

Natalie Basford Named GEAR UP Student of the Year for Augusta Independent School

Augusta Independent was in the spotlight at the 2025 GEAR UP Kentucky Institute for a College-Going Culture, held April 16 at The Campbell House in Lexington. Senior Natalie Basford, the daughter of Jennifer Curtis, was named the 2024-25 GEAR UP Kentucky Student of the Year for Augusta Independent School, one of just 12 students recognized statewide. Basford earned this distinction through strong academic standing, leadership as a GEAR UP Student Ambassador, and consistent support of peers both in and beyond GEAR UP programming. Basford plans to study cosmetology and business and ultimately one day own a salon.

“I want to build something for myself, turn my dreams into a career and maybe even open my own salon one day,” Basford says. “GEAR UP has been a game changer. It’s helped me explore different paths, visit schools and connect with people. But more than giving me resources, GEAR UP has given me confidence. It’s made me realize that my dreams aren’t just ideas, they’re possible. I’m not just hoping things work out, I actually have a plan and the support to follow through.”

GEAR UP Kentucky (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a statewide, federally-funded grant program administered by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. Its mission is to increase the number of students from low-income Kentucky communities who are ready to succeed



Pictured left to right in front row are Devin Warmouth, Bourbon County High School; Alexandria Easton, Bath County High School; and Natalie Basford, Augusta Independent School. In the back row are Bryjuan Dyer, Mason County High School; Jared Ishmael, Fleming County High School; Gavin Profitt, Frankfort High School; and Kaden Frederick, Paris High School. Not pictured are Kylee Butrick, Holmes High School; Joshua Heseman, Marion County High School; Alyssa Pittman, Mercer County Senior High School; Luke Gregg, Pendleton County High School; and Hadleigh Linville, Robertson County School.

in education after high school. The program replaces college and career advisors in schools to provide academic advising, college and career exploration, FAFSA and financial aid support, college visits and summer programs, and leadership opportunities—starting as early as seventh grade.

Augusta Independent School has been a GEAR UP Kentucky partner since 2021 and has seen significant gains throughout the grant cycle, including:

- The percentage of students completing the FAFSA climbed from 50% in 2022 to 89% in 2024, exceeding state and national rates by at least 25 percentage points each year.

- 79% of seniors applied for college since

2022.

- 153 students received more than 2,727 hours of advising.

- GEAR UP Kentucky funding provided

24 visits to college campuses or job site tours for nearly 100 students.

“This year’s recognition of our students of the year was especially



Pictured is the AIS 2024-25 GEAR UP Kentucky Champion of the Year Tyler Rice with GEAR UP Kentucky District Program Manager Autumn Bishop.

meaningful since they were juniors and seniors we have supported for several years,” said Kim Welch, Executive Director of GEAR UP Kentucky. “We have watched them grow into confident, capable young adults who are well prepared for whatever comes next—whether that’s a certification, a two-year college, or a four-year university.”

Tyler Sparks, a substitute teacher and bus driver at Augusta Independent School, was named the 2024-25 GEAR UP Kentucky Champion of the Year, one of just 12 school and district staff recognized statewide. Sparks was honored for his tireless commitment to student success and support of the GEAR UP mission.

Augusta Independent School also won multiple banners for outstanding FAFSA completion:

- The 2024 award for highest percentage of FAFSA completions - 79%.

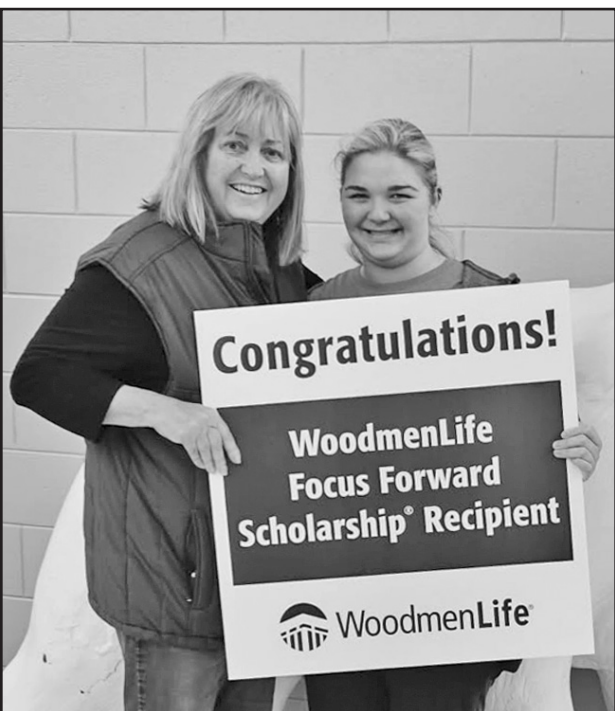
- The 2025 award for highest percentage of FAFSA completions - 63%.

The event at The Campbell House marked the final convening of the current seven-year GEAR UP Kentucky grant. As it closes, schools like Augusta Independent School celebrate not only milestones achieved, but a strong college-going culture built for years to come.

For more information about GEAR UP Kentucky, visit gearup-ky.org.

submitted

Jessica Mains Awarded WoodmenLife Scholarship



Pictured left to right are Maryann Cummins and Jessica Mains.

photo submitted

A Bracken County High School student was recently awarded a national-level WoodmenLife scholarship. Sales Team member Maryann Cummins from WoodmenLife presented Jessica Mains, daughter of Mark and Amy Mains, with the scholarship.

Focus Forward Scholarship® recipients must be high school graduates attending a two-year or four-year college, university or technical school; WoodmenLife members in good stand-

ing with at least three years of membership; and members of families where all in the household are WoodmenLife members in good standing. Scholarships were awarded to those students who make a difference in their community through volunteerism, make their community a better place to live, want to pursue a career as a leader in their community and demonstrate their academic performance by providing their transcripts and GPA.

Augusta Independent Announces Prom Schedule

The Augusta Independent High School Prom will be held in the Augusta Independent Gymnasium on Saturday, May 3rd from 8 pm to midnight. Students who are participating in the “walk-in” should arrive between 7 and 7:45. Cars that are dropping off students should enter at the Bracken Street entrance and will exit onto 2nd Street.

There will be no public viewing prior to the prom, but the public is invited to the crowning ceremony. **This year’s crowning will take place at 11 pm.**

Tickets will be on sale until the day before the prom. The prices for



the tickets are as follows: Couple - \$25; Single - \$15. Augusta Independent School senior class members will be admitted free of charge as a gift from the Junior class. If a senior class member brings a date who is not an Augusta senior, they will be required to pay the \$15 single ticket cost.

submitted

Let Bracken County Know

The Bracken County News does not charge to print articles of community events. We invite you to send us pictures of events along with an short write up, and the names of the people in the picture. Words of

thanks or appreciation can not be included in the article. Items will be published as space allows.

Send it by email to brackencountynews@gmail.com or to the office at 212 Madison Street, Brooksville.

NOTICE OF INVITATION FOR SEALED BIDS FOR A NEW TRUCK – BRACKEN COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

All interested parties please take notice:

The Bracken County Water District is seeking sealed bids for the purchase of a new vehicle. By action of the Board of Directors, the District has authorized the solicitation of bids for a new 2025 Chevrolet 1500 Silverado Crew Cab and has also approved the sale of an excavator to the highest sealed bidder, subject to a minimum bid amount as determined by the Board.

The Board reserves the right to reject any and all bids that do not meet minimum specifications or that exceed the anticipated costs approved by the Board.

Vehicle Specifications (Minimum Requirements):

- 2025 Chevrolet 1500 Silverado Crew Cab
- 1LT Preferred Equipment Group
- 5.3L V8 Engine
- Leather Seats
- Assist Steps
- Convenience Package 1

Deadline for Submission: All sealed bids must be submitted by Friday, May 2, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. to: Bracken County Water District, 1324 Brooksville-Germantown Road, Brooksville, KY 41004.

Bid Opening: Bids will be opened during the regular meeting of the Bracken County Water District Board of Directors on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

The lowest responsive bid will be considered, but may be rejected if it exceeds the anticipated cost as determined by the Board.

For more information, please contact the Bracken County Water District office.

NOTICE OF SEALED BID Bracken County Water District Surplus Vehicle for Sale

The Bracken County Water District has declared the following vehicle as surplus:

2011 Chevrolet 2500 HD 4WD Utility Truck

- Four-wheel-drive
- Utility bed
- Approximately 280,000 miles
- Vehicle will be sold as is

Sealed bids will be accepted for the purchase of this truck. All bids must be submitted to: Bracken County Water District, 1324 Brooksville-Germantown Road, Brooksville, KY 41004.

Deadline for bid submission: No later than 4:00 p.m. on May 2, 2025.

The Bracken County Water District will accept the **highest bid**, but reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

Want to surprise your loved one on their birthday? Why not print your birthday greeting in the BC News? **Call 735-2198 TODAY!**