

Estill Co. Comes Together to Celebrate Recovery

by **DANA STEPP**
Sr. Project Manager of Grants Department

Mercy Health – Marcum and Wallace Hospital

On Saturday, September 19th, 314 community members gathered at the Estill County Fairgrounds for the 5th Annual Estill County Recovery Rally, hosted by Mercy Health – Marcum and Wallace Hos-

pital. The event highlighted an ongoing community-wide commitment to addressing substance use disorder, reducing stigma, strengthening partnerships, and connecting individuals and families with recovery resources.

The hospital's Healing, Empowering, and Living Program (HELP) brings together peer support, spiritual support, com-

munity paramedicine, and behavioral health expertise to connect people with services, provide education and training, and distribute naloxone.

Mercy Health – Marcum and Wallace Hospital have been deeply committed to combating substance use disorder (SUD) for years. In 2026 alone, our dedicated staff have contributed countless hours to programs and

initiatives supporting recovery, including:

- * Court Program with Estill County Courts for diversions

- * Family Accountability, Intervention, and Response (FAIR) teams

- * Overdose Task Force and Quick Response Team (QRT) visits

- * Collaborations with community partners: Estill County Health Department, New Vista, Helping Hands

Outreach, KY-ASAP, Operation Unite, Project HOME, Recovery meetings, and more

We have also provided over 1310 patient encounter hours and donated time to ensure transportation and other resources are available for those seeking recovery. Our QRT visits, in partnership with the Estill County Sheriff's Department and Estill County EMS, allow us to respond quickly and

coordinate care for individuals affected by the opioid crisis.

The Recovery Rally represents more than a single event. It reflects the sustained collaboration of 18 agencies that include health-care providers, first responders, local organizations, recovery advocates, and community partners who are working together to create opportunities for recovery.

Fiscal court to sell surplus property on on-line

Judge/Executive Donnie Watson opened Monday's fiscal court meeting by announcing the surplus equipment sale.

There is a long list of items which can be bid on online over the next two weeks. The list includes numerous vehicles, including a fire ladder truck.

Furniture from the senior center is also included on the surplus list.

Judge Watson said the bidding will end on October 1.

Anyone interested in bidding on an item may stop by the judge's office to see the list and the web site for bidding.

Frank Dixon was

hired as a part-time firefighter effective October 1 at \$14.00 per hour. Watson stated that Dixon has worked as a firefighter before.

Raiden Dotson will complete his probation at the Estill County Animal Shelter on September 23. He is working full time as the director of the animal shelter.

Part-time dispatchers, Caitlyn Hall and Marvin Hereford, will finish their probation period on September 24.

To apply for a county job, a person may inquire at the county judge's office. All positions are contingent upon pre-employment and post-employment

testing, including drug testing, a criminal background check, completion of an interreal training program, and completion of the probationary period.

Estill County Fire Chief Derrick Muncie reported on fire runs since the court met on August 18.

Muncie said that department has made 22 runs since that meeting and are up to 279 runs for this year.

He predicts the department is on track to set a record this year with the number of runs. The highest runs have been 282 to 285.

Muncie also stated that fall fire season will begin October 1 and end

December 15. During this time, outdoor burning is prohibited except between the hours of 6 pm. and 6 a.m. unless the ground is snow covered.

Hargett Fire Chief Rob Forehand said that department has made 142 runs so far this year.

He added the highlight of the month was the recent water training with Millers Creek Fire Department at Lock 12.

The training was paid for through donations, and was also attended by Clay City and Richmond firefighters.

"We got the opportunity to use our new-to-us boat," Forehand

stated.

Ronnie Riddell, director of Emergency Operations, said one of their vendors had left. He added the state 911 service board has been working with the local 911 to replace the vendor, and they had hired a new vendor for service and maintenance.

Riddell stated this has worked out well.

Dotson reported the Estill County Animal Shelter is no different than other animal shelters. "Our walls don't grow," he stated about overcrowding.

He added the lives of 150 pets had been saved this year. This included six pregnant dogs, four starved dogs, and four

dogs with heartworms.

Dotson showed pictures of two dogs which were recently adopted or went to a rescue. The adopted dog went to Canada.

Dotson mentioned donations for spay and neuter and other items needed at the shelter.

He will be placing a photo gallery of adoptable animals at Meade's.

The Estill Animal Shelter will also participate in an adoption event on Saturday in Richmond.

Judge Watson said the mold where a water line had leaked at the bank building had been removed. It is now ready to replace the heating and air unit.

Fiscal court disagrees with Extension Service tax rate

The Estill Fiscal Court met twice last week in special sessions to enter tax rates into the minutes so that property tax bills can be printed.

It takes time to print the tax bills and mail them to arrive on October 1.

At the special fiscal court meeting on Monday, September 14, the fiscal court adjourned without taking action because of what was considered an error on the Extension Service's tax rates.

Judge/Executive Donnie Watson called Kayla Watts at the University of Kentucky who had prepared the tax rates for the local extension service. She reportedly told him the tax rates were correct.

The fiscal court then met again Wednesday afternoon, September 16, to enter the tax rates into the court minutes so the tax bills can be printed.

Watson stated the fiscal court does not set the tax rates of spe-

cial districts, including the one for the extension service. The rates are set by boards of the taxing districts.

Judge Watson estimated the tax rates the extension service presented would give them about 11 percent increase in revenue.

Kentucky's House Bill 44 which was passed in 1979 remains in effect. It gives taxing districts three options.

The district can take the compensating rate which will give them approximately the same revenue as the previous year.

The district can also take a 4% increase in tax revenues but must advertise it in the county's legal newspaper and hold a public hearing.

If a taxing district takes more than a 4% increase in revenues, they must also go through the same steps as the 4% increase. However, anything over 4% is subject to voter recall.

The Estill County Tribune is the legal newspaper for Estill County.

Three taxing districts published notices in this newspaper stating they were taking a 4% increase in revenues and holding public hearings. Those districts were the City of Irvine, the Estill County Board of Education and the Powell County Board of Education.

Because Powell County no longer has a newspaper in their county, by law, a public agency can publish their ads in the legal newspaper of a county adjacent to Powell County.

The ads for the school boards ran for two weeks. The ads stated how much money the school districts planned to receive with the tax increase and what those funds would be spent on.

Estill County's total assessments in 2025 was \$532,9868,567, but this year it

has increased to \$560,111,862. Because of the larger assessment, the property taxes for the Estill County Board of Education remains about the same.

Other taxing districts in the county lowered their property tax rates if they took the compensating rates.

The Extension Service's rate on real property in 2025 was 7 cents per \$100 assessed property. The rate they proposed for 2026 is 7.9 cents per \$100 of property.

That taxing district also increased the rate on personal property from 18.14 to 20.94 cents per \$100 assessed value. Their rates on motor vehicles and watercraft remained at 3.9 cents per \$100 assessed value.

Watson said that if only one property owner challenges the extension service in court and wins the case, the service will have to refund taxpayers.



Raiden Dotson, animal control officer for Estill County, presented photos to the fiscal court of before and after photos of dogs which have been recently adopted by the animal shelter.

Lexington man arrested after Irvine's traffic stop

A Lexington man faces eight charges in Estill County following a traffic stop Thursday, Sept. 17 on S. Irvine Road made by Irvine Officer Jeffrey Richardson.

The citation for Thomas Jefferson McCoy, 45, states that Officer Richardson ran the vehicle's license plate through LINK/NCIC, and it advised that no records were found.

Officer Richardson then made the traffic stop. He said the driver was unable to provide a driver's license, proof of registration, or an insurance card.

The citation states that IPD was given permission to search the vehicle. The driver removed the contents of his pocket and pulled out a small clear container with a small baggie containing a crystal like substance.

Officer Richardson said he called Maryland State Police to run the VIN number of the vehicle. It came back to McCoy but was not valid.

McCoy was charged with no registration receipt, no registration plates, failure to produce insurance card, failure of owner to maintain required insurance, 1st offense, possession of a controlled substance, 1st degree, 3rd or > offense (Meth), no operators/moped license, and license to be in possession.

Officer Mitchel Grater and Deputy Jason Conrad assisted with the investigation

Amber Waves

IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO EAT THIS SANDWICH THEN JUST GO OUTSIDE.

IT'S GOT HEALTHY STUFF LIKE SPROUTS AND YUMMY CUCUMBERS.

IT'S GOOD FOR YOU AND WILL MAKE YOU GROW BIG AND STRONG.

IF YOU'RE FEELING LITTLE AND WEAK AVOID THE KITCHEN.

©2015 King Features Syndicate, Inc. All rights reserved.

by Dave T. Phipps

Need A Subscription?
Call (606) 723-5012