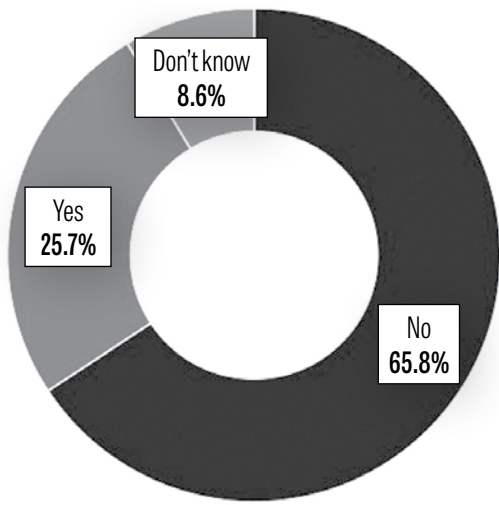


**ONLINE POLL:**

Are you excited about the \$14.2 million project that will bring seven new softball/baseball fields to Lakeview Park?



This poll reflects the opinions of 304 respondents. Visit [www.state-journal.com](http://www.state-journal.com) to take part in today's poll.

**EDITORIAL**

# Instead of pointing fingers, let's learn from tragedy

In the past week, we've witnessed firsthand the power of water and how it can change lives in the blink of an eye. From the ever-swelling Kentucky River — which recorded its second-highest crest ever at 48.27 feet and stayed in major flood stage (over 40 feet) for exactly four whole days inundating hundreds of local homes and businesses — to the swift-moving flash flood waters that tragically claimed the life of a Hearn Elementary School student on his way to the bus stop on April 4.

In the days since the death of 9-year-old Gabriel Andrews, some people — particularly online keyboard commenters — are looking for someone to blame for this horrible accident, which is the problem. No one is at fault for this sudden, unexpected, unintentional and unfortunate incident.

No one could have predicted that Gabriel would never make it to the school bus that day. And if anyone — from the dozens of first responders and volunteers who searched for the boy, his family, friends, classmates, teachers, school administrators or the Franklin County Schools superintendent himself — could have prevented this awful outcome, they would have.

"We are deeply saddened at this horrific tragedy that claimed the life of one of our students. The entire Franklin County Schools system is praying for the family, friends of those directly affected by the events this morning," FCS Superintendent Mark Kopp said on April 4. "We are more than a school system, we're a family at Franklin County Schools and we share this loss together."

Kopp cannot comment further on Gabriel's death because the incident is an ongoing investigation by the Frankfort Police Department and the Franklin County Coroner's Office. Autopsy results will not be available for 15-19 weeks and all of the facts of this case have not yet been made public so no one knows exactly what happened.

Instead of pointing fingers, let's come together as a community to wrap our arms around and support this grieving, local family in the weeks and months to come. Instead of judging others, let's use our energy to map out the small creeks, streams, streets, low-lying areas and poor drainage areas in the community where flash flooding occurs so we can be prepared for the next round of heavy rainfall. Instead of spreading negativity, let's teach our children how to be safe near rushing water. Instead of letting this tragedy divide us, let's learn from it to prevent it from happening to another family.

# Success of Youth Sports Assoc. a game-changer

The recent partnership of the Frankfort Parks Department, the parks board and the community has culminated in the successful establishment of the city and county's first Youth Sports Association. This collaboration promises to shape the future landscape of youth sports in Frankfort and Franklin County for years to come, providing a well-rounded environment for children to develop, learn, and grow.

The creation of the Frankfort Franklin County Youth Sports Association (FFYSA) is a testament to the power of community-driven efforts. Frankfort has always had a strong commitment to recreation opportunities for youth, and has long recognized the importance of fostering physical, emotional, and social development in its young people. However, the establishment of a formal sports association provides a framework to strengthen and expand youth sports opportunities that didn't previously exist. By uniting the community under an association model, the partnership brings together resources, knowledge, and expertise to ensure that Frankfort's youth have access to safe, organized and structured sports programs.

From the outset, the collaboration between the Frankfort Parks Department and community stakeholders has been built on a shared vision: to provide children with the opportunity to engage in team sports, promote healthy lifestyles, and encourage a sense of belonging and camaraderie. It has become clear that the collective effort has already been a resounding success.

The collaboration between the city and the association has served as a model for fiscal responsibility. The partnership

with the Frankfort Parks Department ensures the association is able to keep costs affordable while providing an opportunity for all children to participate. Likewise, the reorganization



**Shawn Pickens**  
Guest columnist



**Chuck Geveden**  
Guest columnist



**David Guarnieri**  
Guest columnist

to an association model has allowed for city funds to be allocated toward facility and infrastructure improvements, which will only serve to improve the sports environment in the community for years to come. In terms of community involvement, the initiative has also fostered a sense of unity. The move to an association shifts the sole responsibility of youth sports away from the city parks department and toward a collaboration with the entire community. Local leaders, school administrators, and volunteers have come together in unprecedented ways to support the association's mission and formation. Coaches, mentors, and parents have played a pivotal role, offering guidance and encouragement, ensuring that the focus remains on equity and accessibility in sports opportunities for our youth.

This collaboration is a reminder of the value of local government working hand-in-hand with community members

to create programs that benefit the greater good. Looking ahead, the Frankfort Franklin County Youth Sports Association holds the promise of even greater success. The foundation has been set, and as the program enters its inaugural year and continues to expand, it's expected to serve as a model for other cities in the region. By focusing on the development of young people and providing them with the tools they need to thrive — both on and off the field — this partnership has ensured that Frankfort's future is in great hands.

The Frankfort Franklin County Youth Sports Association has completed its first enrollment, with record numbers, for spring youth baseball and softball. The spring season kicks off the second week of April.

The first youth sports association in Frankfort is more than just a win for the kids; it's a victory for the entire community. It proves that when we invest in our youth and work together, there's no limit to what we can achieve.

Additional information on programs offered by the association or how to become a volunteer and to be involved can be found at [www.ffysa.org](http://www.ffysa.org) or follow them on Facebook. Administrators can be reached by calling 502-598-9778 or emailing FF-CYSA25@gmail.com

*Shawn Pickens is director of Frankfort Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites. He can be emailed at [spickens@frankfort.ky.gov](mailto:spickens@frankfort.ky.gov); Chuck Geveden is board chair of the Frankfort Parks Board. He can be emailed at [cgeveden@gmail.com](mailto:cgeveden@gmail.com); David Guarnieri is president of the Frankfort Franklin County Youth Sports Association. He can be emailed at [FFCYSA25@gmail.com](mailto:FFCYSA25@gmail.com).*

**LETTERS**

**'SPORTS TOURISM DRIVES LOCAL ECONOMIES'**

Dear editor,

I have lived in Franklin County for over five decades. We have heard talks of amenities and rumors about amenities as long as I remember. The latest proposal by Judge-Executive Michael Mueller and Franklin County Fiscal Court, along with the backing of county park Director Charlie Lewis, at Lakeview Park is one that will benefit almost everyone immediately.

Sports tourism drives local economies. It has been successful in every surrounding county for decades. While it might be too late for my children, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of local kids and families that will benefit immensely.

They don't even have to play sports to prosper. Many residents have pushed for sports tourism for years, to no avail.

Decisions like these shoulder legacies or destroy them. History is our marker. Vote yes.

*Buddy Bennett  
Frankfort*

**SHOP LOCALLY FOR CRAFT AND SEWING SUPPLIES BEFORE LOOKING ONLINE**

Dear editor,

With the closing of Joann stores, there are many people who are now (frantically) looking for a source for their craft and sewing supplies. This is the perfect time to seek out local, small businesses who provide these items.

Doing an internet search for "quilt shop near me" or "craft supplies near me" can provide listings for stores that you may not know exist.

It's hard running a small business and any/all support that former Joann shoppers can provide may very well be what allows a local store to stay afloat a little longer.

Before shopping online for the items that Joann used to provide, try to see if there's a local-ish option available.

You might just make a small business owner's day!

*Mona Phelps  
Versailles*

**SUBMIT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Letters should be the original work of the author, and 250 words or less. Email letters to [letters@state-journal.com](mailto:letters@state-journal.com).

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The State Journal (USPS 520-160) is published Wednesday and Saturday mornings by Frankfort Newsmedia LLC, 1216 Wilkinson Blvd., Frankfort, Kentucky, 40601.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The State Journal, P.O. Box 368, Frankfort, KY 40602.

**State Journal EZ Pay subscription rates:** Monthly by mail, \$11.00 per month; three months - \$33.00; six months - \$66.00; 12 months - \$132.00. Plus tax.

**For home delivery** call the circulation department at 502-227-4556. Periodical postage paid at Frankfort, Kentucky 40601.

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