

# BACK TO SCHOOL: Laurel County students kick off 2025-2026 school year



PHOTOS BY MADISON NANTZ

These Wyan-Pine Grove Comets blasted off into a new school year.

Students across Laurel County Public Schools returned to the classroom last Thursday, August 7, marking the start of the 2025-2026 school year. The first day back brought fresh school supplies, familiar faces, and new routines as students and staff began another year of learning.

**RIGHT: Staff and students reunited with gleeful greetings.**



Parents signed their students in upon entry to the school.



Wyan-Pine Grove Elementary School, as well as other schools in the Laurel County Public Schools district, began the new school year Thursday.



PHOTO BY MADISON NANTZ

South Laurel High School's FFA chapter was recognized for multiple recent achievements.

## SCHOOL

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for its implementation of the Renaissance Program.

South Laurel High School was also recognized for multiple achievements by its FFA (Future Farmers of America) chapter. After winning the regional championship in March, the school's FFA Quiz Bowl leadership development team competed at the Kentucky FFA State Convention in June and won the state championship.

The chapter additionally received recognition from the National FFA Organization as a gold chapter rated a three-star chapter, the highest rating possible. It is one of only nine chapters in Kentucky to achieve that status and will be recognized in October at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis. This marks the

first time in program history for South Laurel FFA.

Board Member Kevin Murray, whose children are part of the program, praised the impact of FFA, stating, "Two of those kids up there are mine, and I can just tell you that programs like this teach life skills and really help. I'm very proud of my children. I'm very proud of this group of seniors."

Moving on to another South Laurel accolade, the board recognized the school for once again being named one of America's Healthiest Schools. This year, the school has earned the recognition in four different areas: bolstering physical education and activity for all students; enriching health education for all students; strengthening social-emotional health and learning through SEL curriculum and trauma-informed care approaches; and

cultivating staff well-being through faculty activities as part of Jostens Renaissance.

The board also honored two elementary principals for their participation in the Truist Leadership Institute for School Principals. Principal Melissa Farris of Sublimity completed the institute last year, and Principal Elizabeth Cupp of Bush is participating this year. The institute is a year-long commitment to developing stronger leadership skills.

During her superintendent's report, Denise Griebel reported a smooth start to the new school year, which started last Thursday. She said enrollment remains "somewhat fluid" as new students continue to enroll

daily.

As of Monday, Supt. Griebel shared K-12 enrollment stands at 8,205 — not including preschool, which has not yet begun.

"That's a slight increase over our ending enrollment in May," she stated, adding that "more accurate" data will be shared at the next meeting.

Further, Griebel said the district will continue implementing the Jostens Renaissance Program that "builds and supports school culture." She also shared more schools will be participating in instructional rounds, opening their classrooms to peer observations and feedback for improvement.

Physical Plant Director Danny Bishop went on to explain the London Elementary roofing project item, which was approved by the board. Bishop shared that, during the partial re-roof at London Elementary, deterioration was discovered in the stone coping caps. The solution, developed with the project architect, was to remove the concrete stone coping and replace it with a wood structure covered with metal flashing.

Bishop said this would be more durable long-term, adding the cost will remain within the project's contingency plan.

Board members also approved an emergency reading of new board policy 08.1351. The policy, cover-

ing the Pledge of Allegiance

and moment of silence, had been inadvertently left off the policy list earlier in the summer when new policies and procedures were adopted in response to recent leg-

islation.

The meeting closed after no action was taken in executive session, which had been held for the purposes of a student discipline hearing and personnel matters.

## Sheriff's 2024 Fee Account Audit

- A copy of the complete audit report including financial statements and supplemental information is on file at the Sheriff's Office and is available for public inspection during normal business hours.

- Any citizen may obtain from the Sheriff a copy of the complete audit report, including financial statements and supplemental information for their personal use.

- Citizens requesting a personal copy of the Sheriff's audit report will be charged for duplication costs at a rate that shall not exceed twenty-five (\$0.25) cents per page.

- Copies of the financial statement prepared in accordance with KRS 424.220 are available to the public at no cost at the business address of the officer responsible for preparation of the statement.

### OPEN HOUSE!

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63 Timberland Lane, Corbin, KY 40701

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 16TH • 10 AM - 12 PM**

MLS# 25013980

157 Bryants Way, London, KY 40741

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 16TH • 12 PM - 2 PM**

MLS# 25017627

645 Jennifer Dr., Richmond, KY 40475

MLS# 25013567

624 Saul Begley Rd., Annville, KY 40402

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 17TH • 11 AM - 1 PM**

MLS# 25016670

204 Goldenhead Dr., Berea, KY 40403

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 17TH • 2 PM - 4 PM**

MLS# 25017543

215 Reams St., London, KY 40741

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## Now Hear This

**Carolyn Reeves, Hearing Specialist**

**PROGRAM DEVELOPED TO PROVIDE FREE HEARING AIDS TO LOW-INCOME ADULTS**

An intervention at a free clinic that included comprehensive care for hearing was able to provide recycled, donated hearing aids to low-income adults, according to a study published by JAMA Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery.

Free clinics play an important role in providing health care to uninsured and underinsured individuals. A 2010 survey reported that there are more than 1,000 free clinics providing health care to approximately 1.8 million Americans annually.

The program (Hope for Hearing) secured donated hearing aids, which were obtained by placing advertisements and through direct purchases via funding provided by a \$5,000 intramural grant. During the study period, a total of 84 hearing aids were donated. Seventeen hearing aids (20 percent) were purchased with grant funding; the remainder were donated. Supplies required to make ear molds were also purchased with grant money.

A total of 54 patients had audiograms performed. The patients were provided with free audiograms, hearing aid molds, and hearing aid programming, as well as follow-up appointments to ensure continued proper functioning of their hearing aids. Since 2013, a total of 34 patients have been determined to be eligible for the free program and were offered hearing aid services. Of these, 20 patients (59 percent) have been fitted or are being fitted with free hearing aids. The value of services provided is estimated to be \$2,260 per patient.

"Comprehensive audiologic care including donated hearing aids can be effectively delivered to indigent patients in a well-established free clinic and academic medical center collaboration. The opportunity for low-income patients to benefit from hearing rehabilitation at minimal personal cost can represent an effective extension of safety-net services," the authors write.

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## Hearing Aid Center

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