



**Issues/Program List for Withers Broadcasting
Paducah, Kentucky, Studios**

**WREZ-FM (Metropolis, Illinois)
WZZL-FM (Reidland, Kentucky)
WGKY-FM (Wickcliffe, Kentucky)
WRJJ-FM (LaCenter, Kentucky)**

The following programs are weekly broadcasts provided as timely and pertinent information or the community needs of Paducah, Kentucky, and the surrounding region in western Kentucky and southern Illinois.

Sundays at 5:00 am, the stations air InfoTrak.

Sundays at 5:30 am, the stations are Kentucky News Connection

Weekly program information can be found on the proceeding pages.



Call Letters: WILY-AM, WRXX-FM, WZZL-FM, WGKY-FM, WRJJ-FM, WMOK-AM, WREZ-FM, KGMO-FM, KREZ-FM, WKIB-FM, KAPE-AM, KJXX-AM, KYRX-FM, KBXB-FM, KRHW-AM, KBHI-FM, WDML

Weekly Public Affairs Program Time Aired: 5:00 AM WEEKLY

QUARTERLY ISSUES REPORT, JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2023

Show # 2023-27

Date aired: Sunday, July 2, 2023

Nora Volkow, MD, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, part of the National Institutes of Health

Fentanyl overdoses are the leading cause of death for Americans ages 18 to 49, more than car accidents or suicides. On average, one person dies of a fentanyl overdose in the United States every seven minutes, and the number of Americans killed by the drug has jumped 94 percent since 2019. Dr. Volkow discussed why the problem has skyrocketed and what steps the federal government is taking to address it. She said that, while the epidemic was worse in certain rural areas of the US in past years, the problem has now overwhelmed every city and state. She talked about the importance of education and treatment programs, and also explained why fentanyl is a particularly troubling issue for pregnant women.

Issues covered:

**Substance Abuse and Treatment
Government Policies**

Length: 17:52

Sam Quinones, author of *"The Least of Us: True Tales of America and Hope in the Time of Fentanyl and Meth"*

The opioid crisis' damage to US communities cost the economy \$1.5 trillion in 2020 alone, according to a congressional analysis. Mr. Quinones talked about steps that cities and towns can take to try to repair community bonds, most effectively on the neighborhood, school and church level. He believes that stronger law enforcement is necessary to force drug abusers into treatment, whether they want it or not.

Issues covered:

**Substance Abuse and Treatment
Community Rehabilitation
Law Enforcement
Homelessness**

Length: 5:08

Show # 2023-28

Date aired: Sunday, July 9, 2023

Paul R. Lawrence, former Under Secretary of Benefits at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, author of *"Veterans Benefits for You: Get What You Deserve"*

Mr. Lawrence offered tips for veterans to successfully apply for benefits they have earned from their service. He explained several ways that a veteran can document a service-related injury, and how they can request their medical records with help from the National Archives and Veterans

Administration. He also talked about the value of benefits not just to a veteran, but to his or her family, as well.

Issues covered:
Veterans' Benefits
Military Service

Length: 8:14

David Maimon, PhD, Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology, Georgia State University

Prof. Maimon explained how criminals are increasingly targeting US Postal Service blue collection boxes and residential mailboxes to steal filled-out checks. He said the thieves sell the stolen checks via social media platforms, then buyers alter the payee and amount on the checks to rob victims' bank accounts of thousands of dollars. He recommends that consumers only hand mail directly to a clerk at a US Post Office, or use other methods to send payments.

Issues covered:
Crime
Identity Theft
Government

Length: 9:09

Lori R. Sackler, Senior VP and family wealth advisor at Morgan Stanley, author of "*The M Word: The Money Talk Every Family Needs to Have about Wealth and Their Financial Future*"

Conversations about money remain taboo for most U.S. households. Ms. Sackler said a staggering 70 percent of families lose their money, assets, and family harmony in the aftermath of estate transfers. She explained how to successfully talk about money matters. She said many people make the same money mistakes that their parents made.

Issues covered:
Retirement Planning
Aging

Length: 5:05

Show # 2023-29

Date aired: Sunday, July 16, 2023

Pam Baker, freelance journalist who focuses on emerging tech topics like artificial intelligence, data analytics, and edge computing, author of "*ChatGPT For Dummies*"

ChatGPT has garnered an amazing amount of attention in just a few months. Ms. Baker explained how the rise of artificial intelligence has already begun affecting our daily lives. She talked about the importance of learning to use AI in the workplace, and why learning how to prompt AI is both the easy part and the most difficult part of using it.

Issues covered:
Artificial Intelligence
Education
Career

Length: 9:05

Ruchi S. Gupta, MD, MPH, board-certified pediatrician and health researcher, Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Clinical Attending at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, founding director of the Center for Food Allergy & Asthma Research

Dr. Gupta led a groundbreaking study of allergies in adults and found the prevalence of food allergy is highest among black, Hispanic and Asian individuals across all ages. She also found that food allergy

is lowest among households earning more than \$150,000 a year. She talked about potential reasons for these findings and the importance of getting a proper diagnosis.

Issues covered:

**Food Allergies
Minority Concerns**

Length: 8:23

Greg Keoleian, Director of the Center for Sustainable Systems at the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability

Environmentally-conscious consumers have probably heard that today's highly efficient dishwashers use less energy and water than traditional hand-washing techniques. However, Prof. Keoleian led a study that found that one manual washing technique--the two-basin method, in which dishes are soaked and scrubbed in hot water and then rinsed in cold water--that is associated with fewer greenhouse gas emissions than machine dishwashing. He offered numerous energy-saving tips related to the task of washing dishes.

Issues covered:

**Environment
Energy
Consumer Matters**

Length: 5:03

Show # 2023-30

Date aired: Sunday, July 23, 2023

Haywood Talcove, CEO of LexisNexis Risk Solutions' Government Group, a multinational information and analytics company based in Atlanta

Mr. Talcove outlined a frightening new wave of scams: next-gen thieves are utilizing sophisticated new artificial intelligence tools to steal millions of dollars from consumers. He discussed the use of AI-generated voices--that criminals can now clone from social media profiles--to easily con parents or grandparents out of significant sums of money. He said the schemes are almost impossible to detect, but he suggested three steps every family should take to defend themselves

Issues covered:

**Crime
Identity Theft
Technology**

Length: 8:49

F. Perry Wilson, MD, MSCE, Associate Professor of Medicine, Director, Clinical and Translational Research Accelerator at the Yale University School of Medicine, author of "*How Medicine Works and When It Doesn't.*"

Dr. Wilson explained how and why the doctor-patient relationship has eroded in recent years. He believes that profit-driven companies—from big pharma to healthcare corporations—have corrupted what should have been medicine's golden age. He offered several potential solutions to restore trust between patients and doctors.

Issues covered:

Personal Health

Length: 8:15

Morag MacKay, Director of Research, Safe Kids Worldwide

Ms. MacKay said that an American child is killed every five days in a train collision, a preventable tragedy that most parents overlook. She outlined the most common scenarios for these incidents and explained how parents can teach their children to avoid dangerous situations with trains.

Issues covered:

**Railroad Safety
Child Safety
Parenting**

Length: 5:06

Show # 2023-31

Date aired: Sunday, July 30, 2023

Kate W. Bauer, PhD MS, Associate Professor of Nutritional Sciences, University of Michigan School of Public Health

Prof. Bauer recently led a study that compared beverage consumption in low-income households that utilize taxpayer-funded food assistance programs. She found that families that used just one of the programs were in the normal range, but those that participated in both the Supplementation Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), consumed high amounts of sugar-sweetened beverages. She explained why this is a concern.

Issues covered:

**Government Food Assistance
Poverty
Nutrition**

Length: 8:00

Patrick Olsen, Editor-in-Chief, CarFax

More than 2.5 million vehicles that have been issued a “Do Not Drive” or “Park Outside” safety recall remain unrepaired, Carfax data shows. Mr. Olsen talked about the most common reasons behind these serious recalls, and why consumers fail to take their cars to dealers to get the issue taken care of. He also explained how someone can check to see if their car is on a recall list.

Issues covered:

**Auto Recalls
Consumer Matters
Transportation**

Length: 9:22

Rachel Neale, PhD, Professor, Group Leader, Deputy Coordinator of the Population Health Department at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Brisbane, Australia

Dr. Neale led a study that examined whether monthly vitamin D supplementation for older adults can prevent major cardiovascular events. She found that vitamin D did result in a small reduction for patients who were already at risk of a heart attack, and she believes further research is needed to better understand the link.

Issues covered:

**Personal Health
Nutrition**

Length: 4:58

Show # 2023-32

Date aired: Sunday, August 6, 2023

Bacall Hincks, Family Advocate and Program Coordinator at Children's Service Society of Utah

More than one million American children now live with grandparents, primarily because of their parent's addiction to opioids and other drugs. Ms. Hincks said this growing trend is causing grandparents to put off retirement and plow through savings to rescue their grandchildren from dangerous situations. She discussed how these difficult experiences can negatively affect children's mental and physical health.

Issues covered:

**Parenting
Substance Abuse
Foster Care
Retirement**

Length: 9:17

Maryanne Wolf, PhD, Professor of Child Development and Director of the Center for Reading and Language Research at Tufts University, author of "*Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World*"

Prof. Wolf discussed the latest research into the human brain as we become increasingly dependent on digital technologies, rather than the printed word. She expressed concerns for both children's and adults' ability to "deep read," as the brain is literally rewired by huge amounts of short bursts of information. She offered suggestions for how the nation's education system needs to adapt.

Issues covered:

**Literacy
Education
Technology**

Length: 8:04

David Michael Slater, teacher, author of "*We're Doing It Wrong: 25 Ideas in Education That Just Don't Work—And How to Fix Them*"

Mr. Slater explained why he believes that many current approaches in education simply aren't working—for students, for teachers, and for society at-large. He explained how teacher evaluations could be improved and why anti-bullying programs in schools don't work.

Issues covered:

Education

Length: 4:50

Show # 2023-33

Date aired: Sunday, August 13, 2023

Paul Pilibosian, a Houston attorney specializing in real estate law

It is a pattern being played out in many cities in the United States: squatters move into a home, refuse to leave, and homeowners have few options to evict them. Mr. Pilibosian explained why this trend is on the rise and what homeowners should do to try to discourage squatters from moving into a house in the first place.

Issues covered:

**Crime
Home Ownership
Legal Issues**

Length: 8:50

Anupam Bapu Jena, MD, PhD, Joseph P. Newhouse Professor at Harvard Medical School, physician at Massachusetts General Hospital, co-author of *“Random Acts of Medicine: The Hidden Forces That Sway Doctors, Impact Patients, and Shape Our Health”*

Dr. Jena explained how unexpected—but often predictable—events can profoundly affect our health. He offered several examples of how randomness affects medical decisions and treatment options. He said a healthy diet and exercise are the wisest choices to lead a healthy life.

Issues covered:
Personal Health

Length: 8:16

Sophie Kjærviik, doctoral candidate in communication at Ohio State University

Firearms contribute to the deaths of more children ages 1-17 years in the U.S. than any other type of injury or illness. While much of that total is gang-related teen shootings, sometimes younger deaths are tragic accidents after a child finds an unsecured gun. Ms. Kjærviik was the co-author of a recent study that found that a simple 60 second video on gun safety made a significant difference in whether kids ages 8 to 12 played with a found gun.

Issues covered:
Gun Safety
Parenting

Length: 5:04

Show # 2023-34

Date aired: Sunday, August 20, 2023

Karl Brauer, Executive Analyst at ISeeCars.com

The pain of inflation has hit every consumer’s pocketbook in the past couple of years, but perhaps the impact has been greatest in the car buying market. Mr. Brauer shared research that found that while the value of used electric vehicles has been plummeting in 2023 (and the trend is accelerating), the price of used cars in general has jumped 47% since 2019. He added that more than half of today’s used cars also have 20% or more miles than they did three years ago.

Issues covered:
Consumer Matters
Transportation

Length: 9:01

LeRoy Hood, MD, PhD, biologist who has served on the faculties at the California Institute of Technology and the University of Washington, developed ground-breaking scientific instruments which made possible major advances in the biological and medical sciences, author of *“The Age of Scientific Wellness”*

Dr. Hood discussed the reasons that medicine is undergoing a major transformation from a reactive, hit-or-miss approach to a personalized, predictive, data-rich, and preventive one. He calls this new form of care “scientific wellness”, which uses information from our blood and genes, as well as AI, to optimize our health and extend our “healthspan.” He believes this new technology can eventually conquer heart disease, Alzheimer’s disease and many other illnesses, with noticeable progress within five years.

Issues covered:
Personal Health
Technology

Length: 8:15

Tobias Rose-Stockwell, author of *“Outrage Machine: How Tech Amplifies Discontent, Disrupts Democracy—And What We Can Do About It”*

The original internet was not designed to make us upset, distracted, confused, and outraged. But Mr. Tobias explained why something unexpected happened at the turn of the last decade, when a handful of small features were quietly launched at social media companies with little fanfare. Together, they triggered a cascading set of dramatic changes to how media, politics, and society itself operate. He explained what needs to happen to find a promising pathway back to a healthier online environment.

Issues covered:
Social Media
Mental Health

Length: 5:14

Show # 2023-35

Date aired: Sunday, August 27, 2023

Anna Mills, textbook author, English instructor at the College of Marin, member of a joint Artificial Intelligence task force with the Modern Language Association and College Conference on Composition and Communication

AI chatbots have triggered a panic among educators, who are flooding listservs, webinars and professional conferences to figure out how to deal with the technology in this new academic year. Ms. Mills explained why many professors are expecting chaos. She said few universities are offering clear guidelines for teachers or students. She also talked about the difficulty of detecting AI-generated cheating.

Issues covered:
Higher Education
Artificial Intelligence

Length: 7:50

J. Scott Roberts, PhD, Professor in Health Behavior and Health Education at the University of Michigan, Associate Director of a poll from the University of Michigan Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation

Prof. Roberts led a poll of people age 65 to 80 and found that while 80% adults see the benefit of tests that can give an early warning of memory and thinking decline, 80% of older adults said they haven't had a cognitive test in the past year to look for early signs of dementia, and 59% reported never having had such a screening. He said the poll also found very low awareness of blood tests that can help detect Alzheimer's disease.

Issues covered:
Personal Health
Technology

Length: 9:17

Peter Clark, Applied Forest Ecologist at the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Vermont

The US Forest Service has been given taxpayer funding to plant more than a billion trees across the country in the next nine years. Prof. Clark's research found a troubling bottleneck that could threaten these efforts: U.S. tree nurseries don't grow nearly enough trees—nor have the species diversity needed—to meet the unprecedented plans. He talked about the reasons behind the problem and what can be done to remedy it.

Issues covered:
Environment
Government

Length: 5:13

Show # 2023-36

Date aired: Sunday, September 3, 2023

ChatGPT, an artificial-intelligence (AI) chatbot

ChatGPT was launched as an artificial intelligence prototype on November 30, 2022, quickly gaining much attention for its detailed responses and articulate answers across many topics. It explained how was it trained and learns, and what its biggest weakness are. It acknowledged that the concerns about potential biases in its answers are legitimate. It also outlined the top 5 human endeavors in which it anticipates making the biggest impact.

Issues covered:

Length: 9:29

Artificial Intelligence

Technology

Employment

Andrew Houtenville, PhD, Professor of Economics at the University of Hampshire, Research Director of the UNH Institute on Disability

Prof. Houtenville discussed recent findings from the National Trends in Disability Employment report, issued semi-monthly by Kessler Foundation and the University of New Hampshire. He explained what is driving historic highs in employment of people with disabilities, and why disabled employment has outstripped the non-disabled since the start of pandemic lockdowns.

Issues covered:

Length: 7:59

Disabilities

Employment

Erin Dooley, PhD, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health

Prof. Dooley was the lead researcher of a study that measured the number of daily steps that may make a difference in the risk of heart problems in senior citizens. Her study of people ages 70 and older found walking an additional 500 steps per day, or an additional quarter mile of walking, was associated with a 14% lower risk of heart disease, stroke or heart failure.

Issues covered:

Length: 5:06

Personal Health

Senior Citizens

Show # 2023-37

Date aired: Sunday, September 10, 2023

Erica Eversman, President of the Automotive Education and Policy Institute in Akron, OH

Drivers are looking for ways to save money on auto insurance as premiums rise rapidly. Ms. Eversman explained a new offering from some insurance companies: usage-based car insurance programs, where the insured agrees to share detailed data about their driving habits with their insurer via a phone app or an in-vehicle device. She said the data does permit insurance companies to evaluate risk better and better match the price of the insurance for the risk, but at a steep cost to consumers' privacy and legal rights.

Issues covered:
Consumer Matters
Auto Insurance
Legal Matters

Length: 8:55

Caroline Leaf, PhD, clinical and cognitive neuroscientist, author of "*How to Help Your Child Clean Up Their Mental Mess*"

Increasingly, children ages 3-10 are struggling with anxiety, depression, and mental health challenges. Dr. Leaf discussed the factors behind this trend and warning signs that parents should watch for. She said if left unaddressed, childhood mental health problems often follow kids into their teens and adulthood.

Issues covered:
Child Mental Health
Parenting

Length: 8:15

Edgar Dworsky, Founder & Editor of ConsumerWorld.com

Grocery costs for Americans have skyrocketed in the past two years. Mr. Dworsky discussed the subtle trend of "shrinkflation," in which many manufacturers shrink their packaging, rather than raising prices. He explained what products most commonly are affected, and ways that consumers can protect themselves against the tricky practice.

Issues covered:
Consumer Matters

Length: 5:01

Show # 2023-38

Date aired: Sunday, September 17, 2023

Ryan P. Burge, PhD, sociologist, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Eastern Illinois University, co-author of "*The Great Dechurching: Who's Leaving, Why Are They Going, and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?*"

The largest and fastest religious shift in US history is in progress. Prof. Burge co-authored a comprehensive study to learn who is leaving organized religion and why. He said the most common reason people stopped attending church was because they moved, and that lower-income people with a high school education or less are the most likely to leave. He also talked about societal effects when faith-based community services such as food banks, after-school programs and prison ministries disappear.

Issues covered:
Religion

Length: 9:22

Chris Carosa, MBA, Certified Trust & Financial Advisor, Senior Contributor to Forbes.com, author of *"Hey! What's My Number: How to Improve the Odds You Will Retire in Comfort"*

A recent New York Life survey found that Americans believe they need \$4.3 million stashed away to retire comfortably. Unfortunately, the average person has around \$135,000 saved. Mr. Carosa explained how to determine how much money will really be needed for a comfortable retirement, along with simple steps to get there.

Issues covered:
Retirement Planning
Personal Finance

Length: 8:03

Kevin Fiscella, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of Family Medicine and Community & Preventive Medicine at the University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry

Dr. Fiscella discussed his groundbreaking research that found that the lives of nearly 8,000 black Americans could be saved each year if doctors could figure out a way to bring their average blood pressure down to the average level of whites. He talked about the reasons behind the gap between the races in controlling blood pressure, and the possible ways to reduce it.

Issues covered:
Personal Health
Minority Concerns

Length: 4:50

Show # 2023-39

Date aired: Sunday, September 24, 2023

Diane Mullins, founder of Deborah's Voice, a national non-profit women's advocacy organization

Pastor Mullins said that child trafficking has become the 2nd largest criminal activity in the world behind illegal drug sales. She said most Americans are unaware of the existence of human trafficking and forced prostitution in their own towns, but it is surprisingly prevalent – not just on dimly lit street corners, but at music concerts, VIP dinners, and sporting events. She talked about techniques used by human traffickers to select their victims.

Issues covered:
Human Trafficking
Women's Issues
Crime

Length: 7:26

Dawn Graham, PhD, psychologist, employment and career expert, Director of Career Management for the Executive MBA Program at The Wharton School, author of *"Switchers: How Smart Professionals Change Careers -- and Seize Success"*

Dr. Graham offered job search advice, particularly for those in middle age who are considering career changes. She said a job search in a new field or occupation requires much more work than a typical job search. She offered suggestions on how to tailor a resume to sidestep age biases and other potential hurdles.

Issues covered:
Career
Aging

Length: 9:45

Susie Vanderlip, teen counselor, author of "*52 Ways to Protect Your Teen*"

Ms. Vanderlip has conducted school assemblies for more than 1 million teens and adults, aimed at helping youth make wise choices and seek help. She talked about the motivations of today's teenagers and why parents may be fearful of their kids. She offered tips to improve communication in a parent/teen relationship.

Issues covered:

Youth at Risk
Parenting Issues
Drug Abuse

Length: 4:54

Kentucky News Connection

712

June 28, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Groups Urge KY Residents to Beware of Solar Scams

Nadia Ramlagan

After a company known as Solar Titan USA was **recently banned** from doing business in Kentucky, advocacy groups are working to raise awareness of the signs of solar fraud.

Hundreds of consumers were duped into making thousands of dollars in payments for solar panels which were improperly installed, took months to install, or did not deliver on the company's promises, according to the Attorney General's office.

Lowell Wagner, a resident of Jackson County, saw an online ad for Solar Titan. He said a representative came to his home and signed him up for monthly payments, but never finished the installation, did not notify his local utility company, and did not respond to subsequent calls.

"We talked to our financial advisor, and we said, 'These guys are under lawsuits, so we're not going to pay him any lump sum,'" Wagner recounted. "I think we paid them \$5,000 to start with, but it was \$20,000. It's just 10 panels, and no battery."

More than 100 complaints about Solar Titan have been reported in the Commonwealth over the past few years. People who suspect they have been scammed should report it to the Federal Trade Commission or to the Kentucky Attorney General's **Office of Consumer Protection**.

Carrie Ray, energy programs coordinator for the Mountain Association, said those who are interested in solar for their home, business, or church should know the signs of a solar scam. She added limited-time offers, "instant" rebates and aggressive sales tactics are all red flags.

"I don't know any reputable solar companies operating right now that aren't very busy already," Ray pointed out. "They don't need to get you to sign immediately."

Wagner noted after calling a friend for help to finish the installation, and sawing down a few trees to increase the amount of sunlight hitting the panels, he is glad he made an investment in renewable energy. He just wishes he did not have to put in the extra money and time to finish the job himself.

"Our electric bill has really gone down," Wagner observed. "And I think maybe -- of course, we're in the summer, and we've got some window air conditioners -- but seems like it's gone down maybe \$100 a month, at least."

The Kentucky Solar Energy Society website, **kyses.org**, has list of vetted solar companies operating in the state.

Kentucky News Connection

July 3, 2023

7/19

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Student Loan Decision Will Impact Hundreds of Thousands of Kentuckians

Nadia Ramlagan

The U.S. Supreme Court's **decision** to block President Biden's one-time, \$400 billion student debt relief plan will affect hundreds of thousands of people in the Commonwealth.

According to the White House, more than **300,000 Kentuckians** had applied or were automatically eligible for debt relief before the Department of Education stopped accepting applications due to legal challenges.

Jason Bailey, executive director of the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, said nearly one in five Kentucky adults has student loan debt. He pointed out the decision is the biggest setback for low-income people, who stood to benefit most from the plan, and Black Kentuckians, who are more likely to have student debt due to lower family wealth.

"And carrying that -- for years, sometimes decades -- inhibits people's ability to buy a home, to start a business, to save for retirement," Bailey outlined. "Or to just have the financial flexibility that they need to have a good quality of life."

According to a Kentucky Center for Economic Policy **report in 2021**, around 616,000 Kentuckians have student debt, with an average amount of more than \$33,000.

Under the now-canceled plan, around 200,000 Kentuckians with \$10,000 or less in student loans and making under \$125,000 a year would have had their debt canceled entirely.

Bailey predicted with inflation and high gas prices, more Kentuckians will face additional hardship, especially those who never completed their college degree, or who whose wages are not growing or remain low.

"It's a huge disappointment and potentially a drag on our economy moving forward," Bailey contended.

Nationwide, household student-loan debt has ballooned from nearly \$500 billion to **\$1.7 trillion** over the past 15 years.

Kentucky News Connection

July 10, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

KY Child Care Providers Face Uncertain Future as Federal Funding Runs Out

Nadia Ramlagan

New **federal data** show child care expenses are out of reach for most families, and in Kentucky, providers are struggling to keep their doors open.

Many say without federal financial assistance, they will have to curb operations or shut their doors entirely.

Kathy Donelan, owner of Aunt Kathy's Child Care and Preschool in Campbellsville, said her business received American Rescue Plan funding to increase employee wages, but the money is running out, and she is unable to maintain the same rate of pay without hiking tuition.

"It's going to be a little shocking, I think, when we don't get that money anymore," Donelan explained. "When I go to meet payroll, I mean, I'll make payroll, but then maybe I won't be able to pay the mortgage or I won't be able to pay the electricity bill, things like that."

According to Kentucky Youth Advocates, the **median pay** for child care workers in Kentucky was around \$12 an hour in 2022.

Statewide, the average child care cost for toddlers in 2021 was around \$7,000 per year, more than a quarter of a single mom's income.

Ashley Brandt, director of early care and education for Metro United Way in Louisville, said last year Kentucky lawmakers convened an Early Childhood Education Task Force to tackle the issue, and also passed **House Bill 499**, which created a statewide employer-based childcare assistance program.

"Where if an employer creates a benefit internally for their employees, that they'll provide, say, \$200 a month that that employee can use for childcare expenses, the state then matches that amount," Brandt outlined.

Donelan pointed out even sporadic disruptions in child care impact families in rural regions, who often do not have back-up childcare options.

"What are the parents going to do if we say I'm sorry, we can't take your child on Tuesday, because we don't have enough people to cover the ratio?" Donelan asked. "I just think that would be devastating for a parent to realize, like they've had childcare and then all of a sudden, they don't have it on a specific day."

A **recent report** from the Annie E. Casey Foundation found between 2020 and 2021, 12% of Kentucky children under age 6 lived in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care.

Kentucky News Connection

July 18, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

New Silica Dust Rule Aims to Protect Miners from Black Lung

Nadia Ramlagan

The federal government is **strengthening rules** aimed at protecting miners from silica dust exposure, the toxic dust driving the resurgence of black lung disease. The proposed rule would require mine operators to limit miners' exposure to respirable crystalline silica at or below 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air for a full eight-hour shift exposure.

Courtney Rhoades Mullins, black lung organizer, Appalachian Citizens Law Center black lung organizer, explained miners inhale silica dust cutting into rock, and added day after day of exposure leaves many workers with costly health problems such as progressive massive fibrosis, emphysema, kidney disease, lung cancer and decreased quality of life.

"Some of these individuals will have to get a lung transplant. The cost of the lung transplant is almost a million dollars," she detailed.

The Department of Labor says it plans to hold public hearings on the new rule in Virginia and Colorado. The hearings will be open for in-person or online participation, but dates have not yet been released. **According to the CDC**, miners in Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia face the most severe risk of death from black lung and lung cancer, compared with miners in other regions.

Mullins added it remains unclear how mine operators will be held accountable if they do not comply.

"It's quite another for it to actually be enforced and enforced correctly to where it's going to protect minors who are currently working to make sure that they aren't sick in the future," she explained."

In addition to reducing the existing exposure limit, the proposal also includes other workplace requirements as exposure sampling and medical surveillance at no cost for miners. The rule would also replace existing outdated respiratory hazard regulations with a standard that reflects the latest advances in respiratory protection.

7/23

Kentucky News Connection

July 24, 2023

7/30

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

KY Rep. Pushes to Fast-Track Federal Prison Project, Despite Local Opposition

Nadia Ramlagan

A more than \$500 million proposed **federal prison project**, which would sit on a former coal mine site in Letcher County, is receiving a renewed push by Rep. Hal Rogers, R-Ky.

Rogers inserted language into the latest **House appropriations bill** to fast-track construction of a 1,400-bed federal prison.

Dr. Artie Ann Bates, a member of the group Concerned Letcher Countians, said the majority of residents do not want another correctional facility, especially one requiring building a new water and sewer treatment plant. She argued residents and small businesses could instead use the funding to jump-start local economies.

"There's absolutely no reason to build another new prison and put it in a super remote area with no infrastructure that currently doesn't have the population to staff it," Bates contended. "And then also, we had this major flood last year, and our county has not recovered from that."

The proposed Federal correctional facility and prison camp would be the fourth federal prison to be built in Eastern Kentucky's 5th congressional district, and one of the most expensive. The Federal Bureau of Prisons said the prison would help meet the ongoing need for modern federal correctional facilities and infrastructure in the nation's mid-Atlantic region.

Emily Posner, general counsel for the group Voice of the Experienced, said the language change would allow the prison to move forward without fully going through the National Environmental Policy Act process. She pointed out residents would no longer be able to participate in the regulatory process by commenting and providing suggestions, and reviewing the project's environmental impact statement.

"To remove our right to seek judicial review of the environmental impact statement is just such an undemocratic move in the Appropriations Subcommittee," Posner emphasized. "It's just really shocking."

Posner added similar to the language in the debt ceiling bill passed this year to greenlight construction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline, the change would effectively squash any legal attempt to challenge the building of the prison.

"The other thing that section 219 does is, it strips citizens the right to sue an agency or, in this case, to sue the Bureau of Prisons, by seeking judicial review in the courts to make sure that the environmental impact statement actually complies with NEPA," Posner stressed.

According to research by the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, three federal prisons built in nearby Clay, Martin and McCreary counties had **no impact** on economic development, and long-standing problems have continued or even worsened two to three decades after the federal prisons opened.

Kentucky News Connection

August 1, 2023

8/6

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

A KY Push for Regenerative Farming in Next Farm Bill

Nadia Ramlagan

People's wallets continue to feel the impact of high food prices, and local environmental groups say sustainable food systems and regenerative farming are solutions that deserve support in the next Farm Bill. Lawmakers are currently at work shaping the legislation to replace the current **Farm Bill**, enacted in 2018 and set to expire this fall.

Hank Grady, a member of the **Sierra Club Kentucky Chapter**, explained relative to many other states, Kentucky is home to a large number of **farmers working** on more than 75,000 farms across the state, and said many producers are looking to transition away from the industrial farming model.

"We believe that in the short run and the long run, this will provide a better alternative and a healthier product than the industrial alternative," he continued.

According to the Sierra Club, **certain soils** also are effective at capturing carbon, but excessive tillage, overgrazing, erosion and overuse use of fertilizers in industrial farming have depleted their ability to reduce greenhouse gases and lessen the impact of climate change.

Grady said efforts to improve water quality have largely been left out of industrial agriculture, and added while the state's **Agriculture Water Quality Authority** is an innovative program, it has not gone far enough to help implement sustainable practices that keep local waterways pollution-free and provide healthy food.

"We would like to see it amended, so it not only attempts to protect water quality in Kentucky from agricultural pollution, but also protects soil and helps farmers build a healthier soil system - one that is not heavily reliant on chemicals and monoculture," he said.

According to the CDC, concentrated animal feeding operations or CAFOS, poorly managed application of pesticides, irrigation water, fertilizer, overgrazing and overworking the land can all result in contaminated waterways.

Kentucky News Connection

August 7, 2023

8/13

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Report: Central Appalachia Could Be Safe Haven for Climate-Change Migrants

Nadia Ramlagan

*By Janie Ekere for **The Daily Yonder**.**Broadcast version by Nadia Ramlagan for Kentucky News Connection for the Public News Service/Daily Yonder Collaboration*

A new report from Invest Appalachia, a self-described social investment fund, looks at ways to bring economic development to Central Appalachia as climate change increasingly determines where Americans live.

The **report** released in May analyzed emerging climate data from Appalachia. According to its findings, Central Appalachian states like Kentucky and North Carolina will likely see a population increase due to climate change-related migration. Mild temperatures, high elevation, and abundant rainfall make the region well-suited geographically to accommodate this population influx.

“Some of the data we included in the report shows that the region actually compares really favorably to the Great Lakes region, parts of New England in terms of actual anticipated weather impacts and status as a climate haven,” Andrew Crosson, CEO of Invest Appalachia and co-author of the report, said in a phone interview. Crosson co-wrote the report with Invest Appalachia’s director of community impact Baylen Campbell and the North Carolina Institute for Climate Studies’ outreach and engagement specialist Nicholas Shanahan.

The report included a map that identified counties with “climate receiving” geographies based on a set of nine different climate risk factors. As more people are expected to leave states like California and Texas in the coming years, the map projected the Great Lakes and Appalachia as likely “climate receiver” regions (marked in blue).

Most of the available climate receiving data that Invest Appalachia’s researchers reviewed has focused on states like Michigan and Wisconsin. These states possess robust urban infrastructure in addition to geographic advantages similar to those of Appalachia. Like these states, Appalachia’s population has grown in response to both the pandemic and climate change, the report found. But little climate research has focused on the region, especially rural parts of the region, up until now.

“We basically call for more study of that topic, both of understanding the factors that will be driving climate migration into the Appalachian region, but also situating Appalachia within the national dialogue as a region that is going to be critical along with some other rural parts of the country. It’s gonna be critical to national-scale climate resilience as a population-absorbing region.”

There are still significant challenges to climate change adaptation in rural Appalachia, according to the report. Available climate data for the region has focused on historical records and has not been adequately updated to reflect emerging climate patterns. Though its geography provides better overall protection against climate catastrophes, Central Appalachia is still seeing increased temperatures and flooding due to climate change. A **record-breaking flood in July 2022 in East Kentucky**, for example, killed 45 people and displaced thousands more. The region is also still recovering from the effects of the fossil fuel-based economy.

“Landscapes have been altered by extractive industries in ways that it has now been proven exacerbates flooding,” Crosson said. “Surface mining, strip mining, lack of proper remediation/reclamation work means that

there's less absorptive capacity, that streams are disrupted from their normal flows. All of that exacerbated the effects of the massive rainfall events in eastern Kentucky that led to the [recent] flooding.”

The report also found that not all Central Appalachian communities can handle the potential population increase equally. The influx of higher-income inhabitants from other states could lead to rising rent and housing prices as demand outstrips supply. Marginalized people in rural areas may face the risk of homelessness or may be forced to move to areas with fewer protections from climate change as a result of gentrification, according to the report.

“Once you have compounding climate impacts, and then you have climate migration on top of that, the people who are going to suffer the most...are the same as the people who are going to suffer from climate-driven rural gentrification,” Crosson said.

While the report called for further research of the region to develop strategies for climate adaptation, it proposed measures that can be taken now toward this goal. Rural Appalachia has faced a long-term lack of government and private sector investment in basic infrastructure and community services which leaves little funding for climate adaptive measures. Reversing that underinvestment is a critical first step in building lasting climate resilience, the report found.

“When you have a chronically disinvested region, the perception of risk — the perception of not being investible — is something that has to be overcome,” Crosson said. “We’re trying to...show outside funders and investors in particular that this is the region of innovation. A region where people have a vision and they need the resources to execute on that vision.”

Janie Ekerey wrote this article for [The Daily Yonder](#).

JAB cont

Kentucky News Connection

August 15, 2023

8/20

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Lack of Child-Care Options Impacts KY Domestic-Violence Survivors

Nadia Ramlagan

Kentucky's child-care crisis could get worse when federal assistance for child-care centers runs out, and that could increase barriers for survivors of intimate-partner violence. **Federal data** shows that when adjusted for inflation, families nationwide are paying between \$5,000 and \$17,000 per year per child for child care.

Meg Savage, chief legal officer with ZeroV, the state's coalition of intimate partner violence programs, said child care ranks as a top factor in survivors' decisions to leave an abusive relationship. She noted that survivors typically cannot obtain employment and move into a safe situation unless they have reliable child care.

"And so they may be moving away from whatever support system they have for child care, Once you are working, then obviously you are concerned that children who need child care are going to be in a safe and wholesome environment while you're at work, " she explained.

A 2021 needs assessment found 35% of survivors identified it as a basic need, with affordability and operating schedules being the biggest barriers.

Crystal, whose last name has been withheld for this story at her request, is a Jessamine County resident and survivor. She said she cannot find affordable child care for her son, making finding employment difficult.

"There's so little options for a single mother, especially one who's been through a lot," she said. "There's trust issues involved with certain things, too. It's hard to trust anybody when you have severe PTSD from things you've been through."

According to the Kentucky Center for Economic Policy, since 2020 Kentucky's child-care industry received around \$1-billion in federal funding - preventing half of the state's centers from shutting their doors. But Savage said that money is expected to run out within a year and added that means child-care costs for families will significantly increase.

"If we can't find a way to step up to the plate and help out child-care providers and help out the Kentucky families that are dependent on child-care assistance," she explained, "then we're really going to be looking at moving backwards very quickly."

A recent **report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation** found that between 2020 and 2021, 12% of Kentucky children younger than six live in families in which someone quit, changed, or refused a job because of problems with child care.

Kentucky News Connection

8/27

August 22, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

More Resources for KY Nonprofits Working to Reduce Overdose Deaths

Nadia Ramlagan

More than 615,000 dollars is going to nonprofit groups in Kentucky working to end **opioid addiction**. According to state data, more than 2,100 Kentuckians lost their lives to a drug overdose last year - the first decline in deaths since 2018. Eligible groups include those working to raise awareness about overdose prevention, reduce the stigma around substance use disorders, and improve access to harm reduction, treatment and recovery support.

Marianne Smith Edge, chair of board of directors with the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky said grant awardees will also receive administrative help.

"The uniqueness is not just the dollars - it's really providing that support that a lot of times nonprofits, especially smaller ones, don't have. So, that'll help them guide and ensure that the dollars really get the return on investment for those specific communities," she said.

The grant program is a partnership between the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Overdose death rates have increased by 44% for Black Americans, and by 39% for the American Indian and Alaskan Native populations, according to the **CDC**. The program aims to address these disparities in the Commonwealth, Smith added.

"This particular fund is really geared toward really reaching those underserved and minority populations that perhaps haven't always been the top recipients of some of the other substance abuse prevention programs," she continued.

Opioid lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies resulted in a **\$460 million payout** to Kentucky in 2021 to provide state and local governments with funding to support opioid treatment programs.

Kentucky News Connection

August 31, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Experts: Catch Up on Kids' Immunizations During Back-to-School Season

Nadia Ramlagan

Health experts are **urging parents to check on the status of their child's vaccinations**, amid pertussis and COVID-19 outbreaks among children that have triggered school closures in some counties.

Western Kentucky Heart and Lung Research Foundation Executive Director Dr. Melinda Joyce said in addition to checking in with a pediatrician, there are many resources available to help parents get back on track when it comes to their child's immunizations.

"If someone is not sure about what immunizations are due at a particular child's age, going to your local pharmacist is a good place to start," said Joyce. "And just ask that question - 'is my child due something at this point in time?'"

Parents or legal guardians can also use **the online Kentucky Immunization Public Portal** to obtain an official record of all of the vaccines their child has received while living in the Commonwealth.

The Kentucky Department for Public Health recently confirmed an outbreak of pertussis - also known as whooping cough - in the central part of the state.

Kelly Taulbee - director of communications and development with Kentucky Voices for Health - said it's a preventable disease, but notes some counties are seeing an uptick in cases.

"Most of the identified cases in Kentucky right now are among unvaccinated children," said Taulbee. "At least one has had to undergo hospitalization. Whooping cough might be one of those household names, but it doesn't have to be common. It doesn't have to be something we are fighting actively right now."

Joyce added that the start of the academic year often coincides with physical exams for sports, and other activities that make it an ideal time of year to focus on children's health.

"I think the beginning of the school season is a great time to think about immunizations," said Joyce, "and to say, 'What does my child need?'"

A report published this year by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that nationwide childhood immunization rates are on the decline for vaccines that prevent measles, tetanus, pertussis, polio, and chickenpox.

9/3

Kentucky News Connection

September 5, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Experts: Kids Often Eligible for Medicaid, Even if Their Parents Aren't

Nadia Ramlagan

Kentucky begins its eligibility review of kids' Medicaid coverage this month - and experts say it's vital the process goes seamlessly, so **kids aren't removed because of procedural errors or incomplete information.**

Emily Beauregard, executive director of Kentucky Voices for Health, explained that most households should receive notices in the coming weeks.

She added that it's even more critical to ensure kids retain their coverage, because Kentucky has recently implemented a new continuous eligibility policy.

"If they're able to renew their children's coverage, those kids will have coverage for 12 months - with no gaps," said Beauregard. "That's really exciting, because what we've seen in the past is that there's churn throughout the year based on fluctuating income, other changes in the household."

According to the Georgetown University Center for Children and Families, **more than 47% of Kentucky children rely on Medicaid or KCHIP coverage.**

Beauregard said the percent of kids on Medicaid and KCHIP coverage in the state's rural counties is especially high, making it even more critical parents and caregivers complete the renewal process for kids.

"It's as high as 77% in some eastern Kentucky counties," said Beauregard, "and it really is the most comprehensive coverage that kids can have. We need to make sure that our kids aren't losing coverage during Medicaid renewal."

Joan Alker - a research professor at the McCourt School of Public Policy, and the executive director, Center for Children and Families at Georgetown University at Georgetown University - said the ripple effects of increasing numbers of kids without coverage could be far-reaching.

"Children are not expensive to cover, but they're regular utilizers of care," said Alker. "We don't want families showing up at the pharmacy and being told, no, you can't get your child's medication."

According to data from KFF, **kids are being kicked off of Medicaid rolls largely due to simple errors or change of address.**

Nationwide, nearly 700,000 children have lost coverage during the unwinding, although experts say that number is likely much higher.

9/10

Kentucky News Connection

9117

September 13, 2023

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

KY's Rural Housing Trust Fund Plays Critical Role in Disaster Recovery

Nadia Ramlagan

The Kentucky Housing Corporation has received applications for housing funding from the state's Rural Housing Trust Fund requesting more than \$18 million for rebuilding single family homes in regions of the state still recovering from catastrophic flooding and tornadoes.

Wendy Smith, deputy executive director of the Kentucky Housing Corporation, explained very few affected homeowners carry flood insurance, and homeowners' policies typically do not cover flooding. She said money from the trust fund will be critical for helping middle and moderate income Kentuckians rebuild their houses.

"We are viewing this allocation of state dollars as a really flexible source to keep the pipeline of housing work in recovery going," Smith noted. "And to grow it before the big federal money arrives."

According to a report by the Ohio River Valley Institute, approximately **9,000 homes** in eastern Kentucky were damaged in last year's severe flooding. Rebuilding costs are estimated to be between \$450 million and \$950 million.

Smith pointed out that, unlike most housing programs, Rural Housing Trust Fund money can serve homeowners who earn up to 120% of a region's medium income.

"It is really a middle-income [program and] we can serve low-income folks," Smith emphasized. "We can also serve folks who earn slightly higher incomes, or maybe it's two earners in the family. And that's really important, because disasters do not care how much money you make."

According to the Ohio Valley Institute report, six in 10 families with flood-damaged have incomes of \$30,000 a year or less.

Smith added long-term local and state funding is critical for a successful recovery and rebuilding.

"We've gotten this crash course in how this works, what the federal role is," Smith outlined. "What constitutes the kind of emergency response phase versus the longer term recovery and rebuilding phase. "

FEMA said the federal government has provided **\$159 million** in assistance to eastern Kentuckians so far.

Kentucky News Connection

September 19, 2023

9/24

Available files: mp3 wav jpg

Local KY Communities Tackle Youth Vaping Crisis

Nadia Ramlagan

Widespread vaping among young Kentuckians continues to be a public health concern - and some local communities are coming up with innovative ways to tackle the issue. A big win in the battle against nicotine came when the Commonwealth raised the age limit to purchase nicotine products to 21.

Lauren Carr, director of the Graves County Agency for Substance Abuse Policy and Prevention, said local shops are still selling vapes to kids. Her county is incentivizing business owners not to sell to minors.

"We reward the clerks that do not sell with a gift card," she said. "So we say, 'Hey, thank you for not selling to the kids. Because that is preventing it from getting into the schools.'"

Experts say tobacco retail licensing can help protect youth from the harmful effects of vaping and can also improve equity among low-income and communities of color, often targeted by the tobacco industry.

According to [Kentucky Youth Advocates](#), about 35 states require retailers to hold a license to sell tobacco products, but Kentucky is not one of them.

Sydney Shafer, a high school student in Scott County, said after her grandfather passed away from lung cancer, she became passionate about raising awareness among state lawmakers about the harms of vaping.

"Big vape companies are targeting younger audiences with fun flavors, like cotton candy and coffee," she argued. "It's deceptive and manipulative, and I would just want to educate other people and let them know that vaping is not as safe as they think."

Bruce Crouch, drug prevention officer with the Youth Coalition Prevention Group at Taylor County High School, said his school district recently received an opioid settlement grant from the state to expand drug prevention work.

"We actually started with our intermediate school, with fourth-graders," Crouch reported. "And we introduced a program, the 'Too Good for Drugs' program. So, they are actually getting that early education about the dangers of nicotine use."

Research from the [CDC](#) and FDA finds more than 2.5 million middle and high school students nationwide reported e-cigarette use in 2022. Nearly 85% of youth who vape used flavored e-cigarettes, and more than half used disposable e-cigarettes.