



Webster County High School Concert Band



Webster County Middle School Concert Band

Webster County High, Middle School Bands Receive Distinguished Ratings

The Webster County Middle and High School Concert Bands recently participated in the spring Kentucky Music Educators Association Concert Assessment at the

Glema Mahr Fine Arts Center in Madisonville. Both bands competed in different divisions and prepared challenging music for the spring assessment.

The Middle School Concert Band received unanimous distinguished ratings from all music judges, marking the second consecutive year in a row. For the High School

Concert Band, the directors, Lucas Morgan and Megan Withers, challenged them by increasing their musical difficulty level for this year's spring assessment, and they met that challenge with an-

other distinguished performance.

A distinguished rating means a superior performance. It is the highest score possible for the spring concert assessment.

Reading Is In My Blood

By Tommy Druen

Reading is in my blood. As I've mentioned in this column before, my mother was a school librarian. But my lineage on this subject runs even deeper. Two of my grandparents served on the local library board, and my uncle was a book dealer. Still, my greatest inspiration for reading may have come from a family member I never even met.

Clem Coomer, my second great-grandfather, was born in rural Adair County in 1877. Like so many of his generation, formal education was a luxury. The demands of the family farm took precedence over school, and as a result, Clem spent much of his life not knowing how to read.

That changed when he met Miss Bertha Hamilton. Bertha was among the first graduates of Lindsey Wilson College and soon taught at a one-room schoolhouse in the community where Clem lived. Despite their vastly different backgrounds, the two fell in love and soon married. Already in his thirties, Clem learned to read under the patient instruction

of his wife.

Naturally, I never knew Clem personally. But he lived to the age of 95, and both my mother and grandmother knew him well. Through their stories, I gathered a sense of who he was—a kind and compassionate man with a remarkable gift for storytelling. Yet what resonated with me most was his devotion to reading the Bible daily. For a man of deep faith who had been denied literacy for so long, the ability to read the Bible for himself was a treasure, not just a skill.

I can't recall a time when I didn't know how to read. My parents undoubtedly played a role in teaching me, as did Nannie Bennett, who cared for me as a child. I also credit my preschool friends for assisting—primarily the ones I found on WDCN in Nashville: Sesame Street, The Letter People, and Read All About It! By the age of four, I was reading Bible passages, and by kindergarten, my teacher, Mrs. Gail Miller, would often ask me to read the class stories aloud.

I cannot fathom life without the ability to read. Beyond the joy

of literature, literacy is fundamental to learning. Every class I ever took—regardless of subject—demanded reading. And, in adulthood, I can't imagine trying to function without understanding how to read books, newspapers, internet sources or manuals. But literacy is not merely about recognizing words; it's about comprehension, critical thinking, and the ability to build upon knowledge. It is the most essential of all essential skills.

Given its importance, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the global adult literacy rate now stands at 86.3%. That figure exceeded my expectations. But any optimism I had quickly vanished when I discovered that the United States lags behind at just 86.0%. That's right—our nation falls below the global average.

A deeper dive into the data only worsened my dismay. The U.S. has the lowest literacy rate among industrialized nations. Every European country surpasses us—our closest peer, Greece, stands at 97.9%. Even within the Americas, we rank

below every nation except Belize, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, where access to education remains a significant challenge.

How did we get here? The United States has the highest GDP in the world—nearly double that of China, our closest competitor. Our total national wealth and median per capita income lead the globe. Compulsory education has been the law of the land in all 50 states since 1929, and we spend more per student on public education than almost every other country, exceeded only by Luxembourg, Norway, and Iceland.

For Americans, illiteracy is not a matter of access or resources—it is cultural. And that realization troubles me even more. What does it say about our values? What does it mean for our future? Ray Bradbury once warned, "You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them."

I realize I'm preaching to the choir, because you are reading this yourself. But take note of how much time you spend reading versus scrolling through

your phone. How often do you read to your children or grandchildren? Do people see you putting value towards literacy? It doesn't have to be a literary classic. It doesn't even have to

be of high quality. People just need to read more, if no other reason than to practice, and appreciate the skill that so many wish they had.

I have no doubt Clem Coomer would agree.

PUBLIC NOTICE

UTILITY ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

The City Council of Clay, Kentucky, adopted an amendment on March 13, 2025 reflecting the changes made to section 50.02 and 53.05 E of the Utility Ordinance. The changes reflect the day on which the water/gas meters are read, moving the start date from the 1st of each month to the 10th. A copy of the full text of the ordinance may be viewed at the Municipal office of the City of Clay, Kentucky, located at 9100 State Route 132 W, Clay, Kentucky 42404.

-- PUBLIC NOTICE --

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Project No. Providence City Lake Generator 22CWW107

City of Providence, Kentucky

The City of Providence is accepting bids for a three phase generator that shall be rated for 250 kW at 480 volts and 60 Hz, and furnished and installed automatic transfer switch(es) with number of poles, amperage, voltage, and withstand current ratings. A copy of the bid specs can be found at Providence City Hall 201 E. Main Street, or by emailing Dana Garrett at danagarrett@gradd.com. Sealed bids for this project can be mailed to City of Providence City Building, PO BOX 128, Providence, KY 42450-0128 or dropped off at the City Building at 201 E. Main Street, Providence, KY 42450. The bid opening will occur at 10:00 AM (CT), on April 22, 2025 at 201 E. Main Street Providence, KY 42450.

Sealed bids for this project shall be clearly labeled on the outside of the envelope or in the subject line as follows: "ATTN Mayor Butch Hackney: Sealed Bid for City of Providence Generator Project", not to be opened until 10:00 AM (CT), April 22, 2025.

The City of Providence reserves the right to accept any bid, to reject any and all bids, to waive any irregularities or informalities in awarding the contract, and to accept what in their opinion is the lowest responsible and responsive bidder.

April 2, 2025

"EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY"