



WCPS RETIREES RECEIVED portable rocking chairs in appreciation for their years of service to the school district. They are pictured enjoying the gift at the district's closing day program.

NOT JUST ONE but three individuals were recognized as the district #1 WC Support Staff of the Year - Katie Lockhart (left) and Lindsay Branson (right) are pictured with superintendent Aaron Harrell. Misty McVay was not present for the program.



THE #1 WC EMPLOYEE of the Year is Matt Pratt, WC ATC instructor. Pratt received his award from Superintendent Aaron Harrell.

Local Educator Takes Position In Henderson County

Henderson County Schools has announced that Dawn Forker is the new principal of the district's Thelma B. Johnson Early Learning Center. Forker is stepping down as the District Assessment Coordinator and director of elementary instruction in Webster County. She also previously served as the principal at Sebree Elementary School.

Forker brings more than two decades of educational experience to the role, including leadership as an assistant superintendent, elementary principal, and special education teacher. Throughout her career, she has focused on strengthening school culture, supporting teachers, and creating strong learning foundations for young students. Her background in special education and instructional leadership has helped shape her commitment to ensuring every child begins school with the support and opportunities needed for success.

A Henderson native, Forker is a graduate of Henderson County High School and earned her Associate in Arts degree from Henderson Community College before continuing her education at Murray State University, Indiana Wesleyan University, and the University of the Cumberlands. She holds advanced degrees in curriculum and instruction, instructional leadership, and school superintendent leadership.

"I am incredibly honored to be selected as the next principal of the Thelma B. Johnson Early Learning Center," said Forker. "Having the opportunity to serve the students and families of my home community of Henderson fills me with immense pride and excitement. It is especially meaningful to give back right where my own educational journey began as a student at Seventh Street Elementary School. I look forward to bringing my leadership experience to support a successful, joyful year of learning and growth alongside the dedicated staff and amazing students at Thelma B. Johnson ELC—where the pursuit of excellence begins."

Henderson County Schools Superintendent Bob Lawson adds, "We are pleased to welcome Ms. Forker as the next principal of Thelma B. Johnson Early Learning Center. Her experience, leadership, and strong connection to the Henderson community make her the perfect fit to lead Thelma B. Johnson Early Learning Center as we continue to pursue excellence and build strong foundations for our youngest learners."

WC Schools Host Closing Day Celebration

Webster County Schools held its Closing Day Celebration on Tuesday, May 19th, in the Webster County Middle School gym. Superintendent Aaron Harrell welcomed staff as the program began.

Retirees were recognized for their years of service in Webster County Schools. 2026 WCPS retirees include:

- * Patricia Bryant—Bus Driver, 31 years of service
- * Lori Corbin- Digital Learning Coach, 29 years of service
- * Marsha Jenkins—Inst Asst

- II, 33 years of service
- * Eddie Milum—Teacher, 26 years of service
- * Kathleen Robinson—GT Instructor, 26 years of service
- * Richard Sarles—Math Teacher, 2nd retirement, 2 years of service at WC
- * William Tabor—Chemistry Teacher, 27 years of service
- * Carla Brashear - Food Service, 26 years of service
- * Susie Jones - Teacher, 23 years of service

The 2026 Employees of the Month were celebrated one more

time before the announcement of the 2026 Employees of the Year. Congratulations to the Employees of the Year: the MSD Team at WCHS, Lindsay Branson, Katie Lockhart, and Misty McVay; Support Staff of the Year; and Matt Pratt, Certified Staff of the Year. Mr. Harrell presented a closing address before Kim Saalwaechter recognized him for his 21 years of service to Webster County Schools.

After the celebration, staff were treated to lunch and dessert from a variety of food trucks.

Hearing Loss A Growing Concern For Farmers

By Vicki Shadrick
Extension Agent
for Agriculture
and Natural Resources

Hearing loss continues to be a significant but often overlooked health issue among farmers and agricultural workers. According to national data, millions of Americans are affected by hearing impairment, and those working in agriculture face an especially high risk due to prolonged exposure to loud environments.

Common farm sounds—such as tractors, grain dryers, livestock, and power equipment—can reach damaging noise levels, and repeated exposure over time can lead to permanent hearing damage. In many cases, the effects develop gradually, making it difficult for individuals to recognize the loss until it becomes severe.

Studies show that more than one-third of farmers in the United States experience some degree of hearing loss. Nationwide, over 22 million Americans are exposed to harmful noise levels each year, and hearing loss ranks as one of the most common health concerns, particularly in occupations involving machinery. Unlike sudden injuries, hearing loss often occurs slowly,

building over many years of daily exposure. As a result, many farmers may not notice changes in their hearing until communication becomes difficult or safety is compromised.

The issue is especially relevant in Kentucky, where nearly 700,000 residents are identified as deaf or hard of hearing. The state ranks among the highest in the nation for hearing impairment rates, making prevention and awareness efforts critical for agricultural communities. Local farmers, who often work long hours around loud equipment, are at increased risk if proper precautions are not taken.

Fortunately, hearing loss is largely preventable. Experts recommend reducing sound exposure whenever possible by selecting quieter equipment and ensuring regular maintenance to keep machinery operating efficiently. Simple actions—such as lubricating parts, replacing worn components, and using enclosed cabs—can significantly reduce noise levels. In addition, limiting time spent in high-noise environments and taking breaks away from loud equipment can help protect hearing over the long term.

The use of personal protective

equipment is another key line of defense. Earplugs and earmuffs, when worn correctly, can greatly reduce noise exposure. These devices are rated by their Noise Reduction Rating (NRR), and choosing equipment with a higher rating provides greater protection. Consistent use is essential, especially when operating machinery such as chainsaws, tractors, or grain dryers, where noise levels can quickly reach hazardous levels.

Health professionals also encourage individuals to monitor their hearing and seek medical advice if they notice changes. Hearing evaluations can detect early signs of damage, allowing for timely intervention. Left unaddressed, hearing loss can impact overall well-being, contributing to communication challenges, social isolation, and even cognitive decline.

As planting, harvesting, and daily farm operations continue across the region, farmers are encouraged to make hearing protection a routine part of their safety practices. By taking simple, proactive steps today, agricultural workers can preserve their hearing and maintain a better quality of life for years to come.

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and
Drink

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