

Letter to the Editor:

The dark side of connectivity: Cyberbullying is on the rise

Dear Editor,

Recent social media activity involving the Falmouth Whisper and several other Facebook accounts of citizens and elected officials has become very alarming with potentially devastating consequences. Although the spreading of false truths and narratives may be entertaining to some, we should not encourage cyberbullying.

Hiding behind a keyboard to promote chaos and discord has consequences. You may not be the one writing the posts, but if you are supporting this behavior by reading, commenting or sharing the information you are just as guilty of cyberbullying as the coward hiding behind the keyboard.

In the digital age, social media has emerged as a double-edged sword powerful tool for global communication and information-sharing, but also a breeding ground for cruelty, harassment, and psychological harm. While it has revolutionized the way we connect, it has simultaneously evolved into a serious societal threat in the form of cyberbullying.

The dangers of cyberbullying are no longer theoretical — they are real, growing, and increasingly devastating. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying is persistent, borderless and inescapable, following its victims 24 hours a day through smartphones, computers and social platforms. Victims are often left feeling trapped, humiliated, and powerless, with no refuge in either the physical or digital world.

CONSEQUENCES

The consequences are far-reaching and deeply hurtful.

Severe mental health consequences include:

- Anxiety and Depression: Victims commonly experience overwhelming emotional distress, often leading to long-term psychological trauma.
- Erosion of Self-Worth: Continuous harassment chips away at a person's confidence, fostering feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.
- Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideation: In some cases — especially among adolescents—cyberbullying has tragically contributed to self-injury and suicide.

Cyberbullying causes relentless, 24/7 harassment:

- The virtual nature of cyberbullying means it can occur anywhere, at any time, making it far more



Police Chief Marty Hart

invasive than physical bullying.

- There is no safe space or escape, magnifying feelings of fear and isolation.

It causes permanent digital damage

- Harmful content — whether videos, false claims, or private information — can be disseminated instantly and irreversibly, leaving a permanent stain on the victim's digital footprint.
- This can severely impact a victim's reputation, educational opportunities, and future career prospects.

Cyberbullying can lead to social withdrawal and isolation:

- Victims often retreat from friends, family, school and social activities out of shame, embarrassment or trauma.
- This isolation can exacerbate depression and anxiety, compounding the psychological damage.

Academic and professional decline often occurs. The emotional toll of cyberbullying frequently results in:

- Falling grades and lack of engagement;
- School absenteeism;
- Loss of motivation;
- Job instability or resignation, particularly for adult victims.

There also are physical health repercussions:

- Though the attacks are virtual, the stress manifests physically, contributing to:
- Chronic headaches;
- Sleep disturbances;
- Stomach pain;
- Fatigue and weakened immunity.

There are legal and safety threats. In extreme instances, cyberbullying involves:

- Threats of violence;
- Doxxing (publishing private information);
- Sextortion or digital blackmail;
- These behaviors may result in criminal charges, police involvement, and even relocation

for safety.

There is silence, underreporting and a lack of accountability with cyberbullying:

- Many victims suffer in silence, afraid to speak out due to shame, fear of retaliation, or belief that nothing will change.
- Without proactive reporting systems and intervention, the cycle of abuse continues — unchecked and often escalating.

CALL TO ACTION

The consequences of cyberbullying are not confined to screens — they reverberate through classrooms, households, and entire communities. This is not merely an issue of digital etiquette; it is a public health crisis that demands urgent attention from educators, parents, policymakers, tech companies and society at large.

If we fail to act, we risk losing more than reputations — we risk lives.

Col. Marty Hart
Chief of police, Falmouth

Fiscal Court hears of help applying for FEMA funding

By Jim Thaxton

FALMOUTH — There were 26 items on the printed agenda and the Pendleton County Fiscal Court room was unusually full for its regular meeting last Tuesday.

After the formalities, including reading of the minutes from the previous meetings and a brief discussion of the treasurer's report, Judge Executive David Fields introduced Emergency Response Asist, Erin McCauley, a disaster grants projects specialist with ER Assist Disaster

Funding Solutions.

McCauley explained to magistrates her role in assisting counties with applications to receive funds from FEMA to repair damage done by natural disasters. Her services are free.

Though federal declaration for individual assessments of damages has been approved for FEMA assistance, it has yet to be approved for local governments to cover damages to public properties and roads.

Several Pendleton County roads have severe slippage and damage from the recent floods and heavy rains.

McCauley explained the steps in the process to get financial assistance once the federal declaration is made.

Magistrates asked several questions for clarification and expressed appreciation for the information indicating they looked forward to working with her once federal declaration is approved.

Magistrates also:

- Opened bids for asphalt paving of county roads bids. Bids were from Eaton, \$1,739,746.55; Reigler Blacktop, \$1,682,076; and Mago Asphalt, \$1,625,935.

A representative from Mago attended the meeting to explain a formula change in their asphalt that he believed would improve the surface. There were no other companies represented.

After discussion, Mago was awarded the contract by a 4-0 vote.

- Bids were opened for freight on board materials for county road repairs. All three bids were accepted and left to the judge's discretion which to use when products are needed.

- A public hearing was opened on uses for county road aid and local government economic assistance funds. There were no comments nor questions from the public. The hearing was closed.
- Approved a cost-of-living increase for full-time county employees, 4-0.
- Approve funding for a waterline on Monroe Road, 4-0. Discussion regarding shared cost and approval was made contingent that the water district would cover \$70,000 of the estimate \$320,000 cost.
- Approve Tara Greene and Bill Flaughter to the Pendleton County Industrial Authority Board for four-year terms.
- Approve Reappointment of JoAnna Crouch to PC Ambulance Board for two years.
- Approve a contract with the Grant County Detention Center to house inmates, 4-0. Magistrates discussed cost saving of not continuing with the Bourbon County Detention Center. It also was noted that Scott County recently built a jail at a cost of \$33 million and it is already too small.

City discusses power issues at school

Postal Service celebrates Mailbox Week

By Jim Thaxton

FALMOUTH — Public Works Supervisor Richard Courtney discuss electrical issues at Southern Elementary School at the May 15 City Council meeting.

Courtney explained that one transformer is leaking. The discrepancies in the current to the building appear to be within the HVAC systems, he said.

After a brief discussion which included replacing the transformer and possibly putting the electric service underground, it was decided to get the HVAC tested before taking any further action. A decision on what to do will be made when more detailed information is available.

Councilman Anthony Cox stated his Code Enforcement, Ordinance and Utilities Committee discussed utility rates as they applied to commercial, residential and institutional customers. They also discussed streets that needed attention mentioning Shelby Street and Woodson Road seeking bids for both and the use of Road Aid funds.

The committee suggested getting a quote from Rumpke in order to set a baseline for decisions regarding providing future sanitation services in the city.

Councilman Steve Jenkin said that his Finance Committee would like to see a preliminary budget from the six city departments. They discussed employee benefits packages including a clothing allowance. They are waiting on an insurance quote and anticipate a 7% increase, he said.

Citizens are reminded that committees meet at 6 p.m. before regularly scheduled City Council meetings on the first and third Thursday of each month. Citizens are encouraged to participate.

Several residents actively engaged in conversation with both Cox and Jenkins about work in their committees before last Thursday's regular council meeting began.

Citizens also were reminded that city offices will be closed Monday for Memorial Day.

The large items trash pickup will be on Tuesday.

Council reported that it is actively engaged interviewing potential city attorneys. Council adjourned its regular meeting to go into closed session to continue interviews. No action was taken.

U.S. Postal Service

National Mailbox Improvement Week is this week, and the U.S. Postal Service is encouraging customers to inspect, maintain, and upgrade their mailboxes to help ensure safe, secure, and efficient mail delivery.

"Customer's mailboxes are the first point of contact for receiving birthday cards, letters, and important documents," Acting Postmaster and CEO Doug Tulino said.

"A well-maintained mailbox helps to ensure that every package and parcel makes it to its intended destination safely and efficiently."

Each year, USPS designates the third week of May as Mailbox Improvement Week to encourage customers with box-on-post-delivery to examine and, where necessary, improve the appearance of their mailboxes.

Through regular mailbox maintenance efficient mail delivery, enhanced neighborhood curb appeal, and improved postal service operations are better ensured.

The Postal Service annually calls attention to Mailbox Awareness Week because of the wear and tear that occurs to mailboxes throughout the year. Some of the typical activities homeowners may need to do include:

- Replacing loose hinges on a mailbox door;
- Repainting a mailbox that may have rusted or has started to peel;
- Remounting a loosened mailbox post;
- Replacing or adding house numbers;
- Keeping security top-of-mind.

USPS partners with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service to keep postal employees, the mail stream, and the American public safe, prevent incidents through education and awareness, and enforce the laws that protect our nation's mail network.

Tips to secure your mail include:

- Promptly pick up your mail: Try not to leave letters and packages in your mailbox or at your door for any length of time.
- Report mailbox vandalism: If you see someone actively tampering with a mailbox, immediately report it to the police.

If you know of someone who committed an act of mailbox vandalism, report it to Postal Inspectors at 1-877-876-2455.

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NEIL BELCHER
OWNER / PUBLISHER

MARILYN BELCHER
OWNER / CFO

Phone: 859-654-3332 Fax: 859-654-4365

Main Email Addresses:
news@falmouthoutlook.com / ads@falmouthoutlook.com

Website: www.falmouthoutlook.com

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Survey: Average Kentuckian has not broken sweat in 108 days

LiveSportsonTV.com

For years, public health experts have waved red flags about America's slide into a sedentary lifestyle, tying it to a laundry list of health woes — heart disease, diabetes, you name it.

But here's a question that's been simmering beneath the surface: Is this less about laziness and more about a cultural drift away from playing sports entirely?

A new survey from LiveSportsonTV.com digs into this, polling 3,024 adults to find out how many have swapped cleats for remotes — and why.

When asked, "When's the last time you played a sport that made you break a sweat?" the average Kentuckian said it was 108 days ago (compared to a national average of 98 days).

That's more than three months since they last huffed and puffed on a field, court, or trail.

But the numbers vary wildly across the country. Take North Dakota: folks there haven't broken a sweat in an average of 188 days — over half a year. Meanwhile, Colorado residents are practically still wiping their brows, averaging just 19 days since their last workout-worthy game.

It's a stark divide that hints at more than just climate or terrain.

Then there's the choice between doing and viewing.

LiveSportsonTV.com asked, "If you had an hour to spend on sports, would you rather play or watch?"

In Kentucky, only 30% picked playing over watching — a stat that might make gym teachers everywhere wince.

North Dakotans, true to form, were the least enthusiastic, with just 11% opting to lace up. Coloradans, on the other hand, flexed their active streak again, with 67% saying they'd rather be in the game than on the couch.

It's a split that suggests geography, culture, or maybe just habit plays a bigger role than we think.

The survey didn't stop at sweat stains and screen time. It also probed whether Kentuckians have simply fallen out of love with playing sports.

Here, 53% admitted they've lost interest — perhaps a reflection of declining local options or shifting priorities.

So what's holding people back — and what could pull them in?

Forty-four percent said they'd play if they had friends or a group to join.

It's a reminder that sports, at their core, are social — and loneliness or a lack of buddies might be sidelining more people than we realize.

A total 27% blamed a lack of free time.

Between work, family, and the endless scroll of streaming options, carving out an hour to shoot hoops isn't as simple as it sounds.

Another 16% pointed to a shortage of local opportunities or facilities. If the nearest court is miles away or the community league folded years ago, motivation can fizzle fast.

Fourteen percent got creative, saying they'd play if they could do it from home — like virtual reality sports.

"We're seeing a real shift in how people engage with sports," Emil Sturesson of LiveSportsonTV.com said.