School Board OKs grant applications amid dispute

BY VICTORIA COX EDITOR

A debate concerning diversity, equity and inclusion left room for discussion between members of the LaRue County Board of Education at their recent monthly meeting Feb. 24.

The conversation revolved around a request to apply for several mini grants from the Council for Exceptional Children, a non-profit association dedicated to improving "educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities.' Capped at a maximum of \$650 per grant, local applications request funding for playground equipment, field trips and instructional materials.

Recently elected board member Teresa Gilbert voiced concern regarding the association's utilization of DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) policies. The comment follows on the heels of President Donald Trump's January 2025 Executive Order that bans DEI programs in the federal government and threatens to remove federal funding for American schools and universities that do not eliminate diversity initiatives.

"I checked again on the Council for Exceptional Children's [website], and in their mission statement they did indicate that they are promoting diversity, equity and inclusion," Gilbert said. "That's an area that I'm a little cautious about so I just wanted to question whether we should proceed on that."

Savannah Boone, Director of Special Education at material mentioned in the LCS, said the DEI that's been "villainized" recently is not the same DEI when referring to special education

"That's our mission as special educators, because our students are diverse learners — they learn differently than other students, so we have to support their diversity," she said. "As far as equity, we have to meet their individual needs through the favor of the grant applica-



The 2024-25 FRED Award nominees are, from left, Marsha Duncan, Robbie Wolford, Pam Dosier and Glenda Coy. Nominees not Pictured include Jamie Hines, Melinda Rock, Beverly Coffee, Jim Cooper, Rita Grubbs, Leeann Cain and Misty Wilmoth. Duncan was presented the award on Monday, March 3.

IEP, which is a federal document. Inclusion is actually something that's also a federal initiative, to start including students with their peers.'

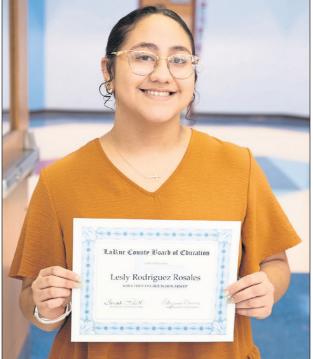
"DEI is something that, while it's kind of been villainized, as a part of special education, it's something we're charged to do by federal law. Right now, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) governs us, and we're told we have to support their diverse learning needs, include them equitably and provide the appropriate accommodations, and then include them with their peers as much as possible.'

Gilbert also questioned if instructional material purchased with the mini grant would have DEI embedded in the curriculum. Boone said material would not be bought from CEC, the grant would simply fund purchases. Furthermore, no curriculum is being bought; the instructional request is referring to technology.

Board member Joanna Hinton added to the conversation, noting she had no objections to special education teachers applying for the funds because "it helps our most needed students with funds that are going to go somewhere, so they might as well come to us."

In a 4-1 decision, members ultimately voted in

> out the service area. are two din, Nelson and Marion counties and one each in LaRue, Meade and Washington counties. Breckinridge and Grayson counties also are in the Lincoln Trail Area Development District but have separate funding for their Head Start programs. "Head Start has a \$9.5 million budget that comes from the federal government," Conover said. "That is our biggest program and our biggest employer."



Photos courtesy of LaRue County Schools

The Kentucky School Boards Association's First Degree Scholarship is awarded annually to help make postsecondary education possible for two students, one male and one female, who will be the first in their family to attend college. LaRue County High School student Lesly Rosales is one of the 2024-2025 awardees; according to LaRue County Board Chair Farrah Pruitt, Rosales is the LC student to receive the scholarship.

tions; Gilbert was the sole nay vote.

The Board was also asked to approve two separate actions for upgrades to the LaRue County High School gymnasium: a stereo equipment upgrade and floor addition.

The first endeavor will involve an overhaul of the foundation of the current sound system and will also allow for future additional

\$34,387.17 project will be funded between District Athletic Funds (\$19,387.17) and Title IX (\$15,000). It is eligible to use Title IX funds — which are strictly reserved to ensuring equal opportunities are provided

upgrades, if desired. The



Tori Dangerfield, Erin Bratcher and Tracy Murray. Not pictured is Amy Litton. Dangerfield received the ExCel Award on Monday, March 3.



Tim Gross was recognized for his completion of Rank 1 through the GRREC Ed Rank Change Program. He is pictured with LaRue County Schools Superintendent Adryanne Warren.

to students of all genders - because the gym is utilized by both boys and girls sports, and the student population as a whole.

The second request proposes adding sleeves to the court floor, which would create two volleyball courts. The \$3,642 project will be fully funded by the volleyball program's Boosters.

Both projects were approved unanimously.

The Board also approved the following items:

 To allow Ashley Carter to apply for a School Garden Grant. If received, the grant would provide \$7,500 to LaRue County Middle School for outdoor garden material and kitchen items to make recipes using the students' grown food.

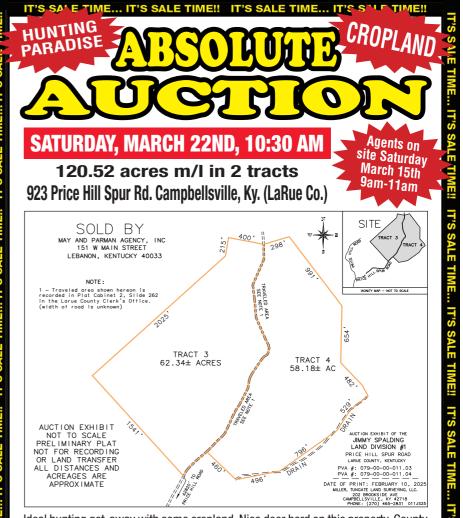
mittee selections of Ashley

Reding as the Board Representative and Ryan Bivens, Sandy Kidd and Ryan Jeffries as community leaders; the committee will be tasked with developing LCS's District Facility Plan, which will outline the conditions, needs and priorities for the district's physical facilities.

• Up to 20 additional Emergency Substitute Certification Requests. Emergency substitutes meet the requirement to be a substitute teacher, but they do not have a degree in education.

• Permission to lay a concrete slab and wall at the LCMS Outdoor Classroom, once funding for the project has been secured.

The next meeting of the LaRue County Board of • Local Planning Com- Education will be at 6 p.m. on Monday, Mar. 17.



Pet of the

Week: Luna Mae



Reader submitted photo by Macy Stillwell Luna Mae, a 10-month-old Corgi, is described as a big ball of energy who wants to be with people 24/7. The Mt. Sherman resident loves to play outside and swim in the pond.

FROM PAGE A1

"The impacts of cuts to federal funding are certainly concerning. We are looking to our federal partners for clarity, not only on whether or not the funding will continue and if it will be impacted, but also how we can comply with the new administration's rules and regulations from the executive orders.'

CKCAC operates 13 different programs with each one targeting a different demographic.

That includes the Head Start program that operates nine standalone centers through-

It serves over 400 children in the Head Start and the Early Head Start programs and employs 150 people.

SEE BUDGET/PAGE A8

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