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A call that kept her on track: Booneville mom completes two degrees at HCTC



By the time Amy Dooley considered stepping away from college again, she wasn't short on determination; she was short on time.

Dooley, a Booneville resident and working mother, came to Hazard Community & Technical College (HCTC) for a practical reason: it was close to home. What she didn't have when she started, she said, was certainty.

"I was very undecided at first," Dooley said. "I struggled with finding my path and the best choice for me."

Today, she is finishing not one, but two degrees — an associate in science — and an associate in arts and preparing to begin her next chapter at Lindsey Wilson University, where she plans to pursue a counseling degree online.

"I'm right where I want to be, moving forward," she said.

When "impossible" felt like the only word

Like many adult students, Dooley's college timeline didn't unfold in neat semesters and predictable schedules. She balanced full-time work and motherhood while her husband was working away from home. In her mind, she said, finishing sometimes felt unrealistic.

"It just seemed like I was stuck and had no time on my hands for anything," she said.

Finances added to the pressure. Dooley said financial aid — and the ability to afford classes — became a major barrier. Even when she didn't think she was "giving up," she said the stress and uncertainty were heavy.

"I was honestly just stressed," she said. "I just felt like I had no sense of direction or guidance."

The check-in that changed everything
Dooley credits a timely retention check-in from HCTC Retention Coordinator Lucy Langdon for helping her push through a moment that could have ended her momentum.

Langdon called as the semester was about to begin and asked whether Dooley was interested in taking classes. Dooley explained that she

planned to sit out the term for financial reasons. Her daughter, a high school student, needed classes paid for that semester, and Dooley said she hadn't been able to get her own financial aid in order in time. She also worried she might not be eligible, which she believed was another reason she'd missed her chance.

Langdon, Dooley said, acted immediately.

"She immediately took action and helped me get everything in order so that I could take the one class that I need," Dooley said, "to obtain my associate in arts and associate in science."

The timing mattered, she said, because it was right before classes started — and right when she believed deadlines had closed the door.

"I thought I had waited too late," she said, "and that there was no chance of getting in a class right before the deadline."

Just as important as the paperwork was what the call communicated.

"It felt great knowing that she was going above and beyond to help me get my situation figured out," Dooley said. "She was so kind and so willing to help, and I had never received that kind of special attention before while being a student at HCTC."

Finding the HCTC Success Zone — and accepting help Dooley said she had not heard of the HCTC Success Zone before working with Langdon. Now, she describes it simply: a place where students can get real help from people who stay with them through the process.

"A great program that is willing to go above and beyond to help you," she said.

She said Langdon helped her navigate steps that can overwhelm students juggling jobs, families, and deadlines, including requirements for transcripts and graduation paperwork.

"She talked me through everything," Dooley said. "I never had to do anything on my own."

For Dooley, the deciding factor in continuing wasn't

pride or pressure; it was trust.

"Lucy," she said. "She told me she would do all she could to help me, and she did exactly that."

A family-driven finish line and what comes next

Dooley is quick to name her biggest motivators: her children.

"My children are my biggest motivators," she said. "I want to succeed and do well for them, even more so than for myself."

She also credits her husband as a steady support through setbacks and stress.

"My husband has been my rock and the one I lean towards with all of my struggles," she said. "Without my family, I would have failed and never gotten back up."

Outside of class, her favorite moments are simple — and loud: watching her children play sports and chase their goals.

"I am so proud of them," she said. "They chase their dreams and set goals for themselves."

With two associate degrees nearly complete, Dooley said the accomplishment feels like closure and a sense of permission to move forward.

"I'm happy to finally be finished with one part of my journey," she said. "It means I am moving on to the next chapter."

That next chapter starts at Lindsey Wilson University, where Dooley is excited by the flexibility of online courses and the momentum she's already found during enrollment.

"I love that I can complete my classes online," she said, "and I have already had some great people to help me get enrolled so quickly."

For Spring 2026, her goals are straightforward: earn strong grades, plan and stay prepared for summer courses.

In the long term, she hopes counseling will help her serve her community in a meaningful way.

"I want to work with people in my community," she said. "I want to help people and make them feel safe and let them know there is always someone to help."

Her advice: Ask sooner than you think you should
For students who feel stuck — or embarrassed — Dooley's message is direct: don't let discomfort keep you from support.

"Don't feel embarrassed!" she said. "I have asked some crazy questions and Lucy made me feel comfortable and guided me in the right direction each time."

And when it comes to financial aid and satisfactory academic progress, she offers the lesson she learned the hard way: start early.

"Work ahead of time getting this done and do not put off asking for help," she said. "Instead, start there first."

UPDATE: Kentucky State Police Conducts Death Investigation in Owsley County



Deann Bennett, 27 and Charles Bennett, 32

Following a year-long investigation, two individuals were arrested February 9, 2026, after indictments were issued by the Owsley County Grand Jury on Thursday, January 22, 2026.

Deann Bennett, 27, of Booneville, was taken into

custody and charged with reckless homicide, tampering with physical evidence, abuse of a corpse, and concealing the birth of an infant. Charles Bennett, 32, of Booneville was also arrested and charged with reckless homicide and concealing the birth of an infant. Both are lodged in the Three Forks Regional Jail.

The investigation began on Friday, November 29, 2024, when Kentucky State Police Post 7 in Richmond received a 911 call just before 10:30 a.m. about a female who had been transported to a local hospital after reporting a possible miscarriage. While at the hospital, the couple informed authorities that the infant remained at their residence on Lewis Lane in Booneville.

Troopers and detectives responded to the residence, where they located an unresponsive infant over an embankment outside the home. Owsley County Coroner Rob Morgan pronounced the infant deceased at the scene. The infant was subsequently transported to the Kentucky Medical Examiner's Office in Frankfort for an autopsy. The investigation was led by KSP Post 7 Detective Anthony Bowling, with assistance from Kentucky State Police personnel and the Owsley County Coroner's Office.

County Road Requests at Fiscal Court Meeting

The Owsley County Fiscal Court met in regular session on Monday, February 9, 2026. Linda Thomas, Secretary, gave the Treasurer's Report. The General Fund has a cash balance of \$477,000.65, the Road Fund has a cash balance of \$1,178,674.10, the Jail Fund has a cash balance of \$6,788.43 and the LGEA Fund has a cash balance of \$45,594.24. The Solid Waste Fund has a cash balance of \$50,345.37, the Parks & Rec Fund has a cash balance of \$2,196.62, the LGEDF Fund has a cash balance of \$11,552.66 and the Clerk Storage Fund has a cash balance of \$9,154.84. The Opioid Fund has a cash balance of \$133,139.64, the Land Acquisition Fund has a cash balance of \$6,763.88 and the EKYSAFE Fund has a cash balance of \$386,091.76. A motion was made and carried to accept the Treasurer's Report. Eddie McIntosh, an Electrical Inspector, wants to have his name added to our list of inspectors which includes Todd Lindon and Calvin Saum. A motion was made and carried to add Eddie to the list.

Judge Little asked if the gentleman from DG Shell was present and he was not. "He asked to be put on the agenda. He wants the county to add their road into the county road system (property on 1071). We voted to do this once before but for some rea-

son it never got done," said Judge Little. "We just need to accept their road system into the county's road system." A motion was made and carried to accept their road system into the county's system.

"Stacy came in Cassie Hudson's Housing. They are wanting us to put three roads into the county road system as well. Two of these roads were put in as private roads," said Judge Little. Stacy explained, "there is one on Hwy. 28, one on Bowman Seale Cemetery Road and the other one is at Twin Meadows." Judge Little continued, "the road at the Bowman Seale Cemetery Road was put into the maps as a private road. We will need a new Resolution to accept that one as a county road." A motion was made and carried to accept this road into the county road system. "The next one is Joe Bowman. This is the same thing. It was put in maps as a private road." A motion was made and carried to accept this road into the county road system. "The next one is the road to the new apartments." A motion was made and carried to accept the roads into the county road system.

Judge Little apologized to the people that live on gravel roads. "There is not much that can be done to a gravel road. We can't grade it and we can't salt them. When they thaw out some more we can try to push some of the ice off. I know it is unfair but there is nothing we can do. We tried to push a few and it made a total mess." Magis-

trate Jason Reed said, "everything looked good until the ice showed up. But if you give us a little time after the ice melts, we will get them fixed. It could take a month or so."

Linda Thomas stated that Solid Waste was doing good. "We still have 3 or 4 of the big garbage cans left at the county garage. If you want one, stop by the judge's office and pay for it and pick it up at the garage." "Our new garbage truck is due to be here on February 20, 2026," said Judge Little.

A motion was made and carried to do Transfers as Needed. A motion was made and carried to pay all legally incurred bills providing funding is available. Jessica Gross from KRADD was present to give an update on some of the projects that they are working on for the county. She informed the court that the AMLER Grants are now open. The deadline to get a grant in for AMLER is the first of May.

"I have been jumped on several times because of the water situation. Jerry McIntosh (Emergency Manager) reached out and got 40 – 50 pallets of water. Jerry, the Rescue Squad and several volunteers distributed the water from the county garage (central location). The county does not do water – we just try to help," said Judge Little. He continued, "I want to thank all the volunteers that helped pass out water."

Congrats OC Cheer who placed 15th in the nation at Orlando, FL. Photo via Shannon Price.



Ellie Spence of Owsley County took a photo of this owl that perched itself looking over the memorial at the Owsley County Courthouse.

