

ON THE RECORD

BY AND FOR THE YOUTH OF LOUISVILLE • FALL/WINTER 2022

A hand is shown holding a clear plastic bag, which is partially filled with dark, crumpled material. The background is a scenic view of a creek with blue water and green trees under a clear sky. The image is framed by a torn paper effect at the top and bottom.

**IS THIS
YOURS?**

Our city is built around Beargrass Creek.

Let's start acting like it. p. 24

There are Perks to Drinking Your Faves



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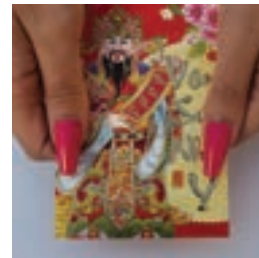
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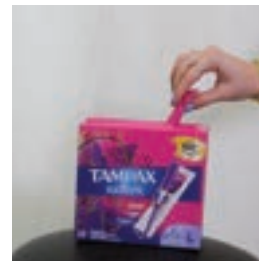
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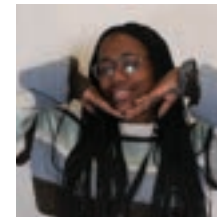
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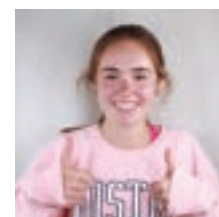
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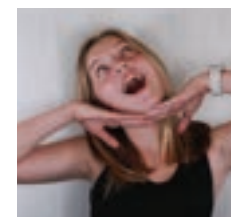
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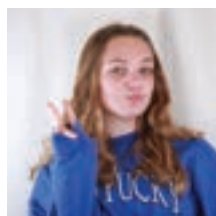
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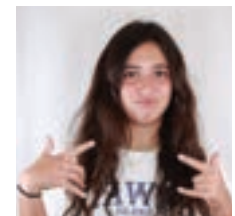
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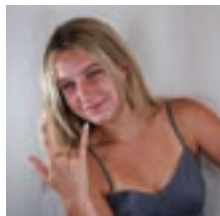
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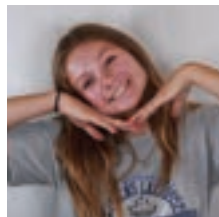
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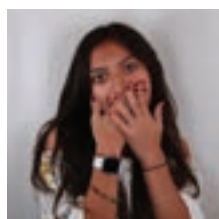
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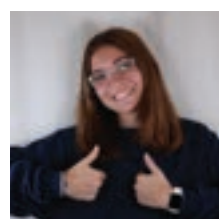
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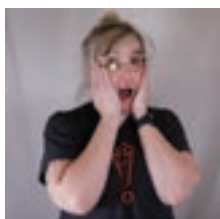
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ON THE RECORD is a magazine by and for the youth of Louisville. In 2015, our publication transitioned from duPont Manual High School's tabloid-size school newspaper, the Crimson Record, to a magazine that focuses on long form in-depth storytelling created for Louisville-wide audience and local distribution. Using our training as writers, photographers, and designers, our mission is to create quality local journalism for youth that includes the crucial, but often overlooked, youth perspective. Each issue's content is determined and produced by youth.

BECOME A CONTRIBUTOR!

On the Record is an educational and journalistic enterprise that does not accept school funding.

This magazine is completely funded by external donors and advertisers, meaning that we appreciate any and all partners in advertising, sponsorships and underwriting to aid us in continuing to spread the youth's perspective on local issues.

If you are interested in supporting On the Record's mission, please see page 59.

WHERE TO FIND OTR

On the Record is distributed to youth-friendly businesses in the Louisville area, as well as to teachers who request class sets.

If you wish to share this magazine with your students or in your business, please contact us.

By subscribing to On the Record, you can receive both editions of our magazine delivered to your door. Subscriptions require sponsorship. More information about sponsorships can be found on page 59.

Digital copies of all magazines can be found at <https://issuu.com/ontherecordmagazine>. Additional stories can be found online at ontherecordmag.com. Additional social media content can be found on Instagram and Twitter: @ontherecordmag.

OUR CREDENTIALS

On the Record is a member of the National Scholastic Press Association, the Columbia High School Press Association, and the Kentucky High School Journalism Association. Previous accolades include NSPA Pacemakers and CSPA Gold Crowns. Individual stories have earned multiple NSPA Story of the Year placements, CSPA Gold Circles, and the Brasler Prize.

CONTACT US!

On the Record would love to hear from you! Our magazine is published by the students of the Journalism and Communications Magnet at duPont Manual High School, 120 W. Lee St., Louisville, KY 40208. Leave us feedback at ontherecordmag.com or email at ontherecord@manualjc.com.

You may also contact the faculty adviser, Liz Palmer at lizpalmer@manualjc.com.

letter from the EDITOR

Dear Readers,

This year, our magazine doesn't have a theme or a package. Whereas our previous issues have explored focused topics such as what it means to "go it alone" and immigration within Louisville, we instead gathered 10 unique stories from all different parts of Louisville in order to best represent the diverse nature of our community.

In this issue, we explore the color that has been painted onto our city walls and on our community's nails. We investigate the impact that violence has had on Kentucky schools. Our writers share two personal stories that break down what it means to have a "normal" family. We walk in each other's shoes, read between the lines, analyze the extra cost of being a woman, and even play with puppies along the way.

In this year's cover story, we explore the pollution that has been impacting Beargrass Creek and examine the ways that Louisville as a whole can go about fixing it. In the same way that this magazine unifies a variety of narratives, Beargrass Creek acts as a unifying force for our urbanizing city. Its three forks flow through downtown Louisville, Butchertown, the East End, and more, interconnecting neighborhoods, businesses, and people. Houses are built around it, bridges above it — our city itself is built around Beargrass.

There is no way we could ever fully represent all the engaging stories that are alive within Louisville. So stick with us, because we'll continue working year after year to share the stories that are important to our community. In the meantime, we urge you to continue supporting student journalism, stay informed, and spread kindness around the city. Louisville is full of life. Louisville is bold. Louisville is complex. Throughout this issue, we hope to have captured that spirit. By opening this magazine, you are a part of the movement that is working to create a more educated and compassionate Louisville. And for that, we thank you.

Much love,
Bella Tilford



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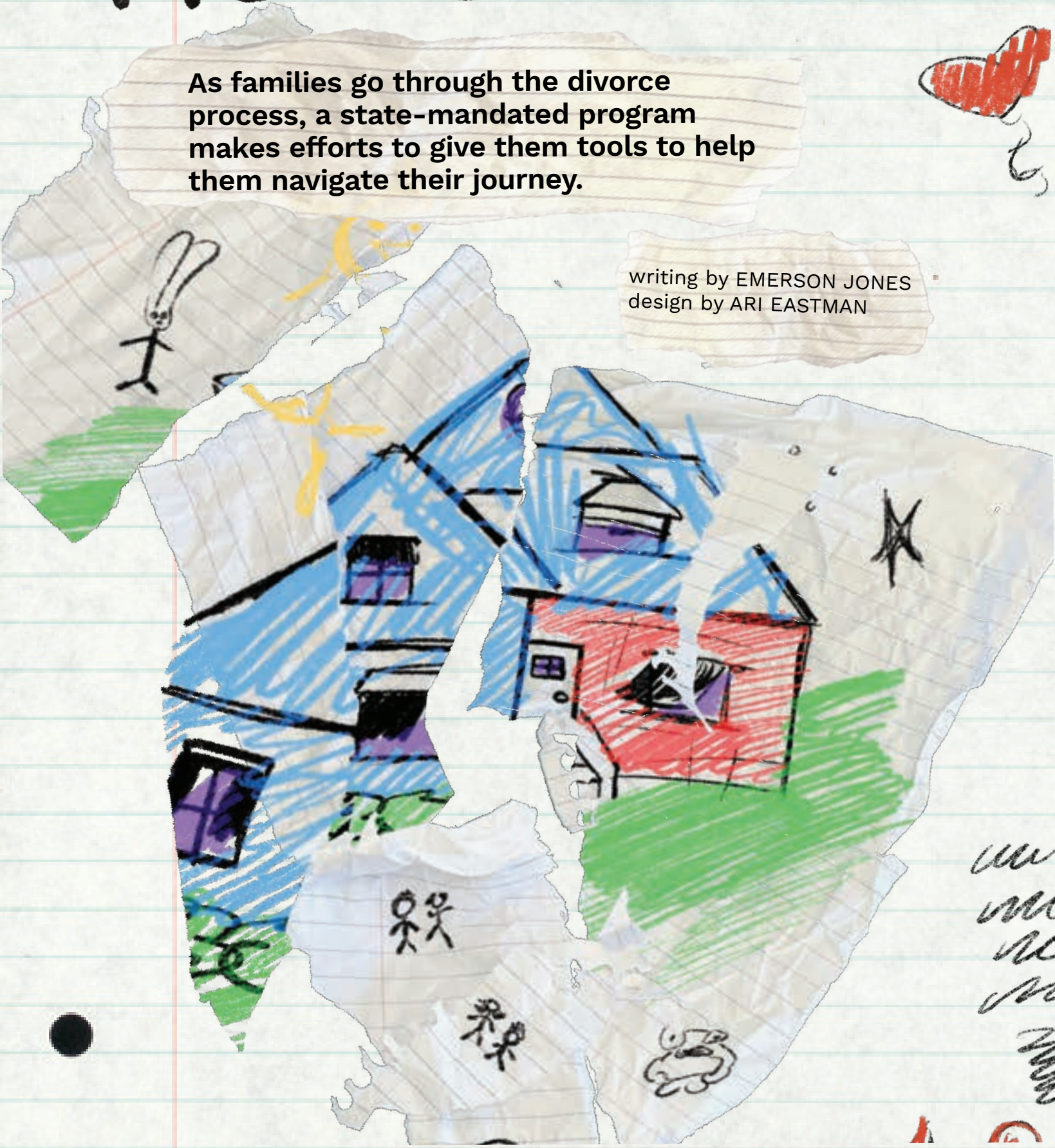
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HOMENWORK

As families go through the divorce process, a state-mandated program makes efforts to give them tools to help them navigate their journey.

writing by EMERSON JONES
design by ARI EASTMAN



On a typical weekend morning, I would wake up to the smell of scrambled eggs and pancakes fresh off the stove. With my hair still messy from the night's rest, I would take my time getting downstairs. When I entered the dining room, I would join my mom, dad, sister, and brother for a homemade breakfast, and talk about our plans for the day. This was a routine that I truly cherished.

However, this particular weekend morning wasn't typical for my family. This morning, we were going to a church to attend a court-ordered divorce class — a course for children whose parents are getting divorced.

We would pass the church on our Sunday morning doughnut runs and on the way to school. Wedged between houses, its brick exterior added to the charm of the neighborhood I loved. As we pulled into the crumbling lot, I dreaded the hours ahead of me. On the inside of the church, the crosses and stained glass windows screamed that it was a place of praise. But on that day, the church had another purpose, and, in my mind, being educated about your parents' divorce was not something that you praise.

The pews were no longer for worship; they were for sitting while we watched a cartoon about divorce.

The sound that filled the room wasn't a gospel sung by a choir; it was the sound of wailing children who wanted to stay with their parents.

The basement wasn't full of colorful Sunday school equipment; it was dark and full of dust.

The kids around me weren't there to worship Christ; they were just kids whose parents were separating, too.

Thinking Back: Emerson Jones, 17, sits in Second Presbyterian church on Nov. 16. Emerson remembers a similar setting when she attended the Families in Transition divorce class in 2019. *Photo by Keller Mobley.*



That was when I realized that there is more to divorce than just signing the papers.

The challenges associated with divorce are often hard to handle alone. As a result, along with the other legal proceedings, the Families in Transition (FIT) program was created in an effort to help families cope with the process.

The FIT program is a divorce class first mandated by the state of Kentucky in 1992 that requires attendance from divorcing families with minors.

As parents and children attend this program, they are involved in group discussions and complete designated workbooks. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of parents maintaining a close relationship with their child, as well as supporting one another. The goal? To make each divorce as smooth as possible.

“If people are going to get divorced, let's not make life hell on their kids. Yes, let's give them the tools to be home as

“Kids that are dealing with the divorce, they’re not really scared to speak out about it, or really talk about it anymore.”

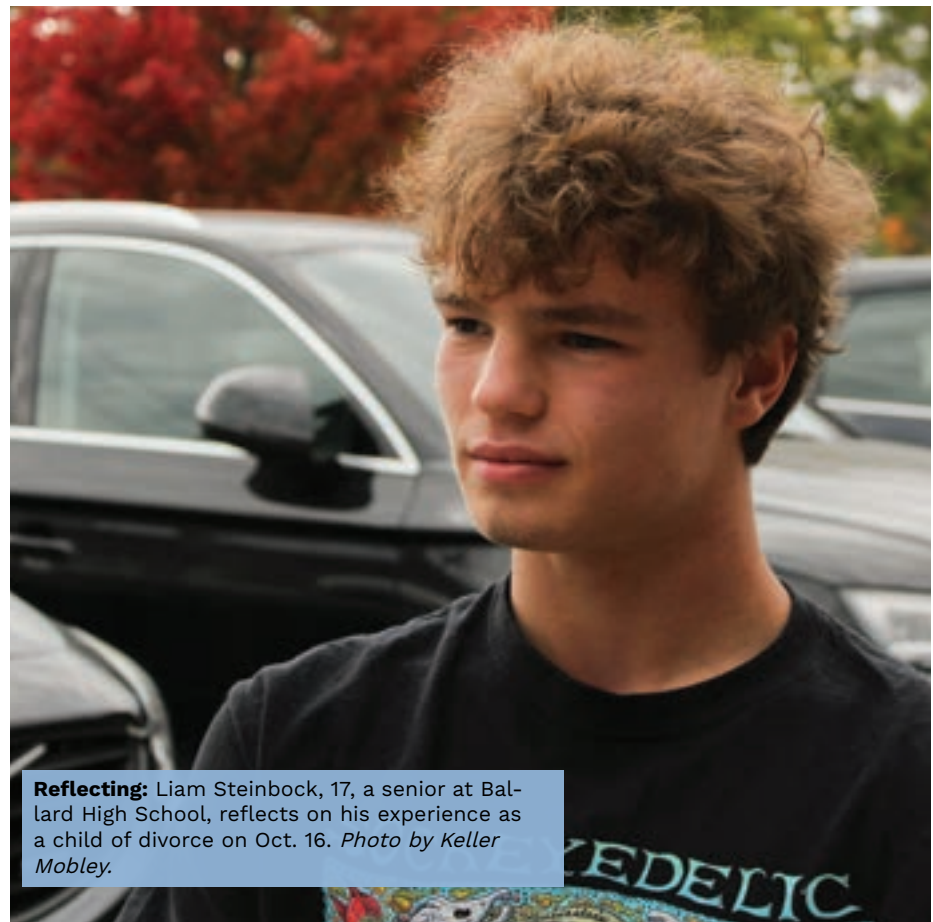
**- Liam Steinbock,
17, Ballard senior**

parents after the ink dries on their divorce papers,” Courtney Preston Kellner, family and divorce lawyer, said.

After this program is completed, families receive a Certificate of Completion that they can show to the Family Court, helping finalize their divorce. Despite having to attend a divorce class, there are often more obligations that families must endure during their effort to establish a new normal. The process of divorce starts here, but has so many more consequences.

My parents broke the news of their divorce to my siblings and I just weeks prior to attending the Families in Transition class, and as the number of divorces across the country have remained high, many children like myself have had to attend it.

According to a 2018 report by the U.S. Census Bureau, the divorce rate in Kentucky was 10.5%, ranking fourth in the nation for states with the highest divorce rates. In the United States, it is estimated



Reflecting: Liam Steinbock, 17, a senior at Ballard High School, reflects on his experience as a child of divorce on Oct. 16. *Photo by Keller Mobley.*

that around 50% of marriages will end in divorce. In Kentucky, a division of the judicial branch called the Family Court regulates all divorces within the state. In Jefferson County, this court is made up of 10 judges, each assigned to their own division. One of the judges must sign off on every divorce in order for the marriage to be dissolved.

“Every judge in Jefferson County potentially could have thousands of families in front of them,” Preston Kellner explained.

Every Monday, these judges hold motion hours in which they take an hour to hear the immediate needs of people. However, if in this limited time judges are unable to make a decision on these needs, they will schedule a future hearing date.

“It may be four or five months down the road before you see a judge,” Preston Kellner said.

Additionally, when judges are making decisions regarding divorce, they have to transcribe all of the legal proceedings that explain the reasoning behind their decision. All these extensive steps can cause divorce to be a lengthy process, however, compromise from divorcing parents can help speed up the process.

“You get a court order much quicker if you can come to an agreement and just pick an agreed order for the court to review, rather than making them have a hearing,” Preston Kellner said.

Over the past years, divorce rates in Kentucky and the United States have remained high. Divorce has become increasingly common for a variety of reasons, including policies and laws that make the process easier. In Kentucky, the no-fault divorce policy indicates that no individual in the relationship has to have done



Mother and Daughter: Emerson Jones, 17, stands with her mother on Nov. 19. Emerson resides with her mother half of the week. *Photo by Keller Mobley.*

something wrong, legally or not, to prompt the split. Only one person in the relationship has to believe there is an issue in order to file for divorce. Less pressure for couples to stay together, more freedom for women to obtain an education, and additional reductions of societal gender norms have allowed women to become financially and socially independent — all of which directly correlate with divorce frequency.

As society has deemed divorce more acceptable, divorce has become more desensitized. Many children have either experienced the divorce of their parents or know someone who has. Similar to having the same favorite band or movie, having divorced parents is a commonality between these individuals. The concept of divorce has become a foundation for subtle jokes and side comments. This destigmatization, however, doesn't have to be negative.

“Kids that are dealing with the divorce, they're not really scared to speak out about it, or

really talk about it anymore,” Liam Steinbock, a 17-year-old Ballard High School senior, said. His parents divorced when he was six.

While the ease at which people talk about divorce has increased, the steps involved in the divorce process remain rigorous. Financial and legal struggles that arise as a family navigates a divorce are often accompanied by emotional and logistical challenges.

Furthermore, each couple experiences divorce differently and have unique relationships after their separation, which directly impacts the new lives of their children.

As my parents went through their divorce, things were peaceful. They negotiated 50-50 custody over my siblings and me, figured out when we would stay at each of their houses, and continued to constantly communicate with each other. My parents remained friends. Both of them continued to come watch our sports games, and to this day, still celebrate holidays

and birthdays together.

Their effort to keep a close relationship, and continue some normality in our lives, was hard for me to process at the beginning of their divorce.

The first Christmas after my mom moved out of the house, she came back over on Christmas Eve and spent the night on the couch. She wanted to be there on Christmas morning to see us rush down the stairs and open presents under the warm glow of Christmas lights. For the first time in a while, when I was sitting in my living room, opening presents and smiling with my family, things felt normal again. For just a moment, I lost sight of my new reality. It felt like Mom still lived with us, like my family was still together, and like nothing had ever changed.

I came out of this trance as Christmas brunch ended and it was time for my mom to go. She was leaving to go to her home — the one she no longer shared with my dad. Things would never be the same, and it took me



Father and Daughter: Emerson Jones, 17, and her father, Craig Jones, stand outside of his house on Nov. 22. Emerson lives at her dad's house correlating with the alternating schedule. *Photo by Keller Mobley.*

months to understand that.

However, my parents' ability to peacefully communicate and spend time together is not something I take for granted, as other children's parents' relationships often differ.

As Steinbock's parents went through their divorce, a strain was put on their relationship that has not diminished.

"There is still a lot of beef between them, to say the least," Steinbock said.

When his parents first got divorced, his mom moved into an apartment and his dad kept the family home. His parents have 50-50 custody over him and his sister, and when he was in elementary and middle school, they were very strict about the kids staying with each parent on their designated days.

"They'd even ... pull up the divorce decree whenever one parent wouldn't follow," Steinbock said.

Along with having to follow a strict schedule, Steinbock's parents' divorce impacted his

relationship with his parents.

"I was a mama's boy, so anytime my dad even did anything good, I always thought, 'Oh, he's just doing that to try to win me over,'" he said.

Three months after his parents separated, when Steinbock's dad introduced him to his future stepmother, Steinbock struggled with the new family dynamic.

"I was fully against my step-siblings and stepmom for about five years," he said. "I thought my dad was loving them more than he loved me, so it was like being replaced."

But as he grew older, his relationships with both of his parents have strengthened.

"I've definitely gotten more close with both ... even to where I'm not choosing one or the other," Steinbock said.

There are more layers to divorce than one may see. The challenges displayed in both Steinbock's and my own story only mention a few of the struggles that families go through in the divorce process.

Despite the FIT program's attempt to help, Steinbock's memory of the class doesn't include the content that he was taught.

"My only main memory of it is that they would play the cartoon 'Frosty the Snowman.' I guess it was just in a sense to try and get us to feel more free," Steinbock said.

While attending this mandated divorce class, Steinbock and other children of divorce sat in a circle and watched the entire cartoon.

"I think the hat or the chest was supposed to symbolize something, but once again, I was six. I didn't know what the symbolism was," Steinbock said.

Apart from watching "Frosty the Snowman," the only thing Steinbock remembers is repeatedly being told that his parents' divorce wasn't his fault.

"And that wasn't necessarily something that I had ever thought of as being my fault," he said.

Steinbock's experience in the FIT program demonstrates a major flaw: divorce isn't one-size-fits-all. As it makes

BAGGAGE



Children of divorce must pack a few essential items when traveling between houses.

NOISE



In order to get a good night's sleep, earplugs help drown out the sound of the surrounding environment. For children of divorce, this noise can come from arguing with parents or figuring out logistical details. In some cases drowning out the sound is necessary for one's well-being.

CLARITY



Glasses help one get a clearer view of their surroundings. It often takes time for children of divorce time to find their glasses and get a clearer view of their new way of life.

RECHARGE



The continuous use of an electronic device can be draining to its battery, just like dealing with the divorce process can be emotionally draining for children. Both the electronic device and children of divorce, need time to recharge.

efforts to cater to as large of an audience as possible, it may introduce negative ideas about divorce that might not apply to that child. Other attendees may not resonate with the material at all.

After attending the program, Steinbock began to question his involvement in his parents' divorce, something he had never done before.

Like Steinbock, I can't recall what was in the workbook I filled out or much of what the facilitator told us. The emotions I felt throughout the program are all that keeps my memory of the experience alive.

At the church where they held my FIT class, the facilitator guided us to the basement to retrieve metal folding chairs. In a discreet room in the front of the church, we gathered in a circle to complete workbooks. As we sat for hours, the firm, cushionless chairs added to the discomfort I felt. Everyone sat quietly, refusing to be the first to talk. We were strangers who knew nothing about each other besides that we were all children of divorce.

But, I was lucky to have my sister with me.

Young Steinbock and his sister's relationship grew stronger throughout their experience. As they navigated the divorce of their parents and the FIT program, they leaned on each other for comfort.

"If I didn't have my sister with me, I would have freaked out," Steinbock said.

Steinbock's relationship with his sister doesn't stray far from my own. Amidst the divorce of our parents, I maintained a close relationship with my siblings. They were the only ones going through the same experience as I was. Although I had friends to lean on, none of them were there the first night my mom

slept at her new house. None of them remember setting the table for dinner, and realizing we needed one less plate. None of them remember what my family was like before it was split into two. My siblings and I went through the steps of the divorce process together – through each emotion and every obstacle.

However, these challenges had appeared far before attending the class, and they would linger far after.

Preston Kellner believes that the FIT program has a noble goal, but many families will need work that extends outside of the class. Services such as specialized co-parenting therapy and individual therapy can provide additional support for families of divorce.

“As long as everyone understands that co-parenting issues aren’t going to be fixed by a weekend, and to take the good information and apply it where you can, and hope for the best, that’s good,” Preston Kellner said.

Though Preston Kellner is not directly involved with the class, she informs her clients that they must attend the program.

“I think it’s just they see it as a checkbox and something they have to do to get through the process,” Preston Kellner said.

However, as children like Steinbock and myself, along with our parents, filter through this state-mandated program, there is the potential that some individuals will take the skills that they learn to grow and heal.

Nicholas Novak (17) was 11 when his parents got divorced. The FIT program was able to shed some light on the confusing nature of his experience.

“I think maybe one of the things that it made me realize was how many people get divorced,” Novak said.

In years prior to attending the FIT program, Novak had

limited exposure to people with divorced parents. While attending this class, he was put into a room full of children in his age range, which revealed to him just how common divorce actually was and how many people were going through the same experience as he was.

“It may have just, like, normalized it for me,” Novak said.

The FIT program can help both parents and children who feel isolated or overwhelmed by the divorce process to connect with others in a similar situation, and can offer a safe space to talk about their struggles.

At first, everyone in the class was a stranger to him. But during the class, he made a memorable connection with someone sitting next to him: a young boy with freckles wearing a trucker hat.

Novak remembered that when the facilitator had asked the boy about his situation, it seemed much worse than his own. When the kid calmly mentioned not knowing where his dad was, Novak admired his ability to not let hardships phase him. Although everyone attending the program came from different situations, they could find comfort in each other.

“We were just in this, sitting next to each other out of chance, and I guess I got lucky, even though I never talked to him after that,” Novak said.

Despite the fact that what Novak took away from the program wasn’t directly out of the workbook or from a facilitator, his exposure to other children of divorce is what made his experience with FIT helpful.

When children understand that they are not to blame for their parents’ divorce or that they’re not alone in their experiences, it can make a positive impact and teach new skills that might help them cope

with their family’s transition. This may lead to improved mental health or clarity in a situation that is hard to process.

Even though the impressions taken from the program vary, FIT promotes the development of essential skills needed to combat struggles in the aftermath of divorce for all who attend. These classes make an effort to help people find their footing while they navigate unfamiliar territory.

“I think it’s just they see it as a checkbox and something they have to do to get through the process.”

- Courtney Preston Kellner, family and divorce lawyer

On a weekend meant as a break from school, these divorce classes take children into another classroom. However, in this case, instead of being lectured on historical events, they are being taught how to approach situations that emerge in the present. While school textbooks often drag students down, the FIT program aims to lift a weight off the shoulders of its attendees. Instead of having essays or worksheets to do after school, children of divorce face a different kind of homework – navigating their new homes, and new lives. •

The image is a promotional graphic for Biscuit Belly. It features a central circular logo with the brand name in a white script font on a dark blue background, surrounded by a yellow border. The background is split into two vertical panels: a light blue one on the left and a dark blue one on the right. The left panel shows a plate with a biscuit topped with melted cheese, drizzled with a red sauce, and garnished with green onions. The right panel shows a hand using a knife to cut into a biscuit sandwich filled with a fried egg, bacon, and a creamy sauce. A yellow banner at the bottom contains the text 'BREAKFAST, BRUNCH & LUNCH' and the website 'www.biscuitbelly.com'.

Biscuit Belly

**BREAKFAST,
BRUNCH & LUNCH**
www.biscuitbelly.com

FLIPPING PAGES



Little Free Libraries in Louisville bring people together and inspire community involvement.

writing by KENDALL GELLER • design by SILAS MAYS

It was a Saturday afternoon. Mary Sullivan walked along the sidewalk, her arms sagging under the weight of the bulky cardboard box she was carrying. She stopped in front of a little wooden structure, her box thudding loudly as she dropped it onto the concrete. Sullivan opened the top flaps, revealing a multicolored array of covers. Books were stacked on top of each other haphazardly, novels and dictionaries mixed with Bibles and fairy tales. Sullivan removed them one by one, placing them neatly onto the little library's wooden shelves. Once the box was empty, she made her way back down the sidewalk to return it to the trunk of her car. Before she drove off, she looked back to where she came from, smiling at the library that would

soon be surrounded by eager readers. Her job was done.

Little Free Library (LFL) is a nonprofit organization based out of St. Paul, Minnesota with libraries across the country. Their mission is to ensure that every reader has access to books. LFL also serves as an outlet for community outreach, activism, and education.

Each individual library is constructed and maintained purely on a volunteer basis, which embodies the organization's goal of inspiring people to share their love of reading with others.

Metro United Way (MUW), a nonprofit that promotes volunteer work, became involved with LFL in 2014. Sullivan, former manager of corporate engagement at MUW, spearheaded this involvement after she read online about a man named Todd Bol, who started LFL

to honor his mother, a retired teacher and librarian.

"So he made this box, and stuck it in the front yard," Sullivan said. "And today it's international."

A major focus area of MUW in 2014 was early childhood education and kindergarten readiness. After Sullivan came to them with her newly-discovered knowledge of LFL, MUW partnered with the 2015 Leadership Louisville Bingham Fellows Project, which is a leadership program in Louisville aimed at discovering solutions to community issues. In 2014, one of their subject areas was educational programs in west Louisville. This included zip code 40210, which, at the time, held the lowest literacy rate for children attending Jefferson County Public Schools.



Setting it Up: On Oct. 15, Mary Sullivan places new books in a Little Free Library located at 334 E. Broadway. Photo by Meredith Snyder.

Some people might not see the gravity of a wooden box, but I don't know. I feel like it is a communal space.

- Abby Crady, 17-year-old LFL volunteer



“So, I went to my boss and I said, ‘We need to put these libraries in neighborhoods,’” Sullivan said.

After deciding to install libraries in neighborhoods in west Louisville, Sullivan and her team at MUW talked to Glen Kelly, a neighborhood advocate in the 40210 zip code. Kelly challenged them to install 40 libraries in her neighborhood — one for each block. Sullivan and her team told Kelly that if she could get 40 residents or organizations that would give permission for libraries to be installed on their property, MUW would provide them.

“Of course, we had no idea where we were going to get 40 libraries — who was going to build 40 libraries?” Sullivan said. “Unfortunately, she only got 15 people. But 15 was a start.”

As of October, MUW has 42 libraries in west Louisville: 36 of which receive books from the organization, three that receive books from their hosts, and three that are currently out of commission due to vandalism.

Even though she is retired, Sullivan still works with MUW as a volunteer, distributing books to their various locations and performing the occasional repair. The fulfillment she gets from working with the libraries

is what she says inspires her to continue volunteering.

“Many times we get notes in libraries saying, ‘Do you have this author, that author?’” Sullivan said. “You know, it’s reaffirming. Like when we’re out there putting books in the library, somebody comes by and says, ‘Thank you.’”

In addition to MUW’s libraries, there are many others registered with LFL scattered throughout the community, as well as those that are independently made and owned.

Little libraries live outside of small businesses, organizations, and individuals’ homes. In many ways, they are a means through which people can come together, whether that is by sharing notes with other visitors of the libraries, having group building and painting days, or volunteering with other community members to achieve their goal.

Abby Crady (17) has been involved in her neighborhood’s library since it was built. Her name can be found on the back of the library, surrounded by hand-painted purple, orange, and blue flowers.

Along with her involvement in the construction of the library, Crady remembers it as a prominent fixture in her childhood memories. She would take her friends to visit the library, encouraging them to

participate in the “take-a-book, leave-a-book” system. Now that she is older, she sees others making the same memories.

“It’s really cute to see the younger kids that have grown up, because obviously when I was younger, those kids were newborn, but now that they’re older, they take their friends to see it,” Crady said.

Watching her community breathe life into the library has allowed Crady to understand its importance.

“Some people might not see the gravity of a wooden box, but I don’t know. I feel like it is a communal space,” Crady said.

These spaces can take shape anywhere and any person can be the one to initiate them. Crady’s was built from scratch by her and her neighborhood, but LFL sells starter kits for people that want to host libraries of their own. Because of their simple installation, little libraries can be easily repurposed for a variety of community needs. They help where help is needed, such as in MUW’s accessibility project, while also bringing people together, like in Crady’s neighborhood.

The libraries have the ability to enact change wherever they reside, flipping pages for communities as people flip the pages of books. •

Overf



Helping Hands: Haley Aldridge, Kentucky Humane Society's database coordinator, holds one of the kittens saved during the Eastern Kentucky Flood relief in July. *Photo courtesy of Victoria Long.*

Overcrowded

After extreme floods hit the state, Louisville's Kentucky Humane Society tackles the struggles that come with overcrowding.

writing by SAMMIE HADEN & MAYA O'DELL • design by JAZMINE MARTINEZ

The walls were lined with crates, and the sound of wagging tails hitting the tile floor filled the room. In our peripheral vision, we saw paws pressing against every kennel, desperately reaching out to us. Every kennel but one.

We stopped in front of the silent crate and found an older dog with a pair of gray ears slowly perking up at the sight of new faces. We both reached out two fingers to her — an invitation she timidly accepted. As we stepped back, we caught a glimpse of the sign displayed on the front of her crate: “AURORA — FLOOD DOG.”

Even after we left, our interaction with Aurora stuck out in our minds. All of the other dogs we met at the Kentucky Humane Society's (KHS) main campus in the Iroquois neighborhood, jumped up onto newcomers and barked out loud greetings, eager to come home

with these new people. So why was Aurora different? Then we realized why: this dog already has a home. She's not looking for someone else to take her in — she's hoping to find a way back.

In late July, Eastern Kentucky was hit by record-breaking floods. Kentucky residents from all around followed the news, watching the damage unfold and pledging to keep the victims in their thoughts and prayers. Others donated supplies or money. With 13 counties affected, the citizens of Eastern Kentucky needed all the help they could get.

But a smaller story was also being told amidst the tragedy.

Over 100 animals were displaced due to the floods. Aside from the outpour of love and support from civilians, Louisville's main KHS campus went straight into crisis mode to help control the overflow of displaced dogs and cats.

“We work with the rural shelters already,” said Victoria Long, the KHS community relations manager. “I call them our sister shelter. We've done thousands of transports with them; we have relationships. So if they're hit, we're hit.”

Long and many other KHS employees spent days transporting animals from Eastern Kentucky to Louisville.

“I went on all three transports there. And it's pretty incredible,” she said. “It's nice to see that shelter slowly get emptier and emptier each week. It was really rewarding — tough, but very rewarding.”

Overcrowding has always been an issue in animal shelters. While the reasons are varied and inconsistent, the massive influx of pets always stays high.

According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), 6.3



Stacked: Jake Robinson, KHS volunteer, stands outside a CARE-a-van, which holds animals who were displaced by the floods, during the Kentucky Humane Society's first Eastern Kentucky animal transport in July. *Photo courtesy of Victoria Long.*

We really do build a relationship here — through our care for animals and as people.

- Eugenia Scoggins, KHS volunteer manager

million animals enter animal shelters every year.

“It’s a problem for all shelters everywhere. It’s a nationwide issue,” Long said.

While overcrowding is a problem, animal shelters have come to expect it and are used to handling a large number of animals. But when disaster strikes a community, a wrench is thrown into this normalcy — and disasters can vary across the country. In California, overcrowding could be from displacement after a fire. In Florida, it could come from a hurricane. But what makes Kentucky’s overcrowding unique?

Kentucky has faced new challenges in recent years. The flooding was a tragedy for the people living in the affected counties. Eastern Kentucky had dealt with some droughts preceding the flood, and with the seriousness of the storm, the soil couldn’t soak up the excess water. People unaffected by the floods offered their support to help deal with the damages. Some started cleanup crews to help in the process of restoring damaged homes, while others donated to help fund whatever the citizens needed after the tragedy. Despite their efforts, with a death toll of 43 and many houses and business fronts destroyed, the number of animals being sent to Louisville’s main and east KHS campuses drastically increased.

“When there is a natural emergency like this, we focus on clearing out the shelters of the animals they already had prior to that storm, or whatever emergency at that time,” Long explained.

If shelters are already at carrying capacity — if not over — taking on so many animals at once is a difficult feat. The KHS ended up taking in an unprecedented amount of displaced animals in the aftermath of the flooding.

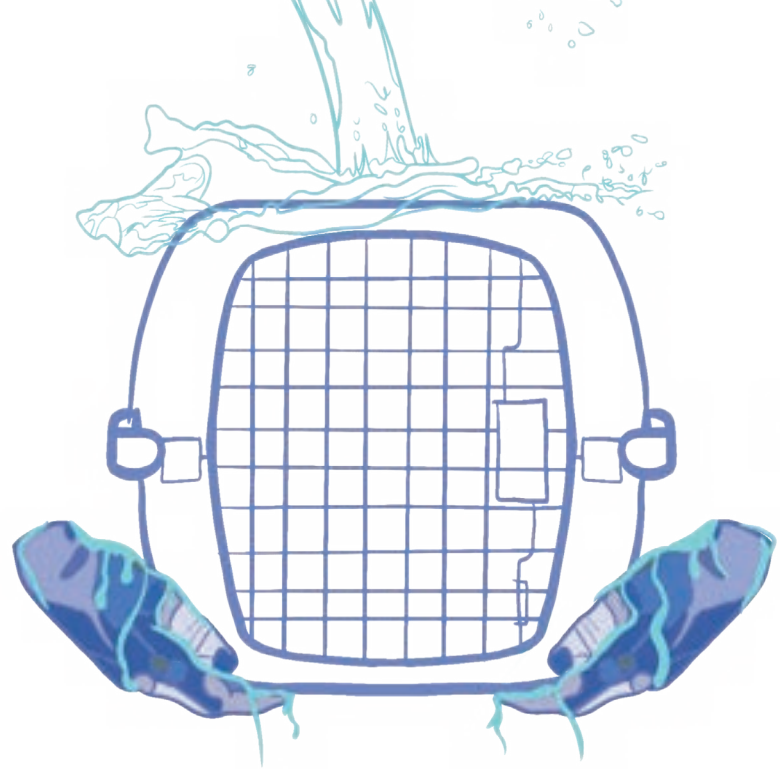
Although the flooding was detrimental, overcrowding isn’t just a result of disasters. There are many other reasons shelters remain overcrowded in the long term.

According to the American Kennel Club (AKC), over 80% of all dogs are spayed and neutered, as well as approximately 85% of cats. However, the remaining percentage of dogs that are not spayed or neutered can cause unexpected pregnancies that owners may not be prepared for. This often leads to the owner sending the baby animals to a shelter because they can’t handle all of them. Actions as simple as spaying and neutering pets to prevent accidental pregnancies can make a big impact.

The Spay and Neuter Incentive Program, also known as the S.N.I.P. Clinic, provides dogs and cats with spay or neuter procedures, which are cheaper than average if the owner gets them done through the KHS. They also have several vaccines and payment aids that are eligible for some pet owners.

The Humane Society’s main campus also offers a pet food bank (when supplies allow) every Thursday from one to three, where they provide food, litter, and other important resources to owners, explained Long. Additionally, they provide a pet helpline — which is available for anyone in the community if they need aid, a bed voucher, or just advice.

Another major contributor to overcrowding is breeding. Breeders create puppy mills, which produce over a million puppies per year. Since breeding is a private business, animal deaths during the breeding process aren’t reported. There are over



10,000 puppy mills in the U.S., but only around 3,000 of them are regulated. These mills are so successful because people often prefer the trendier, more expensive breeds of animals and many times, the baby animals find homes quickly. However, the ones that aren’t immediately adopted are sent to shelters. These new animals add up quickly, considering the large number of puppies and kittens being bred a year, which increases the severity of shelter overcrowding.

Among the reasons for overcrowding, many people think that animals given up following the pandemic have caused serious problems.

During lockdowns, people had an increase of time on their hands, and pet adoption skyrocketed. When things began to return to normal, many of the 23 million households that decided to get a pet during this time returned their pets to shelters. However, these animals make up only a small percentage of why shelters have had to welcome returned or unwanted pets.

“I know some people think that we’re having issues with COVID animals being returned. That is not the only answer,” said Eugenia

Scoggins, the KHS volunteer engagement manager.

Instead, breeding and disasters cause more dire and consistent overcrowding.

If there is an extreme lack of space, it's not uncommon for shelters to euthanize animals. This is a very controversial method, and the Kentucky Humane Society is among those that strive to rarely euthanize animals. However, this means that the shelter has to care for more animals.

One of the biggest ways the KHS is able to manage overcrowding is through its volunteer program.

Volunteers can help out as early as age 14, and the KHS encourages Louisvillians to sign up, especially after the flooding. Even though the help

provided through volunteering doesn't calm the massive influx of animals, it helps ensure that all pets are getting the best treatment possible.

Volunteers fold letters, clean, do laundry, transport animals, and pick up donations – there's a job for everyone. As a result, becoming a volunteer is relatively simple.

"The actual volunteer orientation on-site includes a bit about what volunteers get from volunteering with KHS, what KHS gains from volunteer help, and volunteer expectations. Then a tour and some training on cleaning tasks around the shelter," Scoggins said.

Not every volunteer opportunity is on-site, either. The "Date with a Dog" program allows

the dogs to leave the shelter and have some fun, then come back refreshed. While this is only for people older than 18, Scoggins added that many youth volunteers look forward to this opportunity.

"Beginning the volunteer journey at a young age is a great thing to watch," Scoggins said. "We really do build a relationship here through our care for animals and as people. It's extra special to watch that love grow as some of these kids grow up."

All volunteers are expected to follow directions and be respectful toward all animals. Volunteers will work with and without supervision, depending on the animal and what activity they are participating in.

For the Louisville youth who are too young to volunteer but

Looking Through the Bars: A cat located at the Kentucky Humane Society's main campus stares at the camera through the bars of its cage. *Photo by Jazmine Martinez.*





Feeding Time: A Kentucky Humane Society worker feeds a puppy at their main campus. The puppy eats from a tube due to complications with its mother. *Photo by Jazmine Martinez.*

still want to get involved, the KHS allows children 13 and under to do “At-Home Pet Projects.” These projects include creating toys for the animals, hosting a wish list drive – which is when the KHS makes wish lists for the animals and collects donations from the community – and so much more.

Many young, aspiring volunteers have already taken advantage of the volunteer program. Among them is 16-year-old Sydney Barnes, a student at Ballard High School that participates as a volunteer through her Girl Scout troop.

“The whole experience is very relaxed,” Barnes said. “Me and my friends spent a few hours baking dog treats for the animals. It was a really fun experience, and the staff really made the environment friendly and welcoming.” Volunteering leads to fewer animals not receiving proper care. However, it isn’t an option for some.

Fortunately, there are many other ways that Louisvillians

can combat overcrowding. Some people prefer fostering over adopting because it’s more convenient for their lifestyle. Apartments, short-term living arrangements, financial issues and trying out pet ownership temporarily are just a few reasons why some decide to open their homes to animals short-term. If one decides to foster through KHS, they are provided with all the needed materials: food, leash, collar, and crate.

On average, those who foster will watch the pet for two weeks. However, the care can last from just a couple days to as long as a few months.

“Fostering saves lives,” Long said. “Because we had such an influx of animals out of Eastern Kentucky, we didn’t have space in the shelter. We took them from the rural shelters and immediately put them into foster families. So that’s just a huge help.”

The KHS currently has approximately 500 animals in its foster department, and about one-

third of all of its shelter animals go through the foster system.

Even with the current support being provided by many, there is always more that has to be done. By volunteering, spaying and neutering pets, stopping excessive breeding, and just by becoming educated on overcrowding, there will be many more animals that find their homes.

Even though these animals are coming in at constant rates, our community can ease this stress when everyone pitches in. •

Need pet advice?

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(4738)**

BUILT AROUND BEARGRASS

Drifting Along: A styrofoam takeout box floats down Bear-grass Creek, nearing the confluence, where its three forks converge on Oct. 9. *Photo by Gael Martinez-Morison.*

Louisville finds a balance of citizen and government involvement, working together toward a cleaner Beargrass Creek.

writing by SYDNEY WEBB • design by NOA YUSSMAN

Styrofoam cups reading “TONS OF FLAVOR” covered the sidewalk next to a fallen Thorntons’ trash can. Unimportant to the passing customer, the pile continued to grow. Come rainfall, the trash flowed seamlessly over the concrete parking lot and into other areas of town, sliding by curbs and into storm drains along the way. Over the next 48 hours, the cups, chip bags, and cigarettes made their way to one of Beargrass Creek’s three forks. The trash continued downstream and arrived at the confluence, the spot where all three forks converge. Marked by a fallen tree, the confluence’s natural debris pickup everything in its path, including the styrofoam cups.

At least, that’s the path I imagined upon finding the now unrecognizable pieces of trash.

“Ten styrofoam pieces, two cigarettes, eight chip bags,” I yelled to my teammate, Sam Howlett, an 18-year-old student at the University of Kentucky. We, along with our two other teammates, had climbed off an overpass on Frankfort Avenue and down the adjacent mudslide after seeing the pile of white cups and plastic bags at the confluence. Out of all of our outings so far, we had hit the trash jackpot.

Over the summer, I worked as an intern at the University of Louisville (UofL) at the Christina Lee Brown Envirome Institute on the Beargrass Creek Team. Funded by a joint grant with Notre Dame from the National Science Foundation, our primary investigator, Dr. Faisal Aqlan

from UofL, tasked our team with tracking macroplastics in Beargrass Creek. Opposite to a traditional 9–5, we spent every day knee-deep in each of the three forks of Beargrass Creek, tracking each piece of trash we saw in the Marine Debris Tracker app. By the end of the summer, we had tracked over 3,000 pieces of trash. About 700 of those were plastic bags. Over 400 were plastic cups.

“The hope is to continue the project,” Ashley Jagers, the project manager, said.

After one successful round of data collection, my team and I were left with even more questions.

Until this summer, our team was unaware of how close we truly are to the creek and how pervasive it is throughout Louisville. More than that, none of us knew the condition of the creek or how to help it. Beargrass Creek slips by neighborhoods, under highways, and through woods, going unnoticed by many Louisville residents but cutting through the city. Helping it requires the involvement of not only Louisville leaders, but each community member as well.

Beargrass Creek is split into three forks — Muddy, Middle, and South — over a watershed of 60 square miles. Each fork is distinct, characterized by both its geographic and socioeconomic surroundings.

The cleanest of the three, Muddy Fork, is the northernmost, running through Butchertown, Indian Hills, and the Clifton neighborhood. Unfortunately, it

lives up to its name. When tracking trash in Indian Hills, my team ran into a situation we liked to call “quick-mud.” My teammates and I let out a defeated sigh in unison after one step in the mud engulfed our entire calves in the smelly sludge. It took 20 minutes and a joint effort to pull our boots out of the mud and continue on our hike.



Stuck in the Mud: Sydney Webb, 16, treks through Beargrass Creek’s muddy fork on July 5. *Photo courtesy of Sam Howlett.*



Consumed by Nature: A shopping cart, overgrown with moss, lies corroded on the banks of Beargrass Creek on Oct. 9. *Photo by Gael Martinez-Morison.*

Muddy Fork is also the most secluded, inaccessible fork, surrounded by woods, private property, and worst of all, channelization.

Muddy Fork is channelized where it runs parallel to the Ohio River, a process in which stream banks are physically rerouted, often with concrete or boulders, to straighten and increase the natural flow of water. However, while a straight creek makes building around the water easier, this urban benefit may be outweighed by the environmental consequences.

“It makes it almost invisible for the average person. So they litter more. So it’s just like a big parking lot,” Dr. David Wicks said.

Wicks is an avid Beargrass

Creek expert and professor at UofL — almost always sporting his safari hat and life jacket while on the job. He focuses on restoring the creek through community education, involvement, and government action. He collaborates with various government agencies, such as the Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD), along with teaching a creek class at UofL. In fact, Wicks, along with Dr. Tamara Sluss, a sustainability professor at UofL, worked as project mentors throughout the Beargrass Creek summer project, providing guidance along the way.

Contrary to Muddy Fork, Middle Fork is heavily accessible to the public, running through Cherokee and Seneca Parks, both part of the Olmsted Parks Conservancy. Middle Fork is home to popular gathering spots such as Big Rock, which is

covered in “no swimming” signs, yet filled with families in bathing suits who often leave behind food wrappers and soda cans. More people means more trash.

Similarly, while the South Fork runs through portions of urbanized Louisville, such as Germantown and Buechel, it also flows through Joe Creason Park, a popular spot for runners and hikers. As a result of its high levels of human accessibility, especially near major roads such as Hikes Lane, South Fork is the most polluted of the three forks.

When the word “pollution” is brought up, it is often associated with throwing a takeout box out of the car window or tossing a cigarette on the ground. Pollution, though, is not limited to the conscious act of littering. In the 1800s, Beargrass Creek was originally a dumping ground for sewage and animal carcasses.



This identifiable source of contamination is categorized as point source pollution, but luckily, the creek has exited such a phase.

“Now it’s almost the harder part,” Wicks said. Waste in the creek has shifted toward nonpoint source pollution, arriving from everywhere, but almost impossible to track. This tracking inability can be attributed to surface runoff, specifically concentrated to impervious, paved surfaces.

“Surface runoff is the single most detrimental factor to the creek’s pollution, being that trash from miles away can wash up into the creek over a certain time span,” Howlett said.

During rainfall, all of the items in parking lots, business parks, and even roads take a first class trip to Beargrass, picking up partners along the way.

“All trash that’s on the

ground is going to end up in our water,” said Angela Page, a duPont Manual High School biology teacher focused on Beargrass awareness. “It’s going to get carried there eventually, and then it’s going to go into the Gulf of Mexico, because it’s going to get carried by the Ohio River.”

Often, the biggest source of pollution is invisible, but also right under the community’s nose. Stormwater runoff of fertilizers, fuels, and even car wash soap will eventually end up in the creek. Also a result of heavy rainfall, combined sewer overflows (CSOs) trigger a flood of stormwater and wastewater into bodies of water, such as Beargrass Creek, when the sewage system hits capacity. Such overflows may contain untreated human and animal waste, industrial waste, sediments, and other chemicals.

As the Louisville community and government becomes aware of these habitat threats, it raises the question: Whose job is it to fix Beargrass Creek?

The relationship between citizens and their government is a hotly contested topic. Because Beargrass falls into a gray area between government and citizen

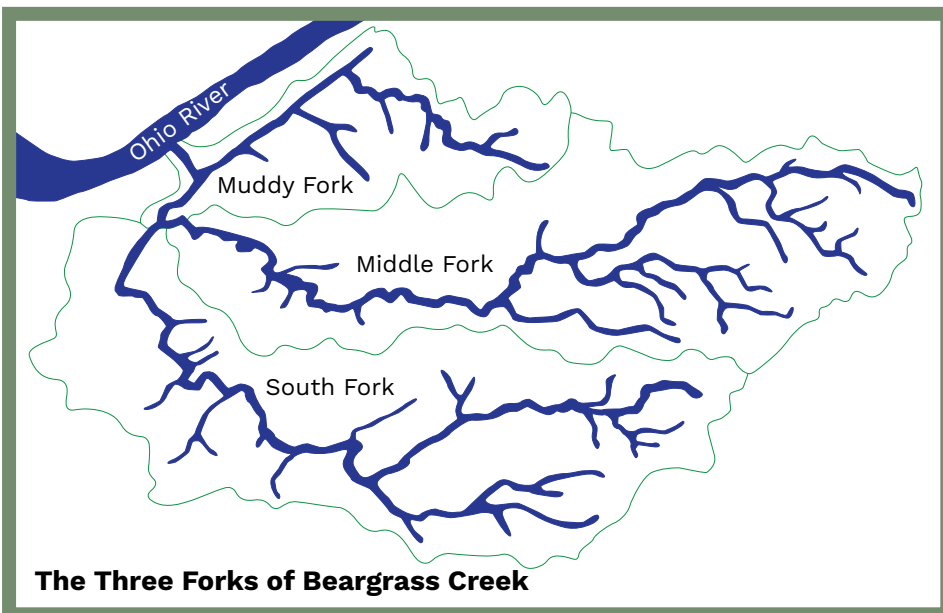
“**What we do isn't going to make it perfect, obviously, but it's a start.**

- Laura Mattingly, USACE project manager

obligation, it can easily be lost in the shuffle. With this said, there are current governmental policies in place to end and prevent pollution in Beargrass Creek.

On October 18, MSD celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act of 1972 by announcing the completion of their new Waterway Protection Tunnel. This four-mile underground tunnel will limit sewage overflows and wastewater contamination previously harming Beargrass Creek by taking pressure off of the sewer system.

“We have reduced our combined sewer overflow





Looking Toward the Future: Dr. David Wicks stands at the Louisville Community Boathouse Marina on Oct. 9. *Photo by Gael Martinez-Morison.*



The Scenic Route: The Louisville Community Boathouse Marina lies just downstream of the Beargrass Creek confluence. Oct. 9. *Photo by Gael Martinez-Morison.*

volume by six billion gallons,” said Stephanie Laughlin, MSD’s infrastructure planning program manager.

In addition to overflow management, MSD has tracked water quality, specifically in the Middle Fork, in order to advise further watershed planning efforts. Colette Easter, MSD’s municipal separate storm sewer system program administrator, played a main role in such data collection.

“We were able to leverage that long-term data, but also partner with our citizens to better understand and better characterize some of the challenges that we can actually address as a community through that watershed planning effort,” Easter said.

You have to go, and be at the creek, and just be quiet.

- Angela Page, duPont Manual High School biology teacher

On a larger scale, MSD assisted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as a local sponsor to conduct the “Three Forks of Beargrass Creek Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study” with the addition of federal funding.

“We were the only inland community that received ecosystem restoration funding,” said Erin Wagoner, the community benefits and partnerships manager at MSD.

The feasibility study includes a 121 million dollar plan that will restore over eight miles of stream and around 600 acres of land at 12 sites.

“The main point of this plan is to create habitat,” said Laura Mattingly, a USACE project manager on the feasibility study.

The USACE performed habitat units that determined the allocated sites based on ones that would have a greater difference, what Mattingly refers to as a “habitat lift.” To achieve this, the plan will work to add and maintain wetlands, plantings, recreation, instream habitat, and

native species over an estimated 10–15 years.

“What we do isn’t going to make it perfect, obviously, but it’s a start,” Mattingly said.

However, government-funded ecosystem restoration has the potential to become a money pit if not preserved by Louisville citizens.

“Most of this litter can get removed pretty quickly,” Wicks said. “It just gets replaced pretty quickly.”

One citizen stepping up to the plate is Page. Before teaching at Manual, Page taught Advanced Ecology, or what was better known as “the creek class,” at Louisville Male High School with the help of Wicks.

“We would typically run kind of a class project, and it would be either individuals or groups depending on the students,” Page said.

Leaving every other day to go to the creek, Page and her students researched water quality, trash, and even made a plastic water bottle boat — all while making it back for fourth block. In one outing, the class came across a

1963 Volkswagen Bug, and soon enough, MSD received a call from Wicks and Page to fish out the VW with a crane. The research performed in those three-hour blocks, from erosion studies to photographing litter, inspired some of her most driven students to pursue a career in water studies and environmental sciences.

“They come to life when you take them out there,” Page said. “They move differently.”

Awareness about the creek is the key to improvement. Without it, the creek could keep flowing through woods, malls, and neighborhoods, completely unnoticed. In order to tackle pollution in the creek, it is important to get to the root of the problem.

“The litter gets onto the pavement somehow,” Wicks said. While the blame can be placed on surface runoff, the origin of pollution lies in the hands of Louisville residents.

But how can we combat such a problem? How can we stop litter?

“Have people move out of Louisville,” Wicks joked. “It’s education.”

Beargrass Creek is often referred to as the “creek in our backyard,” running through the most popular places and parks of Louisville and being a prime spot for recreation. Despite many beautiful spots, it can be easy to ignore the sections that no longer resemble a creek. Whether it starts in school or in free time, engaging in the creek may be stronger than billions of dollars thrown at the problem.

“If locals are more aware of the positive contribution they can make, huge steps will be made to protecting the Beargrass Creek,” Howlett said.

To inspire such engagement, it is imperative to educate Louisvillians on the amount of power they hold. “No swimming”



Keep Out: A sign near Beargrass Creek, posted by the Louisville Metro Sewer Department, warns against the water’s health risks. Oct. 9. *Photo by Gael Martinez-Morison.*

signs pop up all over Louisville in an effort to warn people about the harms of the creek, but is it more important to warn people about the harms that they present?

“When we talk about nonpoint source pollution, we’re talking about things that are actually very tangible for the public to be involved in,” Easter said.

By simply limiting one’s litter and chemical use, citizens can do their part to create a healthier creek.

“I think everything comes down to cultural awareness,” Aqlan said. “If we have that in mind, then everyone can do something.”

However, in order to be motivated enough to create change, there must be a level of emotional obligation.

“You have to go, and be at the creek, and just be quiet,” Page said.

So much of our infrastructure is centered around Beargrass Creek. So, if we’re built around Beargrass, why aren’t we working with it? Louisville is urbanizing. While parking lots expand,

greenery shrinks. Forgetting the nature on which this city is founded has proven itself detrimental to the diversity and health of Louisville’s habitat and ecosystem, primarily in Beargrass Creek.

This doesn’t mean that the creek is unfixable. MSD and the USACE, for example, have first hand experiences with Louisville’s growing advocacy for Beargrass Creek as more citizens become aware of its status and beauty.

“That project actually originated with an application from the city,” Laughlin said.

Awareness regarding Beargrass Creek is gaining momentum.

“There’s just tons of people that really, really care about it. And they love the history of it,” Mattingly said.

Advocacy, awareness, and simply seeing the creek, can sometimes be enough to evoke the attachment to which Mattingly refers.

“Just pick out a spot and look at it,” Wicks said. “Skip studying for a while, and enjoy life.” •



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Kentucky has responded to gun violence in schools in numerous ways, but there are still actions we must take to ensure students' safety.

writing by LUCY VANDERHOFF • design by ARI EASTMAN

Missy Jenkins Smith nervously watched her television as the parole board members announced their votes one by one. Her stomach turned as she watched and waited for the decision that would determine the fate of the person who had permanently altered her life and the lives of her classmates. Though she felt optimistic, the atmosphere of her living room felt charged as Jenkins Smith, along with her best friend and fellow victim, Kelly Hard Alsip, anxiously awaited the verdict with their families.

"We were all nervous that morning, but mostly because we knew there would be no more delays in making the decision," Jenkins Smith said.

The board was deciding the fate of Michael Carneal, who, in 1997, opened fire on his classmates at Heath High School in West Paducah, Kentucky, killing three and injuring five. Jenkins Smith and Hard Alsip were worried Carneal would not have to serve out the rest of his sentence and would soon walk free. They feared Carneal might commit further crimes. Jenkins hated the thought of Carneal coming to her house, trying to contact her, or speaking to her children. But the stakes were even higher — this vote would set a precedent for many hearings to come, as Carneal was part of one of the earliest high-profile mass shootings in a school in the United States.

"There are three girls that died," Jenkins Smith said. "Those three girls don't have parole. I don't have parole from my wheelchair."

Jenkins Smith was paralyzed from the chest down after being shot by Carneal. Now, she advocates for school safety, speaking to students across Kentucky. She says the state's school safety has come a long way since 1997, but there is still work to be done to keep students safe.

"I know a lot of people don't want to change and do these sort of things, but unfortunately we have to change with the times, just like we did with 9/11 and airports," Jenkins Smith said.

School shootings have unfortunately become common in the United States, but at the time of the Heath High School shooting, they were a relatively new phenomenon. The Heath High School shooting predated the infamous 1999 Columbine High School Shooting. Kentucky reacted to the Heath shooting almost immediately, founding the Kentucky Center for School Safety after passing House Bill 330 in April 1998. The Center's mission is to collect and analyze data to use in the development and implementation of new safety programs.

Yet, despite these preventative actions, school shootings continued to occur. In September 2014, a then 16-year-old Andre



Banks took a gun into Fern Creek High School in Jefferson County, angry because he believed a fellow student had given him counterfeit money for an iPad. He fired one shot and hit a bystander.

Then, in 2018, an extreme tragedy struck Marshall County High School, a school in southwest Kentucky, when 15-year-old Gabe Parker opened fire on students, killing two and injuring 14. Four additional students were injured trying to escape. Parker later told investigators he believed his life had no purpose and that he saw the shooting as an experiment.

Following this shooting, in 2019, state lawmakers passed the School Safety and Resiliency Act, a comprehensive bill that requires at least

At the time, he never imagined working as an SRO.

“I thought I was going to be driving and crawling around the state, lighting the tires on fire and running everybody down,” Wilcox told lawmakers in a committee meeting earlier this year.

Wilcox started in 1999, the year of the Columbine school shooting. The sheriff told Wilcox his salary was being paid with a grant for a new SRO, a role Wilcox would have to take on.

“I said, ‘Great, what’s the school resource officer do?’” Wilcox recalled. “And he says, ‘I really don’t know. But it’s gonna pay your salary for three years.’ And so we just really learned how to do it on our own.”

Wilcox grew to love the job. Eventually, after the passage of the School Safety and Resiliency

That is due to a lack of funding and a shortage of qualified candidates, according to Jon Akers, the executive director of the Kentucky Center for School Safety.

“If we had all the money in the world, we wouldn’t have enough candidates to hire them,” Akers said.

With law enforcement under unprecedented scrutiny, the number of people entering the profession has dwindled, according to Akers.

SROs themselves have been a hotly debated topic in the past years. They have been the target of protests and controversy among community and school leaders, who were concerned that SROs escalated rather than prevented school violence. With

one mental health counselor per school and at least one armed school resource officer (SRO) per campus. A school resource officer is “a sworn law enforcement officer who has specialized training to work with youth at a school site,” according to the Kentucky Revised Statute 158.441. The bill also instituted physical security requirements for school buildings and created the office of the state school security marshal, which oversees school compliance.

The man responsible for ensuring the safety of Kentucky’s schools is Ben Wilcox, who saw his dream of working in law enforcement come true when he was 22, newly hired by the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office.

Act in 2019, he became the state’s first school security marshal. He and his staff drive all across the state, visiting and assessing every school. The goal is to create a safer environment for all Kentucky schools.

An overwhelming number of schools are complying with the physical requirements of the School Safety and Resiliency Act, according to Wilcox’s office’s 2021-2022 Annual Report.

However, this same report highlights two significant problems — 56% of school districts in Kentucky are not meeting the goal of having one mental health professional for every 250 students, and 55% of school campuses in Kentucky do not have an armed SRO, as required by the act.

this in mind, already struggling to reach SRO requirements, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) adopted a new security plan earlier this year.

The plan replaced SROs with two new positions: school safety officers (SSOs) and school safety administrators (SAs), both of which report directly to JCPS instead of the state.

SAs are stationed in school buildings, but are unarmed, aiming to foster an environment of safety and comfort for students.

SSOs are armed sworn law enforcement officers that patrol around a set area of schools, typically including one high school, one middle school, and a few elementary schools, yet they do not patrol within the school itself. The goal of the plan is to have 30 SSOs.

JCPS currently employs 15 SSOs for its 150 campuses, still short of the goal, though nine district security monitors are on the way to certification as SSOs. Additionally, JCPS has one mental health practitioner or counselor per 230 students, meaning they exceed the requirement.

“I will speak as a parent of four JCPS students; I believe we are doing everything within our purview to optimize how safe our schools are,” Chris Perkins, JCPS chief operations officer, said.

The Jefferson County Board of Education approved a safety plan this past spring. The plan assigns a safety administrator to either one middle school or high school or two elementary schools. In addition, in-school security monitors, who are

Perkins also feels like the district has come a long way, fostering an environment where students feel confident that they can report potential safety concerns and threats.

“Some indication it’s working is they are being reported and we’re finding these weapons,” he said.

Perkins hits on an important point: students have to take action as well.

“It starts with taking ownership,” he said.

One way to take ownership of your safety was expressed by both Wilcox and Akers — being aware of your surroundings is key to ensuring your safety. Tasks as simple as locking and shutting the classroom door behind you when you leave to go to the restroom could thwart a potential shooter.

“We’re trying to teach that this just doesn’t happen from 8:00 to 3:00 during the school day,” Akers said, citing mass shootings in public places.

There are other ways of being aware as well, not just observing surroundings. It is crucial that students are aware of their peers’ behaviors.

Wilcox urged students to take care of their friends and fellow students. That means eliminating the stigma surrounding talking about mental health.

“We’ve got to make sure that if our friends aren’t okay, it’s okay to tell somebody about it,” Wilcox said. “It’s okay to talk to them about it.”

Students should also notify adults when they hear rumors of potential violence or threats.

non-sworn officers, have been placed in most schools.

Having a sworn officer on every campus has proven to be difficult.

“When you have a school district the size of JCPS, with 150 campuses, to take them to scale instantaneously obviously presents its own set of challenges,” Perkins said.

Like school districts around the state, JCPS is competing for law enforcement officers amid a shortage of candidates, he explained.

JCPS has had successes installing physical features like cameras, secure vestibules, window shades, and unique communications devices in every classroom that allow teachers to signal the office for help.

On May 24, in Uvalde, Texas, a gunman was able to enter Robb Elementary School through a door that failed to lock and a classroom door lockable only from the outside. He fatally shot 19 students and two teachers and wounded 17 others. There were many factors that led to the high mortality rate, but one glaring fault has received the most attention — the gunman was able to get into the school and into a classroom through unlocked doors. Even doors that are designed to lock when closed, like the ones Uvalde may have had, should be closed all the way and checked.

Akers encourages using situational awareness in all parts of your life, not just during school hours.

“You know more than us adults do because you’re on social media,” Akers said. “We don’t hear the talk in the restrooms, we don’t hear the talk in the cafeteria, we don’t hear the talk behind the lockers. You all hear that.”

Before the Heath High School and Marshall County High School shootings, both offenders showed signs or made mentions of their plans. It is essential to be aware of language that foreshadows potential shootings, including phrases such as, “Don’t come to school on a certain day,” “Don’t go to a certain area,” and “I’ll get you one day.”

According to Sandy Hook Promise, an initiative dedicated to preventing school-based gun violence named after another notorious mass shooting, school





Speaking Out: Missy Jenkins Smith speaks to students at Auburn School in Kentucky on Nov. 30, 2010. Photo courtesy of The Logan Journal.

shooters commonly boast about combat and access to guns or show an unusual interest and emulation of other shootings and their perpetrators.

Unfortunately, not all students are comfortable reporting unusual behavior.

"I do not like to make assumptions," Micah Lape, an 18-year-old Louisville Male High School senior, said. "If somebody comes up to me and says they are having mental issues and want to speak to a teacher and need my help, then definitely, but I'm not going to say, 'Hey, this person's acting weird,' because I don't want to be singled out as making problems where there shouldn't be."

Jenkins Smith, however, said students need to rethink the way they look at reporting suspicious activity, especially with so much on the line.

"You're not a snitch ... you're helping that person," she said.

Jenkins Smith has made it her life's mission to help others. In fact, she worked as a mental

health professional in the public school system for a while, until decades of wheelchair use became too physically demanding.

"Having an adult that they can talk to is important, and that's why I became a counselor," Jenkins Smith said, "because I was hoping that if there was a student that was like Michael, that didn't feel like he could confide in anybody, that I would be a safe adult that a kid could come and talk to me without feeling judged or feel like they're going to be in trouble for something."

Back in September, as she watched the parole board hearing from her living room, Jenkins Smith hoped for the best.

In the end, the board voted unanimously to deny Carneal parole and went a step further, eliminating any future parole hearings and requiring him to serve out his life sentence.

For Jenkins Smith, the decision took away a great uncertainty in her life. Though Jenkins Smith was confident

Carneal's parole would be denied, she was used to decisions and results being prolonged.

"It's honestly still hard for me to believe," Jenkins Smith said.

The decision also allowed her to, as she put it, "give the wheelchair a purpose."

"That's to continue to speak publicly about the shooting," she said, "and share how you can overcome obstacles, that there is power in forgiveness and the importance of looking for the signs of violence and the importance of the prevention of bullying and the effects it can have on others for a lifetime."

There is a great debate in our nation about how to end school shootings. Many believe tighter gun control laws would reduce school violence by making it harder for students to access firearms. Critics of school resource officers say the presence of law enforcement officers can be traumatizing and counterproductive for some students. Some of the solutions are politically polarizing, others simply require seemingly out-of-reach amounts of time and effort.

But others are simple and take only a few seconds. Like anything, school violence is an issue with a solution. Finding and implementing this solution is the responsibility of everyone: students, teachers, and families.

"If you spread kindness in one space, it's going to spread," said Ava Samaro, a senior from Male. "And that's really the key thing; not only do we need it in school, but in the world." •

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INCOMPLETE



Sibling relationships — or a lack thereof — play a large role in all of our lives.

writing by LILY CASHMAN • design by CLAIRE DIXON • illustrations by STELLA FORD

I live in a house built for four. There are three bedrooms upstairs, yet one always sits unused. My bathroom has two sinks, two towels, two soap dispensers; it's as if there were two people using it.

But no, I am the only one.

Perhaps the distinctions are most prominent at dinner. My family's kitchen table sits with four chairs evenly situated around its sides. My mom and dad sit facing each other; I sit facing the empty seat. I have looked at the same empty seat, its red cushion looking as new as when it was purchased, for

all 16 years of my life. I grew to question this chair. Why did we even bother having it, when there was no one there to use it?

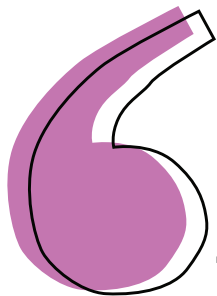
The only time it ever got used was when my grandpa came over for dinner; he would get my seat and I would get shoved into the spare. It is by far the worst seat at the table. Its back rests up against the green wall of my family's kitchen, blocking it from pulling out all the way, and the constant blow of cold air coming from the vent beside the chair makes the seat increasingly uncomfortable.

If I had a sibling, I am sure we would fight over who would have

to sit there. I have heard enough stories from my friends to know that the solution would not come from a simple settlement, but instead a compromise where we would switch which seat we sat in every other day. And an argument would start every once in a while if one of us wasn't home for dinner. Would the schedule stay the same or would there be a switch up?

This is all just hypothetical, because I don't have a sibling.

My house is a constant reminder of that fact. Maybe it's because it was built in 1976, at a time when the idea of the two-parent and two-kid family



I didn't want to bother asking my mom because she already had a lot going on.

- Weslynn Bonner, 18, older sibling



Looking Back: A photo of Lily Cashman from 2014 lying with her father on her family's couch. *Photo courtesy of Lily Cashman.*

structure swept over the country. Between the years 1975–1979, more Americans said they wanted two kids as compared to any other amount of children. Zero to one child, on the other hand, was the least preferred amount.

Maybe it's because four is an even number. Four represents symmetry, a life where everything is even. I envied that life. The one where I would always have someone to talk to, someone to spend family vacations with — just someone there, constantly.

While I always yearned for this family, I never put much thought into what living with a sibling truly entailed. I couldn't understand what it meant to have a sibling beyond just hearing the snapshot stories my friends told.

That's when I came across Weslynn Bonner.

Like myself, all Bonner ever wanted was siblings. She lived

with her mother in an apartment complex, surrounded by neighbors whose families were much larger than her own. She envied those who had siblings.

"I remember telling my mom I wanted a little sister. I guess she took it seriously," Bonner, now 18 years old, said.

When Bonner was five, her mom gave birth to her younger sister, Mylynn "MyMy" Alexander (13). Bonner was ecstatic to have someone to play with. Even at her young age, she knew that she would love her sister endlessly.

Her new title, "big sis," was one she wore proudly, and she didn't care much that her sibling's arrival meant that she now had to share her mom with someone else. After years of being an only child, Bonner was just glad to have someone to play with. She and her sister spent a lot of their time together at Shawnee Park, running around the playground and racing down the double red slides.

A few years later, her mom gave birth to Bonner's youngest sister, Rayleigh "Ray" Shoulders (8).

"I do remember it being a little bit different with my last sister," Bonner said.

At this point, her family had moved into a small home in the West End. For Bonner, living in a house for the first time was a big shift, and the addition of Shoulders into the family meant she was now taking on additional chores, like laundry and dishes.

"I learned how to do everything myself, like everything," Bonner said. "I didn't want to bother asking my mom because she already had a lot going on."

As if that wasn't already a lot for 10-year-old Bonner, she, being the oldest of the three girls, took on a lot of parental responsibilities while her mom wasn't home.

"I always wanted to just help my mom," Bonner said.

She would pick Alexander up from the bus stop, make sure she

made it home safely, and watch both sisters until her mom got home later in the evening.

I thought back to when I was 10. The era of Justice leggings paired with boots. Of getting that first taste of social media. Of figuring out that boys don't actually have cooties.

When I was 10, I was still a child. So was Bonner, though she didn't act like it. She was mature beyond her years, and while her life seems distant compared to mine, it simply felt like a normal routine to her.

"It was just what it was," Bonner said.

Bonner's mom was working to get her master's degree when she gave birth to Shoulders. She worked hard, managing a job — at times even two — while the girls were at school, and taking classes at Daymar College by night. It wasn't easy, and definitely less than ideal, but she always made it work.

"She had to get her degree so she could get a better paying job, and she had to work so she could pay for stuff," Bonner said.

On average, a single mother earns about one-third of the annual salary than that of a dual-income family: \$36,000

versus \$112,000. In 2016, nearly 4.3 million women in the United States maintained more than one job, many working over 70 hours a week. As a result, it becomes exceedingly difficult for single moms trying to balance work and family life.

"My mom's biggest thing was that, no matter what, she wanted to make sure we had food on the table and we had the lights on," Bonner said. "She would never really spend money on herself, but she really put everything into us."

While Bonner recognized and was always grateful for how much her mom did for her and her siblings, the responsibility of watching over them was overwhelming at times.

"It was a lot. She wasn't really home that much," Bonner said.

This scenario is known as parentification: when the line between the role of a parent and that of a child is blurred. Parentification takes on many forms, some more severe than others. Bonner experienced what is known as sibling-focused parentification, which involves one child taking care of another.

When those expected to care for younger siblings are still children themselves, the responsibility can be hard to deal with. Bonner was only 10 when she began looking after her siblings. And granted, for a short while, they had a babysitter, but that wasn't always consistent. Frequently, while her friends were busy picking up new hobbies and interests, she was at home helping her siblings.

"I do remember having a weight on my shoulder, you know, I gotta make sure my sister's okay," Bonner said.

Bonner handled responsibilities at home that many children will never have to experience. Spending so much time taking care of her younger



Holding it Together: Weslynn Bonner, 18, holds her preschool backpack at her favorite childhood playground, Shawnee Park, on Nov. 17.
Photo by Erica Fields.



Sisters: Rayleigh Shoulders, 8, and Mylynn Alexander, 13, share a laugh at their grandmother's house on Oct. 30. The two girls are left in their sister's care while their mother is at work. *Photo by Erica Fields.*

siblings meant less time to do the things she enjoyed.

"I did miss out on some things. Like going to the mall or the movies," Bonner said.

One day, Bonner, who had just recently gotten home, sat on the couch in her family's living room. Her eyes were glued to the television, as flashes of a green field, a ball, and women kicking moved across the screen. She followed the same ritual of watching professional women's soccer before each of her own games, and this afternoon was no different. It was her team's rival game, the one they had been anticipating all week and practicing for all season. Bonner felt every emotion: scared, anxious, excited. Her mom was on the phone in the other room, but Bonner didn't pay much

attention to it. That was, until her mom walked into the room, pausing in front of Bonner. She let out a short sigh before saying that she got called into work.

Bonner knew what this meant. She would have to stay home and watch her siblings that night. She would not make it to her soccer game.

"I was mad. I was heated. I was upset," Bonner said, reflecting on this day. "Everyone on the soccer team was calling like 'oh where are you, where are you, where are you?' And I was like 'I can't go, I gotta babysit.'"

Though Bonner was mad at the moment, she knew that her sisters came first. She would do anything for them, even if it meant missing out on opportunities and holding onto the pressure of watching over

them. Quality relationships between siblings reduce the negative effects present in parentification and there is no uncertainty that Bonner's relationship with her sisters is one she cherishes.

When Bonner started her freshman year of high school, she moved in with her dad. There wasn't really a specific reason other than the fact that he offered — and she wanted — a change of pace. She went from being the oldest sibling at her mom's house to the youngest at her dad's. Her siblings there would tiptoe around her, always bringing up and joking about her age. She didn't feel valued the same way she did at her mom's house.

Ten months later, she moved back in with her mom, and while she wasn't there for very long,



All the effort I put in early on to be a good big sister paid off, because now they're my life-long best friends.

- Weslynn Bonner, 18, older sibling

it changed how she viewed her siblings and her role as “big sis.”

“After that period, I always put in extra work to try and be a better bigger sister,” Bonner said. “I’m never going to let my sisters feel like that, ever.”

Beyond her newly changed perspective of her siblings, living with her dad showed Bonner just how much she appreciated living at her mom’s house.

At her mom’s house, creativity was appreciated. Freedom to explore different interests is something that Bonner cares a lot about. When she was 11, she started a business of her own, selling and trading lip balms online. Her platform grew and she began spending a lot of time sending packages out to customers. Her sisters watched Bonner’s every move, and they, especially Alexander, greatly looked up to her work ethic.

Bonner wants her sisters to learn the importance of pursuing their passions. She doesn’t care exactly what that thing is, as long as they are eager to stick to it.

This characteristic of Bonner, the one where she is thinking of the successes of her sisters in the future, is where the real effects of parentification take form. She is a role model for her younger siblings in every sense of the word.

As an only child, I never had someone like Bonner to look to for help. Yes, I had my parents, but I didn’t have someone my age to truly connect with. In many ways, that is the worst part about not having a sibling.

Apart from that, Bonner’s siblings are people that she knows she can count on, and

her relationship with them is stronger now than she ever imagined possible.

“All the effort I put in early on to be a good big sister paid off, because now they’re my life-long best friends,” Bonner said.

Sibling. A single word. Seven letters strung together; its two syllables mean so much. It once was something I wish I had. I still wonder what my life would look like if I had a sibling. Maybe I would stand up for myself more or be able to show more empathy. But, I know now that what I don’t have may be my biggest reward. What I don’t have is the responsibility to watch over another human being. What I don’t have to face is missing practices and events because I had no one home to take me. Those are privileges that I never accounted for earlier.

Maybe the world was built for a family of four, but it was built for a family with a steady income, a family who had access to consistent after-school care, a family that has enough support to truly raise those kids. Sadly, for Bonner’s family and many others around the country, that is not the reality.

For a long time, I thought something in my life was missing. It was evident in the empty chair I looked at during family dinners or the leftover game piece that sat untouched in the cardboard game box.

I will never get to experience the kind of friendship that Bonner has with her siblings. The kind of friendship that will always be there, whether I like it or not. The kind of friendship that results in spontaneous

midnight meetups in the kitchen, or sharing an eye roll over our parent’s comments.

However, my family has never been incomplete.

Being an only child is not wrong. Being a single mother is not wrong. Living in a family with six, seven, ten siblings is not wrong. Our family dynamics define our upbringing, they make us who we are. One person’s experience is not “better” than another — it’s all relative.

For me, my house built for four can also faultlessly fit my family made of three. •



Lily Now: Lily Cashman, 16, is an only child. She has always wondered what it would be like to have a sibling. Nov. 30. Photo by Erica Fields.

SHOE GAME



Green Eyeballs: Michaela McKiernan, 21, also known by her stage name, Mod Kiddo, poses in her funky shoes at the St. James Court Art Show on Oct. 1. Photo by Erica Fields.

Take a look at Louisville's unique population by exploring the life behind our community's laces.

writing by SYDNEY WEBB • design by SILAS MAYS

In recent years, one piece of the outfit puzzle is making a name for itself: the shoe. Shoes have gone from an easily overlooked accessory to a staple in every outfit. Shoes can be a show of the status, finesse, and personality of their wearer. They have the ability to set a mediocre outfit

over the edge. In an effort to avoid social conformity in a society of rapidly-changing fashion trends, people often turn to shoes as a unique outlet of expression. With this said, the pressure associated with constructing the perfect outfit has led to consumers' obsession over their "shoe game," the idea of

building one's shoe wardrobe in an effort to "out-fashion" others. Whether we are aware of it or not, we decide which pair will be the ideal representation of our daily personas. As a result, the first step to understanding a person's story may as well be found on the ground they walk upon.

Michaela McKiernan

Michaela McKiernan, perhaps better known by her stage name, Mod Kiddo, is a 21-year-old Louisville musician who produces indie and alternative music. She always goes for style over comfort with her shoes.

"I love eyeballs, that's my thing," McKiernan said, when explaining why she bought her bejeweled Kurt Geiger eyeball flats.

Ever since, Mod Kiddo has been sporting these shoes throughout her

musical journey. She has worn these unique shoes on a trip to Nashville, as well as while recording a song at La La Land Studios in Louisville with My Morning Jacket's bass player, Tom Blankenship.



A Closer Look: Michaela McKiernan, 21, shows off her bejeweled Kurt Geiger eyeball slides on Oct. 1. Photo by Erica Fields.



Farmhouse:

Caden Ely, 18, and Lillian Murphy, 18, each wear boots to the St. James Court Art Show on Oct. 1. While Murphy lets style influence her choice of footwear, Ely's preference lies between fashion and comfort.

Photo by Erica Fields.

Lillian Murphy and Caden Ely

Lillian Murphy and Caden Ely, both 18 years old, wore boots on their outing to the St. James Court Art Show, but the auras of their wardrobes differed completely. Murphy styled her brown Wolverine boots with matching knit socks, describing her style as “post-apocalyptic.”

“I go for style for sure,” Murphy said.

Ely, on the other hand, has a more practical approach to shoe shopping. He described his Timberlands as having farm-like vibes. Contrary to Murphy, he goes for not only style but comfort when picking out his shoes.



Minnetonkas: Stella Davis, 26, sports black, leather Minnetonka moccasins at the St. James Court Art Show on Oct. 1. *Photo by Erica Fields.*

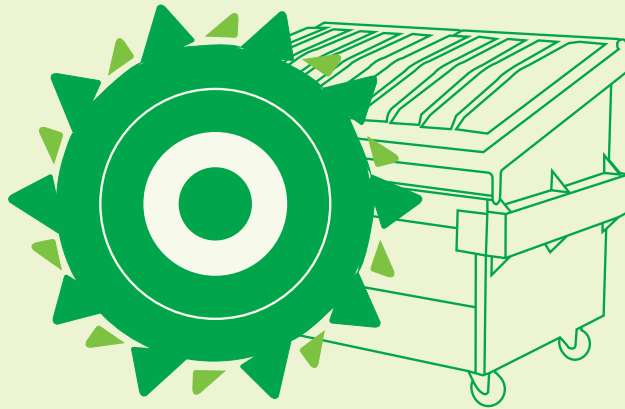
Stella Davis

“I set a theme for myself when it came to fashion this year as Renaissance fair creatures,” Stella Davis (26) said.

Davis purchased her knee-high, black Minnetonkas at Goodwill in California for \$13, a steal considering their usual retail of over \$100.

She describes these boots as “Sherwood chic,” a reference to the Sherwood Forest of Robin Hood.

Davis wore these fringed boots to a cave festival in Tennessee where they doubled as both functional and mystical fashion. •



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Behind the polish

Nail salons are more than just beauty establishments. At First Lady Nails, community is more present than ever.

writing by LILY CASHMAN & LIN TRAN • design by AMELIA JONES & LIN TRAN

The door slammed for the umpteenth time that day — a worker running yet another order to the cars outside. Standing behind the

counter, I scanned the workplace. Customers were lined up one after the other, my co-workers were rushing around packing orders, and my manager was

yelling at us to pick up the pace. This was what I applied for, right? To be in fast food, front-line, serving customers. But the only thing running through my mind at



Photo illustration by Bella Tilford.

that moment was, “I want to go back to the nail salon. I need to.”

After a few months of working in the fast food industry in an attempt to fit in with what my peers were doing, I realized that I wanted to work for more than just pocket money.

Being Vietnamese in a predominantly white area, I wanted an environment with a community that I could call my friends — my family, even. I was provided with that opportunity when my mom told me to work at the nail salon of her friend, Nina Ta. I was wary at first, but right from the start, I felt the strong tug of community.

I started working in reception, but after I gained experience doing my own nails, I got hired as a nail technician. To be honest, I was scared at first. Yes, I already knew the basics, but I was scared that the other technicians were going to treat me differently. I thought they were going to look down on me because of my lack of experience and age, but I was completely wrong. They took me in as one of their own, always offering help, even when I didn’t need it. They were my community, my family. There was absolutely nothing to be afraid of.

The history of nail salons is deeply rooted in Vietnamese culture, and I got to be a part of it. At the salon, I found my place.

...

After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, a plethora of Vietnamese immigrants fled to the United States in search of a new life. Out of them, many Vietnamese women landed at Hope Village, America’s first nonmilitary resettlement camp for Vietnamese refugees in California.

A famous actress, Tippi Hedren, worked at Hope Village, where she helped Vietnamese refugees seek employment. While there, 20 of those Vietnamese women became fascinated by Hedren’s elegant nails. Not only were they eye-catching, but refugees found painting nails to be a desirable job opportunity and an art that could transcend the language barrier. To get by as nail technicians, they simply needed to learn a few English phrases.

Hedren invited her personal manicurist, Dusty Butera, as well as employees from the local beauty school to Sacramento to teach the 20 women how to do a perfect manicure. Hedren helped these women get licensed at Citrus Heights Beauty School and

find employment in nail salons all around Southern California.

As those women found jobs, they spread what they had learned to others in their community and passed the tradition down through generations. As a result, Vietnamese women began to take over the nail industry across the country. Now, according to the UCLA Labor Center and the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, more than half of nail salon workers in the United States are Vietnamese.

Nina Ta, a Vietnamese nail salon owner in Louisville, began doing nails at her husband’s salon nearly 20 years ago, and instantly fell in love with the job. In March 2018, she decided to expand, opening a salon of her own off of Eastern Parkway. The building, previously an old bank, instantly drew her in. Ta named the salon “First Lady Nails,” a name she says symbolizes the strength and unity of Vietnamese women.

“Whenever I hear it, I think of feminism and how women dominate this industry,” Ta said.

The women that work at the salon have a strong bond.

“Everyone is like a small family because we spend 10 hours each day together,” Ta said. “The environment is so close-knit.”



Finishing Up: Destini Rucker, 26, one of the many nail technicians at First Lady Nails, applies a clear top coat to customer Rikki Anderson's new fall-themed nails on Oct. 27. Rucker says she went to a few different salons after graduating from Louisville Beauty Academy, but when she first walked through the doors of First Lady Nails in May, she knew it was where she needed to be. *Photo by Bella Tilford.*



Take a Seat: Nina Ta, owner of First Lady Nails, sits in front of a line of chairs where customers get pedicures on Oct. 27. *Photo by Bella Tilford.*



Even if I am the owner, I still view them on the same level as me.

- Nina Ta, owner of First Lady Nails

To us, working at the salon is more than just a job. This is a place where we all feel respected. There are no judgments surrounding race or gender – we are equal when we are here. Even Ta believes she is not above any of her workers.

“Even if I am the owner, I still view them on the same level as me,” Ta said.

The community within the salon extends beyond the front door of First Lady Nails.

“I guarantee you I know at least one person in every single salon here in Louisville. I have a lot of friends in the industry,” Ta said.

Vietnamese-owned nail salons thrive not only in Louisville, but nationwide, as many employees are drawn in by the thread of community running through each salon. Nail technicians share a talent and passion for their work that radiates through the salon. As a technician myself, I can

confidently say that we truly do love the work we are doing.

Destini Rucker, a nail technician at First Lady Nails, enjoys bringing positivity to everyone she gets to work with. She never knows what her clients have been dealing with, so she is glad to bring a smile to their faces.

Rucker recalls doing one little girl’s nails in particular. The girl was quiet when she initially walked into the salon alongside her aunt. Rucker worked mostly in silence as she gave the young girl a set of designed nails.

“When I finished, it was the first time I saw her smile. She was so happy,” Rucker said.

The girl’s aunt later told Rucker that her niece’s father had died a few days prior. Rucker will always hold onto memories of clients like this one. Knowing that she is making a difference is what makes her job worth it, she explained.

“People that work here, like Destini, tell their friends and refer them here because they enjoy the place,” Ta said.

That speaks to the culture she has built in the salon. It is one of love, and there is a push from all of us workers alike to succeed. This is the beauty of nail salons that go unnoticed to clients: the unconditional, true joy of knowing that you are accepted in your workplace.

Tippi Hedren helped build the community that I am able to experience today and because of this, I am incredibly grateful. So many opportunities for Vietnamese people have opened up due to nail salons. Whether or not someone is a Vietnamese immigrant just coming over to America, or a Vietnamese-American resident looking for a new job, they can look to the salon to be a safe space. •

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BLEEDING PINK



*Photo illustration
by Anna Burzynski.*

The pink tax can make women’s lives harder, but addressing its injustices head-on has the potential to lessen the issue.

writing by KENDALL GELLER & MICHELLE PARADA
design by NOA YUSSMAN • illustration by STELLA FORD

I walked through the sliding glass doors with a \$5 bill wadded up in my hand and six minutes to spare.

I marched toward the women’s health aisle, and all I saw was pink. Rose-colored boxes of menstruation products lined the shelves, a stark contrast to the surrounding aisles of randomly-colored items. I grabbed the smallest box of tampons that I could see, snatching them off of the shelf and making the trek back toward the checkout aisle. There was only one open self-checkout station, which I practically sprinted to in my rush to leave the store. I shoved the \$5 bill into the machine, and to my surprise, the remaining balance did not fall to zero. I checked the carousel, making sure I had purchased the right thing. A box of generic, Target-brand tampons stared back at me.

Five dollars for 36 tampons wasn’t even enough.

Why wasn’t it enough?

On average, personal care products marketed toward women are almost 13% more expensive than those marketed toward men. This includes things like razors and razor cartridges, lotion, deodorant, and shaving cream. These products are necessary to maintain physical health and well-being. So, why is it that it costs more to be a woman?

This cost difference is known as the pink tax. The implications of the pink tax are relevant to all women everywhere, but college students and newly financially-independent people experience the brunt of its negative effects. Many teenagers don’t have to think about the cost of their products, because they aren’t the ones that have to pay for them. However, when this financial safety net is removed, in college or further into adulthood, they will experience the strain that these basic necessities have on their bank accounts. Abbey Maxey, a 21-year-old student at the University of Louisville (UofL), said that she has never purchased a women’s razor for this reason.

“It’s just egregiously expensive compared to a men’s razor with the exact same thing,” Maxey said.

Aside from personal care products, women are already heavily encouraged to purchase products that abide by societal beauty standards: makeup, hair products, skincare, and fashion pieces that adhere to the latest trends. That is simply not the same for cisgender men, who can, for the most part, get by while doing only the bare minimum. The expectations placed on men are not nearly as high as those for women.

There is a constant push for women to make themselves “better” through consumerism. But women already assume a greater economic burden.

“This tax also occurs in a society where women earn, on average — when they work full time year-round — 82% of what men earn,” Dr. Karen Christopher said, a sociology professor at UofL who researches women, gender, and labor.

“It’s the larger cost of being a woman.”

- Dr. Karen Christopher, sociology professor at UofL

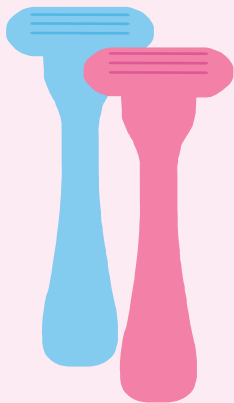
The lessened income provided by the wage gap leaves women on unequal footing in terms of their financial situation, and the pink tax only serves as an added expense. On top of that, the pink tax includes one additional issue that is not applicable to most men: periods.

In Kentucky, menstrual products, such as pads and tampons, are included in the

PINK TAX

THE PRICE FOR PINK

Razors



**11%
more**

\$7.99

\$8.90

Shampoo

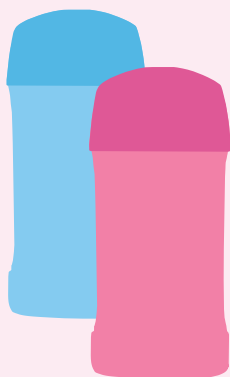


**48%
more**

\$5.68

\$8.39

Deodorant



**3%
more**

\$4.75

\$4.91

**Percents show price differences on average*

Information sourced from the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs 2015 report.

6% sales tax that is placed on luxury goods. The labeling of menstrual products as non-essential, or luxury, means that food stamps and other relief programs cannot help pay for them. This inaccessibility is especially relevant for those who are incapable of affording the products necessary to maintain a sanitary lifestyle.

Homeless, or houseless, women are amongst the group of people that often have trouble acquiring menstrual products. This can be attributed to many factors: their costliness, short-supply of period products in shelters, or not having the transportation necessary to visit a store that sells such products.

According to Louisville Metro Council Member Paula McCraney, the inaccessibility of menstrual products can have negative health impacts, especially for homeless women. Many are forced to leave tampons in for longer than is medically advised, putting them at risk for Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS), a condition caused by bacteria inside the body that releases harmful toxins. The American Medical Association states that some women who cannot afford menstrual products attempt to construct makeshift sanitation products, which can be dangerous and have the potential to cause vaginal and urinary tract infections, severe reproductive health conditions, or TSS.

Houseless women are expected to either ration their supplies, or put their health at risk for products that are necessary for health and sanitation. Denying people these basic necessities not only impacts health, but can be dehumanizing to the people affected.

“People who are houseless should not be put in situations

where they are embarrassed or humiliated because they’re on their cycle and may have bled through, for example,” Kentucky State Representative Attica Scott said. Scott is a Democrat serving Kentucky’s 41st district and has been incredibly vocal in her fight against the pink tax.

“For those of us who have menstrual cycles, it’s not an option. Right? These products aren’t optional. We have to have them,” Scott said.

Aside from menstrual and hygienic products, the pink tax can also be seen in everyday items like children’s toys, stationery supplies, clothing, and more. An article published by Slate incorporated a price-comparison study that included two scooters of the exact same model but in different colors. The red scooter was priced at \$24.99, while the pink one, labeled “pink girl’s scooter,” was \$49.99. The only difference between these two products, besides their color, was their audience. The gendering of colors is extremely prevalent in marketing, where pink and purple products are marketed toward feminine consumers, and red and blue items are marketed toward masculine consumers.

This gendering of colors became prevalent in marketing in the 1950s, when some advertising companies used pink in campaigns directed toward women, forever branding it as a “girl color.” Before this, it was the opposite. Pink was assigned to boys since it was viewed as the younger brother of the “stronger and more powerful” color, red. Blue was seen as dainty and modest, making it “better suited” for girls. The modern association of pink with femininity is not only the fault of advertising, but facilitated by it. The “pink girl’s scooter” is



targeted toward a more feminine consumer, and consequently, is more expensive.

The gendering of colors places people and their identities into strict boxes. In reality, colors are originally androgynous and free to be perceived however one chooses.

The pink tax is only associated with women, which adds to the problematic idea that identity is a binary, rather than a multifaceted concept that can be interpreted in an endless variety of ways.

It is necessary to address all of the problems and implications

of the pink tax. But first, people must know what it is. This presents another issue.

The pink tax isn't something that often makes headlines, as there are often bigger or more pressing issues that are more obvious to the public. Many don't

*Photo illustration
by Anna Burzynski.*

Give her what she really wants...



*Menstrual products
are the perfect gift
for the holidays!*

Photo illustration by Anna Burzynski.
Illustration by Stella Ford.

even realize the pink tax exists; they are used to buying either only men's or women's products, and thus, may not even notice the difference in prices. People in the United States rarely think about it long enough to consider the injustice of the phenomenon. It's just something that happens. Visiting a store and having to pay over five dollars for a pack of 36 tampons is annoying, yes, but not unusual. To put this in perspective, on average, it costs \$5.36 to purchase a pack of cigarettes in Kentucky. Something so unhealthy often costs less than or equal to something that is necessary for basic health and hygiene.

In Louisville, Scott has spoken out about the pink tax. She proposed Kentucky House Bill 27 in 2022, which would provide an exemption of the 6% tax on feminine products, erasing the designation of menstrual products as luxury goods. Scott spoke about how this is something that is heavily needed for all women, but especially for women that cannot afford these necessary products. If passed, Scott's original bill would have been made into law on July 1. However, it has not been passed and nothing has changed.

Still, other states are seeing these changes take place. For instance, the state of Virginia reduced the tax from 7% to 1.5% in 2019, and this year, they decided that the complete removal of the tax will go into effect on January 1. While this change shows progress, it took multiple years for the state government to realize the benefits of a complete removal of the tax.

Part of the problem is that politics are largely dominated by men. Women currently make up 27% of the U.S. Congress, which shows progress given that this is the highest it has ever been.

Regardless, that is still 73% men, who are less likely to vote on or even notice women's issues such as the pink tax.

"It's not on their radar the way it is for us when we experience this once a month. This is part of our life," Christopher said.

We don't have to sit around and wait for policymakers to decide to pay attention to this issue. Chances are, they won't. For example, House Bill 27 was refused a hearing by all members of House leadership.

"I did my part. I tried. I called, I emailed, I met with legislators. I did everything I could to try to get the bill passed," Scott said.

All of her attempts to pass the bill were shot down. That leaves it up to us.

For those above 18, the best thing to do is vote for policymakers who are willing to make these changes. In the 2018 primary election, just 54% of the total eligible voting population cast their votes, and only 24% of eligible voters aged 18-24 participated in the election. Meanwhile, 64% of the 65 and older voting population showed up at the polls.

This disparity does not live exclusively in the statistics. Real-world consequences for women lie in the decisions being made by the people they won't affect.

However, action is not limited to eligible voters.

"You have the power, you have the ability, you have the right to contact your local and elected officials and tell them, 'Make this a priority,'" Scott said.

If we want to experience change for ourselves, we need to act. Scott encourages young people to use the resource lying at our fingertips: social media. She wants us to go live and make posts so that people understand

that we can actually do something to address, and hopefully, solve this issue.

“For those of us who have menstrual cycles, it's not an option. Right? These products aren't optional. We have to have them.”

- Kentucky Rep. Attica Scott

There are still many steps that we have to take, but we are certainly on the right path. Young people especially are demanding change for themselves and future generations. For instance, Scott got her inspiration for House Bill 27 from a group of UofL students that came to her with an idea to propose the erasure of the pink tax like they had seen implemented in other states.

This progress doesn't change the fact that women have and will continue to struggle because of the pink tax. Discrimination against women is as heavily integrated into this country as democracy. It is bleak and frustrating, and if we continue to sit around and wait, it will not stop being our reality.

"It's the larger cost of being a woman," Christopher said.

But it doesn't have to be. •

KEEP LOUISVILLE



See how these local artists are changing Louisville, one wall at a time.

writing by JACKSON BARNES • design by CLAIRE DIXON

First impressions are important, especially in cities. With high-speed internet and the affordability of long-distance transport, so many more entertainment options are available to people. Why actually go somewhere when everything is just a click away on your phone?

We have to ask: what makes our city stand out? Why should people come here, of all places? Ideally, we wouldn't judge a book by its cover, but not everyone can, or is willing to, take the time to look deeper.

Now more than ever, what someone initially sees holds a lot of weight. In Louisville, an already colorful city, one art form makes a perfect first impression: murals.

Murals have a multitude of benefits, one being their ability to bring color to communities in a way that other art rarely can. This man-made beautification gives neighborhoods depth at a glance, allowing for even a casual passerby to become interested.

An alleyway containing a mural becomes so much more than just a rugged road and a wall. It becomes an attraction, a landmark. Not only do murals boost foot traffic to more obscure areas, they also lead to a huge increase in positive energy throughout the city.

In the wake of Breonna Taylor's death, renowned Louisville muralist, Braylyn "Resko" Stewart, worked tirelessly alongside artists Whitney Holbourn and Andrew Norris to create the "Say Their Names" mural in downtown Louisville. Located at the intersection of 11th and Main, the piece acted as a sort of gathering point for supporters of the movement—and a target for its detractors.

"I mean, it was great, but it was tense at the same time because it was during the whole, you know, protests and everything," Stewart said, referencing his experience painting the mural.

"Some people would come by and yell at us, and some people would come by and give us accolades and tell us that we're doing a great job, so we're getting more 'thank yous' and 'it's beautiful' and people sitting out here and enjoying it than people who didn't want it here."

In June, two people vandalized the mural, spraying blue paint over the faces and writing the words, "Patriot Front," the name of a white supremacist group. Stewart and his fellow artists were quick to respond, crowdfunding an effort to repair the damage. They banded together, and were able to not only remove the defacement, but added another important figure's face to it: Travis Nagdy, a protest leader of the Black Lives Matter movement, who was shot and killed in November 2020.

Stewart's work and collaboration with other artists highlighted Nagdy's life and impact on the movement, bringing him to the

attention of those that may not have ever known about him otherwise. A mural of a lesser known subject can bring new attention to parts of Louisville's past or present. This effect is especially important, as it requires no prior knowledge or experience. The pure accessibility that murals offer is amazing in its own right.

"Anybody can walk by and have their own opinion about it, but everybody's going to be emotionally affected by it," Stewart said.

Additionally, murals provide a platform for artists to leave their mark on Louisville and contribute to the local aesthetic. Creating this art is a community building activity at its core, so a visual representation of said community really reinforces that. Though murals are sometimes funded by the Louisville municipality

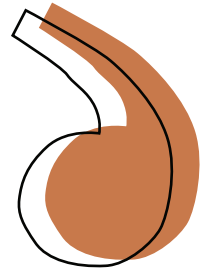
or commissioned privately, the creative intent and personality of the artist shines through, meaning every mural has a personal touch. The art style, colors, and location all come together to create a unique piece that's hard to replicate.

An example of this is the Woody Guthrie mural by artist Damon Thompson. Thompson has done work all over Louisville, with public interest in his murals taking off over quarantine. As someone who was very involved in the art scene even before the pandemic, Thompson housed a monthly gallery hop event at his house. While he already had a background in more traditional art, his first foray into graffiti and wall art was inspired by his colleagues who attended these events.

"I'd started doing that with friends and realized just how much

Anybody can walk by and have their own opinion about it, but everybody's going to be emotionally affected by it.

- Braylyn Stewart, muralist



Spray Their Names: On Nov. 17, Braylyn "Resko" Stewart sits on a ledge, a part of the warehouse wall that his mural was painted on. The mural, 100 feet wide and 30 feet tall, was a collaboration between Stewart and two other well-known local artists, Whitney Holbourn and Andrew Thompson. *Photo by Bella Tilford.*



This Machine Kills Fascists: Damon Thompson's mural of Woody Guthrie can be seen at the corner of Texas and Goss, painted on the side of the bar, The Pearl of Germantown. Nov. 17. *Photo by Bella Tilford.*



The spray can is to murals what the sewing machine was to tailors.

- Damon Thompson, muralist

more accomplished they were at the craft of the spray can than I was, compared to how good I was at old painting and acrylic and stuff,” Thompson said. “It made me want to get better.”

His mural is located on the side of The Pearl of Germantown, which is a bar named after its eponymous neighborhood. Both its scale and style are eye-catching, making it immediately visible from the street. It's done in spray paint, which is Thompson's usual tool of choice for his murals. The way he sees it, the spray can itself has made this type of art much more accessible.

“The spray can is to murals what the sewing machine was to tailors,” Thompson said.

Because the cans work without primer and don't need a specific surface to paint on, it reduces the preparations required for a piece's creation. All you need, essentially, is a blank space to work upon.

Thompson's mural makes the most of the space; Guthrie's figure fills a large portion of the wall, with his iconic guitar appearing near the bottom. The message “this machine kills fascists” is emblazoned across it.


Even at the most basic level, murals leave a lasting impression. Whether it be through memory or

simple observation, these large scale artworks are intrinsically tied to where they're located. You're more likely to remember a place if there's a sense of spectacle with it, or if there's something special about it.

How often do you remember a building or a wall, just on its own? You probably walk by hundreds regularly, without them ever really catching your eye. Inversely, how many pieces of art can you name or imagine? In this way, murals turn their settings into canvases, and turn cities into galleries. In Louisville, their abundance works to highlight all the different things that make this city so unique. •

ON THE RECORD

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	 1/4	4.25 X 5.5	\$125	DISTRIBUTION FREQUENCY Biannually	
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