



Hwy. deaths, most in 7 years

By TOM LATEK
Kentucky Today
FRANKFORT, Ky. — Highway fatalities in Ky. increased in 2023 with 813 deaths, up from 744 in 2022, and the highest since 2016, according to data released Tuesday, April 16 by the Kentucky Office of Highway Safety (KOHS), part of the Transportation Cabinet (KYTC).

“Any life lost on a Kentucky road is one too many, especially those that could have been prevented,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “We can all commit to buckling up, staying aware and driving sober and distraction-free, and Team Kentucky is committed to continuing to build safer bridges and roadways so we can reach our goal of zero traffic deaths.”

KOHS and Kentucky State Police (KSP) say of the 813 fatalities, 51 percent were not wearing a seat belt and 16 percent involved alcohol. Approximately 33 percent involved speeding or aggressive drivers, and 20 percent were due to driver distraction. Pedestrians and bicyclists accounted for 137 deaths and motorcyclists accounted for 105.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one of the most effective ways to help reduce highway traffic deaths is to combine public awareness campaigns with high-visibility enforcement efforts.

In an effort to help families pay tribute to loved ones

killed on Kentucky highways, the newly launched KYTC Office of Highway Safety website features a new addition titled “Memory Lane” – a digital memorial space created for immediate family members to post stories and pay tribute to loved ones lost in traffic crashes.

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‘All-in’ projected lottery pick Reed Sheppard dives into NBA Draft

By KEITH TAYLOR
Kentucky Today
LEXINGTON, Ky. — Reed Sheppard is ready to pursue his next dream. The Kentucky freshman guard declared for the NBA Draft on Thursday, April 18 and will forgo the remaining three years of his college eligibility. The recent hiring of Mark Pope, Jeff Sheppard's teammate at Kentucky, wasn't enough to persuade Sheppard to stay for one more season.

"I'm going all-in," Sheppard told ESPN. "The opportunity I have is great. I've gotten really good feedback showing where I can be in the draft. I had an unbelievable year at Kentucky. It was such a fun year. It's not easy leaving the fans and the school I dreamed of playing at. I need to do what's best for me, and that's heading to the NBA." Sheppard is projected as a lottery pick in the NBA Draft and many analysts

have him listed at No. 7 in most pre-draft projections. He was named Southeastern Conference Freshman of the Year and second-team All-SEC after he averaged 12.5 points, 4.5 rebounds and 2.5 steals per game. He also made 75 3-pointers while shooting 52 percent from long range this season. "My teammates and coaches put confidence in me, telling me you need to shoot," Sheppard said. "I

was fortunate to be able to get in the gym and work with [former Kentucky assistant] coach John Welch every day. He's one of the best trainers you'll find." In a video posted on social media, Sheppard said he is "just a little boy from London, Kentucky with a big dream." "Playing basketball at the University of Kentucky was a huge part of my dream," he said. "I'm so thankful to wear the Blue and White

jersey that represents my family, my friends and the hard-working faithful fans of the Big Blue Nation. "Kentucky is home, Kentucky will always be home. There is another part of my dream — to play basketball in the NBA. I believe it's time to pursue that dream." Sheppard, son of former Kentucky standouts Jeff and Stacey Reed, praised the fans for their support during his lone season with the Wildcats.

"BBN, you have been with me from Day 1 — faithful and passionate," he said. "I am asking you to go with me on this journey. "I'm looking forward to taking you with me. I represent you with all of the characteristics that make us Kentuckians — passion, humility, perseverance, sacrifice and joy. One day I will return to family, to friends, to Kentucky, my home. I love you, BBN, thank you."

Pitino: Pope will lead Wildcats to ‘greatness’

By KEITH TAYLOR
Kentucky Today
LEXINGTON, Ky. — Rick Pitino is all in on new Kentucky coach Mark Pope and gave his former player and captain a strong endorsement after he was officially named coach of the Wildcats. Through a video posted in social media, Pitino, the former Kentucky coach now entering his second season at St. John's, said Friday, April 12 was a "very special day for the University of Kentucky."

does it better. The way his teams move, the way his teams shoot the three — the ball movement, the player movement, is outstanding." Pitino recalled his first season at Kentucky when John Pelphrey was nearly all tears after putting on the Kentucky uniform before every game and the former Kentucky coach asked Pelphrey why he become so emotional. "He said, 'Coach, you don't understand what this means to all of us from Kentucky,'" Pitino recalled. "I can guarantee one thing: Nobody epitomizes the name Kentucky on the front of the jersey more than Mark Pope."

As for Pope's resume of no NCAA Tournament wins at Kentucky, Pitino said Billy Donovan, Danny Hurley and Jay Wright all struggled early in their coaching careers but eventually succeeded. "They all had their trials and tribulations as well early on," Pitino said. "Mark Pope (and BYU) moved to the Big 12 this year, beat Kansas at Kansas and beat Baylor at home and in his first year (in the league) got to the NCAA. What you don't realize, it took Jay Wright 11 years to finally get an NCAA win. Billy Donovan was at Marshall for two years and didn't have an NCAA appearance and he went on to

greatness. Mark Pope will go on to greatness. You can put it down." Pitino added that Pope also has the skills it takes to succeed as a coach and how much of a "relentless recruiter he will be." "You have one of the premier coaches in the game," Pitino said. "Relish it, because he will do you proud. I sit here today at St. John's and I couldn't be any more prouder than to see Mark Pope lead the Kentucky Wildcats to another championship. He will get it done...he loves, absolutely loves Kentucky across his chest. Get it done, Mark. I love ya. You will do a fabulous job."

State determined to support domestic violence shelters

By NADIA RAMLAGAN
Kentucky News Connection
As federal Victims of Crime Act funding continues to impact Kentucky's domestic violence shelters, advocates say they are applauding lawmakers decisions to include \$6 million of the state budget's general fund for shelter and program operations, alongside a one-time allocation of \$7.1 million to offset the impact of VOCA cuts. ZeroV's CEO Angela Yannelli said the funding will ensure life-saving programs for people in crisis continue

to serve those who rely on them - and who often have no where else to turn. "We are extremely grateful to the General Assembly for listening to us," said Yannelli. "We've been talking about this since the interim session, about how VOCA has really impacted us." According to the latest report from the National Network to End Domestic Violence, last year more than 1,000 adult and child survivors relied on Kentucky's emergency shelters and programs, that provide transi-

tional housing, transportation, housing advocacy, legal support, therapy, and other supportive services. Darlene Thomas, who is executive director of a Fayette County shelter, Greenhouse 17, said without continued funding, her organization would lose the ability to provide holistic wraparound services for survivors and their children. "Housing, emergency financial assistance, help with getting back to employment," said Thomas, "we do all of the pieces to

help people move from crisis to self sufficiency." The state has also taken steps to protect survivors who want to exercise their right to vote. A new program allows survivors of crimes, including intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking, to hide their address on public records, including from voter rolls. More information about the Safe at Home program is on the Kentucky Secretary of State's website.

As child care crisis worsens, advocates highlight career pathways

By NADIA RAMLAGAN
Kentucky News Connection
The shrinking supply of child-care workers continues to impact Kentucky, and advocates say helping more people receive a Child Development Associate degree could fill critical gaps in child care and early learning - especially in rural regions. Jennifer Roe is an early-childhood coordinator with Save the Children's Early Steps Program who's currently enrolled in a CDA program at Eastern Kentucky University. She said it hasn't been easy working full time while in school, but says Save the Children's Career Pathways Program has helped with tuition and other resources, putting

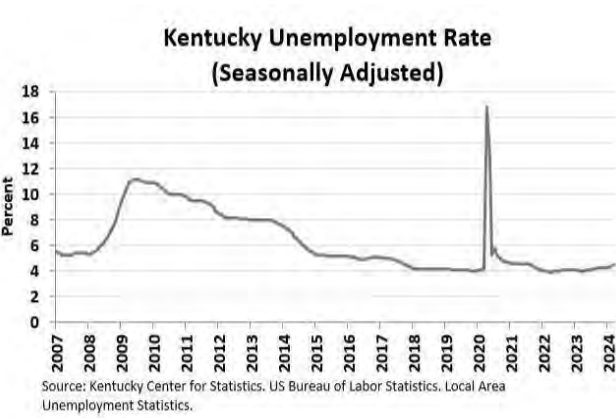
her on track on track to graduate next spring. "When I walk across that stage with that diploma in my hand, it's going to be one of the most rewarding things I've ever done," said Roe. "And not only for myself, but for the families that I serve and for my community." According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, on average, more than 153,000 openings for child-care workers are projected over the next decade - largely driven by the need to replace workers who have left the field or retired. Save the Children's Career in Education Workforce Development Managing Director Karen Harrison said the program aims to reduce barriers to

obtaining a credential or higher-education degree. "We either pay all or partial of their tuition," said Harrison. "We pay stipends for books, supplies and materials. And we also give barrier-reduction stipends; we know that child care for participants themselves can be an issue." Roe added that a CDA degree opens the door to immediate job opportunities working in day-care centers, opening a child-care business, or teaching preschool. "We can't wait 'til they get to kindergarten and expect them to know their ABCs and such," said Roe. "They've got to know when they get there because, if they don't, they're already behind."

Meanwhile, Kentucky child-care providers say the state's industry is on the verge of collapse when federal pandemic funds expire this fall. In a recent letter, hundreds of providers across the state asked lawmakers to pass a supplemental funding bill to help centers stay afloat.

March unemployment rate at 4.5 percent

By TOM LATEK
Kentucky Today
FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky's seasonally adjusted preliminary March 2024 unemployment rate was 4.5 percent, according to data released Thursday by the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), an agency within the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet. The preliminary March 2024 jobless rate was up 0.1 percentage points from February 2024 and up 0.5 percentage point from one year ago. The U.S. seasonally adjusted jobless rate for March was 3.8 percent, which was down from the 3.9 percent recorded for February, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. "Kentucky's unemployment rate increased to 4.5 percent in March as workers returned to the labor force," said University of Kentucky's Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) Director Mike Clark. "The increase in the labor force represents only one month but does reverse the gradual decline Kentucky has experienced over the past few months." In a separate federal sur-



vey of business establishments that excludes jobs in agriculture and people who are self-employed, Kentucky's seasonally adjusted nonfarm employment increased by 9,400 jobs to 2,036,900 in March 2024 compared to the previous month. Kentucky's nonfarm employment was up 25,000 jobs or 1.2 percent, compared to March 2023. "In March, Kentucky posted its strongest month to month employment gains since early 2023," Clark noted. "While the professional and business services saw the largest increase in employment, the gains were widespread with most of Kentucky's major sectors reporting higher

levels of employment." In fact, there were only two sectors that did not see an increase. The number of jobs in the state's mining and logging sector was unchanged from February to March, although there were 200 more jobs in March 2024 compared to March 2023. Employment in Kentucky's information services sector fell by 300 jobs from February to March. The industries in this sector include traditional publishing as well as software publishing; motion pictures and broadcasting; and telecommunications. The number of jobs in this sector was down 700 from a year ago.

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Social needs may prevent women from getting mammogram

By MELISSA PATRICK
Kentucky Health News

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study says the more health-related social needs a woman has, the less likely she is to get a mammogram.

The study defines health-related social needs, or HRSNs, as social conditions that adversely affect a person's health. Examples include feeling socially isolated, loss of work or reduced hours, dissatisfaction with life, the cost to access health care, a lack of transportation, and receiving food stamps. HRSNs are some of the social determinants of health.

Using data from the CDC's 2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, a continuing national survey, the researchers found that mammogram use was almost 20% lower among women between the ages of 50 and 74 who had three or more HRSNs, compared to women who had no such needs.

The report did not provide state-level data, but health-related social needs are more prevalent in Kentucky than in most states.

In Kentucky, 59% of women aged 40-49 and 72% of women aged 50-74 reported having had a mammogram within the previous two years, according to the 2022 BRFSS data. The rate for younger women 40-49 was the same as the national average, but the rate for those 50-74 was 4.6 percentage points less.

Among U.S. women aged 50 to 74 with no adverse HRSNs, 83 percent had a mammogram in the last two years, while that was true for only 66 percent of those with three or more adverse HRSNs.

"We have to address these health-related social needs to help women get the mammograms they need," Dr. Debra Houry, chief medical officer at the CDC, said in a news release. "Identifying these challenges and coordinating efforts between health care, social services, community organizations, and public health to help address these needs could improve efforts to increase breast cancer screening and ultimately save these tragic losses to families."

Breast cancer causes more than 40,000 deaths

in U.S. women each year, according to the news release.

Between 2016 and 2020, Kentucky's breast-cancer rate was 126.7 per 100,000 people and its breast cancer death rate was 21.6 per 100,000, according to the National Cancer Institute State Cancer Profiles. The national rate was 19.6.

The report adds that Black women and women of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to die from breast cancer.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force currently recommends that women aged 50 to 74 get a screening mammogram every two years and that women ages 40 to 49 talk to their health-care providers about when to start and how often to get a mammogram.

Most health-insurance plans cover the full cost of screening mammograms, but follow-up diagnostic imaging is not always covered.

To address this, Kentucky lawmakers recently passed House Bill 115, which eliminates co-payments and cost-sharing requirements for high-risk individuals who need fol-

low-up diagnostic imaging to rule out breast cancer. Gov. Andy Beshear signed HB 115 into law on April 5. It takes effect Jan. 1, 2025.

"Thousands of Kentuckians require diagnostic and supplemental breast

imaging every year, yet many forgo them due to out-of-pocket costs. Not anymore," Molly Guthrie, vice president of policy and advocacy at the breast-cancer foundation Susan G. Komen, said in a news

release. "This life-saving legislation means they will now receive the breast imaging they require, leading to an earlier breast cancer diagnosis and often better health outcomes."

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Dual credit cornerstone of KCTCS

By TOM LATEK
Kentucky Today

VERSAILLES, Ky. — The Kentucky Community and Technical College System is celebrating Community College Month, by recognizing the 27,454 dual credit students from 354 high schools who enrolled in KCTCS last fall.

Representing 35% of total fall enrollments, these students earned a combined 142,624 credit hours and saved an estimated \$13 million in tuition costs. Looking to the future, KCTCS reminds parents and students that enrollment is now open for the fall semester.

Dual credit courses offer students a college-level education while earning both high school and collegiate credits. Students who enroll in dual credit courses can save 50% of tuition costs, and they are more likely to complete a col-

lege degree. Those who complete at least four dual credit courses can earn a degree from KCTCS in just three semesters.


"Dual credit courses are a cornerstone of KCTCS," said KCTCS President Ryan Quarles. "We are empowering high school students to earn their degrees and enter the workforce on the fast track. "Nearly half of all Kentucky public undergraduate students are enrolled at KCTCS for a reason. We are the most affordable and accessible higher education option in the state, and we want what's best for Kentucky and its workforce."

KCTCS dual credit students gain a solid foundation. Ellen Braden, a Louisville attorney, started her journey with dual credit courses at Owensboro Community and Technical College. She is now an em-

ployment defense attorney at Dinsmore and Shohl LLP, representing businesses in cases of discrimination, hostile work environments and more. Each year, thousands of students like Braden build their education and skills through dual credit courses at KCTCS.

As Kentucky's economy continues to grow, KCTCS is a crucial tool in supporting the students and businesses that feed the commonwealth's growth. Last year, KCTCS partnered with more than 2,600 Kentucky companies to build strong talent pipelines, graduating more than 16,000 students in key sectors, including healthcare, skilled trades, manufacturing, logistics and business services.

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By TOM LATEK
Kentucky Today

FRANKFORT, Ky. — The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) reminds political candidates, residents, business operators and property owners along US and KY routes that no signage is allowed on the right of way other than official highway signs and items approved through a permit process.

Any campaign signs must be placed beyond right of way limits, according to state law. The right of way fence is included with this restriction. For roads with a right of way fence, no signs may be attached to it. Items placed on right of way create significant delays for mowing crews and are potential hazards

for mowing operators and passing motorists.

Kentucky Transportation Cabinet crews can remove improperly placed items along state maintained right of way areas, and trash cleanup cycles are scheduled periodically.

The KYTC also wants to take this opportunity to educate all Kentucky residents about state highway right of way issues. In addition to elections, the restriction often becomes a problem with such things as yard sales and real estate advertising. Improperly placed materials along roads can create additional hazards by blocking sight distance or distracting drivers, particularly at intersections.

It is also improper to at-

tach items such as flyers, posters, balloons or streamers to stop signs, highway markers or any other road sign or utility pole. Improper placement on utility poles presents additional obstacles and potential dangers for utility crew workers.

Items removed by the crews are taken to each county's KYTC maintenance facility and held for 30 days. Unclaimed materials after that period are either trashed or recycled.

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