

PEOPLE

Kevin Hart to host BET Awards in June

UPI.com

Comedian and actor **Kevin Hart** is set to host the 25th annual BET Awards show on June 9. “I love a celebration,” Hart said in a statement. “It’s a chance to reflect, cherish and honor life’s unforgettable moments.



Kevin Hart

I’m truly honored to host the 25th BET Awards and celebrate culture’s biggest night.”

The celebration, which takes place at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, will air at 8 p.m. EST on BET.

“For over a decade, Kevin Hart has been a beloved part of the BET family, and we couldn’t be more excited to have him return to host the 25th anniversary BET Awards. His unparalleled talent, infectious energy and deep connection to our audience make him the perfect host for this historic celebration,” said BET president and CEO **Scott Mills**. “Kevin has continuously pushed boundaries in entertainment. On the heels of the successful launch of BET+ original series “Lil Kev,” we are eager to expand our partnership and continue to bring groundbreaking projects to life.”

“Lil Kev” is an animated series made for adults that arrived on BET in March and was “inspired by Hart’s rocky upbringing” per an official synopsis.



RYAN C. HERMENS rhermens@herald-leader.com

Students and parents arrive for the first day of school at Northern Elementary School in Lexington on Aug. 16, 2023.

FROM PAGE 1A

SCHOOLS

even though over half of the identified homeless students fall within that age level.”

“The applicant addresses housing, transportation, and child care needs. It does not address physical welfare and enrollment,” one comment said. “Gaps in academic success are noted in high school students, whereas younger students are only targeted for summer enrichment.”

One part of the application was described as “very vague” with “no specific information about who, how, and when the desired outcomes will be

achieved.”

One section, the comments said, lacked details about the academic success of homeless students.

An application from Campbell County, in Northern Kentucky, received top marks with a score of 126.33. Perry County scored the lowest at 68.67. Fayette County scored 99.67.

Districts that received the grant in 2024 included Bath, Campbell, Covington Independent, Dayton Independent, Jefferson, Jessamine, Newport Independent, Paducah Independent, Spencer, and Whitley.

FCPS SAYS IT WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HOMELESS STUDENTS

Homeless advocates in Fayette County are concerned that the district will slash its homeless services staff by two-thirds, according to a news release from a group that includes Ginny Ramsey, the director of the Catholic Action Center.

At a school board planning meeting last week, advocate Meg Haist asked the district not to eliminate two positions that provide students with school supplies, arrange transportation, allocate supplies for food, provide clothing and laundry, set up tutoring and interact with state and federal

agencies.

Haist told school board members it was important for people who partner with the school district to have a point of contact at Fayette County Public Schools.

Fayette district officials have not confirmed that there have been cuts to staff who oversee the district’s homeless education services.

Dedeeh Newbern, District Chief Student Support Services Officer, acknowledged that the district did not receive the homeless services grant.

Newbern said the school district had created community partnerships with groups like the Catholic Action Center

During the school board

meeting last Thursday, Newbern assured school board members that even without the grant, “The services will continue. The support will continue.”

Newbern said having not received a grant in 2024, the district had to reallocate how the services occur this year.

District staff receive cross-training so they can continue the work, Newbern said.

“There has been a lot of misinformation out there saying we are no longer supporting McKinney-Vento kids,” Superintendent Demetrus Liggins said. “We took care of those kids well before we received that grant, and we are going to continue to take care of them now,” Liggins said.

He said those students “were not being forgotten or tossed out.”

District spokesperson Dia Davidson-Smith said, “FCPS will continue to apply for grants that will support this program.”

WHAT DEFINES A HOMELESS STUDENT

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act defines homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

It included children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals.

Valarie Honeycutt Spears: (859) 379-4967, @vhspears

FROM PAGE 1A

WICKER

According to Truist loan documents filed with the suit, the distillery had an agreement with Blue Run Spirits, which was purchased by Molson Coors in August 2023, to produce liquid inventory and to store barrels of whiskey produced elsewhere.

But a spokesman for Blue Run said that while before the purchase by Coors, Blue Run may have had an agreement with Garrard Distilling, but that Garrard never actually stored anything there or distilled for the label.

Garrard County Distilling also told the bank it was storing finished spirits for a company called CWI Ventures, doing business as Victory Spirits Development, an Atlanta bulk spirits investment company. And separately for Seelbachs Spirits, according to the court documents.

And the company told the bank they had a contract to fill barrels for Brindiamo Group, a whiskey broker that, according to its web site, is the “leading partner for brands and distilleries



Provided

Garrard County Distilling Co. opened in Lancaster with two new column stills and a distilling capacity that made it the largest all-new distillery at the time. The first barrels were filled on Jan. 2, 2024.

seeking to place or secure premium whiskey.”

The distillery has been sitting idle at least since mid-March, with workers furloughed and no distilling taking place. The phone at Garrard Distilling is disconnected. Parent company Staghorn in Atlanta, founded by Ray Franklin, did not respond to requests for comment.

Franklin also has not responded to multiple requests for comment.

WICKER RECRUITED TO GARRARD DISTILLING

A bourbon industry veteran, Wicker began working with Garrard Distilling in October 2023, recruited by Franklin, a spirits entrepreneur who had teamed with Reddy and dozens of investors to build the distillery in Lancaster.

Wicker had been

working at Alltech’s Lexington Brewing & Distilling Co. in Lexington, but she said it hadn’t been a great fit and she left in June 2023 after just under a year.

Franklin was offering a salary she considered top dollar to Wicker, who has an extensive background in the bourbon industry, working at Limestone Branch, Starlight Distillery in Indiana, Preservation Distillery and most notably Widow Jane in New York.

Franklin had already hired a top-notch team from Wild Turkey, Jim Beam, Four Roses and other well-known Kentucky distilleries, as well as MGP in Indiana, she said, to come to the previously dry Garrard County to kick start a bold new venture.

And, best of all, Franklin told her that the distillery already had enough

contracts for its whiskey to fill barrels for the next 4 1/2 years, Wicker said.

But Wicker said things felt off at Garrard Distilling almost from the beginning, “The culture just wasn’t normal distillery culture.”

But the executive team didn’t seem interested in hearing her concerns about how Garrard Distilling was being run, she said.

WHAT TRUIST BANK FILINGS SHOW ABOUT GARRARD DISTILLING

The turmoil began before the place ever filled its first barrel in January 2024.

According to documents filed in the lawsuit, the distillery lost at least one major investor, and the chief executive officer before the distillery was operational.

In October 2022, Truist Bank agreed to give distillery parent company GBRE a \$5 million line of credit and a \$20 million loan, according to court records.

But within six months, the original CEO listed on loan paperwork, Matthew Merrick Shirah, had resigned with a \$1.8 million settlement.

According to the same document, chief financial officer Wade Honeycutt also had resigned as chief financial officer. He apparently remained involved with the company but not as CFO. He’s also listed as an investor.

And Trailer Park Holdings, which had originally invested the equivalent of more than \$1.5 million, had divested itself of its 3% interest in venture, according to court records.

Trailer Park Holdings had contributed 400 barrels of spirits from another undisclosed distillery to the company in exchange for an interest and received 390 barrels back, along with the purchase price for 10 barrels that had been sold, according to the amended loan agreement.

Each of these events was enough to put GBRE’s loan in default because Garrard Distilling apparently did not immediately notify the bank, according to the July 2023 document in court records.

But Truist agreed to grant a waiver and to revise the loan documents with Reddy listed as chairman of All Nations Investors, and Franklin listed as president of All Nations Investors.

All Nations, along with GBRE, also known as Green Bomber, comprised

about 180 investors who put in a combined \$50 million into the distillery, according to the court documents. Eleven investors put in \$1 million or more; many put in hundreds of thousands.

It isn’t clear how much Reddy put in. The Reddy Family Trust invested \$1 million, according to the loan documents.

About 30 investors, including Franklin, appear to have put money in both All Nations and Green Bomber, according to the court filing.

By November 2024, Franklin had left Garrard County Distilling to join Spirits Capital, a barrel brokerage, as chief revenue officer, overseeing the operation of their Distilled Barrels Financial Exchange site. He said at that time he remained an investor in Staghorn and hoped to help Garrard County Distilling find buyers for its barrels of newly made whiskey.

“I did all the things I set out to do with Staghorn,” Franklin told The Spirits Business last fall.

OTHER LAWSUIT, LIENS FILED

The distillery was already facing one lawsuit from contractors Doss & Horky, who also filed a nearly \$2.2 million lien against Garrard Distilling in July 2024.

The contractors alleged they had not been paid for labor and materials and that there were at least three other liens filed against the property.

Janet Patton: 859-379-5233, @janetpattonhl