



THE KENTUCKY RETAILER

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PIERATT'S: BUILDING ON A 77-YEAR-OLD LEGACY



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THE KENTUCKY RETAILER

December 2023, Volume 17, Issue 2

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The Kentucky Retail Federation is the "Voice of Retailing" throughout the Commonwealth, representing retailers of all types and sizes since 1939. From Main Street to the mall, retailers enhance Kentucky's communities and provide a better quality of life for Kentuckians everywhere. Kentucky's retail industry employs over 400 thousand Kentuckians and pays more than \$11.7 billion in wages annually. Retailers collect over \$2.8 billion in state sales tax and pay millions in other taxes to state and local governments.

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On the cover:
Michael Wells, left, and Graham Jones, Pieratt's co-owners, continue to make the appliance and electronics store a local presence. (KRF Photo by Steve McClain)

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Federation working to find solutions



Tod Griffin
KRF PRESIDENT

lingering issue before, during and after the pandemic. Stores are paying more, offering shift incentives and same day pay in some cases, but it is a struggle to fill vacancies.

There has been a lot of data tossed out as to why there aren't enough workers, but the short and long answer is a combination of things. When examining what age group of workers didn't return to the workforce after the pandemic, it is not the younger population, but the older population that didn't come back. That age group seems to have decided that returning to work just wasn't worth it. So, they downsized their homes, invested and decided it was time to enjoy their golden years. Sadly, there were older working adults who succumbed to COVID, and others of all ages who couldn't go back to work after contracting the virus because of long-term health complications.

As for younger populations, they have a lot more options when it comes to employment. Some have decided to do a variety of work-from-home jobs or start their own businesses. Census data is showing there are fewer younger people entering the workforce... not enough to replace those who left. Fewer people to fill the increasing number of openings means the competition is intense. That also means there are more options for people looking for work to choose from and they can pick the best offer for them.

Child care (or elderly care) is also a factor in reducing the workforce. The pandemic shut-downs were the catalyst for caregivers to look at the economics of working a job just to afford childcare, and many realized it didn't pay. Work-from-home options have become the solution for some.

And yes, there are unemployment and other public assistance programs that are keeping able-bodied workers on the sidelines. Legislation that was passed in the last session cut the number of weeks people can draw unemployment and increased job search requirements,

A shortage of workers and organized retail crime have snagged the national spotlight, but Kentucky is not immune to these challenges. It is issues like these that continue to be at the forefront of the Federation's efforts to find solutions that will help members.

Finding enough workers has been a

but it is likely too early to know just how effective that has been. Other changes to these programs are being discussed like reducing or eliminating the "benefits cliff" that disincentivizes workers from getting a better paying job or seeking a promotion.

Where does that leave retailers? Still looking for workers. The one thing for sure is that the days of people knocking your doors down to fill out applications is over. There are too many other options out there, and how they look for jobs has changed. In talking to members about this issue, many owners are taking a hard look at their compensation packages to make sure they are competitive, and looking at enhancing their employee benefits too.

Automation is being considered in some operations, but are you sacrificing customer service in the process? Many of these decisions add costs to the bottom line to the current model of operating a retail location. How do you remain profitable in the process?

We've got to do a better job as an industry in educating the next generation that there are rewarding jobs and careers in retail. The Federation's Kentucky Retail Institute is working on matching future employees with retailers. Recently, KRI held the Retail Next Gen conference in November. This conference brought together 100 high school students with an interest in retail to learn about possible careers and also met with retailers directly onsite about employment opportunities. The Next Gen Conference was so successful, more will likely be scheduled in 2024.

The Federation continues to work with legislators in educating them on the opportunities available in our industry as well.

Organized retail crime has become a national news sensation, most recently smash-and-grabs in Philadelphia. But members are seeing an increase in retail crime across Kentucky as well, and it's not just in Lexington and Louisville. As a result, stores are taking such actions as locking up items behind glass, putting padlocks on ice cream coolers and other barriers to deter crime.

The Federation is working on educating legislators on how organized retail crime impacts stores, employees, and consumers. Efforts are under way to advocate for creating an organized retail crime task force within the Attorney General's office to bring resources for law enforcement to get prosecutions to these criminal organizations and reduce retail thefts.

It is issues like these that demonstrate how valuable the Federation is. It is hard for individual stores to get their voices heard. But together with the Federation's government affairs team coordinating an effort to educate and work to find solutions to challenges, members are heard. ■

Time flies

Alicia Dawson
McDowell Professional Pharmacy
KRF Board Chair

When I was first approached two years ago about serving as the chair of the Kentucky Retail Federation Board of Directors, I honestly was hesitant about saying yes. After all, I was a pharmacist and not sure that I had the background to represent the retailers who trust the Federation to represent them.

But after talking with past chairs, who encouraged me to take the leap, I decided to jump in and agree to be the board chair. And these two years have gone by fast. It was hard to believe that at the October board meeting, it was my last meeting as chair. And looking back, there has been so much that happened these two years.

We were still navigating our way through the COVID pandemic. Retailers were striving to follow the numerous orders and guidelines that were in place so they could be open. Frustrating as it was at times to follow the ever-changing rules, I was proud that members worked hard to provide a safe environment for employees to work in and shoppers to get their essentials.

No sooner than it seemed we had come through the pandemic, more disasters struck Kentucky. We watched and prayed for our fellow Kentuckians as tornadoes ravaged the western part of the state, only to be followed a few months later by horrific flooding in the eastern part of the state. So many retailers saw their businesses blown or float away as they and their employees coped with the loss of property, and sadly in some cases, the loss of people they knew.

Two dominant issues have consistently come up during



Alicia Dawson is recognized by KRF President Tod Griffin for her service as the board chair. (KRF Photo by Steve McClain)

meetings the last year. One of those is retail theft. We have all seen the videos of smash-and-grabs in major cities across the country, but organized retail crime has spread beyond the urban centers of Kentucky and into the rural areas that many believed were immune to it. It is a multi-faceted issue that is going to need multiple avenues to address.

The other issue that members frequently mention is finding and retaining workers. We are finding ourselves competing with every other sector to fill vacancies, and it is becoming a challenge. Like organized retail crime, it is going to take some thinking out of the box to address. For example, the NextGen conference that was held this fall in

Elizabethtown attracted a hundred high school students who are interested in retail careers. This is how we will help attract new people into the workforce.

Retail has changed so much in just the last couple years. That is why chances to get together to brainstorm and share ideas is important. One such chance is Retail Recharge. The Federation has hosted this event twice and a wealth of information is shared. Speakers give insight into how consumers have changed across the generations and how retailers can use that knowledge to reach new shoppers.

I cannot end my last column without talking about the Federation staff. They provide so much assistance and expertise on issues in advocating for members. They are working on these issues in Frankfort and helping find possible solutions.

I have learned so much about other types of retail. No matter what type of retail store you are in, we face many of the same issues. And working together, we can come up with solutions that benefit everyone. ■

Stay connected to the Kentucky Retail Federation

Kentucky Retail Federation members will vouch for the valuable information that comes from staff to keep their businesses up-to-date with changes from Frankfort and other benefits that help them run successful businesses. If you are not getting emails from the Federation, please contact Steve McClain at smcclain@kyretail.com to make sure your email is on file.

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Retailers recharged after annual event

By Steve McClain
KRF

Retailers gathered in Lexington for the second straight year for the Retail Recharge Conference to hear what trends and data can help make their retail business successful.

Nicole Leinbach, founder of Retail Minded, was the keynote presenter and guided a discussion on how generations approach shopping differently, along with panels on labor issues, organized retail crime and the retail economy.

KRF's Board Chair, Alicia Dawson, who owns a pharmacy with her husband in eastern Kentucky, had an opportunity to speak with WKYT about the conference and the importance of retailers coming together to connect and engage with each other.

"As retailers, sometimes we think that the problems we're going through, we're on an island all by ourselves," she said. "It's a great opportunity to meet other people who've probably gone through the same things and maybe find some solutions to some problems that we didn't know were possible."

Economic data

Alison Davis, executive director of the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK), said there is now enough data to compare post-COVID to pre-COVID and see what changes have taken place in the state's economic structure.

During the pandemic, some businesses closed, especially hospitality, retail and restaurants. However, new establishments have opened recently – almost as many that closed.

The pandemic brought on new issues with the supply chain, and retailers are still figuring out how to navigate the changes three years later. The industry is looking to embrace new technologies to improve forecasting and ensure they're getting the right products at the right time to meet customer demand.

Consumer preferences and needs changed dramatically during the pandemic, and some retailers are still digging out of

overstocked inventory that shoppers were buying up in 2020 but today no longer need or want.

Meanwhile, the cost of living continues to rise as the country faces record-high inflation and housing shortages. In many cases, this means less money in consumers' pockets for spending, and retailers must adjust their forecasts accordingly.

She said as e-commerce continues to be a larger percentage of commerce, retailers need to think about how they can tap into that desire and make it easier to shop local but with convenience.

Workforce

One of Davis' takeaway points was that the retail sector continues to struggle with a 60% turnover rate. That led into a discussion about how to find the next generation of retail workers.

As the nation's largest private-sector employer supporting one in four jobs nationwide, the retail industry needs to find and retain reliable, qualified workers.

During a session with Cassie Grigsby, President of the Kentucky Retail Institute; Tina Brogli, Work Based Learning Coordinator for the Kentucky Office of Career and Technical Education; and Rick Mangini, Executive Vice President of the MBA Research and Curriculum Center, panelists discussed how retailers can take a more proactive approach to creating talent pipelines and pathways for career growth.

One solution is the Kentucky Retail Institute's Retail Leaders Apprenticeship Program, the country's only retail apprenticeship that gives students and

"Retail recharge" continues on p. 8



Alison Davis, executive director of the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky, talks about the state of Kentucky's economy to kick off this year's Retail Recharge. (KRF Photo by Symon Kaine/E&W Creative)

KRF HOLDS ANNUAL MEETING, DISCUSSION ON ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME



The Kentucky Retail Federation held its annual meeting in October in Lexington. Russell Coleman, now the Attorney General-elect, spoke about organized retail crime and its effect on stores, employees and customers, and the goals of his administration. He gave a first-hand account of what he had to go through to make a purchase. Read more of his thoughts starting on Page 12.

(Below) John Estus with Amazon; KRF Senior VP of Government Affairs, Senior VP of Government Affairs Shannon Stiglitz; Gene Haynes with Central Bank; and Patrick Oakley with Home Depot discuss recent issues they are facing before the annual meeting.

Alicia Dawson and Cassie Grigsby (bottom left) catch up before the meeting.



The annual meeting would not be possible without the support of sponsors. Top, Kevin Willis with Willis Music and Ben Mudd with the Kentucky Pharmacists Association were recognized as Silver sponsors along with Target. Bottom right, Ed McCoy with Kerr Workplace Solutions was a bronze sponsor. Gold Sponsors were NACDS and Association Advantage Insurance Group. (KRF Photos by Steve McClain)



Age isn't just a number: Shopping differences by generation

Alpha generation – born before 2010, have truly grown up in a digital world. Half of this generation make most of their purchases influenced by social media. They may not have purchasing power, but they tell parents, grandparents what they want.

Gen Z – 63 percent consider product reviews and info before making purchases

Millennials – want to be in control of online and having that information at their fingertips

Gen X – 40ish generation earning most but considered the least in marketing

Baby boomers – Outspend other generations online

Silent generation – Those born before 1945

Source: Nichole Leinbach, Retail Minded

RETAIL RECHARGE

Continued from p. 6

adults the opportunity to receive on-the-job training who want to expand their skillsets and advance their careers in the retail industry. Kentucky retailers have an opportunity to be a part of an innovative program that will set up the industry for long-term success.

Organized Retail Crime

A panel of asset protection managers and fraud investigators talked about the effect organized retail crime is having on the industry.

One thing they made clear was what they are seeing now is not just shoplifting, but criminal organizations in myriad ways, seeking profit through stealing or fraud of retail stores. It is professional shoplifting, or individuals going out and shoplifting goods to make a profit. They take multiple items to their fence and sell stolen product. Most of the time, those products end up on online marketplaces such as Ebay and Facebook.

Organized retail crime is not a victimless crime. Store associates are in the way of smash-and-grabs, are verbally and physically assaulted, and incidents are more violent. And there is no guarantee on the quality of goods sold online.

Retail beyond the four walls

Leinbach said collectively there are still more sales in brick-and-mortar establishments than online. However, what she called the path to purchase is not straight and retailers have to adapt beyond the physical four walls.

A consumer could be intending to buy one thing and then make a different decision and buy something else. Why? A lot of that is because the store is no longer just the four walls.

Consumers likely start their journey to making a purchase by using their phone, tablet or computer to start researching what they are looking for. Retailers have to be where the customers are and that is ultimately the deciding factor to a successful sale.

Leinbach highlighted five key areas for retailers to focus on, which included understanding generational shopping habits, recognizing the path to purchase in which consumers behave, identifying and leveraging the various ways consumers are connected to brands and retailers, introducing “shoppertainment” to your stores—which means making shopping fun—and finally, leaning into technology



KRF Board Chair Alicia Dawson, left, Nichole Leinbach of Retail Minded, far right, discuss how different generations shop. (KRF Photos by Symon Kaine/E&W Creative)

to help expand beyond your store walls.

Generational differences

Hearing from a member of Gen Z, Millennials and Gen X helped retailers in attendance understand how they shop and the importance of using different technologies to reach different ages.

The panelists showed generational differences in preferences to shopping in-store to online, how research plays into their choices and even how they pay.

What would they wish retailers would do better?

They wished they did more social media, visuals, and

marketing, especially small businesses; and improved customer service, not just when returning something but acknowledging you as a customer when you go in the store.

The 2023 Retail Recharge Conference was made possible by the following generous sponsors: Anthem, Traditional Bank, AT&T, First Benefits Insurance Mutual, Retail Industry Leaders Association, Association Advantage Insurance Group, Kentucky Retail Institute, Harold Clinic Pharmacy, McDowell Professional Pharmacy, National Retail Federation, Administrative Services Group, Retailers Processing Network and Frost Brown Todd Attorneys LLP. ■

Scenes from Retail Recharge 2023



Retail Recharge is an opportunity for retailers across the state to come together and share ideas and best practices in this ever changing field. This year's event included discussion on Organized Retail Crime and the many paths to purchase a consumer may take.

(Below) Alicia and Steve Dawson with McDowell Pharmacy listen to a presentation.

(Bottom left) Jeff Pendleton with Hallway Feeds and Wave McFarland with The Woolery chat during a break.

(Bottom right) John Mosley with Kroger and KRF President Tod Griffin talk during the presentation on Organized Retail Crime.

(KRF Photos by Symon Kaine/E&W Creative)





Pieratt's: BUILDING on 77-year-old legacy

By Steve McClain
KRF

In 1946, Frank Pieratt would drive his station wagon house-to-house in Lexington to demonstrate and hopefully sell a few new-fangled entertainment devices – radios, then televisions.

Seventy-seven years later, Pieratt's has grown to three stores in Lexington and one in Richmond with a Lexington warehouse under recent new co-owners Michael Wells and Graham Jones.

"The station wagon was the first Pieratt's store. Frank Pieratt repaired radios in the military and came home from World War II and decided to do that as a profession. Radio was becoming a thing then and he did that all around Lexington," Wells said.

"He would go around house-to-house and demonstrate radio and television. That's how people bought radios and televisions before Pieratt's was around," Jones added.

Since then, Pieratt's opened a location downtown, then branched out to Winchester Road, Nicholasville Road, Crossroads Plaza, and Mount Tabor in Lexington, and expanded beyond Fayette County to open a store in Richmond. All totaled, there is 88,000 square feet of showroom space throughout the company, along with a 60,000 square foot warehouse on Palumbo Drive in Lexington. And they have gone beyond radios and televisions to now sell appliances, furniture and mattresses too.

Relationships key to success

As other stores have come and gone, how has Pieratt's outlasted and grown?

Relationships with customers and with builders.

"About a third of our business now is remodels and new home construction," said Jones, who focuses

on this area of the business. "We work closely with homebuilders and designers in central Kentucky. "

Wells said the relationship with builders really took off in the early 2000s when Jim Boyd joined the retailer and developed and nurtured the relationship with builders. Wells took over in 2011 and doubled the business. Graham eventually came on board and doubled it again.

Then there is the relationship with the customer.

"We are a locally owned company and we take care of our customers. They are not a number," Jones said. "We have more of a relationship with the community and that started with that door-to-door relationship."

"We are the only dealer that has their own service department that covers a great deal of geography," Wells said.

Wells and Jones both say they can't tell how many people tell them they knew Frank or Bruce Pieratt (Frank's son), or went to school with Bruce, or know Bruce's sister, Brenda, or David Cox, Pieratt's former vice president. They both say that is part of the relationship with the community that makes Pieratt's special to the area.

Taking the leap into ownership

Wells and Jones had been working in sales, so how did they end up co-owners?

"Bruce and his sister Brenda owned the company, and she was married to David (Cox). They really didn't have a succession plan and we approached them," Wells said. "It was absolutely important to us and Bruce and Brenda as well to keep the company local."

"We wanted to keep it a local company and not be sold to some huge conglomerate and tear apart what

Pieratt's has become. So, we took the leap together. We believed in ourselves and the people who worked in the business."

Both of them had worked in other fields – Wells in the mortgage industry and Jones in sales with AT&T, Verizon and Spectrum. Naturally, Jones started with Pieratt's in sales then quickly moved into the contract division.

"I was in the mortgage business for 15 years, but it was getting tighter," Wells said. "My brother-in-law was service manager here. I was good in sales and came here and worked on the sales floor for five months. The builder sales position came open and I applied and (went there).

"After about three years, I knew I was going to try and figure out how to buy this place. It was just trying to figure out the opportunity. It's a solid company top to bottom. Those kinds of opportunities don't come open often."

Continuing relationships

Being ingrained in the community means customers feel like they are important, and that is something Wells and Jones takes seriously.

For example, Pieratt's donates mattresses to an organization called the Nest that helps families and children in abusive situations.

Then there was the COVID pandemic.

"We gave loaner appliances to clients in need. Their appliances were out and couldn't get one for months, so we offered loaner refrigerators and dishwashers," Jones said. "There were

hundreds of thousands of dollars we put out in our community to help. That's a loss to the company because you can't get a used refrigerator back and put it out on the floor."

The pandemic tested the appliance industry with supply chain issues that created a backlog of orders and repairs. Wells said he remembered going to the warehouse and not being able to walk through it because of so many products waiting on parts. They ended up writing off close to \$250,000 in inventory because they had aged out and couldn't be put on the floor to sale.

"It was very trying getting products, and once we got the product often it was defective or damaged," Jones said. "So how do we make it right with the customer. It was challenging with service folks, delivery folks, sales folks. We still see a bit of a hangover at times with product."

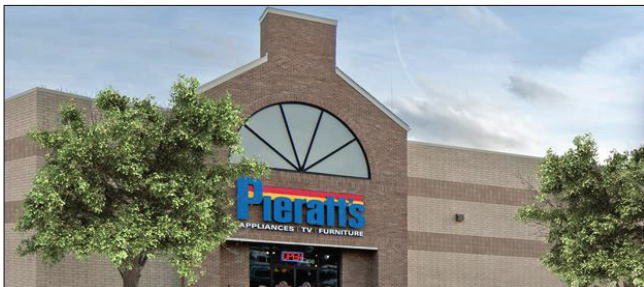
Wells said it was during the pandemic he saw the value of belonging to the Kentucky Retail Federation. Frank Pieratt was an original board member of the Federation.

"I remember it vividly. The order had come in to shut down, and Michael Cox was on the KRF board. He was in communication with Tod (Griffin, KRF President) and the Federation was instrumental in helping identify us as a necessary business and we could stay open. KRF was so helpful during that time."

Setting up for many more years of relationships

Since they have become owners, Wells, who currently sits on the KRF board, and Jones are looking to expand, started an online sales division and improved the website so people can chat with Pieratt's sales people. Sales people are trained on the various brands they sell so they can be knowledgeable when talking with customers.

"I think the pendulum has started to swing back. Everyone went online and big box stores. Now we are seeing the pendulum swing back to local stores because people want that relationship and pick up the phone and talk to someone and not get the runaround." ■



Organized retail crime takes the **SPOTLIGHT**

By Steve McClain
KRF

The viral videos have become seared in the minds of viewers across the country. Organized groups of people, teens and older, some masked, breaking windows of stores in urban and suburban areas, stealing



merchandise or even just running out of the door in the middle of the day with loaded down carts.

Organized retail crime (ORC) is an issue that is no longer just a big urban area problem. It has now become an issue for Kentucky retailers across the state.

Kentucky Retail Federation member Home Depot hosted Louisville legislators at its Preston Highway location to show what has been done to deter theft. There is a camera tower in the parking lot that can get pictures of license plates of people driving away with stolen goods. Gates with alarms go off at the front entrances if unpaid products are taken out the door, and carts with wheels that lock up if they are pushed out the door without paying. Throughout the store, items are locked behind cages.

Despite those efforts, employees at the store say they lose \$10,000 to \$12,000 per day in shrinkage. It is a \$50 million store that lost \$2.6 million last year and shrinkage is 5.5% at that location.

Store personnel and the KRF government affairs team wanted legislators to hear and see firsthand how ORC affects stores and their personnel. Staff at the Home Depot store said it is hard to watch merchandise just go out the door and it affects the morale of employees and managers.

KRF explained to the legislators – Sen. David Yates (D), Rep. Kevin Bratcher (R), Rep. Susan Witten (R) and Rep. Al Gentry (D) – that most of the stolen merchandise is taken by people who are offered money to take it and then deliver it to someone who then takes the products and sells them online through Ebay, Facebook Marketplace and other platforms.

KRF and Home Depot asset protection staff said they would like to see an ORC task force formed within the Attorney General's office to help coordinate agencies to focus on ORC,

along with other steps to make it easier to track online sellers to ensure they are legitimate. They explained to the lawmakers the people running the online marketplaces are the focus because even if they get the people who are actually stealing the items at the stores, they will just be replaced by somebody else or back on the streets quickly.

In fact, Home Depot staff say they frequently

(Top) Sen. David Yates (D-Louisville) demonstrates how a shopping cart locks up if a customer tries to steal merchandise. (Left) Home Depot's Matt Webster, Asset Protection Manager, details some of the loss figures the store incurs at the Preston Highway location and elsewhere to Reps. Susan Witten and Al Gentry as George Cox with Home Depot (middle) listens. (KRF Photos by Steve McClain)



see the same people come in multiple times a week and take items. And while they have a hands-off policy to not stop people who are running out, they do have the ability to track them by license plate pictures and cameras.

A couple days before the Home Depot tour, Russell Coleman, who was elected the next state Attorney General, spoke at the KRF Annual Meeting about ORC and his experience going shopping.

“I went to one of your members in the east end of Jefferson County, and I had a much different experience than what I expected,” he said. “I wanted to pull out an item, but I couldn’t do that because every item was locked up. I had to find a staff member to unlock it and felt imposing and asking questions.”

What came next was eye opening.

“We started having a conversation explaining why it was locked up. It’s one thing to talk about shrinkage; it’s another to hear it from an employee and what it looks like to work in a retail establishment. Lawlessness is what I heard.”

Then as he was going to check out, the employee escorted him to make sure he didn’t

steal it. That’s when he talked to a younger female employee.

“She had a deer-in-the-headlights look, and I was asking her about shrink and she said you aren’t thinking of stealing it are you,” Coleman said. “I asked her how often she sees people go out with items, and she said 3-4 times a day. They don’t sprint out. They acknowledge me; sometimes they laugh at me.

“The way she described the lack of deterrence is something that blew my mind. I cannot accept that. I had conversations with law enforcement and prosecutors since. We have to find a way to push back. I don’t have an answer. But we have to start having conversations.”

At both events, the fact Kentucky is criss-crossed by major interstates (64, 75, 71) is a big factor in the growing amount of crime the state is seeing.

After the tour, the desire to just start a conversation was emphasized over and over.

“These folks are in the customer service business. When they have to take these measures, it’s not taken lightly,” said Shannon Stiglitz, KRF’s Senior Vice President of Government Affairs. ■

During the Kentucky Retail Federation Annual Meeting, then-Attorney General candidate Russell Coleman spoke about his experiences during a recent shopping trip and how his administration would address ORC. (KRF Photos by Steve McClain)



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Prestonsburg embraces unique ideas for local businesses

Story and photos by Steve McClain

KRF

You could say Prestonsburg has risen from the coal ashes.

As the coal industry declined in eastern Kentucky, especially around 2014-15, there were a lot of empty buildings in Prestonsburg. But then, just like the unique people of eastern Kentucky, local people came up with their own special ideas of how to make Prestonsburg a destination.

“We started encouraging local people to get involved. They are unique and have come with ideas and it has been successful,” said Mayor Les Stapleton. “I took a retail class early on in my administration, and learned if a dollar is spent in town, it will turn over at least seven times before it leaves.

“The fact we were spending our own dollars rolling over was not a positive. There was no growth. So, we started inviting people to come see our town, see our outstanding hospitality and the uniqueness of our businesses, and that is what is bringing people to town so we have different dollars in town.”

Stapleton embraces the fact there isn’t a franchise business downtown.

“Some people say it’s a problem, I brag about it. They are all unique,” he said.



FAITH, TRUST, AND LITTLE DUST

Samantha Stovall and her husband were working as registered nurses when he needed to raise funds for a medical mission trip to Kenya.

On a whim, Samantha said she could do chocolate covered strawberries and bundt cakes for a bake sale to raise funds.

“Did I have any experience making those? No,” she said. “The fundraiser went really well, and he went on his trip. But I found I really enjoyed baking. And I really enjoyed the customer interaction.”

So, she started baking, doing gourmet cakes with different flavors and selling them on Facebook.

“And then it took off from there. We just kept growing and growing. And eventually in December of 2020, we decided to open our first brick-and-mortar store,” she said.

FTD (Faith, Trust, and a Little Dust) Bakery sells everything from custom cakes, gourmet dessert cakes, to single brownies, cookie sandwiches, cinnamon rolls, and danishes.

Growing up in Prestonsburg, Stovall believes she has a responsibility to show local students what is possible.

“I think it’s important to show our young people that you don’t have to move away to a big city to make a difference or to pursue your passions. I think that I could probably move to a bigger city and double or triple my revenue. However, I’m not investing in what invested in me,” she said. “Once a year, we go down to the high school and we participate in Career Day. We also do a cookie club at one of the elementary schools just to show people a different avenue of careers and a different way to pursue your passions that necessarily doesn’t look like a four-year degree or moving away.” ■



Samantha Stovall has taught herself how to bake and decorate cakes and now has a brick-and-mortar shop in Prestonsburg.

DAFFODILS BOUTIQUE



Kindra Horne looks over merchandise at Daffodil's Boutique, a woman's clothing and accessories store with two locations in the area.

Vickie Horne had a crazy idea one day in 2009 walking through downtown Prestonsburg.

“I decided that I might want to do this when I retire,” she said. “I worked out of town a lot, but when I could, I loved shopping downtown. I loved downtown Prestonsburg.”

And that’s exactly what she did in July of 2009. Then she got Kindra, her daughter, to go with her one day to Market, so she quit her job and came to work with Vickie.

Since that day in 2009, they opened a location in Pikeville, and right before COVID, they started their online and app

“Prestonsburg” continues on next page

PRESTONSBURG

Continued from previous page

business.

“We do a lot of live videos and just have fun with all of our customers via our social media,” Kindra said. “Online and our app is like a third or fourth store at this point. We’ve had some growing pains, but we have a wonderful staff and wonderful ladies and overall we’ve done well with it,” Vickie added.

They carry clothing and accessories, and love that their store is part of a vibrant downtown.

“We are blessed here in Prestonsburg to have so many local businesses, and actually women-owned businesses, that brings people into our area,” Vickie said. “When the coal industry started declining, people were staying home because they couldn’t afford to go out of town to shop like they used to.

“We pivoted during that time and understood what our customers were looking for. We stayed focused on what was selling at that time. There’s nothing better than (shoppers) coming through the store saying ‘Oh you have Consuela and we don’t have to go to the big city.’ ■

ALL ORE NOTHING

Chloe May is not your typical retailer. She was going to go to college to become an artist and minor in geology. But the opportunity to open a store came up and she decided to take the risk to open All Ore Nothing, a store showcasing gems and minerals, especially those native to eastern Kentucky.

She opened her store All Ore Nothing when she was 18 and has been running it for over two years now.

“When I first opened, I really didn’t know what I was doing to be completely honest. I was still kind of learning it step by step,” she said, adding that a neighbor retailer helped her out. “Brittany taught me the ropes and told me it’s not easy what you’re doing but you just take it day by day. Some days you might not have a customer and that’s okay.”

Her store is truly unique.

“Crystals and gemstones can be used in all kinds of different ways, whether it be meditation, or even just home decor depending on the person. I use them personally in meditation and different practices, but they can also be turned into jewelry,” she said.

While she may be younger than her fellow retailers, she already has an understanding of the importance of retail.

“Retail is really the backbone of a community. Growing up, I remember going to the restaurants and the diners and stuff in this plaza. They have such a connection to me and my family because my family has lived here for generations and generations,” she said. “It’s really important to keep the small businesses alive that way you keep not only the money within the community and within the town, but you also really support the people that you’ve grown up alongside.” ■



Chloe May opened All Ore Nothing when she was 18 and will even make her own jewelry out of gemstones found in her store



LAD N' LASSIE

For 40 years, Lad n' Lassie was the go-to place in and around Prestonsburg for children's clothing.

When the owner made the decision to sell the store last year, Polly Sexton's daughter Desarea made a quick decision.

"I shopped here 25 years ago for my daughter's first pageant dress. She shopped here after she had kids of her own. She found out the store was closing and immediately contacted the owner and she bought the store the next day," said Polly, who manages the store.

Lad n' Lassie had become such an institution in Prestonsburg, the thought of it closing was having an emotional impact.

"The store had been here 40-plus years. Everybody was really upset and sad, but then they found out that my daughter bought it and people have been very grateful for buying it and keeping it open," Polly said. "I

Lad N' Lassie has been the place to go to get children's clothes in Prestonsburg for 40 years. Generations continue to shop there.

have customers that are in their 80s who come into the shop because they were brought here to shop when they were kids."

They carry diaper bags, shoes, clothing and toys. Special events throughout the year help build the clientele as well.

"It was very important to keep the doors open. Why would you travel when you got this. I have ladies from Lexington who shop here and say we've got shops in Lexington but nothing this nice," Polly said. "The thing that has surprised me the most is the repeat customers. That goes back to those 40-year-old people who shopped here as children. Every day, we have repeat customers who come in." ■

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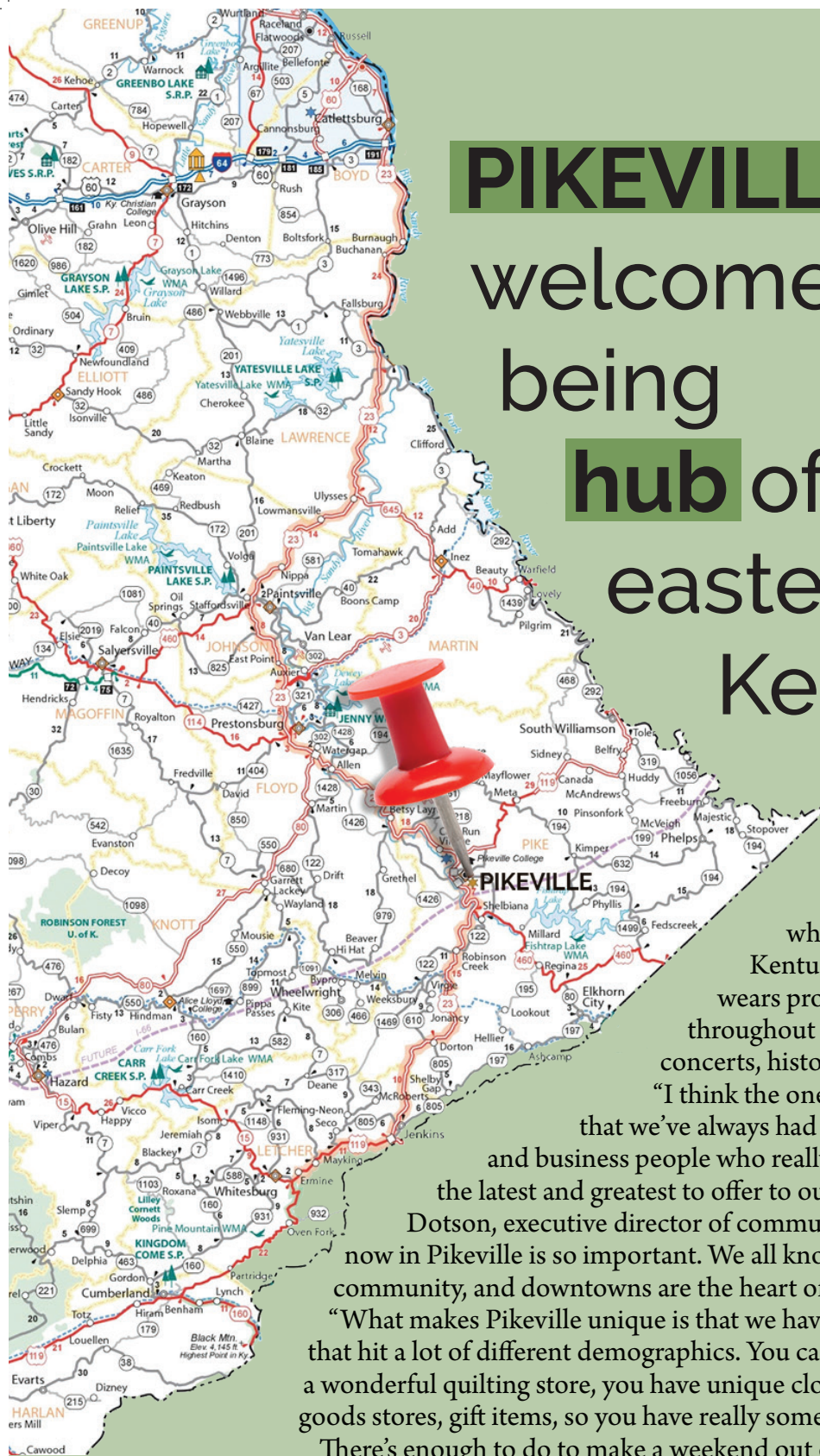
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PIKEVILLE welcomes being hub of eastern Kentucky

By Steve McClain
KRF

Just before you cross the state line into Virginia sits what is a hub of activity in eastern Kentucky. It's a mantle that Pikeville wears proudly as it beckons people from throughout the region to come visit for concerts, history, adventure and definitely retail. "I think the one thing about retail in Pikeville is that we've always had forward thinking entrepreneurs and business people who really make sure that they have what's the latest and greatest to offer to our community members," said Jill Dotson, executive director of community relations for the city. "Retail now in Pikeville is so important. We all know that retail is the heart of every community, and downtowns are the heart of every community we have. "What makes Pikeville unique is that we have a lot of different businesses that hit a lot of different demographics. You can find children's clothing stores, a wonderful quilting store, you have unique clothing boutiques, you have home goods stores, gift items, so you have really something for everyone."

There's enough to do to make a weekend out of a trip to Pikeville. A 7,000-seat arena, a 200-seat theater, Hatfield-McCoy history among other stops and adventure tourism provides something for everyone. And then there is the Shoppes at 225 that offers entrepreneurs a place to set up shop in a brick-and-mortar location and develop their business. Once they have completed their time in that spot, they can move into their own location.



Bear's Den Nutrition

Regan Williams calls herself a healthy bartender at the Bear's Den Nutrition.

And it's easy to see why as a steady stream of folks come in through the doors in the morning to get a protein shake or energy tea on the way to work or class, and then later in the day for a boost.

"People love to come in and shoot the breeze as I'm whipping them up something cool to drink. And that, to me is the best part about my job," she said.

That was obvious as she struck up conversations easily with everyone who came through the door, joking and bantering with local law enforcement, students and hospital workers.

"I've been in Pike County my whole life, and I don't ever remember there being anything like this in this area. You know,

I don't remember having a place where I can go get a protein shake or an energy tea.

"This little area in itself is growing so much. There are so many things to do and the expansion in the last 10 years alone is mind blowing. I can't wait to see what happens in Pike County in the retail side in the next 10 years."

Bridget's Quilting

For years, Bridget Hylton was making quilts out of her home. Then someone suggested she should open a shop to showcase her talent.

And that is how she ended up with her own store in Pikeville. "People were coming to me and they wanted their quilts quilted. I bought a quilting machine and that's when it really took off," Hylton said. "That was back in about 2012 or so and

I was doing the quilting out of my home. And then I started buying fabric and we bought a little building outside the house. And I had fabric in there. Finally, one day one of my friends called said 'I seen on the news where you could do the downtown program' and get a shop. And that's where I'm at now and have been for four years."

Not only does she make quilts, but she also offers classes that have become a growing attraction for people of all ages who want to learn how to make quilts. She finds it a

"Pikeville" continues on next page



(Left) The Bear's Den Nutrition is busy every morning as students and workers stop in for a protein shake or energy tea to start their day. Below are some of the quilts you can find at Bridget's Quilting. (KRF Photos by Steve McClain)



PIKEVILLE

Continued from previous page

way to keep an Appalachian heritage alive for future generations, while also relieving stress and helping people relax.

“Especially since COVID, everybody started out making masks. And now they want to make quilts and little bags and everything,” she said. “It gets your mind off things that are going on. I mean, it’s very stress relieving. Relaxing. So therapeutic.

“But it also is producing something that is specific to a time and place or a memory. And maybe down the road it will be something that will be preserved and remembered by others.”

Two Chicks and Company

Emily Pack played store when she was growing up and always thought she would one day own her own retail business.

“I just never imagined that it would happen when I was younger, and that it would be here in my hometown,” she said at Two Chicks and Company.

Two Chicks started in Lexington, but had done pop-up shops in Pikeville when she was growing up. When Emily graduated college and was working at Two Chicks, she decided to take on the business. Pack made the decision to move Two Chicks to Pikeville during COVID because orders from Pikeville were keeping the business going.

“Taking on a small business fresh out of college was very scary, and I was very naive to the whole experience. But I feel like that gave me the freedom to dive in headfirst with no fear,” she said.

Two Chicks is a lifestyle boutique offering anything and everything you could possibly imagine, from home decor, jewelry, gifts, seasonal apparel and other gift ideas.

“All of these retail stores in the area are so much more than the product in our store. We are a community. It gives us these hubs to gather and be communal and have events and just have fun and it’s you get that sense of community seeing people out with their bags on the street and hopping from shop to shop and it just creates excitement. And it’s another reminder why Pikeville is a wonderful place to be.”

Steph’s Uptown Swag

When Stephanie Roop’s fiancé took over as the volleyball coach at University of Pikeville, she went looking for some UPike gear to wear in support of him and his team.

“I couldn’t find a shirt to support the team. I asked and they said to go to WalMart or go here, but they only had a few to choose from and one size here and there,” she said. “I thought gosh, that would be a really good idea to open up a shop if I can.”

“

“All of these retail stores in the area are so much more than the product in our store. We are a community. It gives us these hubs to gather and be communal and have events and just have fun.”

— Emily Pack, Two Chicks and Company owner

”



Emily Pack’s infectious personality can’t help but draw people into the Two Chicks and Company where they can find almost any kind of décor for their home. The Pikeville native brought the store from Lexington to her hometown. (KRF Photo by Steve McClain)



When Stephanie Roop came to visit her fiancé and UPike Volleyball coach, she was looking for school logo wear and ice cream. Now you can get both at her Step's Uptown Swag location. (KRF Photo by Steve McClain)

So, she talked to the athletic director at the time and went through the process of getting the rights to the logo and license merchandise and now she has a shop selling UPike gear of all kinds, including all the sports teams.

And when she was walking around trying to find UPike wear, she also wanted ice cream. There wasn't a place.

"There was a place from my hometown Velvet Ice Cream, and they were willing to support me and bring the ice cream here. I cannot believe the amount of support I have because of the ice cream," she said, while scooping a cone for a steady line of hospital workers and students.

"(Pikeville) welcomed me. I'm not from here," she said. "Everybody is so welcoming. They're so nice and generous. I love it." ■

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Creating the 'Next Gen' of leaders

Kentucky Retail Institute Partners with Kentucky Department of Education to Host Inaugural Student Conference

The Kentucky Retail Institute (KRI), in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education, hosted its inaugural "Retail Next-Gen" student career conference on November 2 in Elizabethtown. The conference brought together retail leaders and more than 100 students from across the state who are interested in learning more about the retail industry, retail careers and entrepreneurship.

Speakers from the Community Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK) and Hinton Mills shared the impact of the retail industry on Kentucky's economy and how strong skills in the retail sector can translate into a successful career. Students also had the opportunity to participate in a Q&A with representatives from Lowe's, Kroger, Kerr Workplace Solutions and Hinton Mills.

"It's both exciting and incredibly rewarding to interact with the next generation of retail industry leaders," said Cassie Grigsby, president of the Kentucky Retail Institute. "The Retail Next-Gen conference was the latest successful endeavor in an ongoing effort to promote exciting careers in the retail industry.

"These students are the talent pipeline for the future workforce. Retailers and students were able to make connections that could lead to future careers."

"It was energizing to meet many of Kentucky's young entrepreneurs, marketing prospects, and creative minds at the Retail Next-Gen Student Leadership Conference," said Adam Hinton with Hinton Mills. "I hope my personal experiences and the story of the humble beginnings of our family business, Hinton Mills, might encourage one of these young leaders as they consider their own future pursuits. Perhaps our story can serve as an example to them of what other Kentuckians are accomplishing here at home."

The presenting sponsor was Lowe's, with additional sponsorships by Kroger and Walmart. KRI is looking forward to hosting more events in 2024, and retailers who may be interested in sponsoring should be on the lookout for opportunities as they are announced.

"Partnering with the Kentucky Retail Institute to host this student leadership conference has been a wonderful experience. Our teachers and students were able to meet several retail employers and hear valuable information about the retail industry," said Tina Brogli, work-based learning coordinator for the Kentucky Office of Career and Technical Education. "I'm very thankful for the retailers who are willing to invest in the future of our students."

The KRI, working alongside the Kentucky Retail Federation, aims to promote the education of students with an interest in retail. In addition to the Retail Next-Gen conference, the KRI offers a first-of-its-kind Retail Leaders Apprenticeship Program and other educational opportunities for students.

For more information about the Kentucky Retail Institute, visit KYRetailInstitute.org. ■

(Top) Mercedes Fraser with UK's Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky leads a session. (Middle) Kentucky Retail Federation board member Adam Hinton talks about how retail has impacted his life with Hinton Mills. (Right) Kentucky Retail Federation board members and staff were instrumental in making Retail Next-Gen a success. From left, Rachel Ross with Kroger; Ed McCoy with Kerr Workplace Solutions; Adam Hinton with Hinton Mills; Tod Griffin with KRF; John Blankenship with Lowe's; and Cassie Grigsby with KRF all participated in the conference. (KRF photos by Robbie Baker/E&W Creative).

Opposite page, top right picture, John Blankenship with Lowe's, Ed McCoy with Kerr Workplace Solutions, Rachel Ross with Kroger, Cassie Grigsby with KRI and Mary Taylor with the Kentucky Department of Education discuss different retail careers.







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