerry A. Henry, 87, of Princeton, entered Heaven’s gates on Friday, January 23, 2026, at Caldwell Medical Center. Funeral services will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at Morgan’s Funeral Home with Bro. Kyle Noffsinger and Bro. Ronnie Sivells officiating. Burial will follow in Dycusburg Cemetery in Crittenden County. Visitation will be held from 11:00 a.m. until service time on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at Morgan’s Funeral Home.

Lucas Aaron Harris, infant child, passed away January 23, 2026 at Baptist Health Madisonville. Lucas was born to his loving parents, Marcus and Emily Noffsinger Harris of Princeton. Visitation will be held from 12:00 pm until 2:30 pm Saturday, January 31, 2026 at Morgan’s Funeral Home. Funeral services will be held at 2:30 pm Saturday, January 31, 2026 at Morgan’s Funeral Home with Bro. Kyle Noffsinger officiating. Burial will be held privately at a later date.

Miracle Grace “Gracie” Ritter, infant child, passed away January 22, 2026 at Baptist Health Paducah. Gracie is survived by her loving parents, Jonathan Kalab Ritter and Whitney Michelle Thatcher of Princeton. There will be no services held at this time. Morgan’s Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

CALLOWAY

Kimberly Ann Horton, age 58, of Murray, Kentucky, passed away on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at the Murray – Calloway County Hospital. A memorial service will be held at 2:00 p.m., Saturday, January 31, 2026, at the J.H. Churchill Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Visitation will be held from 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., Saturday, January 31, 2026, at the J.H. Churchill Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Kenneth Edward Johnson, 71 of Hardin, Kentucky, passed away Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at Baptist Health in Paducah, Kentucky. Arrangements are incomplete at this time at Blalock-Coleman Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Murray, KY.

CHRISTIAN

Diane Morris Samples, age 82, of Hopkinsville, KY, passed away on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at Jennie Stuart Medical Center of natural causes. Funeral Services will be at 2:00 PM on Friday, January 30, 2026, at Maddux-Fuqua-Hinton Funeral Home with Rev. Billy Crick officiating and Rev.

Phillip Brumfield and Rev. Larry Croft assisting and burial to be held at a later date in Mt. Carmel United Methodist Church Cemetery.

Patsy I. Dukes Naylor, age 78, of Hopkinsville, KY, passed away on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at Jennie Stuart Medical Center of natural causes. The family has chosen cremation with a Celebration of Life Service to be held at a later date. Maddux-Fuqua-Hinton Funeral Home has been entrusted by the family to handle the arrangements.

Nancy Gay Stevens, 79, of Hopkinsville, KY and formerly of Tupelo, MS died at 11:47 a.m. Friday, January 23, 2026 at her residence. Funeral services will be 12:00 p.m. Friday, January 30, 2026 at Hughart, Beard & Giles Funeral Home with Rev. Reed Shepherd and Rev. Dr. Rick Stevens officiating. Private burial will be held at Kentucky Veterans Cemetery West. Visitation will be Friday from 10:30 a.m. until the funeral hour. Hughart, Beard & Giles Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Caleb Ray Hayes, 24, of Hopkinsville, KY died at 10:30 p.m. Thursday, January 22, 2026 at his residence. Memorial services will be 4:00 p.m. Saturday, January 31, 2026 at Journey Church with Pastor Vince Farrell officiating. Visitation will be 2:00 p.m. until the service hour. Hughart, Beard & Giles Funeral Home is assisting with the arrangements.

Chief Petty Officer Colin P. Kelly (Retired) USN, 83, of Clarksville, TN died at 3:34 a.m. Thursday, January 22, 2026 at his residence. Funeral services were held at 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at Hughart, Beard & Giles Funeral Home. Burial with military honors followed in Kentucky Veterans Cemetery West.

Elizabeth M. Manners, 84, Oklahoma Avenue, Oak Grove, KY passed away Friday, January 23, 2026 at her home of natural causes. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Lamb Funeral Home is assisting with arrangements.

David Allen Bryant, 65, Trenton, passed away on Friday, January 23, 2026, in Trenton, KY. He was a member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Spring Creek where he was an Usher, Deacon in Training, maintenance, Finance, and Culinary. He was employed as a Foreman with Kent Smith Farms. No services are scheduled at this time.

James David “Jim” Scott, 77, of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, passed away peacefully on January 24, 2026. There are no events scheduled at this time. You can still show your support by sending flowers directly to the family, or plant a tree in memory of Jim.

CRITTENDEN

James Calvin Darnell, age 69, of Marion, KY passed away on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at his home. There will be no visitation or services at this time. Gilbert Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

FULTON

Thomas Dean Stow, age 63, of the Latham community, passed away January 23, 2026, at his residence. There will be no services held at the funeral home. Hornbeak Funeral Chapel Fulton is in charge of arrangements.

Michael Marks, age 25, of Fulton, KY passed away Thursday, January 22, 2026, at the Jackson Madison County General Hospital ER in Jackson, TN. There will be no services held at the funeral home and private family services will be held.

Robby Robertson, age 84, of South Fulton, Tennessee, passed away on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at Jackson Purchase Medical Center in Mayfield, Kentucky. A memorial graveside service will be held at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, February 6, 2026, at Greenlea Cemetery. There will be no visitation at the funeral home. Friends are asked to meet at the cemetery at the hour of service.

GRAVES

Betty Pinkleton Koerner, age 71, of Mayfield, KY passed away at 6:25 AM Monday, January 26, 2026 at the Lake Way Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center in Benton, KY. Funeral services for Betty will be held at 2:00 PM Thursday, February 5, 2026 at the Brown Funeral Home in Mayfield, KY. Rev. Ronnie Stinson Jr. will officiate with burial to follow in the Robbins Cemetery. Friends are invited to call after 11:00 AM on Thursday February 5, 2025 at the Brown Funeral Home in Mayfield, KY.

Geralynn Marie Carbine, age 63 and a resident of Fancy Farm, KY, passed away on Sunday, January 25, 2026, at the Jackson Purchase Medical Center. Funeral arrangements are incomplete at the Brown Funeral Home in Mayfield.

Dorothy Pierceall age 85 of Mayfield passed away at 9:31 PM Sunday January 25, 2026 at the Anna Mae Owen Hospice House in Murray. Funeral service will be held at 1:00 PM Friday January 30th, 2026 at the Brown Funeral Home in Mayfield with Bro. Michael Farmer and Bro. Barry Summerville officiating, burial will follow in the Mayfield Memory Gardens, visitation will be held after 11:00 AM Friday at the Brown Funeral Home in Mayfield.

Valetta Mae DeAngelis, age 87, a resident of Mayfield, KY., passed away at 8:40 P.M. Saturday, January 24, 2026 at the Jackson Purchase Medical Center in Mayfield. A private family service will be conducted at a later date.

Vicky Riley, born August 22, 1949, passed away on January 24, 2026, leaving behind a lifetime of memories marked by love, laughter, and unmistakable punk. Funeral Mass was held at 12:00 PM Thursday January 29, 2026 at the St. Jerome Catholic Church in Fancy Farm with Father Darrell Venters officiating, burial followed in the Church Cemetery.

HENDERSON

Carol Ann Hinton, 81, of Henderson, KY, passed away Saturday, January 24, 2026, at Deaconess Henderson Hospital. Graveside services will be held on Friday, January 30, 2026, at 2:00 PM at the Fairmont Cemetery Mausoleum. Tomblinson Funeral Home, Henderson Chapel, is entrusted with arrangements.

Betty S. (Qualls) Ward Jenkins, 93, of Henderson, passed away after a brief illness on Friday, January 23, 2026 at Lucy Smith King Care Center. Private services will be scheduled at a later date. Tomblinson Funeral Home in Henderson is handling arrangements.

George Becker “G.B.” Vogel, age 99, of Corydon, Kentucky, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at Breckinridge Place Retirement Center in Morganfield. Funeral service will be 11 AM Friday, January 23, 2026 at St. Peter’s catholic Church in Waverly, KY. Fr. Dave Johnson will officiate. Burial will be in St. Louis Cemetery in Henderson, KY.

HICKMAN

Timothy McCowan, age 69 of Clinton, KY passed away on Thursday, January 22, 2026 at his residence. He was of the Christian faith. A private memorial service will be held at a later date. The Brown Funeral Home in Clinton, KY is in charge of the arrangements.

HOPKINS

Lori Marshall, 64, of Madisonville, KY passed away on Thursday, January 22, 2026 while her husband held her hand at Baptist Health Deaconess. There are no events scheduled at this time.

Ernest Michael Werley, 71, of Princeton, KY, passed away to his heavenly home on Thursday, January 22, 2026. Funeral services will be held at 1:00 P.M., Tuesday, February 4, 2026, at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Madisonville

FUNERAL NOTICES continued

with the Bishop of the church officiating. Cremation will follow. Visitation will be from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Monday, February 3, 2026, at Barnett-Strother Funeral Home and Crematory.

Tony Wendell Camplin, 74 of Mortons Gap went to home to be with Jesus on Monday, January 26, 2026, at his home. Service will be held Saturday, January 31 at 2:00 pm at Unity in Christ Church in Madisonville with Bro. Richardson officiating. Visitation will begin at noon until service hour at the church. Due to current weather conditions, burial at Cranor Cemetery in St. Charles will be delayed at this time.

Ronald Wilburn Shaw, 84 of Mortons Gap passed away Friday, January 23, 2026, at his home with his family at his side. Services are currently pending due to weather. Update will appear here as soon as possible. Arrangements are entrusted to Bandy Funeral Home.

Darrell McConnell, 66, of Slaughters, KY passed away on Monday, January 26, 2026, at Baptist Health Deaconess Madisonville Arrangements are currently pending.

Ruth Duvall, 95, of Providence, KY formerly of Monessen, PA passed away on Saturday, January 24, 2026, at Baptist Health Deaconess Madisonville. Arrangements are currently pending.

Mary Ann Scott, 66, of Madisonville, KY passed away on Saturday, January 24, 2026, at Baptist Health Deaconess Madisonville. Arrangements are currently pending.

Dorothy Menser, 69, of Madisonville, KY passed away on Friday, January 23, 2026, at Baptist Health Deaconess Madisonville. The funeral service will be held at 5 p.m. on Friday, January 30, 2026, in the chapel of Harris Funeral Home in Madisonville with Pastor Raymond Farmer officiating. A burial will be held at Odd Fellows Cemetery in Madisonville once the weather permits.

Walter A. Kunkle, 78, of Madisonville, KY, passed away on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at Baptist Health Deaconess Madisonville. The funeral service will be held at 1 p.m. on Friday, January 30, 2026, in the chapel of Harris Funeral Home in Madisonville with Dr. Mark Partin officiating. A private burial will be held at Little Muddy Cemetery in Morgantown, KY at a later date. A visitation will be held from 11 a.m. until the funeral hour on Friday at the funeral home.

LIVINGSTON

Kelly Chase, age 64, of Grand Rivers, passed away January 25, 2026 at Lake Barkley Health and Rehab. There will be no services held at this time. Lakeland Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Louis Glenn Parrish, age 70, of Ledbetter, Ky passed away on January 21st, 2026, at Baptist Health of Paducah. There will be no services at this time. The family ask for some privacy at this time. Smith Funeral Chapel is in charge of arrangements.

MARSHALL

Henry “Buddy” Brown, 78, of Benton, Kentucky, passed away on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at the Ray & Kay Eckstein Hospice Care Center. Funeral services were held at 1:00 PM on Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at the Life Celebration Center of Filbeck-Cann with Bro. Mike Farmer officiating. Burial will follow at Vanzora Baptist Church Cemetery.

Anna Pauline Richardson Cutsinger, age 83, of Calvert City passed away on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at Lakeway Nursing and Rehabilitation. Funeral services will be held at 1:00 pm on Friday, January 30, 2026, at the Life Celebration Center of Filbeck-Cann, 1003 Poplar Street, Benton, KY 42025, with Bro. James Oates officiating. Burial will follow at Marshall County Memory Gardens. Visitation will be held from 11:00 am until the 1:00 pm service time on Friday, January 30, 2026, at the Life Celebration Center of Filbeck-Cann.

Nancy Freeman Lomprey, 86, of Symsonia, Kentucky, passed away on Thursday, January 22, 2026, at her place of residence. There are no services scheduled at this time. Filbeck-Cann Funeral Home of Miner & Orr is handling the arrangements.

Alicia Gail Andersson, 57, of Benton, passed away Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at Mercy Health - Lourdes Hospital in Paducah. Memorial services were held at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 29, 2026, at the Life Celebration Center of Filbeck-Cann Funeral Home with Bro. Rick Miller officiating.

Randall “Randy” Bruce, age 73 of Benton passed away on Monday, January 26, 2026, at Mercy Health-Lourdes Hospital in Paducah. A Funeral service will be held at 2:00 PM on Sunday, February 1, 2026 at Collier Funeral Chapel located at 211 West 5th St. Benton, Kentucky 42025 with Brent Henderson and Russel Steele officiating.

Interment will follow in Cole Cemetery. Visitation will be held between the hours of 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, February 1, 2026 at Collier Funeral Home.

Rev. Raymond O. Lewis BA, M.Div. age 89 of Benton, KY passed away on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at Calvert City Convalescent Center in Calvert City, KY. A Funeral service will be held at 3:00 PM on Saturday, January 31, 2026 at Collier Funeral Chapel located at 211 West 5th St. Benton, KY 42025 with Dennis Lewis officiating. Interment will follow in Marshall Co. Memory Gardens, Benton, KY.

Visitation will be held between the hours of 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 31, 2026 at Collier Funeral Home.

Emma Jo Edwards, 84 of Benton, Kentucky passed away on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at Marshall Co. Hospital in Benton, Kentucky. A funeral service was held at Collier Funeral Home Chapel on Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at 1:00 pm, with Bro. Ricky Cunningham officiating. Burial followed at Hardin Baptist Church Cemetery.

McCRACKEN

Mat Valerius, 83, of Paducah, Kentucky, passed away on Monday, January 26, 2026, at his residence. Memorial Graveside Services will be held at a later date. Milner & Orr Funeral Home and Cremation Services of Paducah is in charge of arrangements.

Ruth Sieverkropp Kendall, age 91, passed peacefully on Sunday, January 25, 2026 at Mills Nursing and Rehabilitation. Funeral services were held at 1:00 pm on Thursday, January 29, 2026 with Pastor David Appold officiating. Burial will follow at Liberty Cemetery. Visitation was held from 11:00 am until the 1:00 pm service time on Thursday, January 29, 2026 at the Lone Oak Chapel of Milner & Orr Funeral Homes.

Betty Leavell Wurth passed away at 1:30 p.m. on January 23, 2026, at the Ray and Kay Eckstein Hospice Care Center. Funeral Mass will be held on Friday, January 30, 2026 at St. John Catholic Church at 11:00 a.m. with Rev. Bruce Fogle officiating. Burial will follow the service at St. John Catholic Church Cemetery.

Visitation will be held on Thursday, January 29, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. at the Lone Oak Chapel of Milner & Orr Funeral Home with prayers at 4:30 p.m.

Lydia Maria (Wolf) Cackowski, also know as Oma. 77 years young, passed away on January 27,2026 at 0509 am at Missouri Delta Hospital in Sikeston Missouri surrounded by the love of her family. Funeral services will be postponed, as Joe and Lydia wished to share one service and be laid to rest together as one.

James Johnson - For nearly 50 years, Jim was married to the love of his life, Alice, a partnership marked by deep loyalty, friendship, and a lifetime of shared adventures. He passed away just one month shy of their 50th wedding anniversary, leaving behind a legacy of steadfast love and the kind of partnership built through years of showing up for one another.

Ayisha Melonnie Wall “Nonnie” as she was affectionately known, passed away peacefully surrounded by her family on Saturday, January 17,

2026 at Baptist Health Paducah. A Celebration of Life will be held on Friday, January 30, 2026, 12 noon at Pettus Rowland Funeral Home. The family will receive friends from 11:00 a. m. until 12 noon where Reverend Donna G. Hawkins will offer words of comfort.

Verda Louise Estes Downs was called home by her Lord and Savior on January 24, 2026. Known to her family and close friends as Nookey or Aunt Nookey. She is strolling the streets of gold with Gayle, the love of her life. Funeral services will be held at 1:00 PM on Monday, February 2, 2026 at Hughes Funeral Home in Paducah with Pastor Michael Wooley officiating. Burial will follow at Woodlawn Memorial Gardens in Paducah. Visitation will be held from 11:00 AM to service time Monday at the funeral home.

TRIGG

Nelta L. Yeager, 78, Canton Lake Shore Drive, Cadiz, KY passed away Wednesday, January 21, 2026 at her daughter’s home in Gracey, KY of natural causes. A celebration of life service will be held at a later date. Lamb Funeral Home is assisting with arrangements.

Linda Futrell Hendon - July 14, 1942 - January 24, 2026 - Private Burial for 83 year old Linda Futrell Hendon of Cadiz were held on Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 1:30 p.m. at the East Cadiz Baptist Church Cemetery. King’s Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Captain Mike Stewart beloved husband, father, friend and top notch mariner, peacefully “crossed the bar” on Saturday, January 24, 2026 at the age of 72. Funeral services will be held on Friday, January 30, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. at King’s Funeral Home with Brian Morris officiating. Visitation will be on Friday, from 11:00 – 1:00 at King’s Funeral Home. Burial will follow in the Daniel Stewart Cemetery.

Bill Lester - November 5, 1932 - January 22, 2026 - Funeral Services for 93 year old Bill Lester of Gracey were held Thursday, January 29, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. at New Work Fellowship in Hopkinsville with Rev. Steve Hussung and Rev., Dr. Vona Wilson officiating. Burial will follow in the Lester Family Cemetery in Gracey. King’s Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Dee Steele-Hamm, age 60, passed away on Sunday, January 25, 2026, at her home in Cerulean, Kentucky. A memorial service to celebrate Dee’s life will be held at a later date. Goodwin Funeral Home, 138 Main Street in Cadiz, is in care of the arrangements.

UNION

Denise Walker was born on September 15, 1957 and was called home to the Lord on January 23, 2026 after a life beautifully lived and deeply rooted in love, faith, and family. The service will be 12PM Friday, January 30, 2026 at St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Waverly. Fr. Dave Johnson will officiate. The burial will be in St. Peter’s Cemetery. The visitation will be 10AM until service time on Friday at Whitsell Funeral Home in Morganfield.

Daryl Gene Gourley, age 74, passed away peacefully on January 23, 2026 at his home in Waverly, KY surrounded by his family. Funeral service was held at 1 PM Thursday January 29, 2026 at Whitsell Funeral Home in Morganfield, KY. Bro Geoff Deibler will officiate. Burial will be in St. Agnes Cemetery in Uniontown, KY.

To place a full obituary, including a photo, call 270-442-7389 for details and pricing. Obituaries and funeral notices should be received by 9 a.m. Wednesday for inclusion in that week’s paper.

VICTORIOUS *Living* ...in a troubled world

Angels watching over us

By Teresa LeNeave
leneave2@comcast.net

Until I fell off a City Scooter while on vacation in Denver, Colorado, I had no concept of the impact a fall can have on a person's life. I'm ashamed to say, in July 2025, when my family doctor said, "You're in very good health, but the older you get, the more you'll have to be careful about falling", I almost laughed. My immediate, and somewhat proud response, was: "Well, I'm not worried about that because my muscles are strong and I don't think I'll be falling in the near future."

I didn't take ignorance into consideration. Why would someone, my age, get

on an electric City Scooter anyway? I did, and the MRI showed I had torn my hamstring from the bone. I spent three days in the hospital in Denver. It took eight days before I could raise my leg enough to put it on a pillow by myself. On the tenth day, I could get out of bed by myself but it was eleven days before I could walk just a couple steps without a walker. On the 13th day, I felt like a miracle had happened. I was extremely slow, but was able to take care of my basic needs without help. It has now started my fourth week and I'm so excited to be able to sit without tremendous pain.

The amazing thing is that for almost two



weeks I had to have someone do everything for me and miraculously on the 12th day, everything begin to get better day-by-day. I attribute that healing process to God's divine intervention and lots of prayer from lots of Christians. I still need help with some things and it remains to be a

challenge. I'm so grateful for where I am. In fact, from where I was, to where I am, I know God's love and mercy was instrumental in my healing.

I read where celebrity chef, Guy Fiera, fell down some stairs in November, tearing his quadricep muscle in half. He said it was

one of the worse things he's ever gone through. I agree. This is one of the most painful things I've ever experienced. But I'm on the mend and the long-term process of physical therapy must take place if I don't want to limp around the rest of my life.

I don't fully understand the reasons people fall when we get older. In my case, it was a bad choice on my part, but when most people fall it's not their fault. It could be from general weakness, uneven steps, vision problems or something they trip over like a pair of shoes, a cord or a pet. In any case, it's a rude awakening when it happens to you.

The point of my tell-

ing you this is that we think it can't happen to us. It can. We take so much for granted when, in fact, we should look at "normal every day" activities as a privilege. It's God's blessings that we get out of bed, without help, in the morning. I cling to the scriptures, "He sent His Word and healed them" (Ps 107:20) and "Healing is the children's bread" (Matt. 15:21-28).

If you're going through something that's new and painful remember God is with you to heal and restore you. "With us is the Lord our God to help us" (2 Chron 32:8). I honestly believe there are angels watching over us.

There is no substitute for perseverance

By William F Holland Jr.
billyhollandministries.com

When it comes to finding our place in this world, let's consider two categories. The first one, let's call "floating down the river." Imagine someone napping in a small boat without a compass or a paddle and not caring about where they are going. Having a spectator mentality, they have yet to understand the importance of having an intentional direction and instead settle for just hoping for the best. They are comfortable with what they do not know, and believe that everything will somehow be alright. Our second way of thinking involves listening and developing an awareness of our personal accountability to ourselves, those around us, and, of course, God, the one who made us. Until we embrace the reality that He has a specific meaning and purpose for our lives, we will not fulfill our potential.

As a substitute teacher, I have the honor to help children learn, and while in this position, I observe different types of personalities and attitudes. I notice that those who are eager to absorb knowledge and excel are enthusiastic about all subjects. I believe when

kids are encouraged at home, and education is a priority, this transfers over to the student as it opens their eyes to encouraging possibilities and opportunities. On the other hand, when children are looking out the window and doodling on their papers instead of answering the questions, it seems they are not only bored and avoiding the subject matter, but have made a mental decision to refuse to learn. Do some have a resistance to change because they are afraid of failing?

Being a minister, I also volunteer at our local detention center a couple of times a month, where I speak to the inmates about God and the Christian life. For those who ask God to intervene, and agree to let go of their ways, our team will baptize and serve them communion, and try to help them all we can. I've heard some heartbreaking stories from these individuals, and often, they testify about having a hard life at home when they were kids. They lost interest in school, started running with a bad crowd, and it's been a downhill slide ever since. Some admit they are on the bottom, with terrible personal problems, and have burned every bridge, but of course,

it's never too late to ask
for God's help.

God's love encourages and motivates us, but another aspect of success is to realize there are certain conditions and responsibilities on our part for His plan to be fully activated. It will require surrendering our will to him. You see, with God being the Potter and us being the clay, it's critical to accept the fact that we do not conveniently add God to the plans we already have, but rather we must allow Him to transform us into His brand new creation. One of the basic attitudes I see all the time is "I don't care." So what makes people rise from the ashes of apathy, rebellion, and discouragement? Well, personal change is not easy, and anyone who advertises how wonderful it is to sacrifice, suffer, and step into a lifestyle completely opposite to their comfort zone is not being honest. There's nothing wrong with reading books about how others have conquered their demons, but even if someone understands what it will take, this does not automatically mean they will do it.

Sadly, many are only trying to survive today, without a desire to plan for tomorrow. If you've

ever tried to help someone find their direction, you understand when I say we cannot force anyone to do anything, especially those who are not willing to help themselves. In every area of life, the ones who desire a healthy state of being must comprehend the truth about their own responsibilities and be willing to do something about it. Beyond the motivational seminars, the Bible studies, and achievement formulas,

it will take a personal revelation, an enlightenment of the mind and soul, to have faith in ourselves the way God has hope in us. Whether we are young or old, being an overcomer requires seeking, praying, and working, and living in denial and blaming everyone for our problems only makes it worse. I have compassion for those whose parents failed them and know those who still struggle from neglect.

Life has always seemed like a huge mountain that was impossible to climb. There is no substitute for perseverance, as it's true, "We cannot lower the mountain, therefore we must elevate ourselves."

Dr. Holland is a Christian minister, author, and community outreach chaplain. Ask for a free download of his song, "Intentions of the Heart" at psalmz103@gmail.com



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My hunting season is over. I have scheduled a couple of fishing trips, but they are a few weeks away. Until then, I am surrounded by everything man-made. I don't mind this too much after a season of God-made stuff, but I need to return to the God-made stuff quickly. But not for the hunting or fishing, but for the God of the stuff. You see, most of the time when I go to the woods I am going for the purpose of pursuit – whether that is for the purpose

of scouting or hunting. When I'm in the woods I'm thinking about deer or turkey. When I'm on the water, it's usually with a fishing rod. The point is that while I'm surrounded by the very handiwork of God when I am outside, I am focused on a more mundane activity. And sometimes (not all the time) my purpose doesn't line up with my place. Let me explain.

What I need right now more than anything, is to be surrounded by creation for the purpose of

being with and hearing from the Creator. My purpose needs to line up with my place. And yours does too. As you know because you hear it from me all the time, creation is the first way God spoke to his people, and it is still the first way He does it. Sure, the Bible is what we as Christians look to more than anything. But creation is how God speaks to believers and unbelievers all over the world. It is God confronting us head on with something so great that we must contemplate His

desire to include us. And those of us who are Christians need to lean into hearing God through creation as well as through the scriptures. But to do that, we have to get in creation for this specific purpose. So, here's what I'm going to do and maybe it's something that you might want to do. Go to the woods or get in your boat and go to the lake, for the express purpose of hearing what God might want to say to you through His many masterpieces. When you get there

simply ask God, "What do you want to say to me while I'm here?" And then, shut up, look at all the wonders around you, and listen. And then be able to answer this question should someone ask, and your life depended on it. "What was the one thing God wanted you to know from your time in the woods or on the water?" Be able to answer that question. If you and I do this, we will have perfectly used creation for the primary purpose it was meant. And I can't help to

believe the man-made world we are returning to, will be filled with a greater joy as well.

Gary Miller has written Outdoor Truths articles for 23 years. He has also written five books which include compilations of his articles and a father/son devotional. He also speaks at wild-game dinners and men's events for churches and associations. Stay updated on Outdoor Truths each week by subscribing at Outdoortruths.org

HEAVEN'S SAVINGS ACCOUNT

Bro. Brandon G. Bramlett
Bandana Baptist Church

The young man complied although he did not completely comprehend his father's request. If he wished to continue living at home, he had to stick with his dad's straightforward stipulations: hold down a job and pay rent. So, he paid his parents a substantial sum every month, hard-earned money that might otherwise have gone toward video games, upgrading his smartphone, and acquiring frivolous things from Amazon.

Eventually, he decided to move out and buy his first home. It was then that his father revealed a long-time-coming surprise: "Son, I've been putting all of the money you've paid your mother and I into a savings account for the down payment on your house."

His sacrifices literally paid off. Though he likely doubted at times whether it was a waste of time and money, he ended up paying himself. And similarly, the sacrifices we make for the Lord and His kingdom are everlasting

investments. What we give up for Christ—as costly as it may be on earth—is sent ahead of us and reserved in an eternal "savings account," to be inherited when we leave this world to live in a "house not made with hands" (2 Cor. 5:1). And this account is insured by the greatest "FDIC" of all: the Father's Deposits in Christ.

According to Jesus, we rob ourselves of heavenly rewards when we settle for a comfortable and complacent life where our time, talents, and

treasures are spent on ourselves (cf. Mark 8:34-36). But when we give until it hurts, serve when it interrupts our schedule, and choose costly obedience over convenient sins, we grow "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21) and stockpile treasure in heaven: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do

not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19-20, KJV). Christ also assured that we accrue "interest" on what we sacrifice: "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life" (Luke 18:29-30). In other words, the Lord will not only reimburse what we give up on earth—He will infinitely multiply it in eternity.

Still, just as the son paid rent to please his father rather than secure a reward, we must bless others, give our all for God's kingdom, and treat every day as a sacrificial altar—not to manipulate God for blessings, but simply to please Him. The Lord owes us nothing, yet He promises to reward our faithfulness with "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). Are you storing up treasures in heaven?





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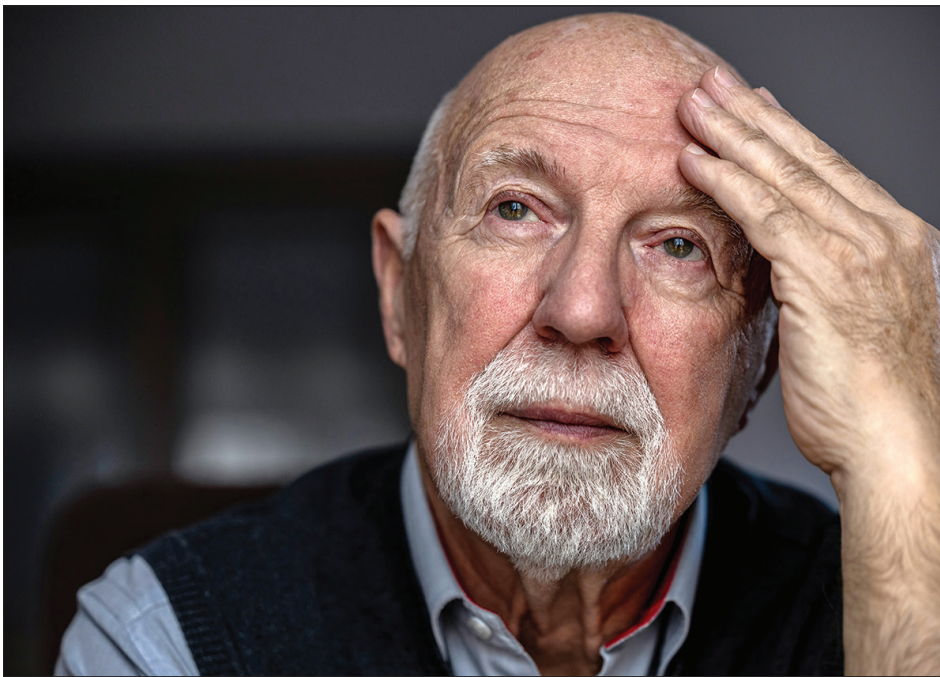


What seniors can do to safeguard their mental health

Mental health has increasingly been noted as a key ingredient to an individual health regimen. The stigma once assigned to mental health issues has largely dissipated, and many people now recognize that mental health should be just as big a priority as physical health.

Seniors may not have come of age in a world where mental health was prioritized, and thanks to that aging men and women may not recognize where their mental health is suffering and what they can do to combat such problems. Recognition of the importance of mental health is a step in the right direction, and seniors also can consider these strategies to safeguard their mental health.

- *Recognize your vulnerability.* The



World Health Organization notes older adults are uniquely vulnerable to potential mental health issues. That's because mental health is shaped by numerous variables, including earlier life experiences and some notable stressors related to aging, such as a decline in functional ability that can

cause psychological distress. Seniors also are more likely than others to experience adverse events like the loss of a loved one or even a loss of purpose, which can affect anyone upon retirement. Recognition of this vulnerability may be enough to compel seniors to seek advice and assistance on how to safeguard their

mental health from age-related stressors.

- *Take time out if you're a caregiver.* The WHO notes that many older adults serve as caregivers for spouses with chronic health conditions, including dementia. The Alzheimer's Association reports that studies have found that 70 percent of caregivers report

feeling stress related to coordination of care, while two in three caregivers have difficulty finding resources and support for their needs. Seniors who have taken on caregiving duties for a loved one must protect their own mental health by taking time out to care for themselves as well. Work with family members to share responsibilities when caring for a loved one. If family members cannot pitch in, then work with local government agencies to alleviate some of the stress of caregiving.

- *Make a concerted effort to socialize.*

A 2025 report from the WHO indicated that roughly one-fourth of all older adults are affected by social isolation and loneliness. Social connection can significantly improve mental health and

provide a sense of life satisfaction while improving quality of life. Seniors are urged to prioritize socialization. Many community-based groups, including government offices, run programs designed specifically to facilitate socialization among older residents. Take advantage of such programs whenever possible. Seniors living alone also may want to consider relocating to communities exclusive to people age 55 and over, as such developments typically offer an array of socialization opportunities to residents.

Seniors are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues, but older adults can take many steps to safeguard their mental health.

Tips for seniors dealing with anxiety, depression & grief

Anxiety, depression, and grief are common challenges for seniors, especially during times of change such as retirement, declining health, or the loss of loved ones. While these feelings can be difficult, there are healthy ways to cope and regain a sense of balance and hope.

First, stay connected. Isolation can worsen emotional struggles, so maintaining regular contact with family, friends, or community groups is important. Even brief phone calls, shared meals, or attending local events can provide comfort and remind seniors they are not alone.

Second, keep a daily routine. Structure offers stability and purpose, which can ease anxiety and low mood. Simple habits such as waking up at the same time, going for a short walk, or enjoying a favorite hobby help create a sense of normalcy and control.

Physical activity also plays a key

role in emotional well-being. Gentle exercises like walking, stretching, or chair yoga can boost mood, reduce stress, and improve sleep. Always consult a healthcare provider before starting new activities, especially if health conditions are present.

When dealing with grief, it's important to allow space for emotions. Grief has no timetable, and feelings may come and go. Writing in a journal, talking openly about memories, or participating in a support group can help process loss in a healthy way.

Seniors should also pay attention to their mental health just as they would their physical health. If feelings of sadness, worry, or hopelessness persist, speaking with a doctor, counselor, or faith leader can be an important step. Professional support can provide reassurance, coping tools, and treatment options when needed. Finally, focus

on small joys. Listening to music, spending time outdoors, reading, or volunteering can bring moments of peace and meaning. While emotional challenges may arise, support, routine, and self-care can help seniors move forward with resilience and renewed purpose.



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What to know about AMD

Physical changes are a normal byproduct of aging. Gray hairs and less elastic skin that contributes to wrinkles may be among the more notable physical signs of aging, but older individuals also may note their vision is not what it once was.

Diminished vision can be a byproduct of various conditions. Aging individuals who have noticed a loss of vision may be dealing with age-related macular degeneration, or AMD. Seniors concerned by AMD can learn about the condition so they're well-positioned to manage it if and when they need to.

What is AMD?
The National Eye Institute notes that AMD is an eye disease that is the leading cause of vision loss for older adults. In fact, Johns Hopkins Medicine notes age is the most common cause of severe loss

of eyesight among people 50 and older. The NEI notes that aging causes damage to the macula, which is the part of the eye that controls sharp, straight-ahead vision. When a person has AMD, his or her central vision is blurred.

What happens when a person has AMD?
Because AMD blurs the central vision, people who develop the disease may struggle to recognize faces, read, drive, or engage in activities that require close-up work, including cooking or fixing things around the house.

Are all cases of AMD the same?
The NEI notes that AMD happens very slowly in some people and faster in others. Some people may not recognize they have vision loss even when they already have early AMD. In addition, there are two types of AMD:
• Dry AMD: Dry

AMD is the most common type of the disease and occurs as the macula gets thinner with age. Dry AMD progresses slowly over several years, and occurs in three stages: early, intermediate and late.
• Wet AMD: Wet AMD is a less common form of late AMD that the NEI notes typically causes faster vision loss. Wet AMD occurs when abnormal blood vessels grow in the back of the eye and damage the macula. Wet AMD is treatable.

Does AMD produce symptoms?
AMD produces different symptoms depending on the stage of the disease. Early dry AMD does not cause any symptoms, and the NEI notes some people with intermediate dry AMD may not experience symptoms. Those who do may notice symptoms such as mild blurriness in their central vision or difficulty seeing in low lighting. Late wet or dry AMD patients may notice that straight lines are beginning to look wavy or crooked and there may be a blurry area near the center of their vision. That blurriness can grow larger over time and people may begin to see blank spots. Colors also may seem less bright and people may have difficulty seeing in low lighting.

Who is at risk for AMD?
The NEI notes that adults over 55 are more likely to have AMD than any other group. People with a family history of AMD, Caucasians and smokers also have a higher risk of developing AMD. Quitting smoking, getting regular physical activity, maintaining healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and eating a healthy diet that includes leafy greens and fish are some ways people can lower their AMD risk.
AMD is most common among individuals over 50. More information is available at nei.nih.gov.

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Baptist Health implements Blue Band Project to reduce maternal risk

[PADUCAH, KY] — In observance of Maternal Health Awareness Day on Jan. 23, Baptist Health Paducah is highlighting the Blue Band Project, a maternal safety initiative implemented across all Baptist Health hospitals to support early recognition and coordinated care for pregnant and postpartum patients with high blood pressure-related conditions.

“The initiative uses a simple tool – a blue silicone wristband – provided to patients diagnosed with hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, such as preeclampsia, during pregnancy or after delivery,” said Lisa Parnell, Director of Mother/Baby Care at Baptist Health Paducah. “These conditions are often manageable with timely care, and this project helps strengthen communication among care teams and supports prompt attention if concerns arise.”

Patients who receive the wristband are encouraged to wear it for up to six weeks after delivery, a time when follow-up care remains especially important. The band serves as a visual cue for healthcare providers, emergency departments and first responders that a patient may need closer

monitoring related to blood pressure concerns. Patients also receive educational materials to help them recognize warning signs and feel informed as they recover and adjust to life with a new baby.

“Pregnancy and the weeks after delivery bring many changes to the body, and high blood pressure is one of the most common conditions we monitor,” said Parnell. “The Blue Band Project adds an extra layer of communication and support for patients and care teams during a critical period.”

The Blue Band Project is part of a statewide effort led by the Kentucky Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Task Force to promote consistent maternal safety practices. Through initiatives like this, Baptist Health continues its focus on supporting healthy pregnancies and safe recoveries for patients and their families.

More information about the Blue Band Project is available at kypqc.org.

To learn more about maternal care at Baptist Health, visit Maternity Care - Mother & Baby Care | Baptist Health or speak with your healthcare provider.

About Baptist Health Paducah
Baptist Health

Paducah is a regional medical and referral center serving about 200,000 patients a year from four states. With more than 1,300 employees and 364 physicians, it offers 42 points of care with a full range of services, including cardiac and cancer care, diagnostic imaging, women’s and children’s services, surgery, emergency treatment, rehabilitation, and more. It has the region’s first heart center and only accredited chest pain center and certified stroke center with 24/7 neurohospitalist coverage, as well as Paducah’s only comprehensive cancer center and Level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care unit. Baptist Health Paducah has a network of healthcare providers for patients in western Kentucky and southern Illinois — from Baptist Health Medical Group physician offices to Baptist Health Urgent Care and Occupational Medicine locations.

The hospital is also designated Pathway to Excellence® for excellence in nursing services by the American Nursing Credentialing Center. It opened in 1953 as Western Baptist Hospital and changed its name in early 2013, along with other facilities in Baptist Health, the largest not-for-profit healthcare systems in Kentucky.



Blue wristband that notifies healthcare professionals of those at risk for hypertensive disorders such as preeclampsia during pregnancy or after delivery.






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How to maximize outdoor wedding venues

When searching for the right place to tie the knot, each couple looks for their own unique spot. According to The Knot Worldwide 2024 Global Wedding Report, couples across the globe identify cost and venue style/type as the most important variables to consider. Nearly 75 percent of couples worldwide report getting married within 30 miles of their homes. And many couples prefer an outdoor wedding.

Outdoor weddings peaked in popularity in 2020, when the global pandemic forced couples to be creative as they sought to tie the knot with friends and family in attendance. Statista reported that 68 percent of couples hosted their wedding ceremonies outside or partially outside in 2020. However, Hudson Valley Weddings paints a more conservative picture of outdoor weddings today, with 35 percent of weddings now being held outdoors.

Couples hold their ceremonies and receptions outside for a variety of reasons, including the chance to tie the knot in a naturally beautiful landscape. The following are some ways to maximize the benefits of outdoor venues.

- *Embrace the opportunity to accommodate more guests.* Couples with large guest lists may opt for outdoor weddings because venues with outdoor space typically can accommodate more people. Outdoor spaces can be vast and not constrained by the walls of banquet halls or restaurants — allowing guests to spread out.
- *Include child-friendly elements.* If it would be difficult to exclude children from the festivities, an outdoor venue can ensure kids have something to do. Kids tend to have high energy levels, and an outdoor venue gives them space to run around without crashing into something or tipping something over. Setting up a separate kids’ play area also makes it easy to gather the kids in a certain spot, helping to keep children away from adults who are dancing.
- *Take advantage of the aesthetic.* Most outdoor spaces offer awe-inspiring features. Those who opt for spring or summer weddings can take advantage of cultivated, fragrant gardens or even fields of natural wildflowers. Fall weddings will be on fire with the natural oranges, reds and yellows of the changing landscape, which makes the perfect photo backdrop for nuptials. Try to time the occasion for around sunset to make outdoor areas even more special. A setting sun can cast a special glow on the festivities. And save money on decor by relying exclusively on natural features.
- *Get creative with food.* Part of the appeal of being outdoors for the wedding is the freedom to offer guests less standard fare in regard to food. A pig roast for a tropical affair or even wood-fired pizzas or barbecue align well with an outdoor wedding. Caterers often suggest passed appetizers for the cocktail hour and plated meals for dinner to cut down on insects buzzing around a buffet line.
- *Design a contingency plan.* Every couple wants the wedding to go off without a hitch (except for the actual getting hitched part), so it’s important to have a tent, pergola or covered area to retreat to in the event of rain or strong sun.

Outdoor weddings are popular options that can add a special touch newlyweds will remember for years to come.

A beginner’s guide to engagement ring shopping



Couples far and wide will tie the knot this year. Weddings join two lives together and often culminate with a lavish party that sees extended family and friends gather around tables enhanced by floral arrangements and delicious food. But long before guests can choose chicken or beef or newlyweds mail the final thank you note, couples must first take the initial step on the road to the wedding. That means getting engaged. Traditionally, engagements involve a sparkling gem that symbolizes love, fidelity and a whirlwind series of months poring over every possible wedding detail.

Shopping for an engagement ring is a unique experience. A ring requires a significant financial investment and serves as a lifelong symbol of commitment to another person. To navigate this sparkling world of diamonds and settings, shoppers can focus on key areas, notably budget, gem classification and finding a reputable jeweler.

Establish an engagement ring budget

Those ready to pop the question need not adhere to the outdated “three months’ salary” rule when selecting an engagement ring. Instead, the ring should be chosen based on financial realism and means. The

Knot’s 2024 Jewelry & Engagement Study indicates the average cost of an engagement ring in the United States comes in at approximately \$5,200. However, many couples spend less, showing that a marriage need not start on shaky financial footing due to the cost of a ring. If cost is a factor, lab-grown diamonds often cost 50 percent or more less than natural diamonds, yet they are chemically and physically identical to mined diamonds. One also can consider another gemstone, particularly if diamonds are beyond a budget or seem too traditional.

Know the four Cs

Diamond shopping involves mastering the Four Cs, which refers to Cut, Color, Clarity, and Carat Weight. A person should prioritize the cut above all else, and try to find a diamond in budget that has a cut that brings out the gem’s brilliance and fire. It can be challenging to distinguish a diamond’s color with the naked eye. Very often a near-colorless G-J diamond can look identical to a colorless one (Grade D). Color grades increase up to Z, with the diamond being more yellow/brown as the grading goes on. Clarity refers to tiny flaws (inclusions) in the diamond. A diamond that is Very Slightly Included will have inclusions not visible without magnification, making them a safe bet for saving money over those without any inclusions at all. Carat weight refers to the diamond’s weight and not its size. Diamonds just shy of the full- or half-carat mark tend to be less expensive but still look impressive.

Choose a reputable seller

It’s best to choose a gem that has been graded by an independent laboratory like the Gemological Institute of America. Customers also should select a jeweler they trust, which may require some research and word-of-mouth recommendations. A knowledgeable jeweler also can make suggestions on setting and gem shape. Upon purchasing the engagement ring, one also might consider having it independently appraised for further purchase protection.

An engagement ring purchase requires careful consideration and a significant investment. But once the stress of purchase wears away, the lasting memories of the engagement and wedding to come will make everything well worth it.

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Why it pays to trust a pro with wedding photography

User-friendly technology and greatly enhanced connectivity has changed the way people approach various tasks. The do-it-yourself home improvement trend is a testament to that shift, as homeowners now have access to professional grade tools and can easily take to social media for inspiration and instructions for renovations that were once the domain of experienced contractors.

Though it can be fun and budget-friendly to embrace a DIY approach in many settings, that strategy is not ideal for every situation, including the day couples tie the knot. A couple’s wedding day is one to cherish forever, which is why it pays to rely on skilled professionals. That’s particularly so with wedding photography, which will serve as the official record of a day filled with love and laughs. Modern technology may compel some couples to think they can go without the services of a professional photographer on their wedding day, but there are many reasons to trust this important job to an experienced pro.

- Photographers can get great shots no matter the conditions. There’s a difference between snapping great shots of an idyllic setting on a smartphone and taking wedding day photographs couples will look back on for years to come. Experienced photographers have cameras capable of far more than those on a smartphone,



and these skilled professionals also possess the knowledge of how to get great shots in settings that might not be so conducive to photography. A dimly lit reception hall dance floor may prove challenging for untrained amateurs, but professional photographers know what to do to get great shots in such settings. Professionals also know how to utilize natural light to their advantage when taking shots outdoors.

- Photographers handle the details. Couples have enough on their plate when planning weddings. Taking on photography duties requires identifying the right photo locations, knowing when to take photos to maximize surroundings, ensuring bridal party members are all ready to go so photos can be taken within tight deadlines, and post-wedding detailing. That’s a lot to take on, and it’s work best left to professionals.

• Photographers free up time. Many newlyweds note their wedding day

seemed to fly by and was over before they knew it. Such sentiments may be

even stronger when couples take on too much responsibility come the wedding day. A professional photographer will coordinate shots and timelines with couples prior to the big day and take over getting bridal party members where they need to be when they need to be there. That frees up time for couples to spend more time with each other and their guests come the day of the wedding, which in turn can make it feel as though the day didn’t fly by.

- You get a professionally finished product. Amateur photographers

simply won’t produce as stunning a finished product as professionals who take and touch up photos for a living. A wedding day photo album is a keepsake couples will look back on for years, so it’s best to ensure its contents include photos taken and touched up by a skilled professional.

Couples can find ways to cut costs with their wedding budgets. But it’s best to avoid cutting corners regarding photography, as there’s no way to turn back the clock and get better shots if the efforts of amateurs fall short of expectations.



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Plan a Valentine’s Day proposal

Valentine’s Day is often characterized as the most romantic day of the year. Steeped in tradition involving the exchange of tokens of affection like chocolates, roses and gifts, Valentine’s Day also is a popular day to propose marriage. It’s possible to separate popping the question from standard Valentine’s Day celebrations. Here’s how to shape a proposal that is heartfelt, personalized and presented with genuine emotion.

Be intentional
Before planning the proposal, reflect on what your partner likes and what matters most. Consider their feelings about gestures, namely, whether they like intimate moments or grand displays. The proposal should fit your partner’s personality and not be about grabbing more social media likes. Start with good intentions that suit your partner.

Find the setting
Select a setting that is meaningful and doesn’t veer into cliché territory. Look for places with personal significance, such as the location of a first date or a spot tied to a shared memory. The location even can be a special spot uniquely special to your partner, like a park bench frequently shared with a grandparent who is no longer living. A new destination that reflects your future together also is a good option. Scout out any areas in advance to ensure privacy and a smooth experience. If the proposal will take place outdoors, have a Plan B ready to deal with weather or any other obstacles.

Make the day flow
Consider the proposal like a mini movie that’s not a standalone moment, but part of a greater narrative. Plan activities leading up to the question. Have a meal together, walk through a favorite neighborhood haunt

or exchange gifts as is customary on Valentine’s Day. These touches set the scene for the day. They may also hint at what’s to come.

Incorporate personal elements
Include touches that call to mind your shared story. Details from inside jokes to beloved songs to objects with sentimental value can elevate this special moment. If family members or close friends are especially important to your partner, figure out a way to incorporate them into the proposal.

Leave room to celebrate
So much emphasis is placed on finding the right words and moment to pop the question, but don’t forget about the afterglow. Knowing your partner will help you decide whether you should move on to a romantic dinner after the proposal or head to a place where phone calls sharing the great news can be handled immediately.



You also may want to spend a cozy night reflecting on this life-changing moment and all that’s on the

horizon. Valentine’s Day proposals are wildly popular. But those considering popping

the question on February 14 can still find ways to make their proposal unique.

What to know before a wedding gown shopping trip

Weddings mark a turning point from one stage in life to another. The significance of that transition is perhaps one reason why couples and their guests dress so nicely for a wedding ceremony and reception. Formal garb is a wedding tradition, and guests anxiously await seeing which type of gown a bride will wear. In western cultures, white wedding gowns have been the standard since the nineteenth century and are believed to symbolize purity and grace. In eastern cultures, wedding gowns often have been elaborate, colorful creations that have their own symbolic meanings unique to various areas of the world. Shopping for a wedding gown can spark mixed emotions.

While it is exciting to try on some remarkable garments, there also is the pressure of knowing all eyes will be on you while wearing this couture creation. Narrowing down wedding gown prospects can take vision, time and patience. The following pointers can help when it comes time to visit bridal shops.

Make an appointment
Many bridal shops operate by appointment only. That’s because the staff wants to devote complete attention to a client, and having people simply walk in from the street can draw their attention away and/or lead to long wait times. Identify the stores you want to visit, and then call to secure your time slot.



Narrow down styles
Think about what your personal style might be and how you want to look on your wedding day. If you’re not sure about the vocabulary surrounding dress silhouettes, visit Pinterest or Instagram and save images of

dresses that you love. Then you can show the sales staff what you are thinking instead of going in empty-handed.

Keep an open mind
Try on a few different styles even if you have a particular dress in mind. You never know if something might be a

better fit for your body type or the scope and style of your wedding unless you give it a go.

Start the process early
Unlike off-the-rack clothing, most wedding shops will have to order your dress and have it shipped. Then comes a few weeks for alterations. KWH Bridal notes eight to 12 months before a wedding is a good time to choose and order a dress. Brides magazine says most made-to-order wedding gowns take about six to nine months to create. There also are three separate fittings to ensure the gown will fit like a glove.

Invite a handful of confidantes
It’s best not to arrive at the shopping appointment with an entire entourage.

Pick, at the most, four people whose opinions you trust; otherwise, it could be a case of too many cooks in the kitchen. As a bride-to-be you’ll already be anxious, and you’ll want soothing, supportive people with you.

Plan your budget
Know well in advance what you can afford to spend. According to data from The Knot, wedding attire accounts for 7 percent of the average couple’s budget. Most wedding gowns are in the range of \$2,000. Don’t forget about additional costs, such as veil, shoes, alterations, undergarments, and any add-ons. In addition to these tips, arrive to an appointment well-rested, fed and comfortable.

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Kentucky Forest Leadership Program opens 2026 applications for unique experience at Robinson Forest

The Kentucky Forest Leadership Program gives high school students seeking practical experience in forestry, entomology and wildlife a head start.

By Jordan Strickler

Quicksand, Ky.—
The University of
Kentucky's Kentucky
Forest Leadership
Program (KFLP) is now
accepting applications
for its 2026 session. The
weeklong, residential
program brings
high school students
together for hands-
on learning about
Kentucky's natural
resources. Part of the

Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, this year's program runs June 7-12 at Robinson Forest.

KFLP is geared for students who want to explore the forests, trees, insects, water and wildlife. Participants spend the week outdoors and in field settings, learning from trained forestry and natural resource

professionals. Students will follow a full schedule of activities built around real field methods and problem-solving.

“The KFLP program helps participants understand the importance of Kentucky forests and natural resources as well as the management and conservation of these resources,” said Extension forester

Laurie Thomas. “It also helps students interact with natural resources professionals and learn about academic programs and careers in this field and develop team building and leadership skills while working in resource management teams.”

Participating students can apply to one of three educational tracks — Forestry, Entomology or Wildlife. While each track offers focused instruction, students also work across tracks during the week, sharing findings and tackling the kind of interdisciplinary questions that come up while working in natural resources.

The Forestry Option is intended for students with a strong interest in Kentucky's woodlands and forest management. These participants learn the basics of forest surveying and

management and complete a survey within an 80-acre forest plot that all three tracks study. Activities include tree identification, land surveying, soil science, fire management, water quality evaluation, Kentucky wildlife topics and GPS/GIS mapping. Forestry students also estimate tree species composition and timber volume as part of their fieldwork.

The Entomology Option focuses on Kentucky's insects and their impact on forests. Students learn insect identification, collection and ecology, then contribute to an insect survey in the same 80-acre plot examined by the other tracks. The entomology schedule also includes aquatic habitat investigation, tree identification, water quality evaluation, wildlife topics and

GPS/GIS mapping.
Students discuss how insect pressures shape forest conditions and how that information feeds into management decisions.

The Wildlife Option centers on Kentucky wildlife and field techniques used to sample, identify and manage species. Wildlife participants complete a wildlife habitat assessment in the shared 80-acre plot and conduct surveys for reptiles and amphibians, signs of mammals (tracks, scat and damage), birds (early morning survey) and bats after dusk using acoustic recording technology. GPS/GIS mapping is also part of the track.

Across all tracks, students periodically come together to compare results and

see **FOREST**,
page B20

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Deer harvest of 145,000 fifth largest in Kentucky history

By Tom Latek
kentucky Today

FRANKFORT, Ky. (KT) – The Kentucky Division of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) announced Friday that hunters harvested 145,433 deer in Kentucky during the 2025-26 season, the fifth-highest reported total in history and 3,000 above the 10-year average.

The recently completed 136-day season was noteworthy for a newly expanded October youth-only season, impressive success of hunters on public land, and a high percentage of harvested bucks estimated to be 2½ years old or older. However, doe harvest goals, aimed at maintaining a healthy and quality herd, were not met.

“In many ways, it was a great deer season – almost 105,000 hunters were successful in taking at least one deer, walking away with meat in the freezer, some with a rack for the wall and all stories to tell friends



and family,” said Joe McDermott, KDFWR deer program coordinator. “We are looking to substantially increase the female harvest over time.”

This year, KDFWR set doe harvest goals for Zone 1 and Zone 2 counties, but only one county – Simpson – met its goal. Eleven other counties met 80 to 90 percent of the department’s goals.

McDermott said wildlife officials are discussing ways to increase doe harvest.

More than 20 counties are expected to be reassigned to different zones to encourage more doe harvest in the 2026-27 deer season.

An overabundance of deer can result in increased deer-vehicle collisions and damage to agricultural crops and expensive landscaping. It can also increase the spread of tick-borne and other diseases and lead to smaller body sizes and antlers due to competi-

tion for food. “When there are fewer deer on the landscape, the re-

maining animals are better able to reach their full potential,” McDermott stated.

Of the 104,595 successful deer hunters, 74 percent took only one deer, less than 43 percent took a doe and less than 3 percent filled their standard four-deer permit allotment, said Tommy Apostolopoulos, deer program biologist.

As a reminder, hunters who take more deer than they need can donate a deer to Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry or Boone Brothers, two organizations working together to fight food insecurity.

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FOREST,
from page B18

work through real-life forest management problems, culminating in a forest management plan and student presentations. Instructors and advisors are from the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, Department of Entomology and Natural Resource and Environmental Science, along with partners from the Kentucky Division of Forestry, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Kentucky Division of Conservation. Enrollment is limited within each track.

“Educating Kentucky’s youth about our natural resources

is critical to the future of our environment and economy,” Thomas said. “Programs like KFLP provide participants a greater understanding about the environment and the importance of managing and conserving our natural resources.”

The program begins at 3 p.m.ET on Sunday, June 7. Families are invited to attend student forest management presentations at 10 a.m. on Friday, June 12.

The program cost is \$600, which covers programming costs and room and board. Payment is due after acceptance. Applications are currently open, and students can apply through the online registration form

posted on the KFLP website.

Scholarship support may be available. County conservation districts often sponsor participants; families can contact Mark Davis with the Kentucky Division of Conservation at 502-782-6594 for details. A Kentucky Woodland Owners Scholarship application is also available through the KFLP site.


For program questions, contact Laurie Thomas at laurie.thomas@uky.edu or 859-257-2703. For questions specific to the Entomology Option, contact Blake Newton at blaken@uky.edu or 859-257-7453.

Learn more about the Kentucky Forest Leadership Program at Martin-Gatton CAFE.

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High school students who participate in the KFLP can take classes in everything from Forestry to Entomology to Wildlife.

Photo by Matt Barton

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