READERS' CHOICE

20th Annual Fayette County

Best of the Best

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A publication of
The Fayette Tribune

Thursday, August 31, 2023
Proud to care for your community.
Harrah recognized as county’s #1 attorney

By Cheryl Keenan
THE FAYETTE TRIBUNE

Growing up on Goose Creek Road in Fayetteville, Larry Harrah likely never pictured himself as a public official or as a litigator striving his hardest to provide relief from a wide array of circumstances for his clients.

Harrah, one of seven children of Larry Sr. and Connie Harrah, and stepson of Elaine Harrah, was more interested in the outdoors, fishing and hunting, and similar things young men of rural areas find exciting.

As a 1996 graduate of Fayetteville High School, Harrah went on to study at West Virginia Tech in Montgomery. It was there he met his wife, Melissa, and she’s the one who encouraged him to attend law school. Harrah earned his master's degree from Mountain State University and then moved on to law school at West Virginia University.

In an earlier interview with The Register-Herald, Harrah said he graduated from WVU College of Law on a Saturday in 2008 and received a job offer from Circuit Judge John W. Hatcher Jr. the same day.

“He asked me if I could start Monday, so I started Monday,” Harrah told The Register-Herald in 2015 following his being sworn in as Fayette County Prosecuting Attorney.

Harrah and his wife, both local natives, had earlier determined they wanted to settle and raise their family in Fayette County, so the offer to serve as a law clerk for the long-time jurist was a welcome call.

“I had a lot of job offers, but I always had it in my mind we would come back here and start a family in Fayette County. Our families are here. We have a support network for our boys. This is where we wanted to be. It is home,” he shared in a 2017 article in The Register-Herald and The Fayette Tribune.

By Jan. 2, 2015, Harrah was named to the role as prosecuting attorney to fill the unexpired term of the former prosecutor, Carl Harris, who had resigned.

Harrah thanked Harris for being “a tremendous mentor and always offering advice and support.”

“It’s bittersweet, but I’m ready to accept this challenge.”

Come the 2016 general election, Harrah was elected by the citizens of Fayette County to fill the office.

Larry Harrah, #1 Attorney

From l to r: Karen Reed (Director of Pharmacy), Teresia Falls (Pharmacy Tech), Andrea Garten (Pharmacy Tech), Frank Angelona (Pharmacist In Charge).

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Circuit Judge Paul M. Blake Jr. is pictured swearing Larry Harrah Jr. in as Fayette County Prosecuting Attorney on Jan. 2, 2015. Holding the Bible is his wife, Melissa.
HARRAH

FROM PAGE 3

“We always enjoyed the public service aspect of things (in the prosecuting attorney’s office),” Harrah said this week. “I always enjoyed helping the people of the county.

“That job as prosecutor has many, many facets. Not just the criminal part, but the civil part as well.”

Harrah said the job of prosecuting attorney, while “very, very rewarding,” was also hard to face. “We were in the absolute desairs of the opioid crisis,” he said, adding that probably 90 percent of the cases his department dealt with were drug-related in some way.

“When prescription pills hit us it was like something we’ve never seen before,” he explained in the 2017 article.

“Some of the saddest stories are the people who came about opioid addiction in an honest way. They were prescribed it for a legitimate reason — a car wreck or getting hurt at work. The next thing you know they are breaking into neighbor’s houses and stealing. They are controlled by this highly addictive pill, and now we are seeing them hooked on heroin or dead,” Harrah said.

“Friends I have grown up with have died. Some of them I’ve put in jail. I don’t like doing it, but it is part of the job,” he said at the time.

Harrah faced a lot of personal trials while serving as the prosecutor, as well as the trials of the job, that helped him to learn more about the importance of the job and balance of being an attorney.

In 2017, he told The Register-Herald the story of a case which broadened his perspective.

Following is an excerpt from that article from Sept. 28, 2017:

“The trial of Thomas Gene Carter Jr., who was sentenced to life in prison without mercy for kidnapping and sexually assaulting a woman in June 2014 on the White Oak Rail Trail, shook the community.

“Eight out of 10 sexual assault victims know their assailant. This was an uncommon case of stranger abduction and assault. Uncommon nationally and even more uncommon in Fayette County.

“Harrah explained that he went into the case hoping the legal system would punish Carter for his crime, but working with the assault victim gave him a different perspective.

“‘She didn’t like me at first. I can understand that. I’m loud at times, and she has just been through something horrible brought on by a man, but she slowly began to trust me,’ he explained. ‘Later on I saw her on the street and she introduced me as the ‘man who saved her life.’”

“‘It was overwhelming and humbling. I had started out looking to punish Carter for what he did to her, but I had to learn about the impact prosecution has on victims and their needs for closure and to feel safe,’ he said. ‘You get these cases. You go into business mode, legal mode, you sometimes forget to be human. That case taught me to slow down, listen to victims and stop plowing through like it’s another case. It isn’t just another case to victims.’”

Because of instances like that, as well as other family-related issues, Harrah in December 2019 informed the Fayette County Commission of his decision to resign from the prosecuting attorney’s office and his plans to open a private law practice in Fayetteville.

Today, Harrah has been chosen as the #1 attorney in Fayette County.

“I’m very humbled by it, very thankful for it,” he said of the honor. “To be chosen by the people is always, always very rewarding.”

Harrah’s one-man law firm has grown rapidly. He’s now added a partner, Elizabeth Campbell, and they’re served by two law paraprofessionals.

“Coming in now here, I get to choose business mode, legal mode, you sometimes forget to be human. That case taught me to slow down, listen to victims and stop plowing through like it’s another case. It isn’t just another case to victims.’”
HARRAH
FROM PAGE 5

the cases that we take and I get to build good, really solid, long-lasting relationships with my clients.

“It’s great, wonderful to get justice for someone who has been wronged whether that be a criminal setting or a civil setting,” he said.

The firm handles a wide array of cases, including personal injury, family law, estate planning, real estate planning and more.

“It has been so rewarding. “We’re a small town law office,” he said. “We like the feel of that so we try to, if somebody comes in with a problem, we try to help them if at all possible.”

Harrah and his wife, Melissa, who are nearing their 20-year wedding anniversary, have three sons — Parker, aged 14; Peyton, aged 11; and Preston, aged 10.

Just as his father did with him while he was growing up, Harrah is teaching the boys his love of the outdoors.

Harrah’s father, Larry Harrah Sr., passed away “at the end of June” this year, he said, and he misses him, but said he knows he would be pleased with him.

“I always tried to make him proud,” he said. “I know he would be so proud of me in everything I did.”

The Harrah Law Firm is located at 103 Fayette Avenue, Fayetteville, WV 25840. To learn more, call 304-574-0222, check out the website at www.harrahlawfirm.com, visit the Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/harrahlawfirmpllc/ or email Harrah at larry@harrahlawfirm.com.

Email ckeenan@register-herald.com

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Jim Lively Jr., a name synonymous with insurance and real estate in the area, once again has been chosen the #1 Real Estate Agent by readers of The Fayette Tribune. Congratulations on the 2023 award.

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By Cheryl Keenan
THE FAYETTE TRIBUNE

Donnie Bowling, owner of the Donnie Bowling Insurance Agency Inc., representing State Farm, has worked in Oak Hill for 18 of his 30 years in the insurance business.

On Feb. 1, 2023, Bowling wrote on his Facebook page: “Thirty years ago today, I started my State Farm career as an agent. I have been blessed to represent a great company, work with many wonderful people, and serve our remarkable policyholders for three decades. After all these years, I still love what I do. Everyday, I get to come to our office and join this awesome team of people I work with to serve others! It doesn’t get any better!”

It’s been a long road to Oak Hill, where he was selected by readers of The Fayette Tribune as the county’s #1 Insurance Agent for 2023.

Bowling was born in Fairbanks, Alaska while his father was in the U.S. Armed Forces. The Bowlinings moved back to West Virginia and, when Donnie was in second grade, the family moved from Beckley to Mullens where he grew up playing the sport for which Mullens is known: Basketball.

Bowling was a member of two state champion basketball squads for the Rebels, as a sophomore and a senior.

Following his graduation from high school, Bowling continued his calling to be in the education field. He graduated with a B.A. degree from Concord College and an M.A. from West Virginia University, later serving as a school principal for five years. “And every year,” he recalled this week, “it got harder and harder and Nationwide and State Farm were both after me to sell insurance.”

At first, he wasn’t particularly interested, but as the education field went through more changes, “I told my wife, after 5 years, the first one that knocks, I’m going to listen to.”

Well, “the first one” to knock was State Farm, and Bowling took a job with the company in Fairmont.

“I did well there, and then I was moved into management where I worked for 10 years.”

Bowling worked in management

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BOWLING 11 Donnie Bowling, #1 Insurance Agent

Thank you
Fayette County for voting me
as your favorite attorney.

—Larry Harrah

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Sheena Sydnor
of Oak Hill.

Thank you to all of our readers who took the time to vote!

The Fayette Tribune fayettetribune.com
BOWLING

FROM PAGE 10

for 10 years, but then decided he would rather be an agent again, working closer with his clients.

Living in Pineville with his wife, Debbie, Bowling knew the opportunity to take over an agency existed in Oak Hill, but couldn’t imagine driving from Pineville to Oak Hill every day.

“I wanted to get out of management sooner, but I didn’t want to drive from Pineville to Oak Hill,” he said.

“Finally, I couldn’t take (management) anymore, so I took over this firm” and he’s been driving from Pineville to Oak Hill five days a week since.

“I put 40,000 miles on a vehicle every year,” he laughed. Fortunately, he knows a good insurance agent.

Bowling said the move to Oak Hill was a good decision.

“It was the best thing that’s ever happened to me career-wise,” he said. “I love what I do.”

And his customers do, as well.

On his company’s website, review after review praises the service Bowling and his company provide.

One example, in which the company was rated 5 out of 5, reads: “Donnie Bowling and his team have been lifelong supporters of our family. I trust him and his facilitation of our State Farm policies to give us the most protection for the most affordable price. My son’s vehicle broke down in Charlotte, NC. Donnie and his team immediately made contacts for me, helped my son with towing, and even found a reliable, local repair shop to assist him. My son was a 19-year-old intern (working away from home), and I can’t express how Donnie and his team facilitated this process to ease this Mom’s heart with my son being so far away. In addition, the office staff are professional, friendly, and go above and beyond to answer my questions.”
**ANNOUNCING THIS YEAR'S READERS' CHOICE WINNERS!**

**Congratulations on being the best...**

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Stephens Chevrolet, formerly King Coal Chevrolet, was voted as the #1 place to buy new or used cars and trucks in the 2023 Readers Choice contest sponsored by The Fayette Tribune. Stephens Chevrolet is located at 1508 Main Street East, Oak Hill, WV 25901. Call 304-469-2901 or visit the company’s website at www.stephenschevrolet.com.

Thank you Fayette County families for trusting us with yours!

Readers voted Oak Hill Place as the #1 Retirement Community in the county!

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Thank you for choosing us as Best Biscuit Again

1st Place
Oak Hill Tudor's

2nd Place
Fayetteville Tudor's
The New River Health Pharmacy in Fayetteville was voted as the #1 pharmacy in the 2023 Readers’ Choice awards. Pictured from left are, Karen Reed, director of pharmacy; Teresia Falls and Andrea Garten, pharmacy techs; and Frank Angelona, pharmacist in charge. The pharmacy is located at 217 West Maple Avenue in Fayetteville and can be contacted at 304-574-3991.

Thank You All Of Fayette County!

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1502 East Main Street, Oak Hill • 304-469-4073 • 304-222-3020
FCNB provides #1 banking service for county residents

Fayette County National Bank has been serving the needs of residents of Fayette County and the surrounding area since 1900. Once again in 2023, FCNB, which has locations in Fayetteville, Oak Hill, and Ansted, has been chosen by readers of The Fayette Tribune as the #1 bank.

Following is information on the bank from its website at www.fcnbonline.com.

About us

Since 1900 we have been serving the banking needs of Fayette County. While we are the oldest locally-owned bank in Fayette County, we stay on the forefront of banking technology and continually add products and services that meet our customers’ needs. We take pride in being a locally-owned community bank with sound risk management practices and superior financial strength and stability, and we are committed to staying that way. Our employees live here, work here, and our banking decisions are made here.

Fayette County National Bank supports the growth of the communities we serve by focusing our attention on the needs of local families and businesses, as well as offering support to local schools, churches and non-profit organizations that are an important part of our community. When you put your money in Fayette County National Bank you are helping your friends and neighbors develop small businesses, finance college, purchase homes and build financial security.

Fayette County National Bank – Serving Fayette County yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Our mission

As a strong community bank, it is the intention of Fayette County National Bank to serve the market area with diligence, trust, and fairness and to provide every feasible convenient service that a community bank can provide for both corporate and consumer relationships...

The bank’s most important asset is its customer base. Without customers, we are nothing. Our products are designed to meet the needs of our customers, our hours are set to meet the needs of our customers, and our employees will be hired and trained to meet the needs of our customers. High quality customer service is the true mission of this bank.

FCNB 19
The main branch of Fayette County National Bank in Fayetteville was constructed in 1906. The bank, chosen as #1 Bank in the 2023 Readers' Choice awards, originally opened in 1900 as The Fayetteville National Bank. FCNB now has three full service branches in Fayetteville, Oak Hill and Ansted. The main office, pictured, is located at 101 North Court Street, Fayetteville, while the Oak Hill office is at 1554 East Main Street, Oak Hill, and the Ansted branch is at 20165 Midland Trail in Ansted. FCNB is the oldest locally-owned bank in Fayette County.

Thanks Fayette County Readers!
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#1 Milkshakes!

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Thank you to our customers for your patronage, and thanks to our team who work hard to serve them.
#1 DAY CARE/EARLY EDUCATION

Perennial community favorite, A Place to Grow Children's Center, was once again chosen as the #1 day care and best place for early education. A Place to Grow's preschool program is NAEYC accredited. The center offers infant care, toddler, pre-K, preschool, big kids and drop-ins. See more on page 21.

1108 Main St. E
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Thank you for once again voting us the #1 Ambulance Service!

A Place to Grow is located at 4031 Lochgelly Road in Oak Hill and may be contacted at 304-469-6687. You may also visit the website at aplacetogrowwv.com. The center’s mission statement is "We offer family-oriented childcare with a well-trained staff, structured learning, free play, nutritious meals, and a lot of TLC. We treat all children as individuals and their families as unique."
**#1 HOSPITAL**

Oak Hill's Plateau Medical Center, regularly chosen as the #1 Hospital in the Readers' Choice contest, captured that crown again in 2023. PMC is now a part of Vandalia Health, the parent company of Charleston Area Medical Center.

**#1 FAMILY PHYSICIAN**

Christina Brash, FNP at New River Health in Oak Hill, was chosen as the #1 family physician. Here's info from her profile on the NRHA website: Christina graduated from Oak Hill High School. She received her Bachelor’s of Nursing from WVU Tech, and her Master’s in Nursing – FNP from Marshall University. She has been with New River Health since 2015 and works with patients 6 months and older. “The people I work with and the patients make it a great place to work. I love my job and being a Family Nurse Practitioner.”

---

**THANK YOU FAYETTE COUNTY FOR VOTING US THE #1 MECHANIC!**

We’ve been serving the Fayette County communities for 10 years!

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