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The SENTINEL **ECHO**

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from the office of...



David WesterfieldLaurel Co. Judge-Executive

Adapting a quote by former President Ronald Reagan, Laurel County Judge Executive David Westerfield focuses on "Making Laurel County a better place to live and work."

Achieving that goal is what motivates Westerfield, a native Laurel Countian who has served on the London City Council and Laurel County Fiscal Court before taking the helm of the county government.

Westerfield launched his political career because he wanted to help the people of the community. He is proud of the strides his home community has made over the past decades and his hope is to continue the trend that has set London and Laurel County in the forefront of industrial development.

Through the oversight of the Laurel County Fiscal Court, the county will soon feature a 700-bed correctional facility to accommodate the growing community. The jail will feature training programs for inmates to assist them in finding gainful employment after their release. That in itself is one of the greatest benefits of a new and improved facility, although the numerous other support programs to assist inmates are also a step towards helping offenders make a new start.

Adjoining the property for the new correctional facility is the Fariston Industrial Park - another feather in the county's cap in the realm of industrial recruiting.

"We have several industrial parks that were full so we had to find land for other companies wanting to locate here," he said. "The last two industrial parks - the Charles Pennington Industrial Park on West (Ky.) 80 and the Dennis Karr Airpark (on Ky. 1006) were both full. We still had people wanting to locate here, so we had to find property for more businesses."

Assisting in the industrial development is a strong board of magistrates and members of the London-Laurel County Industrial Development Authority, all of whom Westerfield credits for their selfless efforts to bring a variety of new businesses to the area.

"We are a progressive city and county and we want to continue the growth, jobs and opportunities for the people of the city and county," he said. "I wanted to serve the people of this county and make their lives better. That's what I hope to continue doing, by bringing in new industries and furthering the opportunities for the people."

With a sincere smile, he repeated, "I want to make Laurel County a better place to live and work."

We have several industrial parks that were full, so we had to find land for other companies wanting to locate here. The last two industrial parks — the Charles Pennington Industrial Park on West (Ky.) 80 and the Dennis Karr Airpark (on Ky. 1006) were both full."

DAVID WESTERFIELD









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THE COLUMN

ucked among gently rolling hills sits London, Ky., a town where tradition and progress blend. It's a place where people invariably wave to one another while driving down country roads, where Christmas carols sing through speakers throughout downtown

in December, where families faithfully head to church on Sundays.

It's also a place where families, just as dutifully, go to the recycling center on Saturdays, the children vying to dump the washed cans and crash the glass into the bins.

A place where the downtown revitalization organization is going strong and has made huge strides in improving the heart of the city.

It's a place where a state-of-the-art, \$150 million hospital sits gleaming beside a peaceful pond. And it's a place that, on Thursdays in the summer, hundreds of people gather on the courthouse block to listen to live music.

London sits in Laurel County, the crossroads to the famed southeastern part of the state. Home to about 60,000 people, the county features scenic views from almost every curving road: farmhouses where children twirl on a tire swing, lush, swaths of grass so rich and green it nearly glows, and long stretches of pasture where cows placidly graze in the sunset.

Amongst it all sits a sparkling lake, its water a calming bluegreen. Lined with cliff-lined shores and peaceful coves, Laurel River Lake is the playground of locals and tourists who come to take advantage of its depths.

The marina is packed with every type of watercraft imaginable: customized houseboats fitted with every amenity, cigarette boats that cut white lines into the water as they race by, and speed boats pulling laughing children on yellow tubes.

The climate here lends itself to being outside every day — the mercury only dips down to freezing temps a few times a year — but it also allows for four distinct seasons, so there's rarely a time people aren't outside enjoying themselves. In the meantime, while Laurel County is a haven within itself, it's within easy driving distance to major centers: Lexington with its horse racing and pretty

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

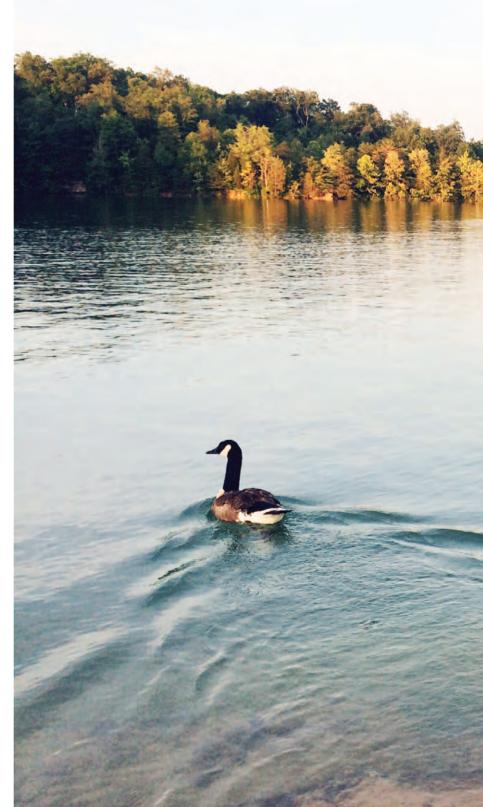
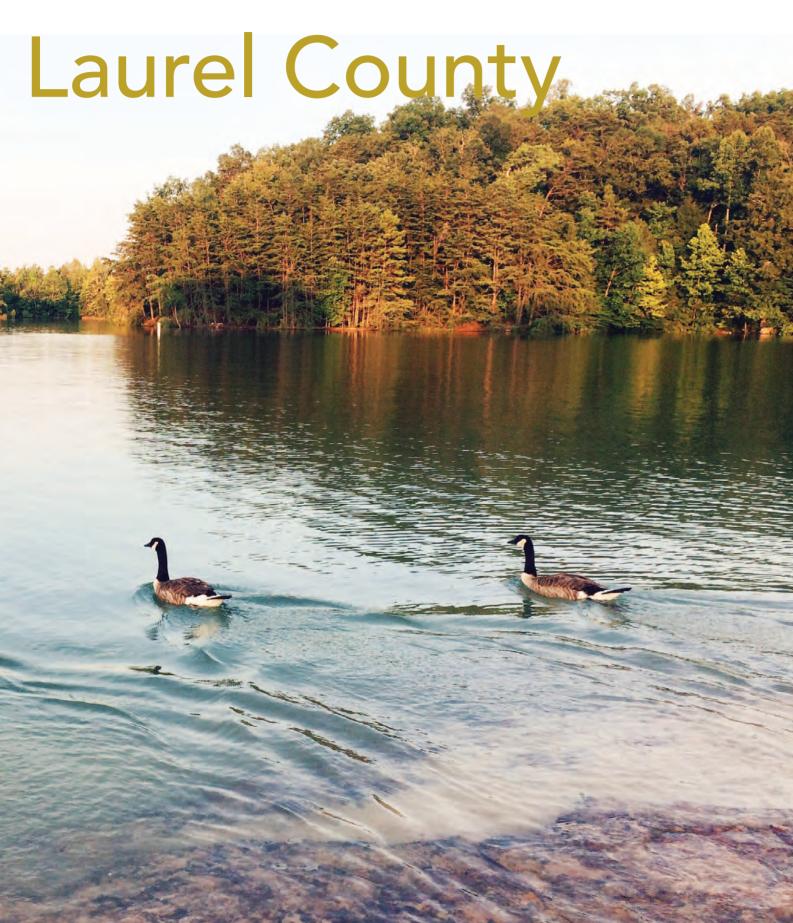


PHOTO BY LACEY SMITH





Laurel Lake has many scenic locations. Among those are the beach area at the spillway.

PHOTO BY LACEY SMITH

"But more than its beauty, climate and access, London and Laurel County's true gem is its people. Throughout the following pages, you'll meet some of them."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

fountains; Louisville with its unique urban and artsy flare; Cincinnati with its impressive skyline and five-star restaurants; the hazy Great Smoky Mountains; and Nashville with its honky-tonks and famous Music Row.

Helping you get to most of these places is Ky. 80, which runs east to west, and bustling Interstate 75, which extends from Michigan to Florida and has two exits that pour into London.

But more than its beauty, climate and access, London and Laurel County's true gem is its people. Throughout the following pages, you'll meet some of them. From business and industry and the many programs the local health department officers to the multiple recreational activities in the area, Laurel County has something for everyone.

What you'll quickly learn is the people of Laurel County are the genuine article: kind, welcoming, forward thinking, treasuring their past, willing to help out in any way.

Maybe it's an attitude passed down generation to generation, maybe it's infused into them from the beauty of the area itself, but people in London and Laurel County know what's right. Regardless of its source, this ethic spreads throughout the area like a quilt and keeps everything warm and comforting.

Come with us, turn the pages and discover the true treasures of Laurel County.

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a local perspective

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Willie Sawvers

The London-Laurel County Chamber of Commerce has served the business community for many years, inviting them to use their membership to make their business more profitable. Through the Chamber's distribution of this community profile, we hope to provide our members with extended opportunities and success.

Within these pages you will find facts about London and Laurel County and a profile of our community that includes education, health care, recreational activities, along with economic development facts and visitor information you're looking for.

Working together with our business community, city and county officials, we have created an attractive, profitable climate and maintained a quality of life that has spurred our steady growth and continued commercial success. Members of the Chamber can conveniently and cost effectively tap into this active marketplace and secure its many rewards. A minimal investment in our non-profit organization actually offers a virtually limitless potential for businesses of all kinds and sizes.

Most often, the Chamber is the first contact for visitors, new residents and businesses coming into the area. Through public relations, the chamber works closely with Mayor Troy Rudder and the City Council members along with County Judge Executive David Westerfield and the magistrates, as well as regional and state agencies to provide valuable information on our area.

We respond to thousands of calls, letters, email inquiries and walk in visitors who want relocation, business and tourism information. Membership in the Chamber offers an opportunity to be part of an organization dedicated to promoting growth and creating an economically sound future for London and Laurel County.

Please visit our website at www.londonlaurelchamber.com for up-to-date information on community events, Chamber programs, and the latest additions of our newsletters and videos. We welcome the opportunity to serve you!

Yours in service,



Deanna Herrmann
Executive Director
London-Laurel Co. Chamber of Commerce



Lonnie Hoskins uses a pallet jack to lead a trailer at the Laurel Grocery warehouse in December 2015.

PHOTO BY MIKE MOORE

Working together with our business community, city and county officials, we have created an attractive, profitable climate and maintained a quality of life that has spurred steady growth and continued commercial success.

DEANNA HERRMANN

students have choices



Lynnzee Owens and Kristen Spitser, both sophomores from North Laurel High School, use the microscope to look at normal and sickle cell blood smears. Owens plans on using her biomedical science knowledge to become a neonatologist. Spitser plans on pursuing a career in nursing.

PHOTO BY SUE MINTON

By Sue Minton

Long before "college and career ready" was such a widely used catch phrase and the Kentucky Department of Education adopted it as the intended focus of education in the Commonwealth, Laurel County Schools were preparing students to be our nation's future leaders.

Beginning with the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic and culminating with classes directly related to a variety of career choices, all students received rigorous instruction. They had the opportunity to graduate high school well prepared to pursue the career of their choice or to further their education. And for years a traditional high school educa-

tion provided the workforce to keep America's economy strong.

In the past three decades our world has changed more rapidly than ever before. Many of the "jobs for a lifetime" that people depended on to take them to retirement have disappeared. Even the "jobs" that have remained have significantly changed. The world of education also had to change in response to new demands to prepare individuals for the changing world of work. And in Laurel County, even though our instructional design still focuses on every student becoming "college and career ready" in their preferred career field, "school" doesn't look like it used to.

All high school students must develop their own Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

which helps them organize and take each step to complete high school and become eligible for at least one of the following: college, vocational/technical school, workforce or home as a workplace, the military, or community service. The ILP is student-specific and includes graduation requirements as well as classes and activities leading to their career goal.

Laurel County students at North Laurel High School and South Laurel High School, and the Laurel County Schools Center for Innovation (CFI) have an abundance of choices through Career Pathways. Using Career Pathways students can be sure they are moving toward employment. Career Pathways are systemic frameworks linking the needs of students and employers across the

learning continuum.

A program of studies for each career pathway is a coherent, articulated sequence of rigorous academic and career/technical courses including dual credit opportunities, leading to postsecondary degrees and industry recognized certifications and/or licensures. Career Pathways are developed, implemented and maintained in partnership among secondary and postsecondary institutions, businesses and employers.

A sampling of pathways at both high schools reflects the multiple career directions students can choose whether they plan to immediately enter the workforce or pursue additional preparation.

- Agricultural Education offers preparation in environmental, plant or animal science; agricultural systems or horticulture-based careers. Learning with hands-on experience, students operate working green houses and for two consecutive years have won state-wide competitions in small-engine repair at Career Development Events through Future Farmers of America (FFA). From a career as a veterinarian technician to a Ph.D in the field of horticulture, students can begin here.
- Business and Marketing Education includes preparation for careers in all levels of technology and business as well as accounting and sports marketing. Students can receive certifications in Microsoft. Participation in Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) gives students exposure to involvement in a professional organization and develops leadership skills. Success in these organizations is reflected in a Laurel County student being named Kentucky DECA student of the year in 2015–2016.
- Students who choose the Family and Consumer Sciences can be well prepared for careers caring for, raising and teaching children but could also pursue jobs developing nutritional and delicious food choices to serve in their own restaurant. From baby-sitting to catering, they engage in handson application of what they are learning in the classroom. Some choose to be involved in school-based businesses producing and marketing personalized garments. Those who complete the qualifications receive the Commonwealth Child Care Credential and or Early Child Care Orientation. They graduate with the state-required credential necessary to work in a certified day care.

Students are able to complete ServeSafe certification qualifying them for employment upon graduation as a food service manager. The student co-curricular organization is Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) which annually sponsors student competitions in STAR Events. In summer 2016 three Laurel County students who are state winners will travel to California for the national competition.

• Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) at both high schools brings to the classroom the rigor and discipline of military life. From the wearing of uniforms to participating in training drills and competitions, students gain a real world professional experience. They can chose to continue by joining a branch of the military or by advancing to ROTC participation at the collegiate level where scholarships and career advancement are assured.

The opening of the Laurel County Schools Center for Innovation in fall 2015-2016 allowed the district to expand their pathways to offer students an even broader range of choices.

• Engineering and Technology Education provides a foundation for advanced degrees in engineering and great options for preparation in a skilled trade. This program may also include an engineering and technology practicum experience whereby the knowledge and skills students acquire throughout the engineering technology program are applied in a real-world experience

Students apply professional skills they have developed to assist with a design process to standards. Upon completion they are ready to take on a rigorous postsecondary degree program or career. Skills USA provides a plat-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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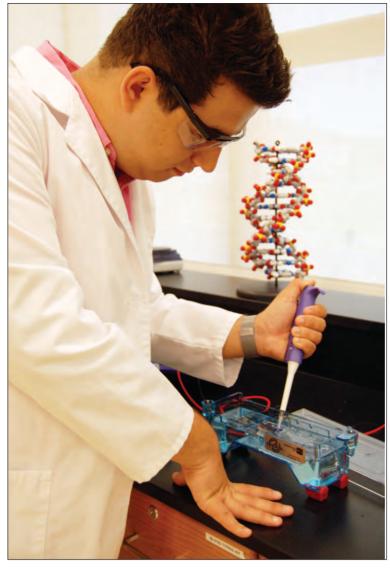
London South 120 Wendon Way London, KY 40741





Jonah Deaton, a Biomedical Science student in Misty Allen's class at the Center for Innovation, uses gel electrophoresis to do a DNA test.

> PHOTO BY SUE MINTON



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

form for co-curricular competition applying their creative and design plans to complete a product judged against industry standards and other student designs.

• Health Sciences range from bio-medical preparation leading to degrees allowing high level research or treatment of disease as well as many allied health programs that support patient care. Students can gain certification and move directly to a career upon graduation or go on to further study. Through real-world case study, bio-medical students are exposed to a range of interventions related to immunology, surgery, genetics, pharmacology, medical devices, and diagnostics.

In a capstone course, Bio-Medical Innovation, students address topics ranging from public health and biomedical engineering. Students may have the opportunity to work on an independent design project with a mentor or advisor from a university, medical facility, or research institution.

Allied Health students are expected to meet professional standards of competency and to be-

come eligible to earn appropriate career credential certifications for Medicaid Nurse Aide (CNA) or Pharmacy Technician (CPhT). They can graduate prepared for immediate employment.

• Industrial Maintenance Technology (IMT) prepares students for diverse career pathways in advanced manufacturing. Students receive advanced coursework, laboratory skills development, and practicum experiences. The prescribed set of courses and applied learning experiences introduce students to electrical technology, motor controls, welding, hydraulics, pneumatics, construction, HVAC, VEX robotics, and integrated computers systems such as Programmable Logic Controls (PLC's).

The program's accreditation by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) qualifies students who complete the training to earn certification as an Electrical Technician, Level 1. Students can earn up to 22 college credits through an agreement with

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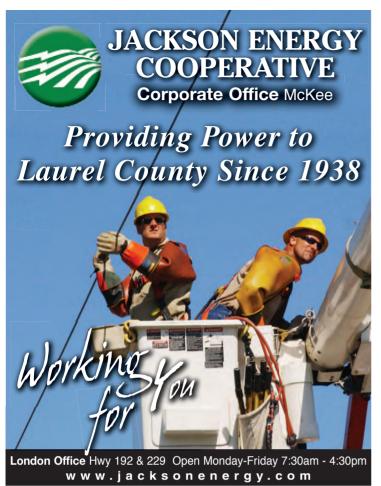
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Founded in 1992, Cornerstone Christian School has found a home in London First Baptist Church, though is it not affiliated with a specific religious denomination. The school instructs around 100 students from preschool to eighth grade. Cornerstone Christian also has a preschool location at Community Christian Church on 5th Street.

LONDON CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

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Providing education for Laurel County students since 1975, London Christian Academy is a mission of the First Pentecostal Church. The school instructs students ages kindergarten to 12th grade and focuses on a biblically-based philosophy, basic reading instruction and computer-enhanced learning.





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"Dr." Jordan Patterson, left, checks the lungs of "patient" Nathan Cummins, using the pulmonary function test using standard precautions. Observing Patterson is "nurse" Tatiana Torres. Patterson, a recent graduate of South Laurel High School, plans on attending Eastern Kentucky University this fall to pursue a degree in nursing. Cummins, is a South Laurel High School junior. Torres, is also a South Laurel High School 2016 graduate, and will be attending Somerset Community College this fall pursuing a degree in nursing. They are all students in the class of Ed Bowling who teaches Health Occupation at the Center for Innovation.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

Southeast Kentucky Community & Technical College. Students can also qualify to apply for the "earn and learn" apprenticeship program sponsored by the Kentucky Federation of Advanced Manufacturing Education (KY-FAME).

• Media Arts Technology (MAT) has a prescribed set of courses and applied learning experiences designed to introduce students to the creating of videos and cinematographic productions. The pathway includes the theory of video, video technology, equipment operation, video production, video directing, video editing, cinematographic art, video and audio technique, and multi-media production. It prepares students to function as staff, producers, directors, and managers of media programming and media organizations. Students learn every aspect of audio and moving image production ranging from creating to transmission and marketing. Students become eligible to pursue various industry certifications in Adobe

Regardless of the pathway a Laurel County college-bound student chooses, he/she can get a head start in a multitude of career fields with advanced placement courses, dual credit courses and institutional agreements

- 1. Advanced Placement (AP) courses are rigorous, college-level courses taught by high school teachers who prepare students to prepare for a national exam and earn college credit. Colleges award three to 12 hours of college credit for a qualifying score in specific AP courses.
- 2. Dual credit courses are offered free of charge to eligible high school students during their junior and senior years. Students attend dual credit courses taught by college instructors at the campuses of Somerset Community College and Eastern Kentucky University. One exception is that University of the Cumberlands accepts credit for a college algebra course taught by a high school teacher at each high school. Eligible students may earn up to nine dual credit hours per semester free of cost.
- 3. In addition to AP courses and dual credit courses, the high schools along with the Center for Innovation (CFI) have articulation agreements with several colleges that award students college credit hours for courses taken during high school.

These opportunities mean students can potentially graduate from high school with as much as four semesters of accumulated college credit. They



Corey Smith and Branson Hamilton, both South Laurel High School juniors, along with South Laurel High senior, Jarrett Mill, are unboxing and getting ready to assemble tables for the welding class that will be available next year to students at the Center for Innovation. Mills plans on attending Somerset Community College this fall.

PHOTO BY SUE MINTON

Students at North Laurel High School, South Laurel High School, and the Laurel County Schools Center for Innovation (CFI) have an abundance of choices through Career Pathways. Using Career Pathways, students can be sure they are moving toward employment. Career Pathways are systemic frameworks linking the needs of students and employers across the learning continuum.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

save significant cost and move much more quickly into any chosen career whether completing a trade certification, an associate or a traditional bachelor's degree.

As students in Laurel County enter high school and look to the future,

they can choose from multiple pathways to reach success. The free education available is designed in response to the changing world and with the future opportunities for students in mind. Regardless of career interest or anticipated level of college preparation, any student can graduate "ready."





Laurel County Health Department

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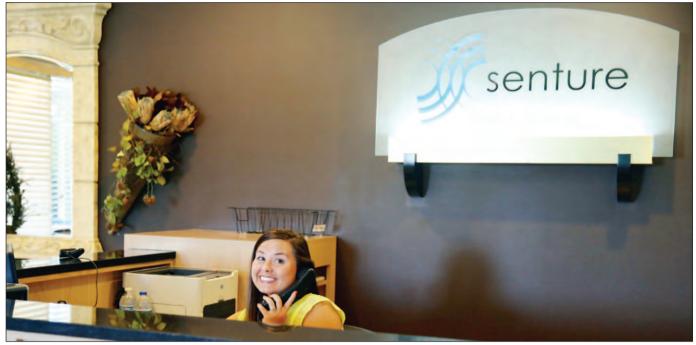
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companies eyeing Laurel



Courtney Blair, "The Face of Senture," a business located in Laurel County, answers the phone in the front lobby of the business.

PHOTO BY NITA JOHNSON

BY NITA JOHNSON

Industry continues to boom in Laurel County and new development is on the horizon every day, according to industrial recruiting officials.

A variety of industrial parks - the first established in 1970 - has elevated Laurel County to a prime area for businesses looking to establish or expand their operations.

Trucking companies, call centers and auto manufacturing facilities have seen a consistent increase in demand locally and industrial recruiters are receiving calls daily about potential new businesses.

The county has seven industrial parks with the last six all being established during the 1990s. Aisin Automotive on Ky. 552 has undergone numerous expansions. The Charles Pennington Industrial Park off Ky. 80 (Russell Dyche Memorial Highway) hosts a number of businesses and includes a child care facility for employees in the industrial park and the general public. The Dennis Karr Airpark offers several service-based companies and has reached its capacity.

With industry growing by leaps and bounds, county officials began searching for another site to allow business to boom. Their efforts took them south of London to the Fariston community, and the industrial park was established soon afterward.

The Fariston Industrial Park has already seen its share of success since its groundbreaking ceremony in May 2014. Hearthside Food Solutions has occupied the first building, a 30,000 square foot facility, for storage and shipping. That move opened up space in Hearthside's facility on South Laurel Road for additional jobs.

With the second building at the Fariston park recently sold to RJM International and a new building in the planning stages, industrial de-

velopment is testimony to the foresight of local leaders.

Paula Thompson, executive director of the London-Laurel County Industrial Development Authority, is excited about the continuing burst of businesses looking to locate here.

"We have a new company, RJM International, that will locate in the 12,000 square foot building and we are in the planning stages for a new spec building there," she said. "Existing businesses are undergoing expansions and we are always fielding calls from companies wanting to look at existing buildings."

Finding the best location for these businesses keeps Thompson on her toes when it comes to industrial recruiting. Whenever possible, she tries to place companies in vacant buildings and utilize that space.

"Everybody is different. There are different needs for different businesses," she added. "We have even located some businesses owners on private property of businesses and individuals."

Laurel County has a high number of jobs in the trucking industry and call centers. That recruiting effort resulted in a record number of jobs in 2013 - over 5,000 new jobs - and earned the county the Kentucky Governor's Cup for business recruiting and job creation for the past two years.

"We are bombarded with retailers wanting to locate here and we are continuing to develop sites for interested companies," Thompson added.

She attributes much of that success to the local government. Industrial parks located in the county are immaculately groomed and prepped by the county government.

"The Laurel County Fiscal Court has been one of the main reasons we've been able to attract businesses here," she said. "If we have an area that needs trees cut or dirt moved, they come right out to help

us. The use of the jail's work release programs has also benefited us with the inmates doing the weed eating and mowing. Their support is one of the main reasons we have such a surge in businesses wanting to come here."

Another facet in progress that will further accent Laurel County as a place to locate a business is the Kentucky Work Ready Communities certification, Thompson said.

That certification is based on six criteria selected by economic developers, site selectors, businesses and industry.

Under that program, the county must meet a high school graduation rate of 82.32 percent; must have a plan to certify 15 percent of working age adults between ages 18 to 64 within three years; and meet a goal of 25 percent of workingage adults with an associate degree or higher and set goals to reach the 39 percent level within 5 years.

The certification also requires "soft skills development" for secondary and post secondary adults with credentialing programs.

The certification also involves local leaders in the process. The criteria dictates that a leadership team must include elected leaders, educators, and persons with economic development, workforce development and business and industry. With several industrial parks already full, the county can boast of a wide array of jobs. The newly named Charles Pennington Industrial Park off West Ky. 80, for example, offers a variety of businesses ranging from call centers, a financial collection company, an automobile parts manufacturing facility, an environmental residential and industrial cleaning facility.

That industrial complex has a plus over many others in the area in that it also has a year-round child care facility that also houses a Head Start program during the school term.

One of the businesses in that industrial park is Senture. Securing government contract jobs defines operations at Senture - an effort that brings Chris Deaton CEO great satisfaction.

Deaton's father was instrumental in establishing several area businesses. The younger Deaton oversees the operations of Senture - which has offices in Monticello and London. Watching the business grow through the years has been an experience that Deaton relishes - not just for his family but for the entire community.

Being able to provide good-paying jobs to people in his hometown is even more inspiring.

The continuing growth of Senture has led to the company converting its warehouse into space for production, i.e., additional space for 250 more employees.

The former Con-Tel building on Main Street is being renovated to provide a training center and production area to host 200 more jobs.

With a total employee count between the Monticello and London facilities, Senture is continuing to expand and grow. Securing government contract jobs has resulted in the elimination of "temporary" jobs.

That surge of growth from its establishment in 2003 with 25 employees brings Senture's employee total to nearly 1,800 jobs. And with projected expansion for at least 400 more in the near future, Deaton's goal to assist families in the area is well underway.



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farming still a major factor in Laurel County

By Bryan Reynolds

There is a decent amount of farmland in Laurel County. According to the USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture, Laurel County spans 284,000 acres. Thirty-four percent of that acreage — 96,054 acres , is farmland used for livestock, vegetable production and even some logging.

That is actually a drop from the last census though, which was conducted in 2007 and reported that 102,489 acres of Laurel County was dedicated to farming. That's a loss of 6,435 acres. Despite that loss, farming in the county carries on.

In 2012, the top three commodities produced in the county were; cattle with a total income of

\$7 million; hay with an income of \$2.6 million and floriculture/sod with \$1.3 income.

According to Glenn Williams, with the Laurel County Extension Office, said that cattle is still the top producer in Kentucky this year. Hay has seen a 25 percent increase in production this year thanks to the amount of rain Laurel County has had this spring.

Williams said that it's too early to say how the excess rain will effect the other crops; corn, tobacco and soy beans.

Williams said the heavy rain could disrupt planting or cause the fields and plants to remain damp. Constant dampness is a breeding ground for fungus. According to Williams, fungus is a greater threat to crops than parasites these days because of the pesticides on the market.

Laurel County endured weeks of endless rain followed by weeks without rain and crops suffered because of it. In July 2015 Laurel County saw 11.23 inches of rain, which was 7.19 inches higher than the average for that time of year. The rain began six to eight weeks earlier than usual and did not let up. This ceaseless rain caused crops to be drowned or led to fungus infections, which devastated crops early on.

It was estimated that Laurel County farmers lost 25 to 50 percent of their crops last year. This crops loss meant that farmers suffered significant income loss: 25 to 40 or even as high as 50 percent income loss.

Enduring these struggles could explain the



A farmer cuts hay off Ky. 1006 near Corinth Baptist Church.

PHOTO BY NITA JOHNSON

significant loss of farms that has been going on in Laurel County for years now. According to the Farms and Land in Farms summary released in 2013, Kentucky saw a loss of 600 farms between 2012 and 2013. Many of the farms lost were small farms that fell in the \$1,000 to \$9,999 sales classes. Farms falling in higher sales classes endured. Farm loss didn't just start recently. It's been happening steadily over the last 107 years. In 1909, Laurel County was home to 2, 780 farms with a total farming acreage of 188,000. Compare that to 2012's acreage number of 96,054 and it's clear farming has been declining for a long time.

The 2012 agricultural census reported that the average age for farmers in Laurel County is 58. Farmer Brent Cornett, who owns a 230-acre farm outside of London, confirmed these findings. Cornett rents and leases land from older farmers who couldn't farm their lands anymore and have no one in their families who can work it.

Cornett thinks that as the previous generation of farmers get older and are unable to work their lands there could be a shift in how farming is done.

"There'll be less farmers, but more land being farmed by each," Cornett said.

Cornett pointed out that there will never be a time when there are no farmers left, but that farming will just change.



Hay fields, such as this one off Lily-Sublimity Road, are a common sight in Laurel County.

PHOTO BY NITA JOHNSON





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economic development

quick facts

POPULATION

 London (2011) 8,058 Laurel County (2012) 59.462

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



INCOME

Per Capita Income (2010) \$26,324 Median Household Income (2009) . . \$36,664 Median Home Price (2011) \$105.000

Source: KY Cabinet for Economic Development

CLIMATE

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, National Climatic Data Center

Steve Yaden, left, assists Larry Butler, center, at Midwest Logistics, a trucking business in Laurel County.

EMPLOYMENT

Company	Products/Services	Employees
ABC Automotive System Inc	plastic automotive parts	289
Aisin Automotive Casting, LCC	aluminum engine components	547
Bimbo Bakeries USA	bread/buns/rolls	130
Flowers Bakery of London LLC	doughnuts/honey buns	423
Hearthside Food Solutions LLC	cookies/crackers	850
Highland Diversified Services Inc.	\dots automotive and major appliance assemblies \dots	197
HSBC	call center/collections	230
Laurel Grocery Company LLC	food wholesaler/distribution	280
Senture LLC	technical help desk	360
Walmart D.C	distribution contor	020

Source: KY Cabinet for Economic Development



The Blue Crawdads, a Barbourville-based band, performed during a June 2015 Thursday Night Live.

SENTINEL FILE PHOTO

pride in our downtown

Thursday Night Live series is a much — anticipated event

By Bryan Reynolds

Thursday Night Live is a live summer music event that happens each Thursday from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. during the months of June, July and August in front of the Laurel County Courthouse.

Thursday Night Live has been a popular staple of London summer nights for the past 11 years. It wasn't always that way though. It started out as a by-product of the London "Renaissance on Main" initiative in 2006. London was working to revitalize the downtown area. When Main Street began improving, the London Downtown committees began looking for ways to attract local residents back to Main Street.

This is when Jamie Shepherd had an idea. As a music lover and musician, Shepherd thought it would be a great to have live music showcasing local musicians somewhere on Main Street. Shepherd presented the idea to then London Downtown Executive Director Sherri Mosley. Mosley liked the idea and the spark for Thursday Night Live began.

"I just got tired of driving everywhere to listen to good live music," Shepherd joked.

Joking aside, Shepherd said she felt that London and the Laurel County area would benefit from the cultural experience of live music.

Shepherd recruited fellow music lovers she knew to create the fledgling Thursday Night Live Committee, with Shepherd ascending to the chairperson position.

Before anything could take shape the committee needed to work out how the event would be financed and where it would take place.

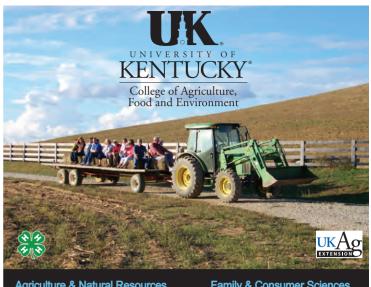
The London City Council was willing to allow them to have Thursday Night Live in front of the Laurel County Courthouse. They even allowed them to shut down that section of Main Street for three hours each Thursday night.

The question of financing was answered when Cumberland Valley National Bank became the main sponsor of Thursday Night Live; the bank is still the main sponsor. Many other local businesses provided sponsorship as well as bringing Thursday Night Live one step closer to becoming a reality.

Scheduling was also an issue that first year. Thursday Night Live was scheduled to go from April through August, but rain kept causing the events to end prematurely. They changed the schedule to June through August the next year so they could avoid spring showers.

The next difficulty facing Shepherd was getting bands to play. Michael Sliter, acting chairperson for Thursday Night Live from 2011 to 2016, said that at first it was difficult to find bands to play the event. For the first couple of years, every other Thursday Night was open mic

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



Agriculture & Natural Resources

- -Annual Farm Industry Tour
- -County Ag Fair
- -Cattlemen's Association
- -Soil Testing (Commercial & Home Production)

4-H Youth Development

- -School Clubs
- -Summer, Fall & Environmental Camps
- -Shooting Sports, Clover Buds,
- Robotics, Horse, Art & Livestock Clubs

Family & Consumer Sciences

- -Laurel County Homemakers
- -Nutrition Education Programs
- -Holiday Cooking School
- -C.L.A.S.S. Education Programs

Horticulture

- -Master Gardeners
- -Farmer's Market
- -Commercial Vegetable Production
- -Gardener's Toolbox Workshop

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Email: admin@londonha.net

Judy Hammack, Executive Director/RIC judy@londonha.net Sam Flannery, Deputy Director deputy@londonha.net



We had 11 slots to fill this year (2016), and we got 60 submissions."

MOLLY BARNETT



Austin Oakley enjoyed some hula hooping action during a 2015 Thursday Night Live.

SENTINEL FILE PHOTO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

night during which anyone could play their acoustic instruments.

"We had 11 slots to fill this year," Molly Barnett, a member of the Thursday Night Live Committee, and director of London Downtown, said. "And we got 60 submissions."

"Before the committee had the to hunt for local talent,: Barnett said. "Now we have a tough time choosing talent."

Interest in Thursday Night Live grew over time to become an event that some people look forward to. Sliter, said that there are people now who are there almost every week.

Shepherd still attends even though she resigned as chairperson back in 2011.

"Even though I'm not as involved as I was, it's still my baby," Shepherd said.

Chris Minton has taken over as chairperson this year and he would like to see Thursday Night Live keep growing from where it is. He thinks part of the success of Thursday Night Live is due to the weight of the name itself. A couple of years ago, one of the Thursday Night Live acts was the group Sunday Valley.

Minton would like to see Thursday Night Live become more self-sufficient. It has always been dependent on sponsors and tourism, but he feels Thursday Night Live could become bigger if it would more self sustaining.

A concern Minton has is rumors that have been going around about the location for Thursday Night Live being changed. He doesn't think it could survive if it were moved from in front of the Laurel County Courthouse because he feels that the location has a lot to do with the event's success.

Minton doesn't think that will actually happen though and sees Thursday Night Live continuing to grow.





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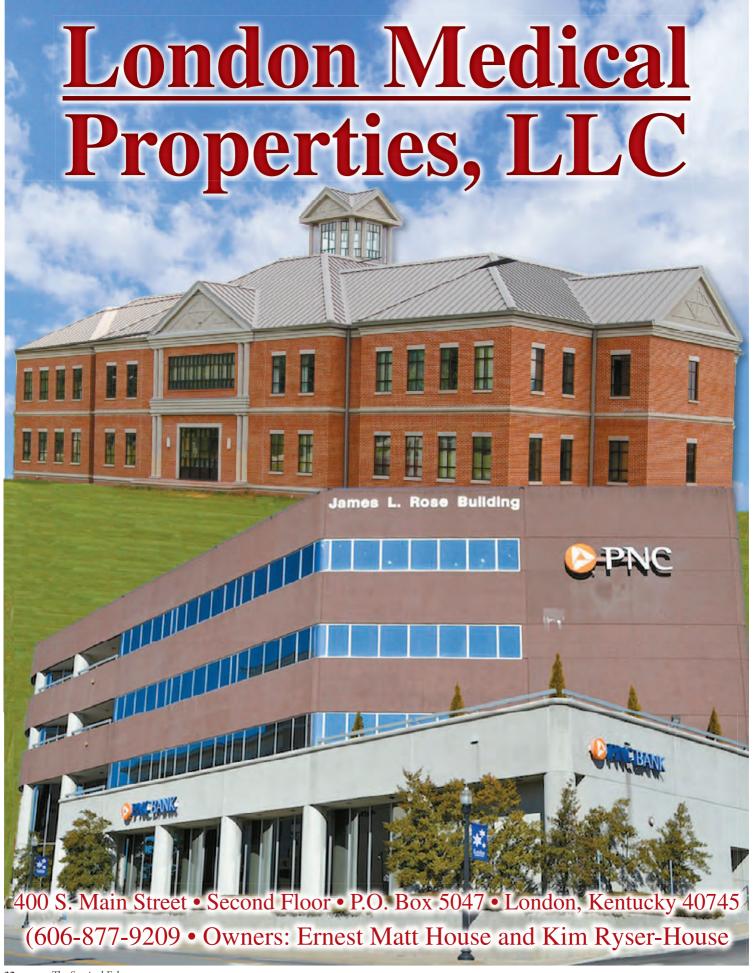
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Laurel County is home to many wonderful trails and abounds with several opportunities for outdoors enthusiast.

PHOTO BY MIKE MOORE

Trail Town designation

Already named as the Bicycling Capitol of Kentucky, the London-Laurel County community now embraces the official Trail Town designation to highlight the other offerings available for Adventure Tourism.

The scenic settings along the many trails through the historic Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park, Laurel Lake and the Rockcastle River are among the most prevalent and popular sites that draw lovers of the outdoors to the area.

A Trail Town is a destination along a long-distance trail - such as the Sheltowee Trace-that serves as a meeting place where people can find the services they seek.

Whether overnight lodging, restaurants, or local shops, those using the trailhead can find the destinations they seek as well as the scenic or services available in that particular area.

For the Laurel community, the facets of adventure tourism are multi-purposed.

Blending history with the increasingly popular outdoor activities of hiking, bicycling, and canoeing, the Laurel area can add in its hospitable character for those seeking to capitalize on the opportunities available as well as expanding current options.

A three-year project undertaken by the London-Laurel County Tourism Commission, the Trail Town designation is a dream come true.

The designation will provide funds to highlight the many offerings with signage and information for those seeking those activities. Those sites where information is available are known as "trailheads."

"A trailhead is a meeting place for people who want to go bicycling, canoeing, paddling or hiking," said Rodney Hendrickson, co-executive director of the London-Laurel County Tourism Commission. "This is a part of Adventure Tourism."

Some Trail Towns offer a kiosk where maps and information are available - something that tourist officials hope will soon be available



A trailhead is a meeting place for people who want to go bicycling, canoeing, paddling or hiking. This is a part of 'Adventure Tourism.'"

RODNEY HENDRICKSON, COUNTY TOURISM

in the Laurel area. While many of the outdoor tourism locations have signage at their individual sites, linking together the various routes into a unique system that highlights the area is the goal of tourism officials.

The use of technology is another facet of highlighting the area's attractions.

The area could be added as an app on cell phones and allow people to pull up information and maps of the area to design their own adventure.

Trail Towns utilize a central location as their information center, and Hendrickson suggested an area in downtown London that will highlight the downtown area.

The "Pocket Park" on Main Street near Mike's Bike and Hike offers a serene setting with its benches, swings, and floral decor.

This central setting for the Adventure Tourism is known as "The Gateway."

While there can be more than one gateway, the elements of the Trail Town are highlighted, showing connector

routes to a main trail such as the Sheltowee Trace and pointing out certain sections or points of interest along the way.

As part of the Trail Town system, the area is also included in the state's advertising campaign for easier access by potential users.

For London and Laurel County, signage along Interstate 75 will be monumental in drawing tourists off the highways and by-ways to the area.

Trail Town events, such as the official ceremony for London and Laurel County, will also be included in the promotion of the designation.

Other related events will also profit from the designation.

The annual Redbud Ride in April brings hundreds to the area for bicycling. The ride offers four routes of varying lengths.

This ride is also part of the Century Rides promoted throughout the area. A simpler and similar bicycling route is also offered locally each October and is known as The Thriller Ride.

With the Rockcastle River and its designation as a Kentucky Wild Rivers Corrider, canoeing and paddling are also a facet of the adventure tourism that will highlight the area.



VanHook Falls in Laurel County

Wildcat Mountain in northern Laurel County is also a destination for both hikers and history buffs who wish to enjoy the scenic area where the Battle of Camp Wildcat was fought during the Civil War.

Altogether, London and Laurel County offer a wealth of adventure tourism whose secrets will now be included in Kentucky's tourism program — an accomplishment that is as welcome to tourism officials as tourists are welcomed to the area.

1 day

100 miles

1,300 riders

Riders from at least 15 states and four countries traveled to London in 2016 to participate in the annual Redbud Ride.

PHOTO BY KELLY MCKINNEY



a cycling destination

Even before being designated as a Kentucky Trail Town, London has been known as one of the most scenic destinations in the United States when it comes to adventure tourism.

Dubbed "The Cycling Capital of Kentucky," London is home to some of the most beautiful and challenging cycling routes found anywhere in the country.

With more than 10 designated road cycling routes and several new mountain biking routes in development, London is a destination any serious cyclist has to visit at least once in their lifetime.

"The scenery is a big part of what draws cyclists to London and Laurel County," said Rodney Hendrickson, co-director of the London-Laurel County Tourist Commission. "We've got some of the most scenic and just beautiful routes anywhere in the country."

According to Hendrickson, visitors from all over the country get to experience those beautifully scenic routes beginning in April as they come to London to take part in the annual Redbud Ride.

Named Active.com's 2011 "Best Century Ride in America" the Redbud Ride is the unofficial kickoff to cycling season in London and offers cyclists a variety of courses spanning anywhere from 23 to 100 miles.

Bringing around 1,200 cyclists of all ability groups, the Redbud Ride is one of London's most notable events of the year. The nationally famous ride has four routes that are available to cyclists: the yellow route, a 23-mile route for beginners and family group rides; the orange route, a 38-mile route for adventurous first-timers or casual ride for experienced riders; the green monster route, a 70-mile intermediate route; and the red route, a 102-mile route standing as the event's pinnacle and most advanced route.

"The good thing about the Redbud Ride is you don't have to be a century rider, that's someone who rides 100-mile routes, to enjoy it," said Gary Hudson, president of the Cumberland Valley Cycling Club. "The 23-mile route is pretty flat; it's a casual ride that's good for beginners."

The Redbud Ride may be one of Laurel County's biggest adventure tourism attractions, but it's definitely not the only one that draws in cyclists. October's Thriller Ride gives bike enthusiasts another chance to get together and ride through some of London and Laurel County's more scenic routes.

"The Thriller Ride is a much more casual ride," Hudson said. "The Halloweenie route is about 25 miles and it's real flat and real easy for beginners. You'll see people pulling kids in bike trailers and things like that; it's a real easy ride."

The Halloween themed Thriller Ride features three routes for cyclists to enjoy as they wrap up the cycling season; the 25-mile Halloweenie route, which is great for beginners; the moderately challenging, 44-mile Zombie Route and the 63-mile Thriller route, which features just the right mixture of flat terrain, gently rolling hills mixed in with a few steep but very short climbs.

Hudson noted that even though the Thriller Ride doesn't have a 100-mile route like the Redbud Ride, it doesn't keep experienced cyclists from participating.

"A lot of the experienced riders will come out just for fun," Hudson said. "Sometimes they'll ride two of the routes. They might ride the 60 mile route and a 40-mile route and get a century ride that way, if they're a big rider."

Enjoying cycling through Laurel County's scenic landscapes isn't limited

to the Redbud and Thriller rides, many local cyclists enjoy riding any of the designated routes in Laurel County throughout the year. Many groups, like the Cumberland Valley Cycling Club, create their own routes based on the type of ride they're looking for on a particular day.

"My favorite route isn't even one of the official routes," Hudson said. "It starts at McWhorter Church which used to be a stop on the Redbud, and riding out in to the county and then in to Jackson County. It's rolling hills. It's about a 25 mile loop so you can do it most days after work."

Hudson said his club does a lot of different routes, some are part of the designated routes and some aren't.

"That's what's so great about cycling in Laurel County, you can get on your bike and ride just about anywhere and see some nice scenery and get something different every time," Hudson said. "Our club has beginner rides on Mondays, they're usually flat rides at about 14 miles. That sounds like a long way, but on a bike it's not that bad. Tuesday we might do flat rides or we might do a hill ride. There's a big variety in the kind of rides you can do here."

In addition to the many opportunities available to road cycling enthusiasts, London is beginning to develop several mountain biking routes throughout the county.

The "Lake Trail" serves as a great beginners trail that takes mountain bikers through trails along Laurel River Lake and through the Daniel Boone National Forest.

Mountain bikers looking for a recreational challenge across rugged terrain will also find several other trails in the Daniel Boone National Forest, but they're asked to remember that they're sharing the trail with hikers and horseback riders.

"London and Laurel County is the place to come to for adventure tourism," Hendrickson said. "We're not just cycling but we're also a great place for hiking or kayaking. With our natural beauty and a variety of routes to travel we're one of the premiere adventure tourism destinations in America."



A group of riders prepare to enter a rest stop at Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department during the 2016 Red Bud Ride.

PHOTO BY MIKE MOORE

rollin' on the river



Rodney Hendrickson navigates the Rockcastle River during a 2015 outing.

SENTINEL FILE PHOTO

It's shortly after 9 a.m. on Wednesday, June 24, 2015, along the Rockcastle River in northern Laurel County.

The deep emerald water — which makes up the north and western border of Laurel County to Rockcastle County — is a bit cloudy due to a summer season filled with rain, but also filled with a peace and calm due to its slow flow.

Trees line both banks of the river, both fallen and upright. Some of the trees look like they've only just toppled over due to their still-fresh foliage.

While the sun is most certainly up and out, the outside temperature remains mild due to the presence of clouds. A light breeze makes being outside a welcome delight.

In other words, it's an ideal day for a canoe or kayaking trip in Laurel County.

"It's a niche activity," said Rodney Hendrickson, co-director of Laurel County Tourism. "Most of our paddlers are from outside of our region. Avid paddlers in Kentucky make this their Mecca — this is where they come to paddle."

Hendrickson was also a worthy tour guide for the adventure down the Upper Section of the Rockcastle River. Within a two and a half hour period, Hendrickson, along with London Downtown Director Molly Barnett and Scott Belzer, covered a section of one of Laurel County's most scenic

treasures

Hendrickson said Laurel County covers the entire spectrum of what kayak and canoe enthusiasts are looking for: tranquility or adventure.

"You've got everything — you have the quiet and flat water that's very scenic due to being in the Daniel Boone National Forest," said Hendrickson. "Then at the lower end, you have the very dangerous and adventurous narrows with white water."

Rockcastle River covers the gauntlet of what Laurel County has to offer your average kayak or canoe enthusiast.

"There are several different sections of the Rockcastle River and each one is very unique," said Hendrickson. "You have about 35 miles worth of river that runs in northern Laurel County for paddling."

The Upper Rockcastle River — from downtown Livingston in Rockcastle County to the Interstate 75 Bridge covers approximately 6 miles of scenic, Kentucky specific beauty.

If you need more or want an entire day's worth of amphibious adventure, continue under the bridge until you reach Ky. 1956 — about 11 miles later. The section is what's known as a Class 1+, or a pool and riffle stream with a moderate difficulty. What's more, provided the water levels are high enough, you can make the run almost year round.

Because of this, the Upper Rockcastle River has been a favorite for



Molly Barnett and Scott Belzer enjoy an afternoon on the Rockcastle River in June 2015.

SENTINEL FILE PHOTO

campers and trailblazers visiting this corner of the Commonwealth. It offers a prime location for fishing, sightseeing, and taking shelter under the stars.

"This section of the Rockcastle is usually runnable from late fall to midsummer. This part of the river is very scenic," states London-Laurel County Tourism's website. "This has been a favorite for canoe campers for decades."

During a trip down the river, it is not at all unusual to encounter amphibious wildlife or fishermen lining the Rockcastle's banks. While the water did have a few slight riffle-filled areas, the biggest obstacle for the majority of the day was a fallen tree.

"I imagine this is happening all the time," said Hendrickson. "The bank's soft sand makes it quite easy for trees to fall. They're called strainers when they're in the river, and can be one of the most dangerous things you can encounter."

The Lower Rockcastle River offers a bit more adventure. From Ky. 1956 to Lake Cumberland, a slew of challenges await those wanting to brave Laurel County waters.

The first six miles from Ky. 1956 are a lot like the Upper Rockcastle River, offering a mild current and numerous riffles and small ledges. The next six miles picks up the pace with several Class 2 rapids.

Around the 12-mile marker, it's a common sight to see Class 2 and Class 3 rapids complete with stair-step ledges, followed by more mild water reminiscent of the Upper Rockcastle River.

At the 15-mile marker, however, canoe or kayak enthusiasts will encounter the "most dangerous and challenging rapid on the river." This is a fourfoot drop known as the Beech Narrows — a "keeper" hydraulic and solid Class 4 rapid. Below the narrows is another stretch of almost continuous and highly technical Class 3 and Class 4 rapids. It's another 21 miles before kayakers and canoe paddlers reach Bee Rock Campground.

If you're looking for a relaxing paddle and are more in tune with sinking a line and lure, Wood Creek Lake or Laurel River Lake offer a more laid-back Laurel County experience.

"On the lakes, it's all up to you," said Hendrickson. "You can paddle as long as you want."

Laurel River Lake offers 5,600 acres of water surface and over 200 miles of tree-lined shore, incorporating beaches, fishing spots, hiking trails and mountain biking opportunities.

The lake also offers two marinas, secluded paddle-in campgrounds, full-service campgrounds, and group campgrounds available for anyone wishing to take a lengthy, paddle-based trip.

Similarly, Wood Creek Lake offers 625 acres worth of surface area and scenic beauty.

"Wood Creek Lake is small enough that some of the reaches feel like a river," said Hendrickson.

Below the Laurel River Lake's dam, however, things go from calm to extreme.

"In the Laurel River, below the Laurel River Lake Dam, you have extreme rapids," said Hendrickson. "It's only a couple miles long, but when they release the water there from the lake, you have plenty of extreme rapids."

According to the Laurel County Tourism website, this section of Laurel River offers everything an extreme sports enthusiast would like to experience

"Spectacular scenery, great rapids but tough to catch in its entirety at runnable levels characterizes this two-mile section of the Laurel River," states the organization's website.

Since the water is released from the bottom of the dam, the water is extremely cold. When seeing kayakers or boaters traversing it's highly technical span during the summer, it's not unusual to see kayakers in full wetsuits and cold weather boating gear.

Those brave enough to span Laurel River's white water are instructed to put in just below the Laurel Lake Dam off Ky. 1193.

If you think you've seen all that the Cumberland River has to offer after visiting Cumberland Falls State Park, you're wrong. The southern Laurel County river offers about 11 miles worth of Class 3 rapids.

In order to fully take advantage of all the rapids the river has to offer, experts recommend traversing the Cumberland River from mid-August to September, after the river's summer pool has come and gone.

For more information on these and other attractions in Laurel County, visit http://www.laurelkytourism.com/featured-attractions/canoeing-kayaking. For a detailed listing on water levels, visit http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ky/nwis/uv?site_no=03406500.

high-quality health care



On a busy Friday, nurse Connie Krossber stood in the emergency room filling out paperwork. In the middle of a 12-hour shift and with her hair tied back in a neat bun, she quickly filled in the forms, walked down a hallway and pulled the curtain into patient room No. 3.

On the bed lay a mother rubbing the forehead of her daughter, who was tucked beside her napping. While talking to her in a low, gentle voice, Krossber seamlessly opened a package holding a syringe and filled it with medicine.

"That little vein sure did hold up well," she said smiling to the mother. "I was worried."

She injected the medicine and then put her hand on the mother's.

"You need anything, just ask," she said.

Krossber has been a nurse at London's only hospital since 1988. Working everywhere from obstetrics to the ICU, she's found her calling in the bustling ER, which serves well over 100 patients each day.

For the past few years, Krossber's job has gotten a little easier though, in large part because Saint Joseph London opened a new state-of-the-art, \$150 million facility in August 2010.

"Look at all of this room," Krossber said, marveling at the wide hallways and roomy drug-dispensing utility room nearby. "We have so much more space, and have room for more patients."

Saint Joseph London is licensed for 120 beds, all private rooms with most overlooking the sparkling lake and garden. The facility was built in 2010 with the intent of taking out the institutional atmosphere that generally dominates hospitals and replacing it with something "more welcoming and relaxing," said Terry Deis, President of Saint Joseph London.

As a result, Saint Joseph London is bathed in natural light, lobbies that look like they belong more in a hotel than a hospital, and the fresh aroma of coffee as soon as patients walk into the front door. Outside, visitors can walk around the sizable lake adjacent to the facility or take a tour in the healing garden and

labyrinth, designed by the esteemed Jon Carloftis.

While architecturally pleasing, the hospital is serious about providing quality health care. Last year, more than 44,000 patient visited our emergency room, over 1,100 babies were born in our Birthing Center, and thousands of outpatient surgeries were performed. In addition, the catholic, non-profit hospital is also committed to giving back to the community. Last year, more than \$39 million in charity care services were provided to our community.

At the same time the new facility was built, Saint Joseph London merged with Jewish Hospital & St. Mary's Healthcare in Louisville to form KentuckyOne Health.

KentuckyOne Health later formed a partnership with the University of Louisville Hospital and the James Graham Brown Cancer Center, creating the largest health care system in the commonwealth. The network of hospitals is committed to improving the health of Kentuckians by integrating medical research, education, technology and health care services wherever patients need care. "It helps with our cost associated with care," Deis said. "We can negotiate for good pricing for our supplies and our needs. It also allows us to offer a wider range of expertise, not the least of which are U of L's academic resources."

In 2012, the hospital added hematology and oncology as part its services, as well as orthopedics. Later, it expanded Imaging/Radiology to a second offsite location and added Ear, Nose & Throat care.



Rhoda Sasser, left, a Family Service Worker at the Laurel County Health Department's Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) program, visited with Lillie Stamper, who is participating in the program.

SENTINEL FILE PHOTO

health department offers many programs

STORIES BY KELLY MCKINNEY

Chances are, those with any kind of health issue can find some sort of help through the Laurel County Health Department. They can see a doctor; they can get family planning services; and they can even see a nutritionist, to name a few.

But the department offers much more in the way of education and health improvement, including supplemental nutrition, diabetes education classes and help with smoking cessation.

One of the most known programs offered by the department is the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) supplemental nutrition program.

The program provides food to infants, children up to 5 years old, and women who are pregnant or have given birth within the previous six months.

In Laurel County, around 2,000 families participate in the program.

"We're probably one of the bigger counties in the state as far as participation," Moore said.

Families must earn under a certain amount to qualify, or receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits or Medicaid.

Moore said a big benefit of the program for families is that WIC provides formula for infants up until they are a year old. After the infant reaches a certain age, it also provides baby food and cereals.

After that, it provides milk.

Children and women receive eggs, peanut butter, whole grains and fresh fruit and vegetables.

"It's all highly nutritious food," Moore said.

In addition to the nutrition families receive, they also receive screenings such as height and weight and blood iron level testing, both when they begin the program and at regular intervals while on the program.

They also answer questions about their general health and eating habits and the like, Moore said.

Moore said the program helps keep participating families healthy, both by providing nutritious food and by educating participants.

The health department talks with the families about exercise and good eating habits, she said.

Some might remember the WIC program providing vouchers that participants had to redeem at the stores. They had to purchase all the items on the voucher on the same visit, and the cashier had to verify that the package sizes and amounts matched the voucher.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

HANDS program helps families

Since 2001, Laurel County parents have had somewhere to turn for a hand—for information, for help locating resources, for assurance that they are doing the right things with their children.

That program is the Kentucky Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) program through the Laurel County Health Department.

Beth Smith, program coordinator, described HANDS as an educational support program for new or expectant parents.

Smith emphasized that HANDS is not a program that aims to judge or give mandates to parents.

"We never go in and tell families what to do," she said. "It's a strength-based support program."

The program serves about 40 families at a time, Smith said. Right now, Smith and family support worker Rhoda Sasser take on that load.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

Those days are long gone.

The program has been electronic for about six years now, Moore said.

Benefits are put on an Electronic Benefits Card, and items can be purchased together or separately.

"If you just need to grab a gallon of milk, you can just grab it and swipe your card," Moore said. "It's much more user-friendly."

The program also now has an app for smart phones, which keeps track of what items users still have available for the month.

WIC is vital for some families.

"I think it's a great program," Moore said. "I think people are really glad to have it. I think people are appreciative of the education they receive as well as the food."

But the food goes a long way for families.

"That extra little bit of food is really helpful," she said.

The WIC program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Another way the Laurel County Health Department provides health education is through its classes on diabetes.

Classes are led by Ronda Arnold, local health nurse.

The biggest diabetes class is called DSME (Diabetes Self-management Education). It consists of a series of four classes that are a couple of hours each.

The first is on general information on the disease, Moore said.

"It's all about what's going on in your body, what causes it—the basics," she said.

The second class is all about nutrition—how to eat to manage the condition. It includes information on carbohydrate counting and physical activity.

Information on medications used to control diabetes takes up the whole of the third class.

Pharmacist Kyle Harris talks about the varying medications that can be prescribed, Moore said.

The fourth class is about reducing risks for complications later on.

While the DSME classes are the biggest classes offered, the department also teaches courses such as pre-diabetes, nutrition basics and holiday meal planning.

Information on the proper disposal of needles and foot care also are included, Moore said.

"We pretty much touch on every aspect of diabetes," she said.

People have said they have really enjoyed the classes, and learned a lot from them. Participants are asked to complete a survey after the completion of the classes.

"We get really good feedback," Moore said.

Moore said the program is one of her favorite programs offered at the department.

"You can really see results," she said.

Another program Moore says she is glad the department offers, which she runs, is the smoking cessation help.

The classes follow the format of the Freedom from Smoking campaign by the American Lung Association.

Classes meet once a week for seven weeks. Participants actually quit during week four of the program, Moore said.

The first few classes are spent talking about the dangers of smoking. Participants also determine what type of quit smoking aid is best for them.

The health department then provides those aids from week four through week seven. Some participants choose nicotine gum; some choose the patches; and some choose medication.

"Whatever they choose, we make sure they are going to be able to get it," Moore said.

Moore said quitting smoking is one of the best ways to improve a

person's health.

The smoking cessation classes haven't seen great participation so far, Moore said. And participants tend to drop out when it gets close to "quit week."

"It's hard to do," Moore said.

She said she is hoping to see greater participation in the upcoming session, and she hopes participants will see it through.

The next session is scheduled to begin Monday, July 11. It will meet each Monday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Anyone interested can register by calling 606-864-5187.





And Laurel County's program is growing by leaps and bounds. The program was just recently named an evidence-based model, meaning research confirms that the program is making a difference in the lives of parents and children.

That's major, Smith said.

"Think of the UK Wildcats winning the NCAA championship," Smith said. "It's that big of a deal."

The study found that moms in the program are more likely to receive prenatal care, HANDS families are more likely to have a medical "home" rather than use the emergency room for non-emergency care, and moms are more likely to carry their babies to term. It also find fewer instances of child neglect and abuse.

"You have those numbers to back up what you say you're doing," Smith said.

The designation also means the program now stands on its own, without having to operate under the umbrella of another program, Smith said.

There are many avenues that bring families into the home visitation program.

HANDS receives referrals from hospitals and agencies such as the WIC program through the health department, the Laurel County Life Center, and the Department for Community-Based Services.

Some families are self-referrals who have heard about the program from other families.

There are no income guidelines to qualify. Qualifications include being pregnant or having a child less than 12 weeks old. Parents then complete a survey, which determines whether they qualify.

Historically, HANDS has only accepted first-time parents, but just in the last few years, the program in Laurel County also began accepting parents having their second child or more.

"It doesn't matter if you're having your first baby or your 10th baby," Smith said. "We were excited about that."

Workers visit each family for 30 minutes to an hour once per week in the beginning, until the child turns 1. Then the visits become less frequent, with a visit every other week. When the child turns 18 months, the visits are once per month. On the child's second birthday, the family is considered a graduate of the program.

Smith said families love the program. Many graduates still keep in touch, letting her know how they are doing and what's going on in their lives.

"I still get pictures of the kids, and updates on how they're doing in school," Smith said.

Workers do end up getting pretty close to the families, she said.

"If you think about it, you're spending almost three years with a family," Smith said.

And she sees the difference.

"We've had parents get their high school diplomas and go on to college; we've had families buy homes," she said.

Part of what workers do during their visits is helping the family set goals.

It's rewarding when the families accomplish those goals, Smith said.

"It could be getting into college or getting a new job, or it could just be cleaning out a closet," she said. "But it feels good when it's accomplished. We cheer and carry on."

She said having that person who they know will be there to lend an ear and helpful advice is key to the program's success.

"The main thing is just the support that they get," she said. "If it's

your first baby, it can be a mystery. If it's your third or fourth, it can be overwhelming. Having somebody who's going to be there every week, somebody who's not judging or telling you what to do."

Smith said the HANDS program is built on the belief that all parents want to be good parents.

That is evidenced, she said, by the way most parents react when they find out the information HANDS workers provide on a child's brain development.

Parents have great power in promoting brain development, from reading to their babies to touching them to making eye contact with them.

"They think, 'Wow," Smith said.

Such interactions are of vital importance in brain development, and in helping children form the secure attachments they need.

Smith said her work with HANDS has been rewarding and fulfilling. "It's like a calling," she said. "I always think of it as 'I get to work in HANDS."

And it's a good time for the workers and the families.

"It's fun," she said. "We really enjoy it."

For more information on the HANDS program, call the Laurel County Health Department at 606-864-5187.



Lillie Stamper decided to go through the HANDS program for a second time with her baby, Selena.

SENTINEL FILE PHOTO

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A portion of the Sheltowee Trace Trail runs through Laurel County. It is a popular destination for hikers.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

great day for a hike

The history of Kentucky offers a rich urge for exploration into the wilderness bordering the original 13 states following the end of the French and Indian War in 1763.

Much of that history hinges on Daniel Boone, who brought the first colonists into Kentucky, reaching a site established as Boonesboro in April 1775. Boone's settling in Kentucky brought anger from the Native American tribes who hunted, fished and dwelled in the wilderness, resulting in the capture of Boone's daughter several years later. While Boone's Trace remains imminent in Kentucky's history, it is joined by the Sheltowee Trace trail that remains the longest trail in the state.

The Sheltowee Trace Trail is also a tribute to Daniel Boone and marks his journey from northern Tennessee into Kentucky to Morehead. The 319-mile trail bears the name given to Boone by Chief Blackfish of the Shawnee tribe after Blackfish adopted Boone as his son.

Intermingling with a variety of trails throughout the state, the Sheltowee Trace Trail remains one of the most popular outdoor recreation areas for mountain bikers, hikers and adventure seekers.

Laurel native Mike Fawbush is one of many who have hiked the entire Sheltowee Trace with his friend, Bill Radford. An avid hiker, Fawbush describes the Sheltowee as one of his favorite trails.

"Locally, my favorite section is from the Ky. 192 trailhead to Vanhook Falls toward the Rockcastle River," Fawbush said. "It's easy to moderate, probably about 2 and a half miles and is downhill for the most part to Cane Creek."

Fawbush and Radford set out to hike the entire trail nearly a decade year ago — when both of them were 60 years old.

"We'd go one weekend a month. We'd leave on Friday and come back on Sunday," Fawbush said. "The next weekend, we'd pick up where we left off and go again."

The two friends have hiked 307 miles — the entire trail with the exception of a new 12-mile section recently added to the Tennessee trail.

Both of Boone's most famed trails come together in Laurel County, along a section of Ky. 229 near and through the Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park.

"Boone Trace goes through the park, behind the clubhouse and part of it is the actual dirt road of the Daniel Boone Trace," Fawbush said. "People go to the campgrounds and go on the trails there but don't realize all the hiking opportunities and the history inside the park."

The Sheltowee Trace and Boone's Trace also encompass the northern section of Laurel County into the Camp Wildcat area — another area where Fawbush has done extensive hiking. The Civil War battlesite, located on a mountain a few miles off U.S. 25, has a wealth of trails and history of its own and is exemplified by the historic trails of Kentucky's most renowned explorer and woodsman.

"The Sheltowee Trace goes by Camp Wildcat and so does the Wilderness Road trail," Fawbush said. "The trail ends at the (Rockcastle) river but if the water is low you can cross the ford and be back on the Sheltowee."

His interest in hiking and in the Sheltowee Trace lead Fawbush to join the Sheltowee Trace Association. That organization focuses on preserving the historic trail with markers and signs detailing its significance in not only Kentucky's history but also to the westward movement that eventually spanned to the current Pacific Coast.

With London and Laurel County being named as the fifth Trail Town in the state, Fawbush feels that the designation will highlight the many outdoor opportunities offered in the area.

"It will bring a lot of people to the area and we will be able to highlight the trails in the area," he said.

It will also allow those taking advantage of the area to see southeastern Kentucky in an entirely different aspect.

"Hiking is good for you physically and mentally," he said. "You see things differently because you're actually able to see things instead of just glancing. As you walk along in the woods, you see things that you've never seen before, but they are things that have always been there and always existed."

The trails along Laurel Lake are also a scenic route that Fawbush recommends.

"The Holly Bay trails are a nice walk. You go up hollers and down hollers and can even come out on (Ky.) 192. You're in the woods all the way," he said.

But Fawbush also knows that there are some basic points that hikers should be aware of before undertaking a trip.

"Besides the physical and mental part, hiking is actually an inexpensive hobby," he said. "You do need good shoes, and you should start out with a 20-mile hike. You should always get a map of where you're going and know about the trail. You can walk a lot faster on a paved road than in the woods, but the woods are a lot cooler."

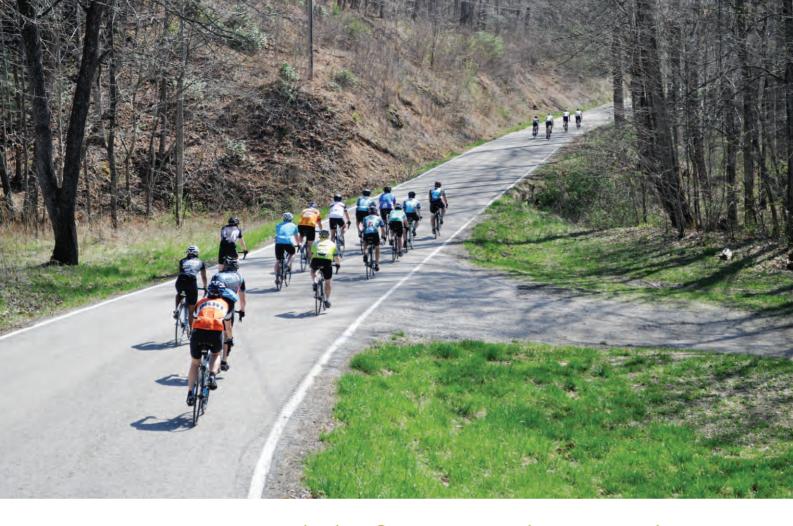
Like any hobby or sport, Fawbush said the amount of money spent is entirely up to the individual.

Clothing is another important factor to consider when hiking.

The heat and humidity of summer is why Fawbush says the winter months are his favorite time for hiking excursions. For one, snakes are not as prevalent during November and December. For walks along the Laurel Lake trails, the fallen leaves also offer a clearer view of the lake as well as offering cooler temperatures.





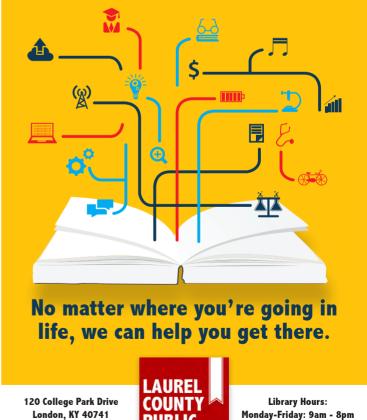


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more than books



Above: A young girl enjoys the many services the Laurel County Public Library has to offer, including looking at the variety of books on the library shelves. Opposite page: Makayla Boothe plays with a puzzle at the library.

PHOTO SUBMITTED AND BY MIKE MOORE

By NITA JOHNSON

The traditional picture of a library as a place to just check out books or read newspapers is long gone.

Instead, public libraries across the state have evolved into multipurpose, multi-media hubs that offers a wide variety of services ranging from computer technology to entertainment.

Laurel County's facility is a prime example of the changing role of the public library in today's society.

Integrating technology and community interests into the regimen that public libraries now offer is paramount for the network of staff and board members of the Laurel County Public Library.

Instead of the "quiet as a mouse" atmosphere that once existed libraries, the Laurel County Public Library is a hive of activity ranging from a wide selection of reading materials to live entertainment and round-table discussions.

Construction completed in early 2016 expanded the facility's current offerings to include an auditorium where live music, art

"We love our auditorium because it allows us to present programs for the community in a dedicated area without disrupting other patrons who are studying, using the computers, or trying to read."

> Peggy Mershon, Library Director





A young patron dressed up in a super hero's costume studies a kangaroo during the Laurel County Public Library's Comic Con event held in March 2016.

PHOTO SUBMITTED

shows and other activities are open to the public. The auditorium features a stage and backstage area for performers with a state of the art sound system to implement the facility. With a seating area of approximately 100, the auditorium is the site for many live performances in a family-friendly environment.

Peggy Mershon, director of the Laurel County Public Library, is pleased to see the new aspects of the library and the services offered as well as the impact on the community.

"We love our new auditorium because it allows us to present programs for the community in a dedicated area without disrupting other patrons who are studying, using the computer, or trying to read," she said.

The renovations that added the auditorium and expanded the children's department increased the Laurel County Public Library's space from 25,200 square feet to 41,650 square feet.

The children's section also features a unique decor that Mershon said is always an amazement to those who visit the library.

"It's so fun to watch kids come into the new children's department. They all love the artwork created for us by Lonnie and Twyla Money —

Although the shelves of carefully cataloged and meticulously arranged books still signify the "traditional" library, the center of the Laurel County facility is offset by a computer area that is open for

public use.

they enjoy touching the shelving panels and pointing to the 3-D birds

A reading nook offsets another facet of the library, which is accented by small meeting rooms in addition to the auditorium.

The Laurel County Library has hosted uncountable events including a tea party, weekly movie night, a Comic Con day for children, and numerous other events.

"The community was so understanding about all of the disruptions during the construction and remodeling because they knew the inconveniences would be worth the trouble in the long run," Mershon added. "I think now that everything is finished, they're even more proud of their community library than ever before."

n the web



For more information on services the Laurel County Public Library offers, visit www.laurellibrary.org

on the wall," she added.

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Festivals and events

SPRING

London Community Orchestra Spring Concert

www.londoncommunityorchestra.com 606-864-4194

Pulling together musicians from around the area, as well as surrounding counties, this ensemble always impresses.

London-Laurel County Farmers' Market

http://laurel.ca.uky.edu/FarmersMarket

Open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from May to October, this market is one of the largest in the state, and is particularly bustling on Saturday mornings.

Redbud Ride

www.redbudride.com

606-862-8841

This April ride features four routes that wind past the stunning redbud trees that are native to the area and usually in full bloom during the event. Last year, nearly 1,300 riders from 22 states participated.

Laurel County Shrine Club Bluegrass Festival

606-862-8841

A celebration of the famous music homegrown in Kentucky. This event takes place in May.

AM Shooters ASC Pro-Am Tour Archery Competition

www.asaarchery.com

1-770-795-0232

Each year, hundreds of archers from around the country flock to this competition, which is held at the Laurel County Fairgrounds.



Top: Camp Wildcat re-enactment. Above: South Laurel students Tanay Patel, left, and Connor Frost take a spin on the Superman ride during the 2015 World Chicken Festival held the last week in September.

PHOTOS BY MIKE MOORE AND NITA JOHNSON

Thursday Night Live

www.thursdaynightlivedowntown.com 606-862-8841

Live music on the courthouse steps draws hundreds each week during this concert series held from June to August. Different types of bands and music styles are featured each week.

Cruisin' on Broad Car Show 606-862-8841

Another event hosted by London Downtown, this monthly car show attracts hot wheels, muscle cars and classic rides to downtown from May to September.

Red, White and Boom

606-864-6995

Thousands gather to watch this spectacular fireworks display in honor of the Fourth of July. Games, face painting, food and entertainment are all part of the celebration. The event is held at College Park.

Laurel County Fair

www.laurelcountyfair.com 606-682-2899

This classic fair in July features carnival rides, funnel cakes and candy apples, tractor pulls, demolition derbies and a popular pageant.

American Junior Amateur Golf Championship

606-878-6900

Nearly 150 of the country's best junior golfers converge at Crooked Creek Golf Course in August for this 54-hole event.

Laurel County Homecoming

www.laurelcountyhomecoming.com

This four-day event hosted at Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park highlights the heritage of Laurel County and its founders with live music and entertainment, contests, arts and crafts exhibits, food vendors and an honorees banquet.

The Little Miss and Master pageant opens the event on Thursday night, with the Honorees banquet on Friday evening. Saturday offers a downtown parade with activities resuming at the park with contests, talent exhibitions, a pet parade, and the annual Teen and Miss Laurel County Homecoming pageant that evening.

Sunday concludes the celebration with a gospel singing - the event that began the Laurel County Homecoming in 1935.



Members of the South Laurel Air Force JROTC march during the downtown Christmas parade in December 2015.

PHOTO BY MIKE MOORE

World Chicken Festival

606-878-6900

FALL

www.chickenfestival.com

Easily the festival for which London and Laurel County are most well known, this four-day event at the end of September draws up to 250,000 people for its chicken-themed fun. The WCF was named the best festival in

the state by Kentucky Monthly Magazine and the Southeast Tourism Society included it in its Top 20 Events list. Col. Sanders look-alikes wander the streets, while people line up at the world's largest skillet to get their fried chicken dinner. Youngsters are invited to the Chick-O-Lympics, which includes a chicken scratch where they dive through flour to find hidden dollar bills. Students countywide participate in the egg drop, where they test their architectural skills to protect an egg from a two-story fall. A chicken wing-eating contest, a chicken sculpture competition, carnival rides, live music and fair food round out the fun.

Camp Wildcat Civil War Re-enactment

www.wildcatreenactment.org

With cannons firing and bullets flying, Civil War re-enactors recreate the battle of Camp Wildcat, which originally took place Oct. 21, 1861. They also recreate the Battle of London. Part of the entertainment is walking around the encampment the re-enactors have set up, complete with Civil War-era tents, cooking utensils and sleeping quarters.

Thriller Ride

606-878-6900

http://cvcc-ky.org/Thriller_Ride.html
The Halloween-themed Thriller Ride in
October boasts three cycling routes of varying
lengths, all of which wind through Levi Jackson Wilderness Road State Park. Riders are
encouraged to dress in costumes.

WINTER

Sights and Sounds of Christmas

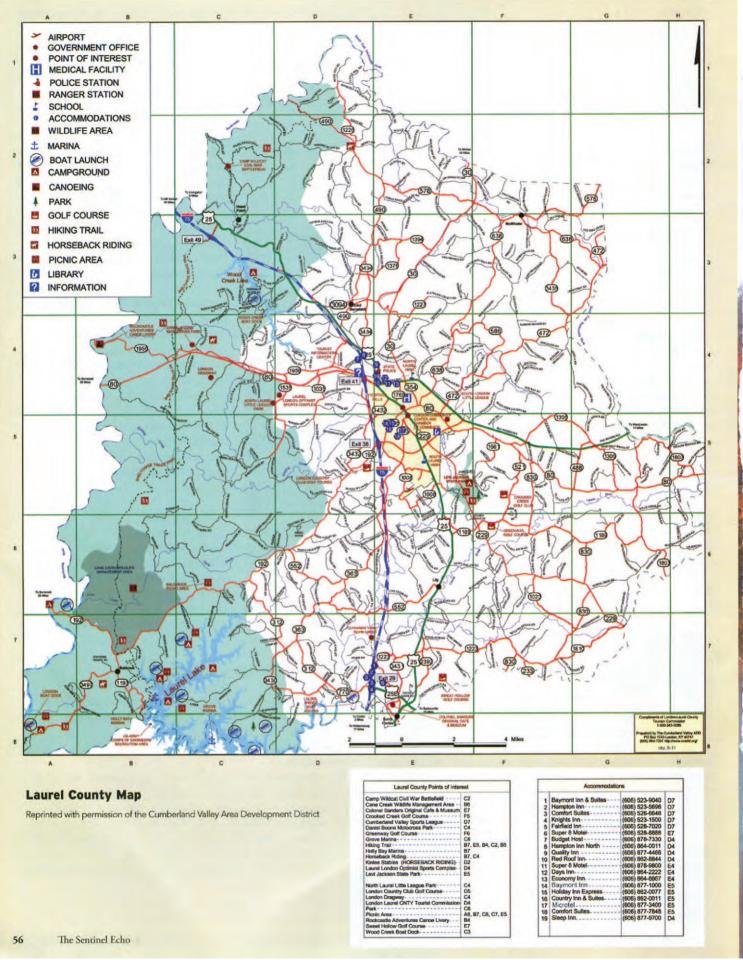
606-864-7777

Held on Thanksgiving weekend, this craft show features some of the best handmade objects d'art in the area.

Christmas on Main

606-862-8841

With Christmas carols sounding through speakers set up all over downtown, this festive evening is an annual favorite at the beginning of December. The event includes singing; a book walk for children; a jolly, float-filled parade and the annual lighting of the Christmas tree. The parade route, which is always packed with hundreds of onlookers, ends at the Laurel County Farmers' Market, where Santa is ready to take pictures.



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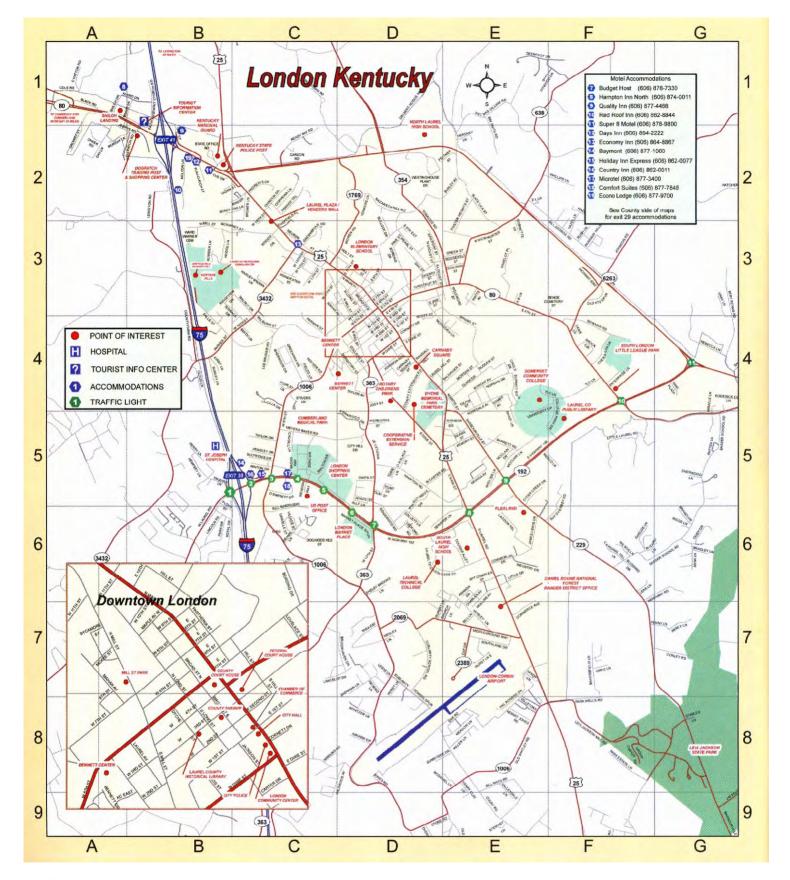


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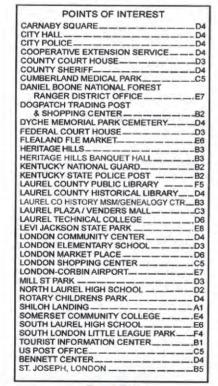
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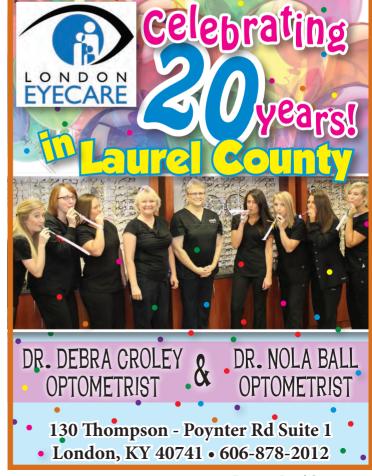
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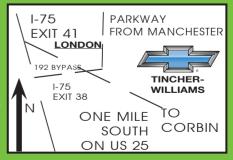
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