



The Crittenden Press

GIRLS HEADED TO CHAMPIONSHIP GAME | Page 8

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AN INDEPENDENTLY-OWNED, LOCAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1879

TWO DOLLARS

COUNTDOWN

Daylight Saving Time

Just around the corner is Daylight Saving Time, which begins at 2 a.m., on Sunday, March 8 and ends on Sunday, Nov. 1. Get ready to spring ahead in just over a week.

Next candidate forum is planned for Mattoon

A series of public town hall meetings are being held ahead of the May primary election to feature local candidates. The next speaking event for candidates will be at Mattoon at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, March 12. Going forward, forums are planned at Tolu on April 18 at 2 p.m., and at Marion's Fohs Hall on May 9 at 5:30 p.m.

Chamber is planning Home & Garden event

Mark your calendars now for Crittenden County Chamber of Commerce's Home and Garden Show on Saturday, April 11 at the County Recreation Center (former armory). Vendors should contact the Chamber now to reserve a spot. Cost for vendors is \$35 for chamber members and \$50 for non-members.

No free dump days

Crittenden County will not be having a free dump days event this spring as it has in some previous years. Judge-Executive Perry Newcom says the activity costs about \$80,000. Under the current financial climate, he said the county cannot afford to spend that kind of money for the free opportunity. The county did not have free dump days last year either.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Crittenden County Board of Education will meet at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 26 at Rocket Arena.
- Crittenden County Public Library Board meets at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 26, at the library.
- Crittenden County Board of Education will meet at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, March 5, 2026, for a working session at Rocket Arena.
- Community Prayer will be held at 10 a.m., Saturday, March 7 at Rocket Arena.
- Marion Code Enforcement Board will meet at 5 p.m., Monday, March 9, 2026, at city hall.
- Livingston County Board of Education will meet at 5 p.m., Monday, March 9, 2026.
- Crittenden County Chamber of Commerce will meet at 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at Rocket Arena conference room.
- Caldwell County Fiscal Court will meet at 9 a.m., Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at the courthouse.
- Crittenden-Livingston Farm Service Agency County Committee will meet at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at the Salem Service Center. Call the office in advance to verify the meeting remains on the schedule.
- Marion City Council will meet at 5 p.m., Monday, March 16, 2026, at city hall.

LISTEN ONLINE - Monday | Thursday

Have you heard The Press News Podcast? Our news and sports program is on Mondays and Thursdays. Find it two mornings each week at The Press Online.



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Marion firefighters Evan Cruce and Cutter Singleton battle a blaze that started in a field north of town last week and quickly spread to a dwelling.

Photo by Brian Kirby

The clock is ticking

Every day, we encounter people who do not own a computer, do not scroll social media and do not read their news online. Most are older – my age and beyond – but not all. They are veterans, widows, retirees, farmers and small-business owners who still rely on a printed newspaper delivered to their mailbox or picked up at the store.

Our generation may well be the last to routinely hold a newspaper in its hands – the ones with ink pressed onto thin newsprint, folded and creased from being read at the kitchen table.



Chris EVANS
Press Editor & Publisher
About Town

Legislation moving through Frankfort continues to chip away at the statutory requirements that have long anchored public notices in printed community newspapers. Whether elected officials intend it or not, these incremental changes hasten the erosion of an institution that has served Kentucky towns for more than a century.

Government requirements to publish legal notices in newspapers still make sense. A printed newspaper is a permanent, unalterable record. It cannot be edited after publication. It cannot disappear behind a broken link or be quietly revised without scrutiny. And it ensures that those without digital access, and there are more than you might think, still have meaningful access to information about tax increases, zoning changes, school board decisions and fiscal court actions.

Legal advertising revenue has never been the make-or-break lifeline for community newspapers. But it has provided stability, a predictable stream that helps offset the rising costs of printing, postage and reporting in small markets.

Here's the reality: once legal advertising is allowed to migrate entirely online, many community newspapers will fold. The incentive to go fully digital becomes overwhelming. One more loosening of long-standing statutory requirements will accelerate that shift.

At The Crittenden Press, we now have as many digital subscribers to the full edition as traditional print subscribers. Our social media reach far exceeds our total circulation – digital and print combined. We understand the digital future. We are part of it.

But legislators often view erosion of printed notice requirements as cost savings. What it really means is this: further tinkering with those long-standing protections will hasten the end of traditional newspapers. Not someday. Not in theory. In your lifetime.

And when the printed newspaper disappears, so does something more than ink on paper. A shared civic record. A tangible archive. A daily reminder that local government actions belong in plain sight.

The question isn't whether technology evolves. It does. The question is whether we choose to preserve a proven public safeguard while we still can.

Do you want your community newspaper to survive? Because the clock is ticking.

Chris Evans, a newspaperman since 1979, has been editor of The Press for more than 30 years and is the author of *South of the Mouth of Sandy*, a true story about crime along the Tennessee River. You can find it on Amazon or wherever books are sold.

Flirting with Fire

Department heads urge seasonal caution

An unusually dry winter has led to a spike in fire calls across Crittenden County, with the county fire department responding to nine calls in the past month alone.

Fire officials say the recent run of calls is higher than normal and comes as Kentucky enters its annual wildfire hazard season. Under state law, burning is prohibited from 6 a.m., to 6 p.m., within 150 feet of any woodland or brushland.

Marion City Fire Department has provided mutual aid on some of those incidents, deploying its new truck to assist county crews.

The latest call came last week when a property owner was burning trash on the ground. Authorities said an aerosol can exploded, sending the burning can into nearby sage grass. Fueled by tall grass and high winds, the fire spread quickly, burning approximately six acres and destroying 28 round hay bales on the owner's property.

The blaze also extended onto two adjoining properties, burning grass on one and causing damage to a residence on another.



Marion's used, but new to this town, fire truck has been rigged up and put into action the last couple of weeks with multiple fires across the area.

The property owner was cited for illegal burning and criminal mischief related to the property damage.

Assisting agencies included the Marion City Fire Department, Tolu-Sheridan Volunteer Fire Department, Salem Fire and Rescue, Crittenden County EMS, Crittenden County Sheriff's Department and the Crittenden County Road Department.

Jail continues to dominate attention of county leaders

Faced with insufficient funds, county withholds bill payments

STAFF REPORT

Crittenden County's fiscal court again last week during its regular monthly meeting focused a great deal of its attention on the poor financial condition of the county jail, voting to delay payment of more than \$65,000 in bills because of insufficient funds.

Judge-Executive Perry Newcom said the jail's cash position is too strained to cover current claims, meet an upcoming \$82,000 payroll and prepare for a looming bond payment.

Unpaid claims carried over from January totaled \$31,104. Magistrates approved payment of those bills after discussion about the jail's cash position sheet.

However, February claims of \$55,828, along with just under \$10,000 in late claims, were another matter. After paying other obligations, the jail's balance stood at \$60,264. Paying all February claims would overdraw the account by more than \$4,700, Newcom said, with payroll due and no receipts anticipated in the coming days.

"After that I don't know what we are going to do," Newcom said.

Magistrates voted to decline payment of the February claims and late claims due to the lack of available funds.

Magistrate Travis Perryman initiated a discussion as to whether the county might save money by no longer keeping state inmates. It was noted that the per diem reim-



Newcom



A Corrections Department analysis finds that Crittenden County Detention Center is understaffed. Article Page 3.

Magistrates adopt resolution supporting jail aid legislation

STAFF REPORT

Crittenden County Fiscal Court on Thursday during its regular monthly meeting approved a resolution urging the Kentucky General Assembly to pass House Bill 557, legislation aimed at easing mounting financial pressure on county jails across the state.

Under current law, counties often house felony defendants for extended periods while cases await trial or some other final disposition of their cases. This time period can often go for months or even years, without reimbursement from the state. By the time their case has worked itself through the legal system, they often have enough time credit that they're virtually served out. Jailer Athena Hayes said that effectively shifts state incarceration costs onto county taxpayers.

"It saves the state money, but it's really costing the counties," she said.

County Judge-Executive Perry Newcom told the court the state housing fee is \$35.35 per day, while it costs counties an average of \$63.44 per day to house an inmate. House Bill 557, a 42-page measure introduced Feb. 4 by Rep. Michael Mered-



Hayes

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