2025

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and storytelling touched countless lives. Howell was known as a devoted Kentucky, Hodgenville and Abraham Lincoln scholar who brought history to life through his writing and extensive collection of memorabilia. He was also a nationally-known postcard collector.

Jail is a reflection of society

What began with a hope, a need for increased worship, a feed trough and some volunteers ended with a total of 18 LaRue County **Detention Center inmates** and two staff members being baptized on site.

SEPTEMBER Celebrating the career

of Deputy Sherrard LaRue County Sheriff Deputy Douglas Sherrard officially retired after dedicating 30 years of loyal service to the citizens of Hodgenville and LaRue County.

Burn bans issued for Hodgenville, LaRue

Due to a period of extraordinary forest fire hazard or fire occurrence, local government officials issued burns bans for the City of Hodgenville and LaRue County. The bans were prompted by the area experiencing more than 21 consecutive days with less than 0.25 inches of rainfall only receiving approximately 0.5 inches of rain throughout the entire month of August.

Schools' need for additional funds prompt vote

After a public hearing where more than a dozen citizens expressed their opinion on the matter, the LaRue County Board of Education voted 3-2 to approve a 4.2 cent tax increase.

Higdon will not seek reelection in 2026

Senator Jimmy Higdon announced that he would not be seeking reelection when his current term ends in Dec. 2026. The 72-yearold has represented 11 different counties since being elected to the Senate in 2009 and said that he looks forward to spending more time with his family and doing the things he hasn't been able to do over the years.

Restaurant tax returns \$39K in 1st month

Hodgenville received more than \$39,000 during the first month collecting its restaurant tax. The largest payment was more \$10,000 from McDonalds.

City purchases Magnolia Bank branch

Negotiations between the City of Hodgenville and Magnolia Bank culminated into a purchase of the Lincoln Hills branch, located at 794 Old Elizabethtown Rd. The location was purchased for \$795,000, along with a \$100,000 donation to the city from Magnolia Bank. The banking center will be used to house Hodgenville City

Board member accused

of neglecting duties LaRue County Board of Education member Teresa Gilbert was accused of neglecting her duties and responsibilities multiple community members came forward stating their attempts to correspond with her hadn't been responded to or even acknowledged. Gilbert did not directly address the concerns, while Board chairperson Farrah Pruitt said the raised concerns should be viewed as a learning opportunity.

2025 LCHS Football **Homecoming Queen**

LaRue County High School senior Bridget Faulkner was crowned the 2025 LCHS Homecoming Queen.

OCTOBER The legacy of Pioneer Games

In honor of its 45-year anniversary, the Pioneer

grand marshal. Despite ups and downs and changes over the years, members from the community have ensured the games have remain a staple of the festival since their inception in 1980.

Petition filed to recall

school property tax Three local men filed a petition to recall the LaRue County Board of Education's 2025 property tax levy increase. The petition committee had 21 days to obtain signatures from 731 registered and qualified LaRue County voters.

Certification of petition signatures underway

The committee petitioning against the school district's property tax levy turned in the petition signatures less than two hours before the deadline. LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf was given 30 days to verify if enough signatures were obtained to put the matter on the ballot.

Petition declared insufficient

LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf declared the petition attempting to recall the school tax levy as insufficient. In her ruling, Metcalf stated that two pages of the petition were not substantially uniform in style, as required by law, and she therefore could not certify the signatures.

Alleged violations prompt school board action

The LaRue County Board of Education voted to ask the state Attorney General's office to review and potentially investigate the conduct of school board member Teresa Gilbert following a substantial number of complaints from the public alleging violations of law and ethical standards.

Band of Hawks place fifth in the state

For the first time in 17 years, the LaRue County High School Band of Hawks marched its way into Class AAA state finals. The band was crowned the fifth-place winner of the Class AAA State Final competition.

NOVEMBER Petitioners appeal insufficiency decision

The school tax levy recall petition committee filed to appeal LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf's determination that the petition was insufficient, claiming that Metcalf interpreted the law too strictly and that the different petition pages were a "technical problem" that should not cause the petition as a whole to be rejected.

Birthplace closure affects local community

The closure of the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park in Hodgenville, a consequence of the 43-day U.S. federal government shutdown, caused at least 10,000 tourists to bypass the local area.

Hodgenville certified

as KY Trail Town Hodgenville was certified as a Kentucky Trail Town, a tourism and economic development program designed to provide communities with a strategic plan to capitalize on recreational

opportunities. This designation was accomplished through the efforts of countless government officials, volunteers and sponsors. Hodgenville was the state's 31st Trail Town.

Hawk Pantry to support local families

Through an initiative known as the Hawk Pantry, local students began turning their leftover breakfasts and lunches into meals for families facing hardship a project built entirely on generosity and community spirit. The pantry is open to any student or family in need, even during after school hours.

Hawks win Junior Chef competition

For the first time in program history, the LCHS Junior Chef program was selected as the Champion of the Farm to School Junior

Games was selected as the Chef competition. Hungry 2025 Lincoln Days Parade Hawk team members Noah Selman and Austin Harp, who each received a scholarship to Sullivan University, were coached by Abe Miller. The team advanced to the Southeast Regional Competition, which will be held in Alabama in April.

Cheer teams advance to Nationals

The LaRue County Middle School and High School Cheerleading teams both advanced to Nationals during the UCA Bluegrass Regional Competition and are now set to compete in Orlando, FL in late January.

Increased police presence is District's obligation

An increased police presence at the LaRue County Board of Education's November meeting discovered that the board and individual board members had been the subject of "increasing hostile and threatening language."

DECEMBER Counsel files motion to dismiss petition appeal

Attorneys representing LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf and the LaRue County Board of Education in the appeal against the nickel tax recall petition asked the court to dismiss the case, contending that the law's requirement for substantially uniform petition pages is a "statutory safeguard" that could not be ignored.

Making products for Heros

Nationwide Uniform, a factory in Hodgenville that has crafted high-quality uniforms worn by our nation's heroes in the military for more than six decades, was awarded the 2025 Mid-Size Manufacturer Award by the KY Association of Manufacturers.

Jail deputy arrested for using racist, obscene language on duty

LaRue County Detention Center employee Zachary Behlke, 20 of Leitchfield, was fired and arrested after he used racial slurs and derogatory language on social media while on duty. LaRue County Jailer Jody Perry said the termination occurred after he verified the events occurred while Behlke was on duty and on jail property. Behlke was arrested by the Kentucky State Police and charged with first-degree official misconduct and thirdterroristic degree threatening.

Shepherd elected as **KPA Vice President**

The LaRue County Herald News Publisher Allison Shepherd was chosen as the next Vice President of Kentucky Press Association.

Judge orders count of

petition signatures After hearing arguments from the petitioners and defendants in the nickel tax recall petition appeal, LaRue County Circuit Court Judge Charles C. Simms III decided that he would need to know whether the petition had enough valid signatures, minus the two differing pages, before making a ruling. He ordered LaRue County Clerk Rhonda Metcalf to conduct an official count of the petition signatures within 30 days.

Man wanted after child found with drug paraphernalia

After staff at Preschool on College Street found drug paraphernalia in a student's backpack, the Hodgenville Department arrested Jessica Sidebottom, 33 of Hodgenville, and announced they were searching for Ronald "Eric" Wolford, of Hodgenville, in relation to the incident.

School Board refutes violation accusations

LaRue County Board of **Education Chair Farrah** Pruitt refuted allegations that the board violated the state's Open Meetings Act by having an increased police presence at its November meeting.



The EF-1 tornado that touched down on 31-E in Magnolia in February 2025 caused downed trees and power lines and damage to nearby structures.



File photo

A Cardinal was seen weathering the first winter storm of 2025 in Buffalo.

SNOW

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inches with up to a quarter inch of ice. In addition to resulting in hazardous driving conditions, these collections also caused power outages throughout the local prompted area and LaRue County Schools to close for an extra week after Christmas break.

winter storms blew into Kentucky just days later, coating the local area with anywhere from three to six inches of snow and once again causing schools and business closures throughout the county.

The third and final winter storm of January brought with it the lowest recorded temperature of the year – -4.7° on Jan. 22. This event vailed in the area, all of which brought with it more than caused landslides, numerous two and a half inches of impassable roads and school additional snow, treezing temperatures and more began efforts to remove business, church and school closures.

LaRue County was hit with severe thunderstorms during the first week of February. On Feb. 5, 60 mph wind gusts, quarter-sized hail and flooding that caused several roadways in Buffalo, Mt. Sherman and Upton to be inaccessible and required a water rescue by the Campbellsville Fire & Rescue's Special Operations team were reported. Another thunderstorm rolled through the area the following evening, bringing 30 mph winds, pea-sized hail and additional rainfall and the two days. An EF-1 Kentucky Mesonet found

tornado also touched down on 31-E in Magnolia during this time, with 95 mph peak winds and ground time of $0.5 \, \mathrm{miles}$

The area received another three to five inches of snow less than a week later. Four days after that, another four inches of rain fell, causing impassable roads and also requiring a water rescue for a man who was found standing on the top of his car. The area was then The second round of subject to another snowstorm, with an additional one to three inches blanketing the community. This storm is connected to the deaths of 11 Kentuck-

Historic flooding occurred in April, with parts of LaRue County receiving 15 inches of rain over a four-day period. Severe thunderstorms and damaging winds also preclosings. Although officials floodwaters as soon as it was safe, it took more than two weeks for all floodwaters to be removed. Due to multiple landslides, access to parts of Cissal Hill Road in New Haven has just recently been restored nearly

eight months later. Too much precipitation soon turned into not enough, and LaRue County was officially designated as experiencing a drought in September. This was due to the area only receiving 0.5 inches of rain throughout the entire month of August, which is more than 3.5 inches less than the monthly flooding. A total of 2.5 inches average over the past five of rain was recorded between years. Statistics from WKU's

that, in 46 days, the county only received 0.75 inches of rain and had 28 consecutive days with less than 0.25 inches. A burn ban issued at the end of August persisted until mid-October.

The rainfall returned to normal after that, and the weather remained normal until winter weather returned in November. LaRue County experienced a day of falling temperatures and wind gust on Nov. 9, with snow beginning to accumulate on bridges and overpasses as temperatures fell into the low 20's. Snow showers and a Winter Weather Advisory continued throughout the next day, with temperatures climbing to freezing during the day and the wind chill hovering at around 18 degrees.

The final weather event of 2025 was a severe thunderstorm on Dec. 18 that featured torrential rainfall and 40+ mph wind gusts and produced a tornado. The El 0 twister touched down along Campbellsville Road in Buffalo with 85 mph peak winds, a travel distance of 1.99 miles and a width of 20 yards. This destroyed a barn, caused roof damage to nearby structures and also damaged trees along McDougal Creek.

With temperatures ranging from -4.7 in January to 94.1° in August and conditions ranging from severely dehydrated to flash flooding, numerous different types of weather were seen in LaRue County throughout 2025. The LaRue County Herald News covered these and other weather events that occurred and will continue

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