Board of Education moves forward with new preschool class

CRITTENDEN COUNTY | Board of Education

BY DAVID R. DRENNAN
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A new preschool classroom and a change to a new virtual learning platform were among items approved by the Crittenden County Board of Education during its July 23 meeting.

The board approved creation of an additional preschool teacher and assistant after reviewing enrollment figures. During its working session earlier this month, the board discussed the possibility of a half day preschool class; however, after polling families, Director of Special Education George Cavannah reported that the half day option would be inconvenient for many.

The board also approved a preschool tuition rate increase. The rate increased from $200 to $225 per school month. Tuition is assessed only to students accepted when spaces remain available after qualifying students have been enrolled.

Another item that the board revisited from its working session is its virtual learning guidelines. During the working session, Driver explained that the district was switching from Commonwealth Academy to Edmentum for its virtual learning platform. The board approved an Edmentum plan that includes only elementary students grandfathered from Commonwealth Academy.

"No new elementary students will be accepted," Driver stated.

The middle school virtual program will cap its enrollment at five students, including those grandfathered in from the Commonwealth program. Enrollment guidelines for the high school's virtual program will remain as in previous years, through switching to Edmentum.

District Technology Coordinator Ben Grainger shared updates from the district's technology department. He reported that some changes over the summer were "good, and others cost money." These updates included new wireless access points, specifically in Rocket Arena. Additionally, with the Kentucky Department of Education not paying for anti-virus software anymore, the district picked up that cost, using Sentinel One as its new anti-virus software. Grainger also explained the new Connected User Experience, a way to streamline account creation for district employees.

"It's a big time saver for account creation," added Grainger.

He also highlighted several grants the district has received that will add new technology to the schools, including more Verkatta cameras, 375 new Chromebooks, a new computer for every classroom, and three 130" ViewSonic boards. These boards are portable and will be stationed at Rocket Arena, the high school multi-purpose room, and the elementary school.

Superintendent Tonya Driver gave her report, speaking of a "super busy time" for hiring new staff. She also introduced Dr. Jeff Stamper, formerly of Wolfe County, as the new director of instruction. Driver applauded his experience and contacts. Driver also explained how House Bill 757 would change the way schools would levy taxes moving forward. This included that if the district decided to levy taxes at or above the 4% rate, a public hearing would be held and two weeks of advertisements are required. Driver added that the district hadn't received information from the state on tax rates, but she hopes that information will be received by the Aug. 6 working session. Because of the new rules, Driver didn't rule out a special-called board meeting.

Driver and Principal Josh Cook reported that the high school's DECA and FFA chapters earned high accolades from their organizations. DECA won a state level silver designation and FFA was given a gold designation for its year of work.

Board Chairman Chris Cook briefly highlighted his attendance at the Summer Institute at the Kentucky School Board Association. He attended financial leadership sessions and spoke on one of the panels.

"I am very excited as we continue to get better," Cook explained. The longtime board chairman added that the experience will help him not only as a board member but as a member of the district's resource efficiency team.

The board gave second reading of the new policies and procedures that came from KSBA. The district's maternity leave policy was added to that action.

Also in the meeting, the board approved several memorandum of understandings and memberships for teacher professional development, student programs, and grants.

It also approved the parking pass for high schoolers to be increased from $5 to $10 for the upcoming school year.

Crittenden County deputies Tyler Garner and Dustin Bolen were among local law enforcement officers who participated in an active shooter training exercise Tuesday on the Crittenden Community Hospital campus. The drill was held inside the hospital's former administrative annex. Sheriff Evan Head said the building, which is scheduled to be demolished soon, provided a realistic training environment. The building is scheduled to be razed within two weeks, hospital CEO Shawn Bright said.

Two indicted by grand jury

LIVINGSTON COUNTY | Grand Jury

STAFF REPORT

The Livingston County Grand Jury returned indictments against two defendants July 7.

Brandon Joseph Demarcus, 46, of Sydney, Ohio was indicted on charges of first-degree possession of a controlled substance involving cocaine, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of marijuana.

According to court records, deputies on Sunday, May 3 were dispatched to a disturbance on Fayette Drive in Grand Rivers. There, deputies found what they believe was 2-3 grams of cocaine and other items.

Rachel Nicole Coursey, 37, of Ledbetter was indicted on charges of first-degree possession of a controlled substance involving less than 2 grams of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia and failure to notify the Kentucky Department of Transportation of an address change. An original first-degree trafficking charge was amended to possession.

Court records allege that on Feb. 28, Livingston County authorities stopped a vehicle in which Coursey was a passenger because it had expired plates. Officers found the alleged drugs in a purse they believed belonged to Coursey.

An indictment is a formal accusation and does not establish guilt.

MOVES

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ational area and the several hunting seasons that draw countless outdoorsmen each year. And, oh yes, we do have a fairly large Amish community that draws visitors.

However, like most small towns, our little hamlet has suffered with the advent of big-box stores coming to towns or cities nearby. Stores such as Walmart, Home Depot, Lowes and Kroger have stifled small businesses here, as they have in most small towns. There just isn't any way for a small, locally-owned business to compete with the big stores in terms of the variety of products and services offered, or in price.

I was not only curious as to what had lured these people to Crittenden County, but I also wondered how they had adjusted to small-town living. Were they happy here? Had they found it difficult to adjust to small-town living? Did they like the people they had met? Did they miss having shopping and entertainment options in town?

I started interviewing some of the people I had met, asking them questions about their relocation and how they had adjusted. I've met some remarkably interesting people, and I'll be sharing some of their stories with you over the next several weeks or months.

As for me, I moved back to Marion because my husband had passed away and I had no family in Cincinnati; all my family was in Crittenden County. I needed to come home … home to a place filled with memories of growing up, seeing familiar places like Fohs Hall, where I went to school from first through fifth grade; and a place where I could drive past houses where my family had lived and retrace the route I walked to and from school every day.

But making a move like this, 300 miles away from the home I'd known for over 50 years, was daunting for a woman alone, especially for a woman like me, someone who was of a certain age. But after a couple of years of thinking hard about it and making numerous lists of pros and cons, I felt secure in my decision to relocate to my hometown.

So, by the first of August 2023, I was enjoying my new home. Marion is a comfortable and safe place to live; it is also situated close to cities and to doctors who can provide medical and hospital care when needed. I am happy and content, and I also know that I have now come full circle! I am where I am supposed to be.

I have been warmly welcomed in this community, and I can attest to the opinion of other transplants when they say how friendly and helpful the people here are to newcomers. I hope you will enjoy learning more about the people who have moved into our area and who have hopefully found acceptance, comfort and happiness here. Make it a point to get to know these new neighbors; welcome them and make them feel a part of our small town.

Jenny Zimmer is a freelance contributor to The Crittenden Press. She is a retired Human Resources Executive who, after living in Cincinnati for 53 years, moved back to Marion, her home town, in 2023. She is currently involved with The Friends of the Library. She is a published author with a fourth book coming out in April 2026. She loves to paint, read and play Mahjong.

SUTTON

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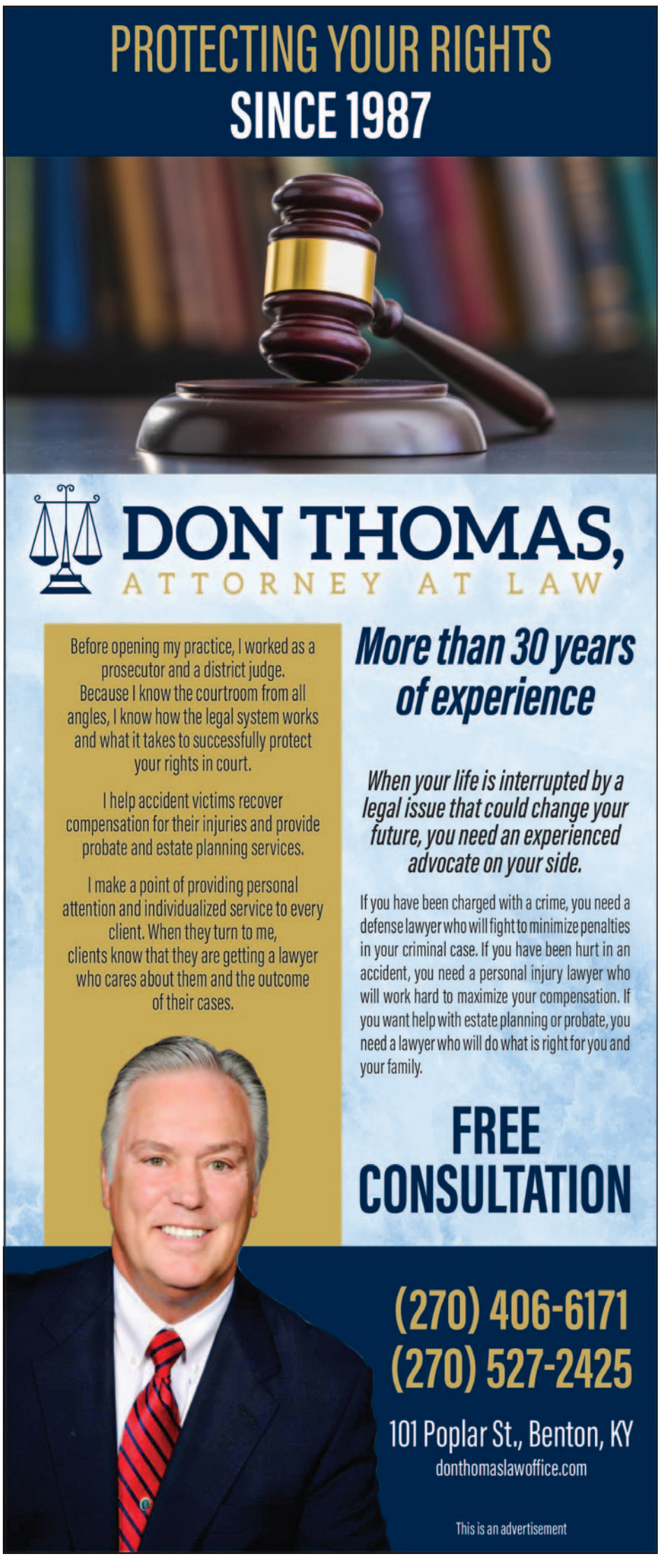
once or twice a month. And she said that getting her nails done is enjoyable when she has free time.

Sutton says she would recommend this area to anyone else interested in relocating, particularly for those who might be looking for a slower pace of life, less traffic, friendly people and fewer stop lights.