

# The Last Page of 2025

Around 6 a.m. on New Year’s Eve morning, I sat at my kitchen table sipping on a cup of coffee. The house was quiet and still, and I was thinking about the journey my wife and I had in front of us. She was scheduled for out-patient surgery at Pineville hospital at 8 a.m. and we wanted to get there a little early. Nothing too serious.

After getting ready, we donned our winter coats and loaded into the car which I had started a half hour before, then hit the road. The car was warm, and I could see the sleep sticking to her from the mild glow of the dashboard lights. It was somehow cozy.

The drive from Corbin to Pineville takes about 45 minutes. I turned the radio on low, and “Landslide” by Fleetwood Mac whispered out of the speakers as we cruised down a lonely Main Street, which still harbored the red and green decorations from Christmas, and then on to Masters and made our way to Highway 25E.

Night still held the morning, and as our little Nissan glided down the dark road we talked about Christmas dinner, friends and family. We laughed out loud at stories we had both told several times already about our grandkids.

Finally, we pulled around the bend leading into Pineville, and I could barely see the soft light of the sun just over those wall-like mountains, and it dawned on me that this was about the same time I would be pulling into my parking spot at the Middle School if this had been a workday.

We pulled into the hospital parking lot just as her doctor was getting out of his car. My wife asked, “Is this parking for doctors only?”

“Nah,” he said, “Park wherever you want. We’re pretty laid back around here.” I love this guy.

We registered and eventually they took her back for her procedure. When I went into the hall, I could still feel the Chapstick on my lips from when I kissed her before they took her back. I went to a coffee bar that the hospital provided and then to the special waiting room and read a book on my phone.

After about 30 minutes, the doctor came out, and I sat my coffee down beside the chair and stood to greet him. He told me everything went fine. We had been here several times before, the doctor and I, in this same room and hallway. I might have been wearing the same shirt, I am pretty sure he was wearing the same pants. I was familiar with him, his voice, this hospital, the elevators, the check-in procedure. The road to Pineville.

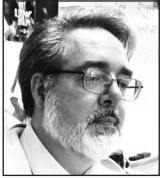
About an hour later, when I signed the form to release her, the nurse handed me a clip board. I stood awkwardly with coffee in one hand and pen in the other. The nurse said, “I’ll hold that for you.” So, I awkwardly handed her my coffee and signed the form.

In my thirties, I aimed for perseverance. I never realized there existed a virtue beyond that fortitude which would serve me as much. Or maybe I did. All I know is . . . I drink a lot of coffee.

Consequently, the whole last day of 2025 reminded me of a quote I once read. It stated, “Imagine reading a book with no way to turn back the page. How carefully would you read it? That’s life.”

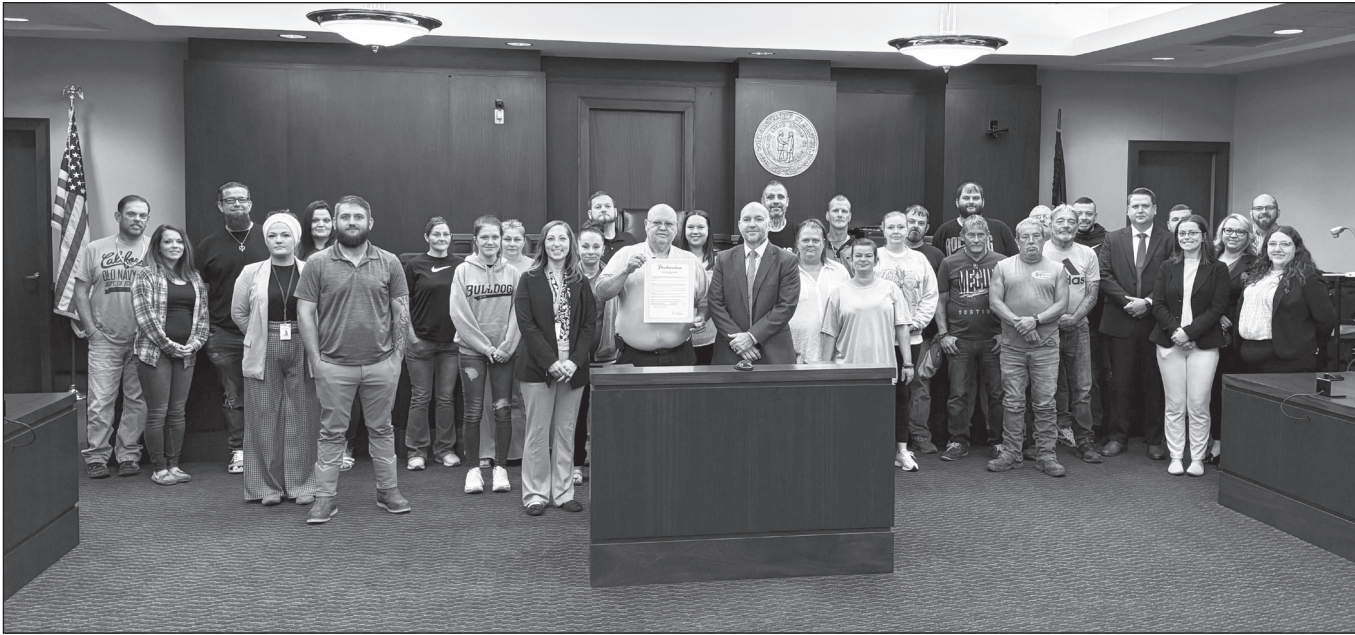
As the years pass, I am sure the moment, the memory, and the kiss will be bookmarked regardless. Reflectively, while driving home from Pineville New Year’s Eve, my lethargic wife told me how that kiss was the last thing she remembered before they took her back.

And so, “We two who’ve peddled in the stream,  
From morning sun til night,  
The seas between us roared and swelled,  
Since the days of auld lang syne.”



**The Teacher’s Desk**  
By Brian Theodore

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR



**Laurel County Judge Executive David Westerfield signed a proclamation declaring May as National Treatment Court Month.** | Photo contributed

# Treatment courts reduce crime, save lives, and strengthen communities



**The December ceremony featured nine new graduates.** | Photo contributed



**London Mayor Randall Weddle, right, signed the proclamation declaring May as National Treatment Court Month.** | Photo contributed

The 27th Judicial Circuit Court Drug Court Program is excited to announce that it recently held its second Graduation Program for 2025. The program honored nine new graduates for completion of the drug court program. A program made available to non-violent felon offenders who are often struggling with substance use and mental health issues when committing their crimes.

Every day, courtrooms across the United States are filled with individuals impacted by substance use and mental

health disorders. Without treatment to address the underlying cause of criminal behavior, many will continue to cycle in and out of the justice system, burdening law enforcement and at tremendous expense to taxpayers. Treatment courts break this cycle by holding individuals accountable through a combination of treatment and rigorous supervision and returning them to the community as healthy, productive citizens. Today, approximately 4,000 treatment courts across the nation are now considered the

most successful justice intervention in our nation’s history, proving that when one person, family, and community rises, we all rise.

May is recognized as National Treatment Court Month throughout the United States, and this year our drug court program celebrated in two ways: First, Laurel County and the City of London issued proclamations recognizing May as National Treatment Court Month, and Second, our program held a graduation ceremony recognizing 12 graduates for completing the requirements of the drug court program.

Those Proclamations de-

clared successful intervention and improvement within our community. Specifically, that Treatment Courts are recognized as the most successful justice system intervention in our nation’s history because they reduce crime, provide economic benefits to our communities, and combine accountability with evidence-based treatment. Our program’s objective is to eliminate substance use and appropriately manage mental health disorders through treatment, thereby preventing fatal overdoses. We partner with community leaders and local public officials, bringing together public safety and public health. Treatment Courts such as ours provide participants the opportunity for employment, education, and stability — things often unobtainable while under the influence of their addictions. The Proclamations raise awareness to communities in the Commonwealth on how Treatment Courts successfully reduce crime, decrease costs relating to victimization, and critically improve the lives of not only those participating in our program, but those residing in the communities who are affected by this increasing devastation.

**Lucas M. Joyner**  
**Specialty Court Judge for the**  
**27th Judicial Circuit Drug Court Program**



**The June ceremony featured 12 new graduates.** | Photo contributed