Free electric vehicle charging now available at Somerset-Pulaski County visitor center

LAKE CUMBERLAND TOURISM



SUBMITTED

Lake Cumberland Tourism board and team members stand in the parking spot dedicated to electric vehicle charging at the Somerset-Pulaski County visitor center. The charger was made possible through a grant from the Mountain Association. From left, board members Lynn Lowery Brandon Davis, Ann Cook, Courtney Ikerd, Tim Kelly and Megan Damron; Lake Cumberland Tourism Executive Director Michelle Allen; board member Carolyn Mounce; and Assistant Marketing Director Katie Colwell.

Electric vehicle drivers visiting The Capital of Lake Cumberland now have another free place to plug in. Lake Cumberland Tourism has installed a Level 2 EV charger outside the Somerset-Pulaski County visitor center, funded through a $7,000 grant from the Mountain Association.

The grant covered the Enphase charger, installation, security cameras and signage. Charging is free to drivers, thanks in part to energy savings Lake Cumberland Tourism gained through an efficiency assessment of its visitor center, completed as part of the project.

The idea started with a question visitor center staff had heard for years: Where can I charge my car?

"Over the years, we've had calls from travelers asking where they could charge, so when I learned about this funding, it felt worth exploring," said Katie Colwell, assistant marketing director for Lake Cumberland Tourism. "We had a parking spot on the side of our lot that was almost never used. Turning it into a charging station was the perfect way to put that space to work for our visitors."

The visitor center is conveniently located off Ky. 80 near U.S. 27, a high-visibility, high-traffic location traversed by residents and visitors.

Colwell contacted the Mountain Association in December after learning about the funding opportunity and began working with Hope Broecker, the organization's energy specialist. Among other business support and lending programs, the Berea-based nonprofit helps rural communities, businesses, and local governments plan and fund EV charging projects with support from General Motors.

Broecker and Mountain Association Senior Energy Analyst Josh Bills visited the site to evaluate the charging location. While there, the team also conducted an energy audit of the visitor center through the Mountain Association's partnership with Kentucky Utilities, replacing light bulbs and thermostat controls and recommending additional ways to reduce energy use. Once Lake Cumberland Tourism's application was approved, Solar Energy Living of Corbin installed the charger.

"Travelers want to know a destination is ready for them before they ever pull into town, and for a growing number of families that includes knowing where they can charge," said Michelle Allen, executive director of Lake Cumberland Tourism. "This project lets us meet that need without adding cost to our operation, and it gives EV drivers one more reason to stop and see what Somerset and Pulaski County have to offer. We're grateful to the Mountain Association, General Motors, Kentucky Utilities and Solar Energy Living for helping us make it happen."

EV registrations in Kentucky more than doubled from about 11,000 in 2024 to 24,000 in 2025, according to the Mountain Association. Level 2 chargers add meaningful range while drivers grab a meal, shop or explore nearby. Lake Cumberland Tourism will track charger use through a mobile app to measure demand over time.

A QR code on the charger's sign connects drivers with information about things to see and do in the area, along with an option to donate to the non-profit Master Musicians Festival. Instead of charging a fee, Lake Cumberland Tourism invites drivers to support one of the region's signature events, which has brought music, art and culture to Somerset for the last 34 years.

The charger is located at the Somerset-Pulaski County Visitor Center, 522 Ogden Street, Somerset, and is available 24 hours a day.

Creepy Quackers Duck Race invade Rocky Hollow for Halloween

BY CARLA SLAVEY
COMMONWEALTH JOURNAL



CARLA SLAVEY I CJ

Five-year-old Ariyah Moore, dressed as Wonder Woman for Halloween, fishes a duck out of the creek at Rocky Hollow. She helped to collect the ducks that were part of the Somerset Junior Woman's Club's Creepy Quackers Duck Race.

Birds of a feather may flock together, but when it comes to racing, it's every duck for themselves.

The Somerset Junior Woman's Club tried to get all their ducks in a row Saturday by hosting the Creepy Quackers Duck Race.

The event took place in the park at Rocky Hollow in Somerset, with around 200 rubber ducks being released into the creek and allowed to float their merry way downstream before being netted back up.

Due to the event taking place right before the downtown Somerset Boo Bash – meaning most folks may have been getting ready for the trick-or-treating event – there weren't as many spectators for the race as there have been in the past.

Previous races have not only taken place in the spring, but happened at the Eubank Park on the northern end of the county.

However, SJWC President Wynona Padgett said the organization has wondered whether the event would work in the Somerset park as well.

"I think It went really well down here, and it's definitely worth considering doing it again," Padgett said after the race.

Part of the reason it went so well is thanks to the Somerset Fire Department ensuring that Rocky Hollow's creek had enough flow to accommodate the ducks.

Padgett and duck race chairperson Charlotte Allen explained that the fire department opened up the hydrant in front of its Central Avenue firehouse and directed the water through a storm drain that allowed the water to run into the creek.

As such, Allen said the team wanted to thank SFD and the City of Somerset for helping with the event.

Each duck had a number, and the race was closely monitored to see which ducks would cross the finish line first – or last, as there was a prize for that place as well.

People were invited to "rent a duck," so to speak, by sponsoring ducks by number in an effort to win prizes.

This year's winners were Becky Perkins for first place, Michael Foor for second, Tarah Phillippi for third, April Brown for fourth and Lu Durham for last place.

Padgett made it clear that people didn't get to keep their ducks.

"We don't sell the ducks. We ask for a donation for them," Padgett said.

At the end of the race, the ducks are collected to be used again for next year's race.

The money raised goes to benefit several local animal rescue organizations: the Somerset-Pulaski County Humane Society, Hope for all Pets Inc. (HAPI), and the Born 2 Be Wild Rehabilitation Center.

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CONTACT US
News: news@somerset-kentucky.com
Sports: sports@somerset-kentucky.com
Advertising: advertising@somerset-kentucky.com
Circulation: circulation@somerset-kentucky.com
(606) 678-8191 · www.somerset-kentucky.com

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