

Let's do this! Staci's style on monthly display

When The Crittenden Press first asked if I'd consider joining its team as a lifestyle columnist, my initial reaction wasn't excitement – it was pure panic. Me? A lifestyle columnist? The same woman who can't get anywhere on time, has a laundry pile so large my family lovingly calls it Mount St. Laundry, and is famous for starting new projects even though there are already three unfinished ones begging for attention? Surely they meant someone more... put-together. More adult. More June Cleaver and less Frankie Heck. More Ethel Tucker and far less – well – me.

After sharing the news and receiving a round of lovingly sarcastic comments from my family, encouragement from my friends and a few heart-to-hearts with Jesus, here we are. Anyone who knows me knows two things: I rarely back down from a challenge, and "no" is not a word I practice often. Still, before anyone assumes I'm about to provide polished, Pinterest-worthy instructions on folding fitted sheets or organizing a pantry by color and can height – please rest assured, I am not qualified for that level of adulthood, and most everyone around me agrees. If you don't, then I have somehow fooled you, along with Chris and Allison Evans at The Press.

Yet, somewhere in the conversations with friends and family, I realized that maybe that's exactly the point of view people need – a point of view from those of us who are surviving but not necessarily thriving at all times. For those of us wearing mismatched socks and not caring who notices. Those of



Staci STYLE

Home | Lifestyles | Food | Fashion | Design

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us who will invite you to dinner at their secondhand-but-newly-painted kitchen table. Those of us who show up to birthday parties with a pretty gift bag holding a \$20 bill only because the Facebook reminder popped up an hour earlier. Those of us who will cook you a homemade meal with old pots and pans. Those of us who can offer you a coat, gloves and a snack at a freezing baseball game, all because we haven't cleaned out the vehicle since Obama was president.

Those of us whose houses are clean and hair is done – but never both at the same time.

If anything, I'm more of a professional chaos coordinator and seasoned disigner of all things broken, dusty or a little junky. I can make things look pretty. I can cook a good meal. I can start DIY projects with Olympic-level enthusiasm – finishing them is a different story. I can throw together a cute outfit like I'm in a

hurry, which works out well since I'm always in a hurry. I don't gentle parent, but I do parent with love, humor, a raised eyebrow and the occasional "Lord, give me strength" whispered into the abyss. And usually, with all that going on, life turns out pretty fun – and gives me plenty of material to share with all of you.

Since announcing this new gig, I've been asked, "Where do you find the time?" and "How do you keep up with everything?" Here's the honest truth, though it may not be the most clever or well-thought-out answer: I just do. I run on little sleep and large cups of caffeine, but I genuinely enjoy the chaos that life throws my way. I literally wrote this article while shuffling between birthday parties and basketball practice – typing sentences in five-minute bursts and reminding my kids not to lick the icing off someone else's cupcake. If there's a perfect time to do everything I do, I haven't found

it yet. But I've always enjoyed sharing my life with others, and God gave me a way to share it with another group of people I may not otherwise reach. Though I may feel underqualified, when He says do it – you do it. Who am I to turn that away?

So no, I'm not the expert who will guide you to spotless counters or serene morning routines. But if you need someone to remind you that a good life doesn't have to look perfect – and that the best stories often come from the biggest messes – then you've found your people in me. Trust me, I've learned many lessons and skills through the ability to look past the mess I created while laughing at myself in the process.

If you see me in public with two kids parkouring off the grocery store shelves and you have an idea for a topic, stop me and tell me. Even though my life is sure to provide plenty of material, I welcome all ideas. After all, Ryan Blackburn's favorite place to wait is the grocery store parking lot because, as he often reminds me, I like to talk – to everyone.

If you follow me on social media, send me a message. If we aren't friends on social media, we should be. I share recipes, family happenings and plenty of embarrassing stories that will make it worth your while.

It's 2026 – the year I became a writer(ish), heavy on the "ish." I'm excited, honored and only slightly unprepared.

But that's never stopped me before. Let's do this!



Marion resident Travis Kinnis (right) of Kentucky Transportation Cabinet District 1 was among transportation professionals statewide recognized for completing the Kentucky Roads Scholar Training Program. Kinnis was honored Dec. 18 during a graduation ceremony in Bowling Green after completing the program offered through the Technology Transfer Program of the Kentucky Transportation Center at the University of Kentucky. He joins more than 4,600 Roads Scholars who have completed the training since the program began. The Roads Scholar program consists of nine full-day courses totaling 95 hours of instruction and is designed for employees of local and state transportation agencies as well as private industry. Awards at the Bowling Green ceremony were presented by John Moore (left), deputy state highway engineer with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.

A safe piece of Salem's bank history

STAFF REPORT

A massive piece of Salem's financial history is now on public display at Salem City Hall, where a 123-year-old bank safe once used by the Bank of Salem stands as a reminder of the town's early-20th-century commerce.

The Mosler Patent Screw Door Bank Safe was manufactured in August 1902 by The Mosler Safe Company of Hamilton, Ohio, one of the nation's premier safe makers of the era. Original purchase and specification documents preserved with the safe confirm it was custom-ordered for the Bank of Salem and delivered later that year.

According to the Mosler specifications, the safe was ordered Aug. 26, 1902, at a cost of \$1,050, which was a substantial investment at the time, and shipped by rail through Marion.



Salem Mayor Gary Damron peeks at the safe which is now on display at city hall.

Built for security rather than appearance, the safe features a patented screw-door design and multiple layers of uniformly tempered, drill-proof steel. Mosler advertised the model as having no

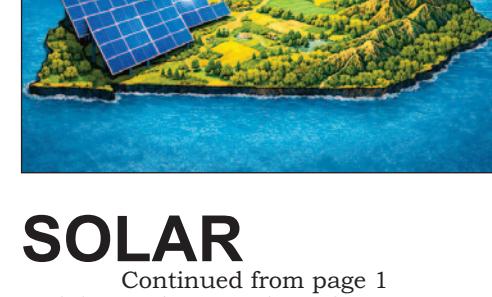
holes through the door or body and no combination spindles that could be exploited by thieves. The door alone measures four inches thick, while the safe body is constructed with three-inch steel walls.

Despite its relatively compact footprint, roughly 35½ inches tall on wheels, the safe weighs an estimated 2,400 pounds.

The safe remained in the former bank building for decades before being moved to City Hall, where it can now be viewed by the public. The relocation required careful planning and manpower due to its weight and age. The move was carried out with the help of Doug Slayden, Donnie Willbanks and T.L. Maddux.

City officials said the display preserves not only a physical artifact but also a tangible link to Salem's early banking history, when institutions relied on heavy mechanical security to protect cash, deeds and records long before the digital age.

Survival of both the safe and its original Mosler paperwork adds to its historical value, providing rare documentation that traces the artifact from its manufacture in Ohio to its service in a small Kentucky banking community.



SOLAR

Continued from page 1
and disposal or recycling of system components. A surety instrument would be required to ensure the county could complete decommissioning if a developer defaults.

Licensing fees would be set at \$100 per acre, with a minimum fee of \$10,000 and a maximum cap of \$500,000, payable to the county general fund. The fiscal court would have 60 days to approve, approve with conditions, or deny a completed application.

The ordinance includes provisions for public notice and comment, license revocation, transfer of ownership, enforcement and penalties. Violations could result in misdemeanor charges and fines of up to \$500 per day.

The measure received its first reading during the December fiscal court meeting and magistrates will consider it for final passage at its regular meeting in January.

In light of interest in solar energy farms in western Kentucky, several communities have begun to develop local ordinances to protect the rights of landowners and residents. A large-scale solar farm has recently gone online in Lyon County just south of Fredonia and another is planned for Livingston County, on property west of Joy. Another company is planning a solar facility in Caldwell County southeast of Fredonia.

Quarter of this century behind us

Good Grief, Charlie Brown!

Can you believe it? Charlie Brown has turned 60! Like many of you, I watched the very first airing of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" back in December 1965. In fact, we watch this classic every December. The CBS executives were quite nervous about airing this prime-time TV special written by Charles Schulz, the very first of several TV specials based on Schulz's wildly successful "Peanuts" comic strip. One of the main issues with those CBS executives was that they did not want the Bible read on prime-time television for fear of public backlash and poor ratings.

Schulz refused to back down, so he had Linus actually quote the familiar Luke 2:8-14 portion of the Christmas story. What creative genius by Schulz, having the forever insecure, thumb-sucking Linus - with his familiar "security blanket" in tow - stepping to the center of the stage, calling for lights, then proceeding to quote verbatim that well-known passage from Luke 2. To top it off, at the exact moment that Linus says "Fear not" (quoting the angel), he suddenly turns loose of his beloved security blanket and confidently orates the timeless message presented by the angel(s).

What an amazing rendition of biblical truth by the most unlikely of characters. Sound familiar? Who would have picked Mary and Joseph to be the parents of the Savior of the world? Who would have picked a cold, damp, smelly "stable" in a cave for the birthplace of the King of Kings? (Sorry folks, no barn in this Bible story.)

CBS could have never imagined the huge success of Schulz's innovative project, with the show coming in at No.

2 in the ratings (behind "Bonanza") with a whopping 45% of the viewing audience tuned in. One reviewer referred to the Bible quotation scene with Linus as "the dramatic highlight of the season." Happy birthday, Charlie Brown.

Can you believe it was

70 degrees on Christmas Day? This brought back many memories, both of warm and cold Christmases. I think back to Christmas 1982. I had left Salem on Jan. 1, 1982, and moved to Campbellsville with my wife and young son in order to begin classes at Campbellsville College during the spring 1982 semester. We were really excited about being home for Christmas.

My dad had installed a brand new wood furnace about three weeks prior to our arrival. The wood furnace had been performing admirably in the cold December weather, minimizing the amount of propane Daddy was burning. Then came Christmas Day with a high of 69 degrees (according to Barkley Regional Airport). That night it was literally 90 degrees in the house. I was sweating terribly and could not go to sleep, so I opened our bedroom windows wide open in order to cool things down a bit.

The next day I encouraged Daddy to not put any more wood in the furnace until we went back to Campbellsville. He listened and let the fire go out. Thankfully, he had that fire fully stoked a year later as the low temperature on Christmas Eve 1983 plummeted to minus 20 degrees, according to Daddy's thermometer on the front



Chris
CLARKE
Press Columnist
Happy Trails

porch. That is not a misprint; it was minus 20 degrees. The official high on Christmas Day at Barkley Regional was 12 degrees, although Daddy's house was nice and toasty, thanks to that wood furnace.

Can you believe another January has arrived? I'm writing this on Dec. 27, but unless Gabriel blows his horn and Jesus rides in on the big white stallion, I feel reasonably sure that Jan. 1, 2026, will arrive right on time. Plus, it looks like our New Year's Day weather will be pretty much normal January weather for us. (Normal January weather in our neck of the woods consists of highs in the mid-40s and lows in the mid-20s.)

My personal weather station shows that our lowest temperature in December was 5.9 degrees on Dec. 14; our lowest high temperature was 18.1 degrees on Dec. 13. (Remember, this was before winter officially arrived.) Hopefully, this will be one of those crazy years in which our coldest weather of the winter was actually in December.

Let's think about the big picture for a moment - can you believe that one-quarter of this century is now behind us? We know that time marches on. What have you been putting off? Do you have a so-called bucket list of things you hope to accomplish or experience before you are physically unable to do so? Mammoth Cave? The Grand Canyon in Arizona? Giant sequoias in California? What's stopping you?

Make a list. Formulate a plan. Put it on your calendar. Do it now. Go experience God's vast creation and be awed by His creative genius. What a mighty God we serve.

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