

Trails for Trades benefit ride to fund scholarships

Labor Day weekend event to honor James Ellis Carver, support vocational education

BY DENNIS BROWN
LEWIS COUNTY HERALD

A new Labor Day tradition is set to begin in Lewis County as Trace Creek Construction, in partnership with 1806 Adventure Park and Briery Creek RV Park, hosts the inaugural “Trails for the Trades” Benefit Ride on Saturday, Aug. 30.

The off-road ride and family event will take place at 1806 Adventure Park, at 1979 Briery Creek Road in southern Lewis County. All proceeds will fund scholarships for students pursuing vocational and technical education.

This year’s ride is being held in memory of James Ellis Carver, whose mother, Becky Esham, hosted a similar benefit in his honor for several years, raising money for scholarships. Trace Creek will now lead the event and continue the tradition as an annual Labor Day fundraiser.

The “Trails for the Trades” Scholarship Fund will award financial support to graduating seniors from Lewis, Greenup, Boyd, Carter, and Owsley County High Schools. Eligibility requires that students have participated in a vocational program and they continue their education at a Kentucky state university, a Kentucky Community and Technical College System school, or a technical/trade program.

Sam Howard, CEO of Trace Creek Construction, emphasized the importance of the initiative:

“We are specifically earmarking whatever money is raised for trades education. It will be for kids that have had hands-on learning inside the high school and they want to continue their education at the college level, whether it be a university setting or a technical college or trade school. We believe this can be the first step into stopping the drain we’ve had in the trades for many years.”

Trace Creek has long supported education, awarding 25 scholarships in 2025 alone through its established \$1,000 scholarship program for seniors in districts where the company provides construction management or design services. The new benefit ride scholarships will be in addition to Trace Creek’s existing program.

Event Details

The entry fee is \$40, which includes food truck access starting at noon, dinner and a commemorative T-shirt.

- A silent auction will run all day, with a live auction beginning at 6:00 p.m.
- The band Seventurn will perform live at 7:00 p.m.
- Other attractions include food trucks, a poker run and prize drawings.

A highlight of the evening will be the giveaway of a four-wheeler donated by Big Blue Outdoors of Flemingsburg. Additional area businesses have provided sponsorships and donations to support both the auctions and the scholarships.

Voices of support

The initiative has drawn praise from educators across the region.

- Gary Cornett, Superintendent of Owsley County Schools: “The Owsley County School District is excited for our students to be eligible for vocational scholarships that are provided by ‘Trails for the Trades.’ Many of our students go on to trade schools and have successful careers. These scholarships will allow them to further their education and ease the financial burden that is associated with higher education.”
- Courtney Bartley, Principal, Boyd County CTC: “This vocational center is instrumental to our workforce and to students as individuals. We teach academic, employability, and technical skills so that all students can leave enrolled, enlisted, or employed. From mechanics and welders to nurses, doctors, and engineers, CTE can be the start.”
- Jeremy L. Ruckel, Principal, Lewis County CTC: “Lewis County Career and Technical Center is an investment in our students and our entire county. It opens doors that will allow young men and women to break cycles of poverty in Eastern Kentucky. It gives them confidence to dream bigger, the tools to succeed, and the courage to lead change.”
- Traysea Moresea, Superintendent, Greenup County Schools: “Scholarships for students pursuing post-secondary programs in Career and Technical Education are an investment in our students’ futures, their families’ stability, and the strength of our community workforce. We are beyond grateful for the support we receive from our community partner Trace Creek Construction.”
- Kelly Moore, Principal, Carter County CTC: “A scholarship for any student can be life changing. Scholarships for tech students are important because they legitimize our work in technical and vocational education and give students an alternative to attending four-year colleges.”

Community backing

“Trails for the Trades” is supported by numerous gold silver, and bronze sponsors including Ribolt Fabrication, PrimaryPlus, WillScot, Advance Wall Systems, Big Blue Outdoors, Briery Creek RV Park, Dixie Roofing, Atlas Metal Products, and many other businesses and individuals.

The event will serve as both a tribute to James Ellis Carver and a rallying point for the future of vocational education in Eastern Kentucky.

“Grab your helmet and join us Labor Day Weekend at 1806 Adventure Park for ‘Trails for the Trades.’ Together we can build futures and strengthen the trades workforce of tomorrow,” Howard added.

Visit the Facebook page for Trace Creek Construction for ride details. Contact cswearingen@tracecreek.net for more information.

What I learned from a man I never met

Digging into the life of my great-great-grandfather — a war hero, postman, and moonshiner from Kentucky — helped me understand the values we’re so quick to forget, and the stories we’re at risk of losing.

I grew up hearing stories about my great-great-grandfather, a WWI veteran, postman, and moonshiner from Greenup County, Kentucky. What struck me most wasn’t the wild tales, but how his life reflected values often missing from today’s national narrative: resilience, humility, and an unshakable sense of place.

In my family, he was simply “Ol’ Mort” — a man who could lift a wagon no mule could budge and shoot the head off a penny from a hundred yards. He carried the scars of war, built his home with his own hands, and when times got tough, he made whiskey to keep food on the table. Most folks in the valley did see him as a hero, not just for what he did in World War I, but for the way he lived when he came home.

Writing about Mort’s life forced me to think more deeply about the stories we tell and the ones we forget. There’s something sacred in oral history, especially in places like Appalachia and Eastern Kentucky, where storytelling fills the gaps official



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Justice Department won’t defend grants for Hispanic-serving colleges

WASHINGTON (AP) The Trump administration said Friday it will not defend a decades-old grant program for colleges with large numbers of Hispanic students that is being challenged in court, declaring the government believes the funding is unconstitutional.

In a memo sent to Congress, the Justice Department said it agrees with a lawsuit attempting to strike down grants that are reserved for colleges and universities where at least a quarter of undergraduates are Hispanic. Congress created the program in 1998 after finding Latino students were attending college and graduating at far lower rates than white students.

Justice Department officials argued the program provides an unconstitutional advantage based on race or ethnicity.

The state of Tennessee and an anti-affirmative action organization sued the U.S. Education Department in June, asking a judge to halt the Hispanic-Serving Institution program. Tennessee argued all of its public universities serve Hispanic students, but none meet the “arbitrary ethnic threshold” to be eligible for the grants. Those schools miss out on tens of millions of dollars because of discriminatory requirements, the lawsuit said.

On Friday, the Justice Department released a letter in which Solicitor General D. John Sauer notified Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson that the department “has decided not to defend” the program, saying certain aspects of it are unconstitutional. The letter, dated July 25, cited the 2023 Supreme Court decision outlawing affirmative action, which said “outright racial balancing” is “patently unconstitutional.”

The Justice Department declined to comment.

Tennessee is backed in the suit by Students for Fair Admissions, a conservative legal group that successfully challenged affirmative action in admissions at Harvard and the University of North Carolina. That suit led to a 2023 Supreme Court ruling that forbids universities from considering students’ race in admissions decisions.

Edward Blum, president of Students for Fair Admissions, said Friday the group would decline to comment.

More than 500 colleges and universities are designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions, making them eligible for the grant program. Congress appropriated about \$350 million for the program in 2024. Colleges compete for the grants, which can go toward a range of uses, from building improvements to science programs.

Former President Joe Biden made Hispanic-serving universities a priority, signing an executive action last year that promised a new presidential advisory board and increased funding. President Donald Trump revoked the order his first day in office.

Trump is taking steps to dismantle the Education Department and has called for massive funding cuts, yet his 2026 budget request preserved grants for Hispanic-serving colleges and even asked Congress for a slight increase. Even so, there have been doubts about his administration’s commitment to the funding.

A national association of Hispanic-serving universities filed a motion last month to intervene as a defendant in the Tennessee lawsuit, voicing concern that the federal government would not adequately represent the group’s members.

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities said Trump’s agenda is “entirely adverse” to the group’s interests, citing the president’s aim to close the Education Department entirely. The administration is “on record denouncing programs like HSIs, that take account of and seek to redress ethnic or racial disparity,” the group wrote.

Tennessee and Students for Fair Admissions did not object to

the group’s request to lead the legal defense.

Unlike historically Black or Native American tribal colleges and universities, which receive their designations based on their missions, any college can receive the HSI label and grants if its Latino enrollment makes up at least 25% of the undergraduate student body.

The list of HSIs includes flagship campuses like the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Arizona, along with many community colleges and smaller institutions.

In its court filing, the national association argues the grants are constitutional and help put its members on an even playing field.

The group’s schools enroll 67% of the nation’s Latino undergraduate students, yet studies find those schools receive far less in state and federal funding than other institutions. Hispanic-serving universities are open to students of all races — as an example, the association pointed to Southern Adventist University, a private school in Tennessee whose student body is 28% Hispanic and 40% white.

The Justice Department generally has a duty to uphold the Constitution and federal legislation, but in rare cases it can refuse to defend laws it believes are unconstitutional. The Obama administration did so in 2011 when it refused to enforce the Defense of Marriage Act. During his first term, Trump did the same with the Affordable Care Act.

The Trump administration has fought to end diversity, equity and inclusion policies in government, education and business, arguing that they discriminate against white and Asian American people.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

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The Greenup County Project Development Board (PDB) proposes to construct a new judicial center to be located in Greenup, KY. The PDB invites interested architectural firms to electronically submit a Court of Justice Architect-Engineer and Related Services Questionnaire to the Administrative Office of the Courts at Solicitation@kycourts.net. Proposals must be submitted to the address above no later than September 26, 2025, at 2PM EST. Proposals received after this date and time shall not be considered. Upon review of the electronically submitted proposal, 8 printed copies of the proposal be requested to be sent to the Administrative Office of the Courts for PDB review. The Questionnaire, project program documents, and required forms may be obtained from the Lynn Imaging Online Planroom www.LynnImaging.com/distribution. The PDB will select at least 3 firms to be interviewed by the PDB. The selection of these firms will be based on the criteria listed in the Kentucky Court of Justice Administrative Procedures for the Court of Justice Part X, Section 5-2, which is available in the Lynn Imaging Online Planroom.

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