

PATRIOT

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Florence. The restaurant has been hosting the group for 11 years and has partnered with KHH in conducting disaster relief drives. At this year's dinner, a plaque made from the lid of a bourbon barrel was presented to the restaurant's owners, Guy and Mandy Cummins, in gratitude for their support.

The dinner is a chance for everyone to have a great meal, relax and talk before the real fun begins: drawing names to see which boat captain is paired with which veteran.

First, Dave Jardon, founder of KHH, also explained the rules of the tournament. For those without a fishing license, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources waives the requirement for the tournament. There is a six-fish limit with a minimum length of 12 inches. No live bait is allowed. Fish must be alive to count.

After drawing for teams, boat captains then drew numbers to determine their launch order. Many of the boat captains know each other well and fish together in regular Wednesday night tournaments, and there is no small amount of ribbing and friendly rivalry.

Having the drawing the night the tournament before allows each pair the chance to meet and get to know one another a little. The gathering ends early so that everyone can get a good night's sleep before heading to the marina at 6 a.m. the next day.

The tournament takes place from 7 a.m. to noon, and for the duration the lake is closed to all others.

Noisy boats and jet skis can trigger those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). At a past tournament, the loud presence of a random jet ski that appeared suddenly upset a veteran so badly that she had to be returned to the dock, explained Bob Perry, an avid local fisherman and one of the forces behind the tournament.

This day is dedicated solely to the veterans and first responders; a time of fishing, solitude, joy, reflection and quiet intergenerational conversations between boat captains, some of whom served in Vietnam, and younger veterans.

Perry got to the marina in the wee hours of the morning to anchor what is known as the "missing man boat" a little ways offshore. The missing man boat honors fallen comrades or soldiers missing in action—all those who never made it home.

In the early morning darkness, the little rowboat bobbed on the water, a lit lantern in the bow; a vase containing a single red rose just visible above the gunwale.

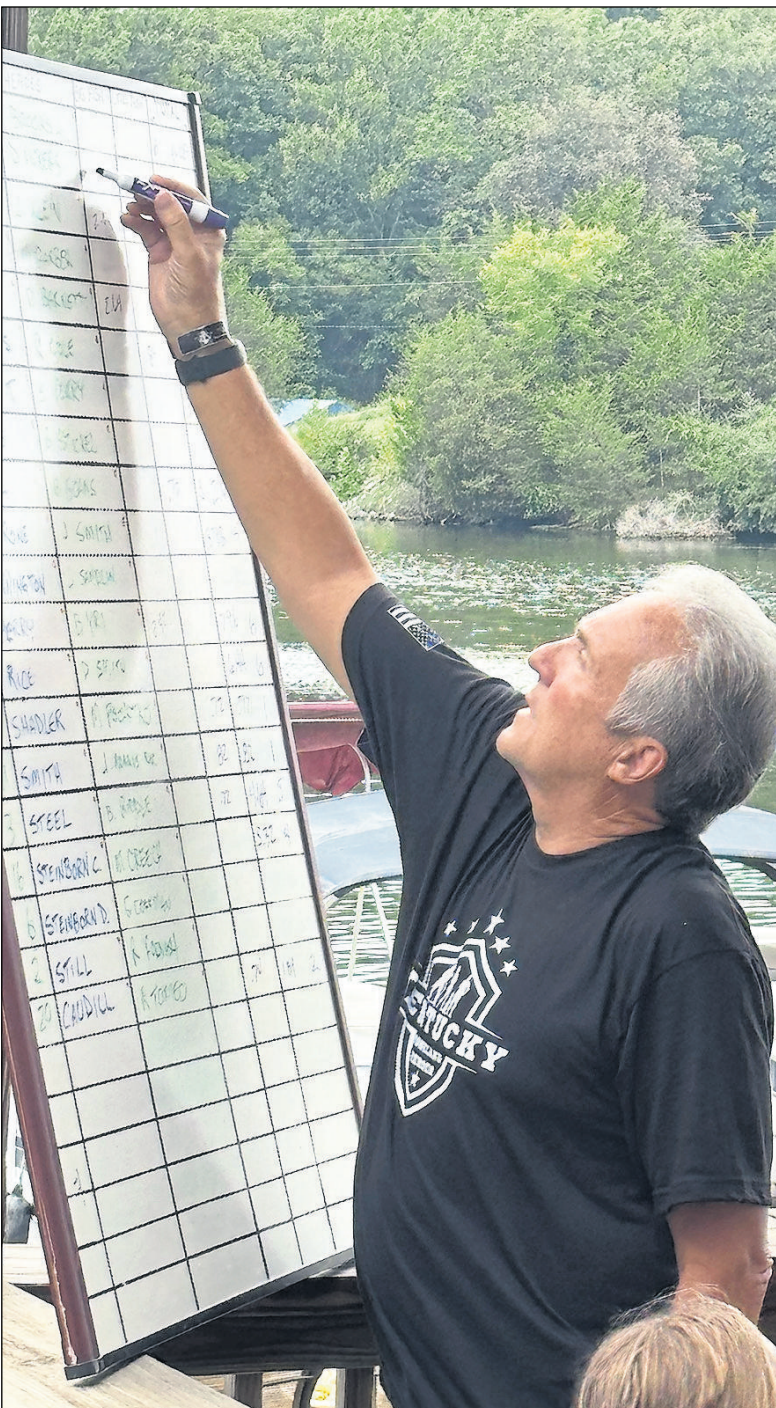
Shortly after 7 a.m. a prayer was offered, then Jardon called out, "Boat One, launch!" and the tournament was on.

One by one the boats took off into the dawn, the boat captains racing to claim their favorite fishing spots.

Along the lake shore, home owners showed support by placing American flags on their docks. The night before the tournament, Jardon announced there would also be a group of Scouts encamped on the shore who would be offering snacks and drinks to the fishermen.

Shortly before noon, the boats began to return, and the teams brought their catches ashore to be weighed.

As the fish were weighed, Jardon recorded the total on a dry erase board. Also noted



Dave Jardon, founder of Kentucky Homeland Heroes, records the weight of a team's catch on a dry erase board at the Sept. 12 Patriot Day Annual Bass Fishing Tournament.



Bob Perry watches the scale as he weighs a catch at the 2026 Patriot Day Annual Bass Fishing Tournament.



Participants in the 2026 Patriot Day Annual Bass Fishing Tournament pose for a group photo.

were the weights of fish in the running for the big fish, little fish awards—or as the award plaques read "Size matters" (won by Dan Darrell for landing a 2.64 pound bass) and "Size doesn't matter" (won by partners Noel and Goens for catching a bass weighing only .7 pound).

The third largest catch of the day, at 7.32 pounds, belonged to Butler and Klein. Perry and Byri took second, with a catch weighing 7.96 pounds. The winning team was Darrell and Barnett, with a total of 8.18 pounds.

The first prize winners each took home a handcrafted wooden American Flag, "The Nine," made by veterans in the wood-working shop at Patriots Landing. The plaques for second and third place were the Patriots Landing "22 Flag," created to raise awareness for the high rate of suicide among veterans.

One of the fisherman, Ralph Tomeo, was a New York police officer, counter terrorism division, who was attending the tournament for the fourth time.

Tomeo had a front row seat to the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers, and he spoke to the group about his experience.

His precinct was on the opposite side of the East River from the towers, and from it he had a view of the Twin Towers down the block. He was home when the planes hit the towers. He was unable to get through to his precinct by phone.

"So I did what I thought was the best thing to do; I loaded up my car with rifles, shotguns and ammo, and I headed into work, because this was as close to a mainland invasion that I would have ever envisioned."

An ambulance pulled up to the station and dropped off an officer in an injured wheelchair and just left him there. "He was covered in dust and soot and he was bleeding."

All the local medical facilities were overwhelmed. His commander asked him to take him to a hospital in Eastern Long Island. The fact that he had to go so far made the reality of the mass casualty event sink in.

In the days that followed,

Tomeo became part of the bucket brigade that sifted through debris in the pit. "A guy in front of me had pulled somebody's bloody pants, and there was nothing really left inside." A back pocket contained negatives of the first attack on the World Trade Center, which occurred in February 1993.

"The irony was, here's a guy that was in that building, survived the first one; on his way he grabbed those negatives—must have been in his desk—he didn't make it the second time."

Workers in the pit "spent 15, 16 hour tours there, every day. There were no days off ... You kind of compartmentalized your emotions, anger and anything else, and pressed on."

One day he was asked to serve a welcome shift as the officer on a ferry to New Jersey. On the dock he encountered hundreds of pictures of missing people with heartrending pleas for information.

"There were hundreds of missing persons that you knew

weren't missing ... none of those people were missing." The sheer number of pictures massed together like that—"That hit me hard."

Jardon also addressed the crowd, referring to 9/11 as our generation's Pearl Harbor.

"On 9/12, as a nation, we made a vow to never forget, and that's why we are here today ... Let's join our veterans, our first responders, our active duty service members, in keeping that vow that we made 25 years ago: to never forget."

Tournament sponsors included Grant County Tourism, Cornerstone Equipment, Kenton Equipment, Marshall Powersports Wieda's Marine, American Gun & Pawn, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Smokin' This and That BBQ, and Custom Trophy Active Edge.

Special thanks was given to the Williamstown Marina, and Mark Cummins was presented with a bourbon barrel plaque for his years of hosting the tournament.

PROPOSED

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occurred, he noted the city is working on increasing oversight.

Discussion on the the dock ordinance at the Sept. 15 meeting began with Councilmember Bob Perry pointing out that it does not reflect the recently passed ordinance regarding dredging.

Morgan dismissed it as a scrivener error, saying,

"I don't view that omission as being a significant problem for discussing, reviewing and voting on the boat dock permits."

Henson assured the dredging ordinance would be added.

The amended language in Ordinance 2026-11 requires all existing docks be permitted, and a permit must be obtained before building or making a structural change (beyond minor repair or maintenance) to any boat dock on or in

Lake Williamstown.

Most of the discussion centered on the language making it the responsibility of a property's seller to make sure the dock is permitted. Councilmembers raised concerns that it could potentially negatively impact a property transfer.

Henson explained the ordinance required a permit assuring the work would be done, not that work had to be completed before a sale could go through.

He rejected Morgan's

suggestion that permitting should be the responsibility of the buyer. After more discussion, Morgan made some suggestions for revisions. A motion was made to table the ordinance so revisions could be made. The motion passed with Councilmember Rick Skinner voting no.

Other actions - Council approved a motion to bring off the table Ordinance 2026-12 "Establishing single-family residential contextual

compatibility standards."

- Council then immediately approved a motion to retract Ordinance number 2026-12 so that the designation could be used for future a proposed ordinance, preserving numerical sequence.

There will be a public hearing regarding the tax rate ordinance Sept. 28th at 5:30. This will be immediately followed by a special meeting at 6 p.m. to conduct first reading of the ordinance.

Second reading will

take place at a special meeting Sept. 29 at 5:30 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Williamstown City Council will be Monday, Oct. 5, at 6 p.m. at the City Building, 400 North Main Street, Williamstown.

There will also be a Town Hall Meeting at the Williamstown Performing Arts Center on Monday, Oct. 12 at 6 p.m. on the campus of Williamstown Independent Schools, 300 Helton Street, Williamstown.