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# CHRONICLE & TIMES

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

FLOYD COUNTY

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 21 • 14 PAGES • 50 CENTS

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**Bradford Hunt**

## Hunt pleads guilty in robbery case

A FLOYD CHRONICLE AND TIMES STAFF REPORT

A Floyd County man pleaded guilty last week to robbing a local business.

On March 8, Langley resident Bradford Hunt, 43, pleaded guilty to second-degree robbery in Floyd Circuit Court.

He was indicted in September 2017 on charges first-degree robbery and for being a persistent felony offender. The indictment accused him of threatening the use of a weapon during a Nov. 23, 2013, robbery of Fast Lane in Eastern.

Hunt, represented by attorney William Collins,

See PLEADS, Page 9A



Floyd Chronicle and Times photos by Mary Meadows  
Current and former educators and their supporters from Floyd, Pike, Johnson, Martin and Magoffin counties held a rally in Prestonsburg on Saturday to protest Senate Bill 1, which is set to make changes in teacher retirement benefits.

## Educators protest pension plan in Prestonsburg

BY MARY MEADOWS  
STAFF WRITER

Chanting things like "We will remember in November," and "A pension is a promise," educators from Floyd and surrounding counties rallied in Prestonsburg on March 10 to protest Senate Bill 1.

Floyd County teacher Angela Coleman, who has taught for 23 years, helped organize the rally as president of the Floyd County Education Association, an affiliate of the Kentucky Educa-

tion Association.

"I think many in the public are not aware that teachers have pre-paid into our retirement. We've pre-paid into our retirement healthcare. We've pre-paid into our COLAs," she said. "So we're not asking for anything that we haven't already earned and that we deserve."

The pension reform bill attempts to reduce the state's \$42 billion pension fund debt by cutting the annual cost-of-living increase

See PROTEST, Page 2A



Floyd Chronicle and Times photo by Mary Meadows  
Sen. Johnny Ray Turner, D-Prestonsburg, pictured here with Floyd County Education Association President Angela Coleman, a Floyd County teacher, addresses those who turned out at a rally in protest of Senate Bill 1 on March 10.

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## Community mourns death of 'Ranger Rick'

A FLOYD CHRONICLE AND TIMES STAFF REPORT

Floyd County residents are mourning the death of a popular radio DJ.

Ricky Dane Caudill, known to his listeners at WMDJ as "Ranger Rick," died March 7, at his home in Eastern.

He worked at WMDJ for more than 30 years, serving as music director, and he also previously served decades as a member of the Martin Fire Department and in the county sheriff's department.

He led the radio station's daytime broadcast, where he was known for using characters and "telling a good tale" on air.

"Our hearts are broken tonight over the loss of one of our own," WMDJ said on Facebook. "For 35 years, 'Ranger' Rick made us laugh, informed and entertained our listeners. He was a devoted husband, papaw, Sheriff's Deputy, Dispatcher, retired firefighter and beloved radio personality. Please pray for his family at this trying time."

See MOURNS, Page 7A

## John M. Stumbo community seeks redistricting

BY MARY MEADOWS  
STAFF WRITER

Parents and officials with John M. Stumbo Elementary are calling for a redistricting plan to bring in more students, citing declining enrollment and the loss of teachers and opportunities for students.

This "community group" of parents, working with the school's Site-Based Deci-

sion-Making Council, plans to address the Floyd County Board of Education this month about redistricting.

Grethel resident Danita Evans, who represents parents on the school's SBDM Council, said John M. Stumbo students are missing opportunities because funds have decreased since the school's enrollment decreased. The school housed 324

See REDISTRICTING, Page 7A

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**PROTEST**

Continued From Page 1A

in teacher retirement plans, and, among other things, placing new teachers into a 401K-style retirement plan.

Senate leaders claim

it will save \$3.2 billion in 20 years and pay off the state's pension debt in 30 years, but people who protested at the rally believe the state should look at other ways to raise revenues.

The bill was introduced in the Senate in

February and was expected to pass last week, but the Senate, instead, sent it back to the State & Local Government committee. As teachers rallied at the Capitol and hosted walk-ins in eight counties, Senate leaders announced on March 9

that the vote would be postponed.

Talking about the protests that led up to that decision, Sen. Johnny Ray Turner, D-Prestonsburg, said it was a "wild week" in Frankfort. A retired educator, he commended rally participants for their efforts. He said all of the phone calls, emails and protests worked.

"It's the first time since I've been there that I've seen that kind of reaction out of the majority party. So, great job," he told the crowd.

He said the bill is "an attack on us" and an "attack on education" and encouraged rally participants to continue voicing opposition, saying SB1 would negatively impact all current, retired and future teachers and would be "devastating to education."

He believes the state's pension problem "will take care of itself" if it is fully funded.

"The only thing that I will support is if they fund it completely," he said. "In the bill, there's an actuarial analysis, about a 60- to 80-page document. If we fund it, it works. It takes care of itself in about 30 years, the teachers (retirement plan) does, and the state (retirement plan) takes care of itself in 26 years."

He said tax reform is needed and mentioned the possibility of casinos, cigarette taxes, and a penny sales tax.

"All of those things could fund it," he said. "There's a lot of thing you could do, but tax reform is the most meaningful. Meaningful tax reform is the only way that we're going to be able to do it."

He currently draws a retirement from his decades of service as an educator in Floyd and Johnson counties.

"This bill, as it was amended, would take a half percent of the COLA

every year until it's fully funded," he said. "You don't think about a half percent being much, but over my lifetime, it could mean \$50,000 or \$60,000."

That's what Faye Wright, 55, of Prestonsburg is worried about.

She retired from the Floyd County School District six years ago, after 27 years of teaching. She said she only wants what she was promised as an educator.

"If all of those things were to happen, I would have a hard time just surviving," she said about SB1. "My bills come in and they don't decrease, and with a decreased retirement amount, I wouldn't be able to survive. We've worked hard, and when you're promised a pension, and if you change it, it's going to make a drastic reduction in our benefits. It's not fair."

Bruce Harkins, 29, who teaches at Sheldon Clark High School in Martin County, rallied for those promises with his wife in Prestonsburg. He pointed out that teachers cannot get Social Security, so their retirement is dependent on the state pension system.

"We deserve the pension we were promised," he said. "We pay 13 percent into what we were promised. We will not collect Social Security. My wife won't collect Social Security. I think it's very, very sad that this cut is the first idea."

He, too, believes the state could find other ways to fund the pension debt.

Retired Floyd County teacher Shayne Wicker, 53, held a sign that said, "My pension is my life" at the rally. He worries about the COLA decrease, as well as an increase in health insurance costs, which is proposed in the state's budget bill.

"They're wanting to cut our pension, and also

cut our insurance," he said. "I'm married. I've got two step-children and three grandchildren that I help with. If I have to pay another \$600 a month on insurance, and have a smaller cost of living allowance, it would be awful."

Joey Hamilton, a teacher at East Ridge High School in Pike County who also serves as the vice president of the Eastern Kentucky Education Association, also believes the state should find alternative funding. He has paid into his retirement for 26 years.

"It's a bad bill," he said. "Teachers don't get to draw Social Security. A lot of people don't know that. It would impact me with that. I've already been paying in on my pension. The government just needs to fund it."

He said the legislature needs to "find funding first," a phrase that was prominent on signs at the rally.

"There's funding out there. There's tax reform that could be done," he said. "There's funding that could be found other than cutting funds to education because our kids need those funds."

Coleman said it was good that the vote on SB1 was delayed, but said educators "can't be complacent with that."

"What we need is tax reform," she said. "Pension reform, the only problem with it is the lack of funding by the legislature. We've paid our part. They're not paying their part. You can't rob Peter to pay Paul, and that type of mentality is what I think is going on right now in Frankfort. Teachers have had enough. We want our voices heard. We're asking for what we've earned, what we deserve, and no more, no less. It's only right. A pension is a promise and a promise is meant to be kept."



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HEALTH NEWS @

**PIKEVILLE MEDICAL CENTER**



**We saved her life so she can help save yours.** By AMY CHARLES



Being proactive about your breast health and doing self-exams can make a real difference in the outcome you may have with breast cancer. That was the case with Regina Baker, 53, from Shelby Gap. She has been an oncology Nurse at Pikeville Medical Center for 15 years. But after discovering a lump in her breast during a routine self-exam, Baker became an oncology patient.

From the time she was 40 years old, Baker did everything she was supposed to do; mammograms every year and self-exams every month. Things were always normal. In December of 2016 she felt a nodule while doing a self-exam. Needle biopsy results came back as a fibroid. Baker decided to just leave it alone because she didn't want surgery. "About fourteen months later, in February of 2017, the fibroid began to hurt," explained Baker. "It hurt all weekend. So, on Monday I made an appointment to have it removed." No one expected the results that came next.

"I was so surprised it was cancer," Baker stated. "It turns out the cancer was hiding behind the fibroid, causing the needle biopsy to come back negative." Further testing revealed the lymph nodes and PET scan were clear, confirming stage one cancer. Her official diagnosis was invasive ductal adenocarcinoma.

Along with the initial shock of the news came fear, but she relied on her faith. "I was afraid at first, but within hours I already felt the peace of God, that He was with me and would bring me through this," said Baker. Surgery was definitely in Baker's future, but to what extent? She had the option of having a lumpectomy with radiation, but was contemplating a double mastectomy with reconstruction. After speaking with another PMC nurse who opted for the mastectomy and reconstruction, her mind was made up.

"It helped that my husband, Roger, was so supportive," said Baker. "From the very beginning he was fine with me having them removed, as long as I would be healthy. I thank God for him daily," Baker added. They will celebrate their eight year wedding anniversary in December of this year.

Baker went on to have the more invasive surgery in June of this year, performed by Dr. Oon Leedhanachoke, PMC Surgeon. Her reconstruction is being done by Dr. Dimitrios Danikas, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon. "I don't think I could have had better surgeons than Dr. Oon who performed my mastectomy and Dr. Danikas who did my reconstruction," praised Baker. "Dr. Oon is not only a skilled surgeon, but was very caring towards me during my process. Dr. Danikas is very meticulous and has been very informative about all my reconstructive decisions."

She has a message for women over 40 or with risk factors for breast cancer. "It is very important for women to take care of your breast health and do self-exams," emphasized Baker. "Make sure you get yearly mammograms so that your physician has something to compare it to. Keep your appointments and go to your follow-up visits. It is so important to be vigilant about your own health."

For more information about the services offered at PMC visit [pikevillehospital.org](http://pikevillehospital.org). To make an appointment at the Leonard Lawson Cancer Center, call 606-218-2212



**100<sup>TH</sup> SURGERY USING THE DA VINCI XI SURGICAL SYSTEM**

By AMANDA JO LAWSON

Pikeville Medical Center (PMC) is proud to announce a milestone has been reached, with their 100th surgery using the da Vinci XI Surgical System.

This minimally-invasive surgery benefits the patient through shorter hospital stays, less pain and scarring, less risk of wound infections, less blood loss, fewer transfusions, faster recovery and quicker return to normal activities.

PMC Urologist, Dustin Gayheart, M.D. said, "In the past surgery would typically require large open incisions but with the da Vinci System we make several small incisions. We operate robotic surgeries using a control system which allows our hand movements to make more precise movements, using tiny instruments inside the body."

The procedures are enhanced by the use of high-definition 3D vision and a magnified view. "We are excited to announce the completion of our 100th procedure," said Dr. Gayheart. "We have an excellent surgery team. Dr. Luke Edwards and I are blessed with a talented, well-trained team that is dedicated to doing their very best for our patients."

This cutting-edge technology helps keep patients close to home and gets them back to their normal lives as quickly as possible.

PMC is dedicated to continuing to advance health care and better serve its patients throughout eastern Kentucky. For additional information about the da Vinci XI Surgical System call 606-218-2202 or visit [www.pikevillehospital.org](http://www.pikevillehospital.org).

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**LOSE BIG WITH HMR**

By KATHY ATKINS

PMC's Vice President of Facilities Ralph Lomma chose the Wellness and Weight Loss Center's HMR plan to lose weight and restore his health. Over a period of years, Lomma had gained weight and developed health issues including high blood pressure, sleep apnea and knee pain. "My weight was over the edge and I just wasn't feeling well," said Lomma. "I'm 62 years old now, and you start thinking do I want to live longer or do I want to eat more."

Lomma had struggled with weight issues for close to 18 years. "I tried the Atkins Diet, lost 25 pounds and kept it off for about one day. As soon as I got off the diet I put the weight back on plus another five or 10 pounds."

The HMR program combines a structured diet, physical activity and behavioral lifestyle-change coaching. "You don't have to think about what to eat. The only choice is which entrée you want," added Lomma. "It's simple. There is no thinking. There is no counting calories."

For more information on the HMR weight loss program, contact the PMC Wellness and Weight Loss Center at 606-218-2205.



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## EDITORIAL:

# Floyd BOE made the right call

The Floyd County Board of Education made the right decision when, on Feb. 26, it voted to place law enforcement officials in county schools.

The board made that decision in the wake of mass shootings which resulted in a total of nearly two dozen teachers and students being killed at high schools in Kentucky and Florida, and it would not have been

possible without support from the Floyd County Fiscal Court and its sheriff's department and the cities of Prestonsburg and Martin and their police departments.

As officials said during that board meeting, parents and students have been "on edge" about school violence, and these proactive measures taken by the school district have already paid off.

When there was a report of a juvenile bringing a handgun to Betsy Layne High School on March 6, the Floyd County Sheriff's Resource Officer was already on site and started the investigation with the help of school officials. We were told this juvenile made no specific threat to the school or to students there, but that does not mean there was not cause

for alarm, especially since a handgun was involved.

It may seem cliché, but it's true what they say, "our children are our future." Our most important jobs are to protect them and to educate them so they are prepared to lead this world one day.

You can't educate a child who is afraid to go to school.

The Floyd County Board of Education

made the right call in deciding to place police officers in schools. At this point in time, with the episodes of school violence we've witnessed in recent years, it was the best decision they could have made. And the partners who joined them in that effort — as always — are going above and beyond their call of duty.

## EDITORIAL:

# Continued annexation talk in Allen still needs to take a backseat to discussions on transparency, fiscal responsibility

A month ago, we issued an opinion that Allen needed to get its house in order before it looked to expand.

For years now, we've been reporting on ongoing questions about the city's finances, including a lack of paperwork and filings which has cost the city road funding and, ultimately, keeps the

taxpayers from knowing how their money is being spent, or even how much money, exactly, is coming into the city.

For many municipalities, that would be enough to force leaders to draw back and do some serious soul-searching, to really do some work on getting things lined out to ensure a sustain-

able future. However, the Allen City Commission, last week, persisted in talk about potentially annexing property located along Ky. 1428 in New Allen, a strip of land which includes several businesses.

The reasons are numerous as to why it would be beneficial for Allen to annex the

property. The city would receive potential occupational tax proceeds, as well as alcohol sales tax, if the properties were approved as wet.

However, the thing about which we remain concerned is that we're having trouble seeing the benefits to those in the area proposed for annexation. As we said

last month, when a city takes in property, the benefits to the area being annexed are supposed to be apparent, such as increased public works access or access to services such as police or fire protection.

With the City of Allen being in the shape it's in as far as record-keeping, transparency and management,

we have serious questions as to whether the city can offer enough in terms of services to justify the annexation.

While it's not up to us, but is up to the people living in the areas being annexed, we would challenge Allen to get its house in order before proceeding and for the community to demand that the annexation not just be beneficial for the government, but the people as well.

### CHRONICLE & TIMES

#### LETTERS OR COMMENTS:

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By Christopher Epling c 2018 The Floyd County Chronicle and Times 03.14.18

**Michael Burkett**

Michael Douglas Burkett, 46, of Prestonsburg, died Thursday, Mar. 8, 2018.

Arrangements were under the direction of Nelson-Frazier Funeral Home of Martin.

**"Ranger Rick" Caudill**

Ricky Dane "Ranger Rick" Caudill, 54, of Eastern, died Wednesday, Mar. 7, 2018.

Arrangements were under the direction of Nelson-Frazier Funeral Home of Martin.



**John Gilbert**

U S A F  
MSgt. (ret.)

John Talmadge Gilbert, 89, of Fairborn Ohio, loving husband,

father, grandfather and friend went home to heaven Thursday, March 8, 2018, following a short illness.

He was born at Ashland, Aug. 14, 1928, the son of the late Emery and Edith Watson Gilbert.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a brother, Rudolph Gilbert; and a sister, Geneva Gilbert.

John married the love of his life, the late Brenda Joyce Music on Dec. 22, 1951. They shared 60 wonderful years together, raising five children.

John led a life of service to his family; to his country, proudly serving 20 years in the United States Air Force; to his community, working 20 years for the Fairborn City Schools; and finally to others in need as the

greeter for the Hearth Community Place Food Pantry. Lovingly known as the "Candyman", he brought smiles and an uplifted heart to many each week.

He is survived by his children, John and Kathy Gilbert of Monticello, Ind., Mike and Lisa Gilbert of Monticello, Ind., Tamara and Mike Duncan of Dayton, Ohio, Vana and Tim D'Aurora of Fairborn, Ohio, and Tim and Carol Gilbert of Dayton, Ohio; 14 grandchildren; and 25 great grandchildren.

He also leaves behind his sisters-in-law, Billie Irene Kruchko of Cass City, Mich.; Judy Music of Auxier; his brother-in-law, James T. Craft of Casey, Ill.; as well as many nieces, nephews and his very close friends from the "breakfast crew" who

have meant so much to him.

Funeral services will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 15, 2018, at the Belton-Stroup Funeral Home, 422 E. Dayton-Yellow Springs Rd., Fairborn, Ohio, with Pastor Scott VanDyke officiating. The family will receive friends from 4 p.m. until the time of services.

Graveside service will be conducted at 2 p.m. Friday, March 16, 2018, at the Music Family Cemetery, Auxier, with Pastor Kyle Guley officiating. Arrangements are under the direction of the Belton-Stroup Funeral Home of Fairborn, Ohio.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions, if desired, may be made to The Hearth Community Place Food Pantry by mailing your donation to:

The Hearth Community Place, 3415 Linden Ave., Dayton, OH 45410.

The guestbook may be signed at [www.Belton-Stroup.com](http://www.Belton-Stroup.com).

This is a paid obituary.

**"Bobcat" Jackson**

Robert Earl "Bobcat" Jackson, 72, of Georgetown, died Friday, Mar. 9, 2018.

Arrangements are under the direction of Nelson-Frazier Funeral Home of Martin.

**Annisson Slone**

Annisson Slone, 43, of Topmost, died Friday, Mar. 9, 2018.

Arrangements were under the direction of Nelson-Frazier Funeral Home of Martin.

**Edith Steele**

Edith Burdell Stratton Steele, 87, of Harold, died Wednesday, Mar. 7, 2018.

Arrangements were under the direction of Hall Funeral Home of Martin.

**Donna Terry**

Donna Sue Combs Terry, 75, of Martin, died Friday, Mar. 9, 2018.

Arrangements were under the direction of Hall Funeral Home of Martin.

**Mary Williams**

Mary Dotson Williams, 92, of Betsy Layne, died Wednesday, Mar. 7, 2018.

Arrangements were under the direction of Hall Funeral Home of Martin.

## Early Childhood educators honored in Floyd

SPECIAL TO THE  
FLOYD CHRONICLE AND TIMES

Superintendent Steve Trimble praised the Floyd County Schools' Early Childhood Program, reporting that it "continues to see success for students."

Trimble said in a press release, "The board team and I are happy to see our Early Childhood program continue to grow and succeed for our youngest students, giving them the best possible foundation for future educational success. Our kids continue to score much higher than the state average in being ready for kindergarten and our exceptional classrooms continue to be recognized at the regional level."

In Kentucky, results on the BRIGANCE assessment show the average percent of students who enter school ready for kindergarten to be 51 percent, while in Floyd County, the average percent of students ready is 82 percent.

The BRIGANCE is aligned with Kentucky's School Readiness definition that, "each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child's success."

To determine readiness, the BRIGANCE assesses children in five areas, including

their academic/cognitive skills, language skills, development, physical development, their ability to help themselves and their social-emotional development.

Recently, the Floyd County Board of Education recognized eight classrooms who had an average of 90 percent or higher of their students being ready for kindergarten.

The following three classrooms had 100 percent of their students ready for kindergarten for the 2017-2018 school year:

- Jessica Kiser, Mika Crisp and Amanda Patrick from Allen Elementary
  - Liz Isaac and Christina Flannery from South Floyd Elementary
  - Debra Tackett, Wilma Martin and Stephanie Slone from John M. Stumbo Elementary
- Five additional classrooms had 90 percent or higher of their students ready for kindergarten. They include:
- Krystal Barker, Diana Ratliff and Rebekah Allen from Prestonsburg Elementary (94 percent)
  - Misty Knott, Ramona Stewart and Stacey Paige from Duff-Allen Central Elementary (92 percent)
  - Barb Harris and Dedra Johnson from Prestonsburg Elementary (91 percent);

- April Borowski and Britany Tackett from Betsy Layne Elementary (90 percent);

- Debbie Gibson, Mary Bentley and Amanda Burke from South Floyd Elementary (90 percent)."

In addition to Floyd County continuing to exceed the state average in kindergarten readiness, six classroom teams rank highest among the 64 classrooms in the region.

Trimble said, "To receive a high ranking in the region, teachers, instructional assistants, the family service worker and the education consultant for the classroom work together for kids. The board team and I are happy to say that Floyd County Schools houses top ranking classrooms in the region."

- Those classrooms include:
- Misty Knott, Rhonda Newman, Kim Grubb, Stacy Paige and Teresa Newsome from Duff-Allen Central Elementary
  - Rhonda Begley, Beth Martin, Jennifer Woods, Kim Grubb, Teresa Newsome from May Valley Elementary
  - Jessica Kiser, Amanda Patrick, Kim Grubb, Denise Prater, Teresa Newsome from Allen Elementary
  - Ashley Fite, Shonna Hall, Jennifer Woods, Kim Grubb, Teresa Newsome from May Valley Elementary

- Rebekah Allen, Diana Ratliff, Kim Grubb, Teresa Campbell, Teresa Newsome from Prestonsburg Elementary
- Barb Harris, Dedra Johnson, Teresa Campbell, Kim Grubb, Teresa Newsome from Prestonsburg Elementary

When asked about children who are not currently enrolled in Floyd County Schools' Head Start or Preschool programs, Trimble talked about the varied opportunities the district provides for kids and families (at no cost to parents) before they enter school.

"When children begin kindergarten and aren't ready, they start their educational careers having to catch up to their peers who are ready," Trimble said. "That's why Head Start, Preschool and early learning experiences are so important and we want to help families start giving these opportunities at birth. In a partnership with Highlands Regional Medical Center, we have materials for new parents when they are discharged from the hospital with the new addition to their family."

He explained the school district also offer Bornlearning programs for kids age birth to five years old, as well as three Tiny Academies for kids that age.

"In addition, our team works closely with the Floyd

County Early Childhood Council to offer opportunities for families with young children who are not in school to come and learn ways to help their children be ready for school," he said. "If you are unable to attend our events, we have live events on Facebook to help teach activities and strategies for parents to turn regular activities into opportunities for learning. And we will come to you."

He talked about a summer program the district has hosted for two years, in which early childhood educators traveled to public housing areas in the summer months to offer educational opportunities.

"In Floyd County Schools, we not only want all children entering kindergarten to be ready to learn and thrive, we are truly doing whatever it takes to help kids be ready to take off when they enter our school system," Trimble said. "The board team and I would like to thank Anna Shepherd, director of Early Childhood, our wonderful community partners and all the amazing people working together to make this happen for kids."

For more information on how to help your child be ready for kindergarten visit <https://goo.gl/e4vmZt>

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## REDISTRICTING Continued From Page 1A

students in 2015-2016, the Kentucky Department of Education reports online, but that number decreased to 310 in 2016-2017. This year, enrollment is only 286 students, Evans said.

She said the school currently has seven empty classrooms and, since school funding is based on enrollment, it doesn't have enough funding to offer some classes for students.

"There's no music class, no PE class, no art class because we're just getting enough to teach the students we have, and our enrollment has dropped to 286," she said.

She said redistricting is "crucial" for John M. Stumbo.

When she attended the school years ago, it educated all students who lived on Ky. 979 in Grethel, but, redistricting sent some students who live there to Betsy Layne and South Floyd elementary schools. She and others report that students who live on Frasure's Creek in the McDowell area are within 10 minutes of John M. Stumbo are currently being transported 30 minutes away to South Floyd.

"We just feel that we're at a crucial time where we have to do something," she said. "We're down to 286 students ... We've heard talk that they want to remodel one school (Betsy Layne Elementary) because there's not enough room for students, but we've got classrooms sitting empty."

She said it "just makes sense" to transport students living closer to Stumbo to that school, a comment other organizers also made. They believe redistricting can save district transportation costs.

Last year, the board closed McDowell Elementary and Osborne Elementary and sent the majority of those students to South Floyd. None of those students came to John M. Stumbo, Evans said, even though some of them live closer to that school.

John M. Stumbo Principal Donna Robinson would not comment about the proposal, but others affiliated with the school were quite vocal.

Last week, John M. Stumbo employee Nechole Hall, a parent of a student at the school, sought community support for redistricting on social media.

"Please help support redistricting in our area!" she wrote. "Parents and community members we need your help."

She suggested that redistricting will ensure students receive "equitable education."

"We know there isn't any more money to help, but if the kids were equally distributed to all the schools then all schools could offer the same resources," she wrote.

John M. Stumbo is one

of the district's highest-performing schools, ranking first among Kentucky middle schools and among the top 20 elementary schools on the assessment and earning multiple "Distinguished" ratings in the old accountability system.

School volunteer Dwayne Hamilton, an alumni whose grandchildren are enrolled there, talked about those accolades when he voiced support for redistricting.

"Stumbo has been the number one school here for the last few years in the state," he said. "But with this loss of enrollment, I understand that kids will lose out on some teachers, and when they do that, they will lose out on some classes, like art and PE ... It doesn't seem like a good way to reward the number one school."

He said other county schools are overpopulated and some students could easily attend John M. Stumbo instead. Students would receive better educational opportunities if classrooms were "equalized," he said.

"I do know this for a fact," he said. "Kids who live within five or six miles of the school are being bused to another school. I don't know if that was the intent or what, but it doesn't seem to make much sense."

He was talking about former Osborne Elementary students who live in Teaberry, located near Hi Hat, who are now attending South Floyd Elementary. That school became a kindergarten through eighth grade school in last year's consolidations, following the closure of Osborne.

South Floyd/Middle High School had an enrollment of 491 before it converted to an elementary school. In its first year as an elementary school, it's enrollment is 670.

Grethel resident Brittany Johnson, the parent of four John M. Stumbo students, said the group is backing a proposal that would bring students living near that school to its campus, rather than busing them to South Floyd or Betsy Layne.

She said they "see the solution" and they want to "make the public aware that this would help all children."

"Right now, we're facing issues because kids who live in our district, who physically live in our district, are being bused to Betsy Layne and South Floyd," she said, talking about how these students have longer commutes and how transportation costs could be reduced by bringing those students to John M. Stumbo.

"These schools are overflowing with students, while we are at under 300 at total," she said. "It does become a funding issue for a school because each student equals funding. This is limiting us greatly and we have an ample amount of space for these students."

She praised the school and its staff, saying that parents whose children attend

other schools should not be concerned about transitioning to John M. Stumbo.

She said her four girls are "growing and thriving there" and she's certain other students will as well.

"Our teachers and our students, we love them ... We're very grateful to them for the job they do and we want them to have the same opportunities as they have in other schools," she said.

Board of Education member William Jr. Newsome, whose district includes John M. Stumbo and Betsy Layne, would not say whether supports redistricting, but he said the board will continue to do what's best for students. He did, however, voice an understanding of the concerns this community group has expressed.

"I know there's a couple of districts that was changed years ago to other educational districts, where most of their kids in those districts go to either Stumbo or Betsy Layne schools," he said. "There might be some concerns with parents who might not think their kids are represented as well since their kids go to a different school other than where their board member is."

He said some students live in districts represented by other board members, but they attend schools in his district, and vice-versa.

"That was changed several years ago. I don't know why it was change. It's something I don't want to comment on right now, but that's one of the things parents are concerned about," Newsome said.

Betsy Layne Elementary Principal John Kidd is among one of the Floyd County residents who live in another board member's district, but is served by schools in another member's district.

"It's very odd," he said. "Where I live, for example, in Little Mud...the Honaker, Little Mud, Banner area, it all went to Dr. Varia's district."

When the redistricting happened years ago, he said residents were told that it had to do with the population, to ensure that each board member had approximately the same amount of voters to represent in their districts. He said the change confused residents of that area because they lived and voted in districts represented by one school board member, but their children attended schools in districts represented by someone else.

He said redistricting could be fairer than the current plan.

"I think it would be a fair thing, unless there's some type of regulation that I'm not aware of that caused that to happen," he said.

The Kentucky Department of Education reports online that the Floyd County School District has lost 308 students since 2013. That school year, enrollment was 5,963 students, the KDE reports, and enrollment was 5,655 last year.

## MOURNS Continued From Page 1A

The Martin Fire Department posted a picture of Caudill's former shield, Unit #2630, bearing a mourning band.

The department's statement said he "dedicated many years" to Floyd County, and "the loss will be felt county wide."

Caudill had been ill prior to his death. Several local musicians, including Tommy Webb, Dewey Moore, Tony Stumbo and others, planned a benefit singing for him on March 10 at the Graceway Methodist Church in Langley.

The son of Gaylord and Dixie Tackett Caudill, "Ranger Rick" is survived by his wife, Tonia Holman Caudill, his "second



'Ranger Rick' Caudill

mom" Freda Tackett, his sons Jonathan Bacca of Martin and Sammy Bacca of Van Lear, his granddaughter Hailey Grace Bacca and other family members.

His funeral was held March 11 at Nelson Frazier Funeral Home. He was buried in the Lackey Cemetery under direction of the funeral home.

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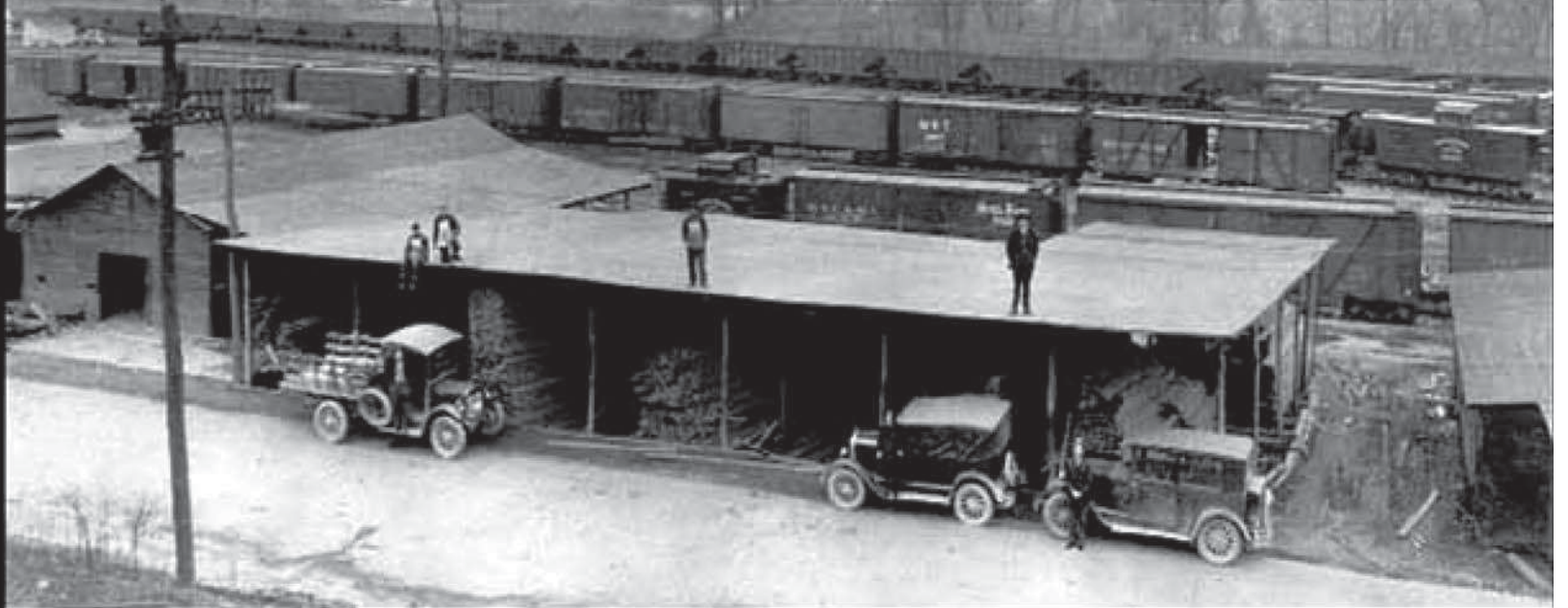
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2x8 Treated	7.77	9.88	11.88	13.77	14.88
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# Local students shine at Governor's Cup

**SPECIAL TO THE FLOYD CHRONICLE AND TIMES**

Superintendent Steve Trimble announced the results for Floyd County School District students who competed in the Region 34 Kentucky Association for Academic Competition Governor's Cup, which was held at Allen Elementary recently.

"The board team and I are happy to say that our elementary kids had a lot of success at the 2018 Regional Governor's Cup competition," Trimble said in a press release. "Congratulations May Valley Elementary on being Regional Champs, Quick Recall Champs and Future Problem Solving (FPS) Champs! We want to recognize Brock Horne from May Valley Elementary. His score on the Arts & Humanities test placed him 4th in Kentucky!"

Trimble commented on the success of other Floyd County teams saying, "We also want to congratulate Prestonsburg Elementary on being Regional Runner-Up and placing 3rd in FPS and South Floyd Elementary on being Regional Runner-Up in FPS and the Hume Sportsmanship Award recipient. In addition, most of the students placing in the top five in the content areas are Floyd County students." He said the district

is proud of its students and thanked parents and coaches for supporting academic teams this season.

The following standings for schools and individual students were released:

**Final Overall**

1. May Valley Elementary
2. Prestonsburg Elementary
4. South Floyd Elementary
6. Duff-Allen Central Elementary

**Future Problem Solving**

1. May Valley Elementary
2. South Floyd Elementary
4. Duff-Allen Central Elementary
5. John M. Stumbo Elementary

**Quick Recall**

1. May Valley Elementary
3. Prestonsburg Elementary
- T-5. South Floyd Elementary
- T-5. John M. Stumbo Elementary

**Math**

2. Olivia McKinney, May Valley
3. Alex Harris, Prestonsburg Elementary
5. Brody Brown-Vickery, Prestonsburg Elementary

**Science**

1. Ally Hamilton, Prestonsburg Elementary

2. Austin Elia, Prestonsburg Elementary
3. Braxton Howard, May Valley Elementary
4. Slone Akers, May Valley Elementary

**Social studies**

2. Emery Bartrum, Duff-Allen Central Elem.
3. Alex Harris, Prestonsburg Elementary

**Language arts**

- T-1. Ethan Walls, Prestonsburg Elementary
- T-1. Sara Springer, Prestonsburg Elementary
3. Jada Wright, May Valley Elementary
4. Carleigh Frazier, May Valley Elementary

**Arts and Humanities**

1. Brock Horne, May Valley Elementary
2. Sara Springer, Prestonsburg Elementary
4. Elijah Little, South Floyd Elementary
5. Lindsey Marshall, May Valley Elementary

**Composition**

1. Colton Lafferty, May Valley Elementary
2. Taylor Stumbo, South Floyd Elementary
3. Paisley Akers, Prestonsburg Elementary
5. Kailee McGuire, Duff Allen Central Elementary



Submitted photo

May Valley Elementary students earned the recognition as regional champions during a recent Governor's Cup competition. The academic team placed first in final overall scoring, Quick Recall and Future Problem solving.



Prestonsburg Elementary students earned the runner-up spot in a recent Governor's Cup competition. The academic team placed second in overall standings and third in Quick Recall.

Submitted photo



Submitted photo

South Floyd Elementary students earned second place in Future Problem Solving during a recent Governor's Cup competition. The academic team also placed fourth overall and fifth in Quick Recall.

**PLEADS**

Continued From Page 1A

pleaded guilty in connection with a plea agreement negotiated with the Floyd Commonwealth Attorney's office. In exchange for the guilty plea, he agreed to a recommended

sentenc of five years, and the plea agreement would allow that sentence to run concurrently to, or at the same time of, sentences Hunt is currently serving for other crimes.

He will be formally sentenced on April 26.

**LEGAL NOTICE**

**The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet**

In accordance with KRS 176.051, Kentucky's noxious weed law, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet will control noxious weeds on state-owned right of way at the request of the adjoining property owner. The noxious weeds named in this law are Johnson grass, giant foxtail, Canada thistle, nodding thistle, common teasel, multiflora rose, amur honeysuckle, poison hemlock, marestalk, Japanese knotweed, and kudzu.

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**LEGALS**

**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MINE Pursuant to Application No. 836-5612, Renewal #3**

In accordance with KRS 350.055, notice is hereby given that FM Energy, LLC, 3420 CR 56, Auburn, IN 46706 has applied for a renewal of a permit for an existing underground coal mining operation located approximately 0.15 mile southwest of Eastern in Floyd County. The proposed operation will disturb 5.87 surface acres and will underlie 200.84 underground acres, and the total area within the permit boundary will be 203.92 acres. The proposed operation is approximately 0.50 miles southwest from KY Route 550' junction with KY Route 80 and located 0.10 miles northwest of the

**LEGALS**

Right Fork of Beaver Creek. The proposed operation is located on the Martin U.S.G.S. 7 1/2 minute quadrangle maps. The surface area is owned by Fred and Monica Witmer. The operation will underlie land owned by Fred and Monica Witmer, Robert Martin & Joan S. Flannery, Willard Hicks Estate, Gregory Cooley Estate, Roger & Freda Tackett, Myrtle & Jobe Cooley, Ralph & Glenda Barnett, Floyd County Board of Education, Forrest & Cindi Hughes, Alda Hazel Gibson and Ronald & Dephina Reid. The application has been filed for public inspection at the Department for Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's Prestonsburg Regional Office, 3140 South Lake Drive, Suite 6, Prestonsburg, KY 41653. Written comments or objections must be filed with the Director, Department for Natural Resources, Division of Mine Permits, 300 Sower Boulevard, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601.

**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY DRAFT PROGRAM-MATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DEWEY LAKE MASTER PLAN PROJECT FLOYD AND PIKE COUNTY, KENTUCKY**  
The U.S. Army

**LEGALS**

Corps of Engineers, Huntington District, by this Notice of Availability (NOA), advises the public that the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (DPEA) for the Dewey Lake Master Plan Project is complete and available for public review. The project is located in Floyd County and Pike County, Kentucky. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is anticipated for the proposed project. A Draft FONSI is included with the DPEA for public review.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and 40 CFR 1501.4, the DPEA and draft FONSI must be available to the public in the affected area for thirty (30) days for review and comment. Final determination regarding the need for additional NEPA documentation will be made after the public review period, which begins on or about March 3, 2018. Copies of the documents may be viewed at the following location:

Floyd County Public Library  
161 N Arnold Ave  
Prestonsburg, Kentucky  
Phone: (606) 886-2981

The documents may also be viewed at the following website: <http://www.lrh.usace.army.mil/Missions/PublicReview.aspx>. Copies of the DPEA and draft FONSI may be obtained by contacting the

**LEGALS**

Huntington District Office of the Corps of Engineers at (304) 399-5924. Comments pertaining to the documents may be submitted by letter to:

Ms. Rebecca Rutherford  
Chief,  
Environmental Analysis Section,  
Planning Branch  
Huntington District Corps of Engineers  
502 Eighth Street  
Huntington, West Virginia 25701-2070

**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MINE Pursuant to Application Number 836-0417, Amendment No. 3**

In accordance with KRS 350.070, notice is hereby given that MetElectric Energy LLC, 2533 Pascoli Place, Lexington, Kentucky 40509 has applied for an amendment to an existing surface and auger coal mining and reclamation operation located at Grethel in Floyd County, Kentucky. The amendment will add 53.31 acres of surface disturbance, will delete 0.88 acres of surface disturbance and will underlie an additional 46.82 acres of auger area making a total area of 737.20 within the amended permit boundary. The proposed operation is approximately 1.66 miles south from KY 979's junction with KY 1426 and located on Big Mud Creek.

**LEGALS**

The proposed operation is located on the Harold and McDowell USGS 7 1/2 minute quadrangle maps. The operation will use the contour and auger methods of surface mining. The surface area to be disturbed is owned by Eula H. Scott, Peggy A. Steele, Combs Brothers Investments Company, David Betscher, Franklin and Belinda McKinney, Curtis Marvin Tackett and Marie Tackett, Paul Conn, Zachary D. Akers, Jake and Melvina N. Akers, J & N Land Company, Inc., Keith and Sharon Newman, Dwayne and Julie Kidd, Gerald, Cathy and Andy Newsome, Kevin Auton, Tom and Barbie Bow, Steve Conn, Alma Land Company, Timothy N. and Roma L. Newsome, Curtis Marvin and Marie Tackett, William Jr. and Josephine K. Newsome, Zachery D. and Bonita D. Akers, Paul Conn, and Carlos Akers. The operation will underlie land owned by Eula H. Scott, Peggy A. Steele, Combs Brothers Investments Company, David Betscher, Curtis Marvin and Marie Tackett, Kevin Auton, Tom and Barbie Bow, Steve Conn, Alma Land Company, Timothy N. and Roma L. Newsome, and Carlos Akers. The application has been filed for public inspection

**LEGALS**

at the Department for Natural Resources' Prestonsburg Regional Office, 3140 South Lake Drive, Suite 6, Prestonsburg, Kentucky 41653. Written comments, objections, or requests for a permit conference must be filed with the Director of the Division of Mine Permits, 300 Sower Boulevard, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601.

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## March of the Bears: UPIke heads back to Kansas City



Floyd Chronicle and Times photo by Cory Vance

UPIke's Chase Parsley shoots a three over a Campbellsville defender during the Mid-South Conference Tournament at the East Kentucky Expo Center.

By **RANDY WHITE**  
REGIONAL SPORTS EDITOR

UPIke is going back on its annual trip to Kansas City.

The Bears will play Langston Thursday in the NAIA National Basketball Championship tournament.

UPIke enters the tournament as one of the four No. 1 seeds. The Bears finished ranked No. 2 in the last NAIA Poll.

"I think the greatest part of finishing the season ranked No. 2 and earning a No. 1 seed is that it shows that we had a great regular season," UPIke coach Kelly Wells said. "We won 28 games and our regular season conference (title) by two games and that is unbelievable for these guys to have accomplished. It shows that they worked hard all season and we are happy, but it guarantees us nothing."

Langston enters the tournament with a 20-11 record on the season.

"We are preparing to play five games in five days," Wells said. "Langston is a tough challenge, though. We know they are going to be a tough matchup and have seven guys who can play with anybody in the country. We have to show up ready to play."

One game at a time. We know we can't overlook anybody or look ahead, so we are focused on Langston right now and are getting ready for next Thursday.

The Bears will take on Langston at 2:15 p.m. central time and 3:15 p.m. local time.

UPIke made it to the Elite 8 in last season's NAIA National Championship tournament. Starters Jordan Perry, Darrion Leslie, Rze Culbreath and Chase Parsley were all on last year's team.

"I hope that carries over to this year," Wells said. "We were one basket from advancing from the Elite 8 and into the Final Four last year. So through that, we hope these guys who played last year know the process and understands the stage and environment. That disappointment of last year has helped drive us this year. I think our loss in the conference tournament helped break up some complacency and gives us a sense of urgency."

Defense has been the calling card for the Bears this season.

"A lot of our offense is created by our defense," Wells said. "When you play strong defense, it leads to better shots and

See BEARS, Page 13A

## Season recap: Prestonsburg Blackcats Lady Blackcats

By **STEVE LEMASTER**  
SPORTS WRITER

**PRESTONSBURG** — After ending the month of December at 3-8, Prestonsburg showed much improvement throughout the months of January and February, finishing runner-up to Floyd Central in the 58th District and reaching the 15th Region Boys' Basketball Tournament. Prestonsburg used an impressive late rally to push Johnson Central in

the opening round of the 15th Region Tournament, but exited the 2017/2018 season with a 14-19 record.

Many Blackcat fans were pleased with Prestonsburg's performance in the second half of the season, as was first-year head coach Brandon Gearheart.

"In all my years around the game, I have never been prouder of any team I've been associated with," Gearheart

said. "I also don't think I've ever had as much fun once we bought into what we wanted to do on and off the court. These guys were fearless. They played for each other and they played for our school and community. It was a selfless bunch of kids who had everything and the kitchen sink thrown at them. New coaches, new style, new attitude. We had to make changes to our team and dealt

See BLACKCATS, Page 13A

By **STEVE LEMASTER**  
SPORTS WRITER

**PRESTONSBURG** — In his first season as head coach of the Prestonsburg girls' basketball team, Brandon Kidd guided the Lady Blackcats to 12 wins. Under the direction of Kidd, Prestonsburg won six of its last nine regular-season games and exited the 2017/2018 campaign with a 12-18 record.

The Lady Blackcats

are carrying momentum into the offseason despite an opening round loss to Floyd Central in the 58th District Girls' Basketball Tournament.

"As a first-year head coach, I set out to accomplish four goals," Kidd said. "One, grow as a coach. Two, create a positive and competitive culture. Three, make the program better than it was when I got here; and four, turn this entire program into one big family."

When I first took over the job here at Prestonsburg, I knew the challenges that my staff and I had ahead of us. I said from day one that Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither will this program. Trust the process. And from day one, each and every person around our program bought into this philosophy. From day one, our staff was out in the community and going

See LADY, Page 13A

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**LADY**

**Continued From Page 12A**

with injuries and suspension. It wasn't easy. Still, the heart of these kids was on display every time they took the court."

Several players helped to lead Prestonsburg. Senior Phil Cornett ranked as the Blackcats' leading scorer, averaging a team-high 12.4 points per game. Other key players for Prestonsburg included senior Drake Nunnery (8.8 ppg) and sophomores Adam Slone (8.8 ppg) and Graham Burchett (8.1 ppg).

According to Gearheart, Prestonsburg accomplished the three goals it had set at the start of the season.

"Our goals to start the season were one, double our win total; two, get in the district championship game and get to the region tournament and three, play fast and run while having more fun than anybody should playing the game and being around each other," Gearheart noted. "We checked all of those off, especially the fun part. Our seniors Drake Nunnery, Phil Cornett, Dalton Trusty, and Chandler Nelson were such good leaders. They are a special group of young men who I enjoyed being around everyday. Chandler suffered a season-ending injury and handled it with such grace. He helped us out so much on the bench as an assistant coach. Drake played out of position all season and never complained, he just

competed hard every time out. Phil thought I was crazy at first telling him that we shot first and asked questions later at Prestonsburg but when he realized we were serious his game took off. He grew so much on and off the court this season. Dalton battled all year inside, he had the most positive attitude and was our best free throw shooters on the team. I could go on and on about them but I want everybody to know how proud I was to coach them and that our school appreciates them. I love them and we are in their corner for life."

Gearheart is also quick to compliment his coaching staff, which is made up of assistant coaches John Meade and Justin Allen.

"John Meade and Justin Allen were tremendous in their roles as assistant coaches," Gearheart confided. "We have a staff that knows the game, can teach the game and that enjoys being around young men and molding them and helping them grow. Those guys deserve a ton of credit for our season. Our managers Nate Collins and Bradley Goble were really important to our team. Our bookkeeper, clock people, public address announcer, we appreciate them all so much. Our administration, staff and student body supported us all year. We are grateful."

Gearheart and the Blackcats will return to work in the offseason. The Prestonsburg coach expects his team to show even more improvement

in the 2018-19 season.

"Next season, we will have a good nucleus of young, driven players," Gearheart commented. "I'm not kidding when I tell you they are ready to get working now for next season. They want to take the momentum we've got and keep it rolling. I had multiple guys coming up to me after the game in the locker room at the Expo saying 'Coach, whatever it takes, we are ready to do it.' That bodes well for our future. We will play a ton of games this summer, lift those weights, do the workouts, compete in the team camps, you name it. I'm excited to also host a summer basketball camp for our community. Maybe even collaborate with our girls' coach Brandon Kidd. Shoutout to the season the Lady Blackcats had."

Gearheart guided the Prestonsburg Lady Blackcats before becoming a boys' high school basketball head coach.

"I'm very proud to be a Blackcat and be a part of this community," Gearheart said. "I love our city and there is not a better place to teach and coach the game I love. It gets said a lot by people and students, our school and community members, but 'loyal and true' sums it up. I'm going to enjoy the state tournament; hopefully some of our guys can go down and see some of it and then we are going to start working hard to make next season a success. We feel like we are just getting started."

**BLACKCATS**

**Continued From Page 1B**

to games each and every night. From middle school basketball to volleyball to soccer, we were out trying to get girls interested in our program. We were blessed to pick up several key players from these sports that really helped us this season. It was not easy on us as a staff because we were gone so much from our families but it was what we knew we needed to do to build this program the right way. On October 15, we started with six girls at practice and only four of those would finish the season with us. We ended up having a total of 13 players on our roster and six of those girls were middle schoolers. Our roster included seniors Maddy Rainey and Nicole Burchett; junior Reesce Endicott; sophomores Alison Campbell, Grace Trusty and Haley Ratliff; freshman Alivia Slone; eighth-graders Faith Lazar and Gracie Simpson; and seventh-graders Celiina Mullins, Maggie Nelson, Alexis Beatty and Lauren Howard."

Junior Reesce Endicott (17.9 points per game) and freshman Alivia Slone (16.8 ppg) were a tough tandem for the Lady Blackcats. Prestonsburg's attack also featured sophomore Alison Campbell (7.8 ppg), seniors Nicole Burchett (6.6 ppg, 8.6 rebounds per game) and Maddy Rainey (2.7 ppg, 8.8 rpg) and seventh-grader Celi-

na Mullins (4.6 ppg).

"We finished our season with a 12-18 record," Kidd commented. "That might not seem like a good season to most, but coming off the adversity that this program had in the offseason of losing six to seven players to other schools I feel that we accomplished a lot this season. I have said this to anyone that will listen; the future is bright for our Prestonsburg Lady Blackcats and I am so blessed to be their coach. We will be losing two seniors, Maddy Rainey and Nicole Burchett. Maddy was the player from day one that I knew would help us turn this program back around. When everyone left she was the one that stayed and I was so honored and blessed to be able to help this young lady grow as a player on and off the court. Nicole was a player that everyone respected and she gave it 100 percent no matter what the circumstance was. From playing hurt to playing sick she never complained and always gave it her best. These two amazing girls have changed my life forever. These girls will be truly missed here, but they know they will always have a home here and will always be a part of our Lady Blackcat family. This offseason is going to be huge for us in taking not just that next step, but a big leap in our process. We return 11 players from this year's roster and I am excited for next season. After our

final game I told the girls we were going to take a month or so off, but honestly I spent one week off and I have been back at it."

Kidd is working on his schedule for not only the summer, but the 2018/2019 season.

"We have been scheduling for this summer and next season," Kidd confided. "We are hoping to be able to raise the money to take the girls to an overnight summer camp this year. We plan to start back working in the weight room in April and back in the gym getting ready for summer ball in May. Never in a million years would I have seen myself coaching girls' basketball but these girls have made me not only a better coach, but a better person. In all of my years in coaching this has been my favorite year. Being able to come into this with the best coaching staff, which is made up of Brandon Thacker, Ammie Thacker, Rick Ward and Cathryn Calhoun, has made this year one that I will never forget. I can tell you that I played just a small part in the transformation of this basketball program. My assistants, the players, and the parents are the ones that I hope will get all the credit. It makes my job easier when I am surrounded by great people. With that being said, I love this program, the players, and my staff, and I am so excited to see what the future holds for us going forward."

**BEARS**

**Continued From Page 12A**

easier shots. We haven't had anybody who didn't want to participate on the defensive side of the ball this season, were in years past, some guys just wanted to play offense and not focus as

much on defense."

Versatility was something Wells thought his team would possess this season and it has shown true throughout the year.

"Yeah, we really tried to focus on bringing in guys with a versatility and developing team versatility," Wells said.

"Last season, we weren't the greatest shooting team in the world and we struggled to score the ball. This season, we have guys who can defend and score and do so many different things. I think that reflects on the court. If you are scouting us, who do you focus on?

You can focus in on stopping one or two guys who are good scorers and try and game plan to take those guys away. We have six different guys who averaged double figures. Who do you focus on? We don't have one guy that we rely on. We have a lot of depth

off of our bench."

The Mid-South Conference is sending six teams to the the NAIA National Championship tournament.

"I've said from the beginning that anybody who wins our conference has a legit chance to win the national champion-

ship," Wells said. "There is a very good possibility of that any year. With six teams in the tournament and the other two very good teams, you're basically playing a Top 25 team every night. That reflects by our conference sending six teams to the tournament."



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