

# Grateful for the 2025 SOAR Appalachian Recovery Award and Our Community's Support for Freedom House

Dear Editor,

On behalf of Volunteers of America Mid-States, my colleagues and I are deeply honored to receive the 2025 Appalachian Recovery Award at the SOAR Summit. This recognition belongs not just to our organization, but to the entire Clay County community that has embraced and supported Freedom House from day one.

Since opening our doors in March 2020, Freedom House Manchester has served 689 women, 382 children, and welcomed 25 healthy babies into the world — providing a safe place for mothers to heal from substance use disorder, rebuild their lives, and strengthen their families. These numbers reflect far more than statistics; they represent transformed lives and generational change.

Freedom House and our five other programs have created 90 new jobs in Clay County and the region. Many of these new jobs at Freedom House are uniquely filled by graduates of Freedom House. This “full-circle” employment model not only strengthens our workforce but also provides powerful role models for the women currently in treatment — proof that recovery is real and sustainable.

“I’m extremely grateful for the Freedom House program, and I highly recommend going there,” said Nakota, a recent graduate. “It really helped me



and my daughter to stay together, and it saved us from being torn apart. I will forever be grateful.”

Vanessa, another recent graduate who has two children, said, “Come in, put in the work, and it will pay off.”

The need for Freedom House continues to grow. Each week, we hear from women who are ready to change their lives but because of our space limitations can’t be part of our life-changing program. Expansion is not just an opportunity; it is a moral imperative. By increasing our capacity, we can serve more mothers, save more babies from being born into life-altering circumstances, and continue to build a stronger, healthier community for everyone. To answer this need, our program expansion is scheduled to open in the Spring of 2026.

To our partners, donors, neighbors, and local leaders — thank you for believing in Freedom House and in the women we serve. Your support fuels hope and makes recovery possible. Together, we are proving that when a community invests in second chances, the return is measured in healthy families, thriving children, and a healthy Clay County/Manchester for all.

With gratitude,  
Jennifer Hancock  
President & CEO  
Volunteers of America Mid-States

# Thank You

This isn’t my normal column for the week. Unfortunately it’s the one I never thought I’d write.

A public appreciation for everyone who has loved on us through the death of my son, Cashton. He lost his life in a car accident and to say that our world has been rocked doesn’t even scratch the surface.

It has devastated us. But I have seen so much good from the people in our community that I just have to share it. Eating is the last thing we could think of doing after he passed. But eating is also a necessity.

I caught myself going long periods of time without eating until people began bringing food. It was then that I realized, I could just grab something and not have to actually think to prepare it.



MELISSA GARRISON  
-DOWN HOME WITH MELISSA

People have done this since last Sunday, and today is Sunday. We have been able to feed our entire family on the holler that is grieving all week long. You took that burden from us. If you brought food- thank you and so much love to you.

People have sent money to us which will be used for Cashton’s headstone. Thank you. More gifts than we could talk about sent to the funeral home. Thank you. Rominger Funeral Home provided the best service that we could have ever asked for during the hardest time of our life.

They were so compassionate and caring. Anything we wanted or needed, they were willing to do. That means so much during a death. Those decisions are the hardest to make.

Thank you to all of the Romingers, we love you so much. Esther’s flowers, Jessica, I had no idea how to pick out flowers. Honestly, so many decisions that I was overwhelmed. But she made it perfect and I didn’t even know what I wanted.

Thank you. Oneida Community church, you opened the doors for us to have a dinner following the burial, you didn’t have to but you did and you did the work of cleaning up and preparing.

Thank you. City of Hope Church you’ve brought us meals, you brought food to the church, you’ve sent messages, you’ve shown so much love.

Thank you. Panco church you showed up, brought food and showed love to us. Thank you. Clay Bishop you prepared the perfect message for my boy. You honored him with such dignity and you helped the others in the crowd to see what difference a life with Jesus could make with your words.

Thank you. Jerry Rice, you brought us a wonderful message. Thank you. Dan Gay and Kylie Holland, you sang so beautifully. Thank you.

The Laurel county first responders, you did a timely response on our boy. The hospital staff at St. Joseph London, you were so compassionate to our family during our loss. We will never forget it. Thank you.

The Laurel county coroner for being kind and professional. Thank you. Allen’s Towing service, you not only took our boys vehicle but you and others helped lead the escort from the funeral home as well as all of the local fire departments.

Thank you. Friends, family, and the long line of people that came to show love to us at a time that we needed it the most. Thank you. We will never forget you.

Maybe you brought us donuts, maybe you brought us money. Maybe you took care of the baby for us, maybe you prayed for us. Maybe you cried with us, maybe you followed us to the cemetery.

Whatever you did- I hope that I do know it, but I’m sure I don’t know it all, so thank you. From county line, to county line on All ends, you have supported us. And all we can say, is we love you and thank you.



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# Woman Arrested After Stick-Swinging Standoff with Dogs on Gregory Branch

It’s not every day that Clay County Dispatch fields a call that sounds like the opening act of a circus, but that’s what happened Tuesday evening on Gregory Branch Road.

According to Sheriff Patrick Robinson, deputies were sent out after reports of a woman standing in the roadway, swinging a stick at passing dogs “like she was conducting an invisible orchestra,” while also appearing highly intoxicated.

Deputy Dustin Henson arrived on the scene and found 38-year-old Priscilla Lovins of Manchester giving what witnesses could only describe as an impromptu “stick-fighting demonstration.” Henson quickly realized her speech was slurred and her balance about as steady as a rocking chair on gravel.

A quick check through dispatch revealed Lovins had an active bench warrant. When Deputy Henson attempted to take her into custody, she reportedly resisted—though sources say the “struggle” was more of a tipsy tug-of-war than an action-movie fight scene.

Once secured, Lovins was charged with:

- Public Intoxication (controlled substance, not alcohol)
- Resisting Arrest
- Menacing
- Contempt of Court

No dogs were injured in the incident, though a few may have walked away confused, wondering what they had just witnessed.

As one local joked, “Only in Clay County do you call in a stick-swinging traffic hazard, and it turns into a full-blown arrest.”



PRISCILLA LOVINS

# ARRESTS

## From A1

The warrants included:

- Jackson County District Court Bench Warrant for Failure to Comply – Drug Court Violation (related to methamphetamine possession, possession of a controlled substance 2nd degree, and possession of drug paraphernalia).
- Laurel County District Court Bench Warrant for Failure to Pay Court Costs, Fines, and Fees (drug paraphernalia possession).

Also assisting on scene were Shift Sergeant Ben Webb, Master Sergeant John Inman, and Officer Jamie Etherton.

Both men were lodged in jail following their arrests.

# FESTIVAL

## From A1

“This is truly about community,” Parks added. “We want families to come out, enjoy world-class music in our small town, and see what Manchester has to offer. It’s a chance to make memories right here at home.”

The Manchester Music Festival is presented by the Manchester Tourism Commission. For more details and updates, visit their social media pages.

## Request for Bids

The Clay County Fiscal Court is accepting bids on furnishing and delivering precast reinforced concrete culvert sections to the following location:  
Clay County Kentucky CR 1429- GPS Location: 37.1827,-83.8287, length is 17 ft with 9 ft span, rise of 4.5 feet.

Price of the precast concrete box culvert per liner foot (LF) in sections not to exceed 6 foot in length. Vendor is responsible for shop drawings, fabricating culvert sections, loading, transportation and delivery to site project.

Interested bidders should contact Tommy Harmon for complete project details at 606-598-2071 or email [FinanceOfficer@claycountyky.com](mailto:FinanceOfficer@claycountyky.com) for information.

Sealed bids will be accepted until September 3rd at 4:00 PM at Judge Harmon’s office 102 Richmond Road Manchester, Ky 40962.