

# Knox recognizes school social workers following Governor's proclamation

## KCPS NEWS

During his Team Kentucky update, Governor Andy Beshear signed a proclamation on Thursday, March 13, officially recognizing March as School Social Worker Month in the Commonwealth.

In the Knox County Public Schools, social workers Rhonda Clouse and Danielle Ramsey are being recognized for their dedication to students. They provide essential services, including connecting families with community resources, ensuring access to basic needs, assisting with child welfare and attendance issues, and leading social-emotional learning (SEL) counseling groups.

"One of my favorite ways to serve our kids is through our SEL Groups," said Ramsey. "It allows me to get to know more about some of our students and

how to better serve them. It is also an opportunity to mix in fun ways for our kids to learn about social and emotional obstacles they may face."

The proclamation highlights the ongoing efforts of social workers to support students' academic success and overall well-being.

"It really makes you feel like you are making a difference in their lives when the kids look forward to seeing you each week, and you can see the progress they are making over time," said Clouse.

In his speech, Governor Beshear said, "School social workers are our boots on the ground, doing the work every single day to create a positive environment in our schools."

"They look out for our children and connect them to resources they need to thrive."



Rhonda Clouse and Danielle Ramsey were recognized for their work with students.

# Union Commonwealth Univ. president speaks to Corbin Rotary Club

## BY TREVOR SHERMAN CORBIN NEWS JOURNAL

Growth and community engagement were two of the biggest topics that were touched upon by Union Commonwealth University President Dr. DJ Washington during a recent presentation to the Corbin Rotary Club.

"Union is booming with energy, excitement and urgency," Washington said to Rotary Club members. "We are really excited."

Washington, who is a native of the Nashville, Tenn. area, recounted his own college years at Union, where he played basketball as a Bulldog from 2000 to 2003. He said that, despite his teammate's differences in backgrounds, he remembers how everyone would come together on the court in order to achieve a common goal of winning games. He implied that he wants to see that same kind of teamwork mentality on campus now, as the newly branded Union Commonwealth University seeks to expand its offerings and make a positive impact on the community at-large.

Washington explained that he served on Union's board of

trustees for five years before being named president. In that time, he said that he had many concerns about what he called the institution's "financial challenges." He is happy to report now, however, that things have "turned around really quickly" after the implementation of several operational changes.

Washington said that UCU should soon be seeing an approximate \$5 million increase in revenues generated, and thanks to a cost reduction program that does not include layoffs, he said that the ship is getting righted on campus without having to send anyone home.

"We're doing really well," Washington said. "And as we continue to turn things around from a financial standpoint, I think that you're going to see some really cool growth around our campus."

Elaborating on that growth, Washington said that enrollment at Union has increased significantly, with an estimated 240 percent jump between 2020 and 2025. With the increased enrollment comes a need for additional housing options, which is some-



Union Commonwealth University President Dr. DJ Washington spoke to the Corbin Rotary Club recently.

PHOTO BY TREVOR SHERMAN

thing that is being addressed in the form of a \$7 million renovation project that will transform a former science building on campus into a new "living and learning community."

With about 400 beds currently on campus, the new facility

will add between 50-60 beds in the upstairs portion of the building. The ground floor will contain an academic space that will be dedicated to health sciences. Washington said that he is excited about the impact that this center will have in terms of

workforce development, with many future professionals in the field of health science being able to receive the education and training that they will need to be successful post-college.

Other comments that Washington made during his presentation included highlighting some of the differences between operating as Union Commonwealth University as opposed to Union College. He said that the designation shows that the institution is able to be more comprehensive in its academic offerings, including online programs and Master degree programs. He said that he hopes to eventually add doctoral programs as well.

When it comes to online enrollment, Washington said that those students have played a large role in the university's overall growth. Currently, he said that total enrollment stands at about 1,300 students, which is nearly doubled when compared to when he was a student in the early 2000's.

For more information on Union Commonwealth University, visit them online at [www.unionky.edu](http://www.unionky.edu).



Knox Central Lady Panther standout Kim Mays Mills will be inducted into the Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame in September.

# KC Basketball Legend to be Inducted into Hall of Fame

## STAFF REPORT

A local basketball legend was named to the 2025 Class of Inductees for the Kentucky High School Basketball Hall of Fame.

Of the 13 inductees, local Knox Central Lady Panthers standout Kim Mays Mills, Class of 1990, was among the group.

"Kim Mays Mills started for the Knox Central varsity Lady Panthers as a seventh grader. She became a tremendous scorer and led the state in scoring her senior year with a 41.6 points per game average. She set 13\* region records for most points scored in a game (59 points) and career points

(3,952). Kim earned All-State honors in 1988, 1989, and 1990 and was named Kentucky's Miss Basketball in 1990. She was named to the prestigious Parade and Street and Smith's All-American Teams in 1990 as well. She earned a basketball scholarship to Eastern Kentucky University, where she continued her successful career," read a statement about Mills in a release from the Hall of Fame.

The induction celebration will take place at 7 p.m., Saturday, September 6, 2025 at the Historic State Theater in Elizabethtown, Ky.



## Conducting Business a Day Early

The Knox County Fiscal Court met in regular session on Tuesday, March 25, a day earlier than normal. Several items were discussed and approved at the Tuesday afternoon meeting. For the complete story, see [mountainadvocate.com](http://mountainadvocate.com) and the April 2 issue of The Mountain Advocate. Above, from left, Magistrates Roger Mills (District 1), Keith Abner (District 2) and Tony Golden (District 3) prepare to get Tuesday's meeting started.

PHOTO BY NIKKI STANLEY

# Kuhl keynotes for March Chamber luncheon



Kentucky Small Business Development Center Director Rodney Kuhl  
Small Business Administration Rodney Kuhl

## BY NIKKI STANLEY

Union Commonwealth University hosted the month Knox County Chamber of Commerce Meeting, Tuesday, March 25th, where speaker Kentucky Small Business Development Center Director Rodney Kuhl spoke about America's Small Business Development Center

Kentucky (SBDC). The noon luncheon was attended by local officials, including Barbourville Tourism Director Marcia Dixon many other members of the Knox business community.

Kuhl spoke to the audience about what SBDC does and how it helps both existing business owners AND

people who simply have a business idea and would like to see where it goes. They have experienced and knowledgeable staff who provide business coaching and training services and can help you find ways to fund your business ideas and how to get it off the ground.