

BUDDIES

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With the bar set high already by earning this recognition, it gives the Best Buddies program a blueprint of how the organization and others like it are meant to be. It also provides students a level at which to maintain in coming years.

Cobb feels this will create a momentum for reaching more students and be an example with hopes other schools in Hardin County will begin their own Best Buddies program.

Best Buddies International is a global organization, created in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver to foster one-to-one friendships between people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Submitted
John Hardin's Best Buddies students and sponsors get a photo with Best Buddies International founder Anthony Kennedy Shriver.

"He had family members that had these disabilities and did not have the same opportunities for friendships," Cobb said.

Cobb helped bring Best Buddies to the college level 16 years ago. When she discovered a group of students wanted to bring the program to

John Hardin, "I was like, oh my goodness, this is a full circle moment for me."

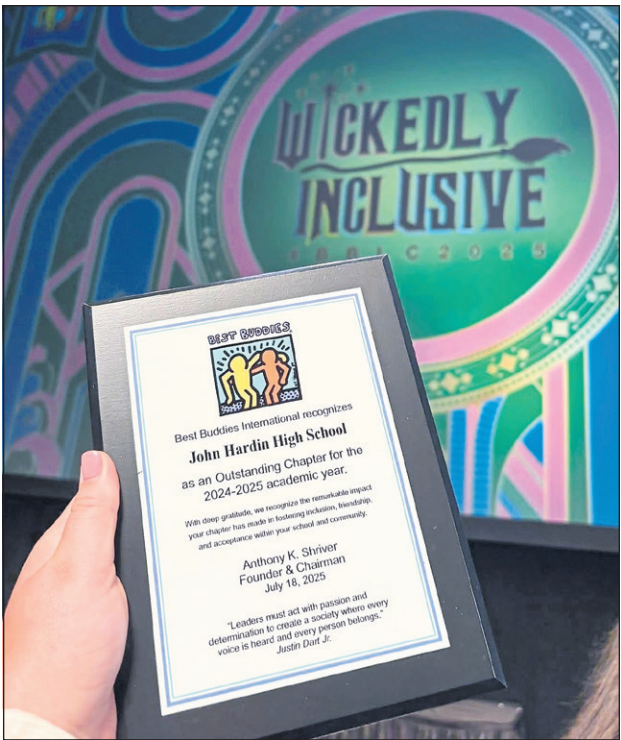
The school received a plaque that will be proudly displayed.

Cobb says she is really proud of the students and sponsors describing their effectiveness and enthusiasm for the program as

being "electric."

As the new school year begins Aug. 7, John Hardin's Best Buddies program will have 13 friendship matches with more expected.

Greg Thompson can be reached at 270-505-1414 or gthompson@thenewsenterprise.com.



Submitted
Best Buddies program at John Hardin High School was recognized this past weekend as an Outstanding Chapter during a leadership conference held at Indiana University in Bloomington. John Hardin was the only high school in Kentucky to earn the recognition and one of 40 from around the world.

CRUISIN

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The Cruisin' the Heartland Car Show is a three-day festival beginning at 7 p.m. Thursday at the State Theater with the movie "Smokey and the Bandit." Doors open at 6 p.m.

"There is a lot of people who haven't seen the movie on the big screen," Pyles said. "For \$5 you get to see the movie, a small popcorn and a fountain drink."

The main event from 2 to 6 p.m. Friday is the Car Show at Freeman Lake Park on Blue Heron Way in Elizabethtown. Registration, which is \$20, and parking starts at 2 p.m.

Although it costs to compete in the show, guest admission is free.

"I think that is kind of a hidden secret. A lot of folks in Elizabethtown don't realize that we do have a car show out at the lake on Friday," Pyles said. "If someone does have a classic car, they can bring it out and not be part of the judging competition."

According to Pyles, last year there were tons of spectators at the park to view the cars.

"The band, Checkmates, will play at the Freeman Lake Bandstand from 4 to 6 p.m.," Pyles said.

The event is free and open to the public. Food trucks will be on-site and no outside alcohol

is permitted. Guests are encouraged to bring their own chairs for the concert.

"Saturday is our big downtown event," Pyles said. "We'll start shutting down the roads at 5:30 a.m. and parking will begin at 6 a.m."

Once the festival's main event, Cruisin' the Heartland, begins early Saturday, there will be a grab-and-go breakfast and a swap meet at 8 a.m. in the State Theater.

"We kick off the day at 10 a.m. with the BlueOval Kids Zone, which will open over at the Cherry Lot," Pyles said. "We've got lots of inflatables, basketball and things for adults and children alike to do."

Other activities as part of the festival include the

Aaron Harp Magic Show, The Not so Newlywed Game Show, classic trivia and a drawing for grand prizes, which you must be present to win, that will be held at The State Theater parking lot.

"One of the new activities we're doing is the Quicksie 98.3 Watermelon Eating Contest," Pyles said. "They'll start registration for that at 10:30 a.m. and the first 20 people will get to participate in that."

All the activities that are in the State Theater parking lot are free, Pyles said.

East Bound & Down — Smokey & The Bandit Tribute group will be bringing popular cars of the film to showcase Saturday as well.

Festival goers are encouraged to bring money for food on Friday and Saturday as food trucks will be present. Additional attractions on Saturday include vendors and, the stars of the festival, thousands of classic cars.

"It's going to be a fun weekend centered around classic cars, but there is a lot to do that doesn't revolve around cars," Pyles said. "This event is not specifically for car people."

Apart from cars lining the downtown streets, Pyles said local shops and restaurants will be open for guests to the event to enjoy.

Pyles along with many others are proud that many car enthusiasts from around the coun-

try make Cruisin' the Heartland a must stop on their car show tour of the summer as it falls on the weekend before the 56th annual Street Rod Nationals in Louisville.

"We tend to bring a lot of cars. There are a lot of car shows around and we tend to bring in a diversity to see not only classic cars but other cars as well," Pyles said. "We have a great community that comes into Cruisin' the Heartland and that are impressed by our hospitality, community, our volunteers and our city. There is something for everybody to enjoy."

Kodee Brinegar can be reached at 270-505-1413 or kbrinegar@thenewsenterprise.com.

COUNCIL

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Behind the request is developer Hamstra-Juliet JV from Dallas, who has identified the property as a potential site for a Veterans Administration Medical Clinic. Chad Suito, who represented the developer, said in the July 8 hearing would be a 60,000-square-foot clinic possibly offering optometry, audiology, dietary, women's health, general health, mental health and imaging services. The site is across Ring Road from another major development which includes a Publix grocery store.

The company is a private developer who builds properties designed for VA Clinics and then leases the property to the Veterans Administration but has yet to sign a contract with the VA for the site.

In the July 8 meeting, several residents who live in neighborhoods near the site and a homeowner directly next to it spoke in opposition of the zone change. Many were present Monday to deride the council for not adhering to the commission's recommendation.

After hearing the first reading, Brown Gwynn, who lives in Foxfire, was first to the podium to question why the council didn't follow the recommendation of its commission that took into consideration traffic and other impacts.

"There's been some miscommunication, everybody in this room appreciates veterans," Gwynn said looking at the rows of veterans present for the meeting. "The

only reason I'm able to stand here and say this is because of what you all have done in your service."

Gwynn believes reporting of the potential zone change has misrepresented of what the residents near the property were in opposition.

And, in my opinion, because of the way the news media reported this, most of the veterans felt like the vote of the planning commission and the speakers at the hearing that day were opposed to a veterans clinic in Elizabethtown," Gwynn said. "And that's 1,000,000% away from the truth. The truth is, everybody there that I talked to and saw, plus the planning commission, felt like Elizabethtown

was a wonderful place for a veterans clinic and we need it and we want to do anything we can to support the veterans clinic."

The clinic just didn't have to be at that location, Gwynn said, along with others making the same point, some saying the clinic should be located on the south side of town, later in the public comments portion of the meeting.

Mayor Jeff Gregory reminded the public that the city has no power to force a developer to purchase and build on property in which they are uninterested and that developers choose sites they feel best suit their needs.

Stan Routt reminded the council that while the developer says they plan to build a VA clinic on the site, it is not guaranteed as other developers could be shopping for sites for the already approved clinic in the Elizabethtown

area.

"... The VA's 2026 budget submission report to Congress as shown under the 2005 to 2025 major medical leases not yet completed list confirms the VA's intent to establish a VA medical center in Elizabethtown," Routt said. "This action is currently in the acquisition process, which means they've got it on the plan, but they may not even have a request for quote out here for it. This means there is no formal

contract awarded to anyone for the actual construction and timing of

the project. Contracting companies in their march toward being able to submit a quote or bid for this work must include a firm site proposal, generally, along with other details. So there may well be several companies quoting this work while using other sites in E'town. The work is expensive, lucrative and competitive for construction and for the leases. The first year lease alone is estimated at \$16.671 million."

Many veterans in the audience thanked the council for its consideration of the project as they cited having to

seek services at clinics in Fort Knox — a problem for veterans with a felony — Grayson County or the VA hospital in Louisville.

"I've been fighting cancer since 2006," said Walter Reed, who is in his late 70s. "Every couple of years I either take chemo or radiation. My wife cannot drive in Louisville. She's too nervous. So therefore, I have to find someone to take me."

While Reed said he relies on a multitude of friends, the added complexity of finding someone to take him either 30 minutes or an hour away

for treatment is an obstacle a clinic in Elizabethtown would eliminate. He and other veterans who spoke said with the aging of the more than 14,000 veterans in the area, time is of the essence.

"We fought for you, fight for us," Reed told the council.

The council is expected to hear second reading on the matter at 4:30 p.m. Aug. 4 at its next regular meeting at Pritchard Community Center in Elizabethtown.

Gina Clear can be reached at 270-505-1418 or gclear@thenewsenterprise.com.

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