

The Johnsons of Appalachia, a novel by Pam Hall

In 1985, when I assumed executive leadership, the Jesse Stuart Foundation was an organization that lacked leadership and direction. Those early board meetings, between 1979 and 1985, had a clown-car atmosphere.

I brought the Jesse Stuart Foundation to Ashland through the generous leadership of Judy B. Thomas, president of the Ashland Oil Founda-



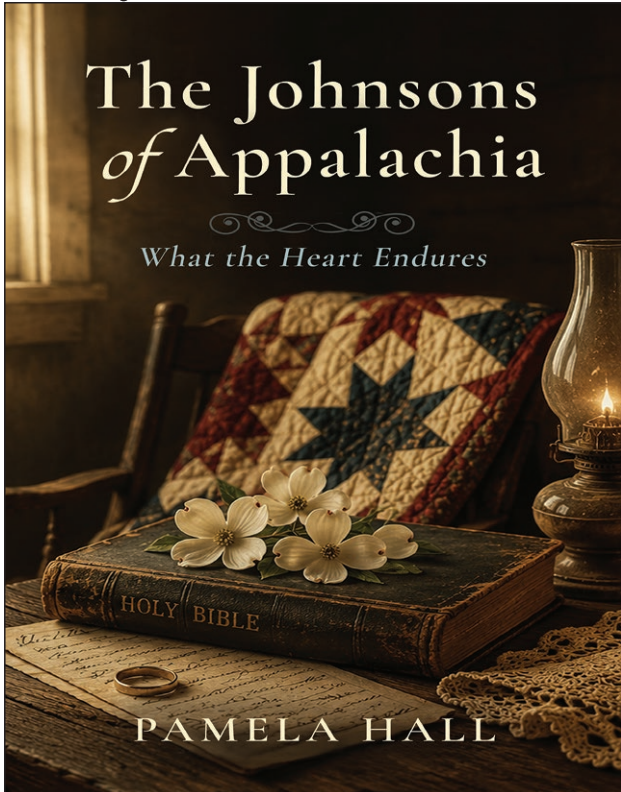
JIM GIFFORD

tion. Judy chaired our Board of Directors for 17 years. During that time, we transformed the JSF into a regional publishing house. In the last 41 years, we have published more than 155 books, many of them have gone through numerous printings and editions.

Many of our early authors were famously-successful writers whose books had gone out of print with commercial publishers. Over the course of our first two decades, we signed publishing contracts with Billy C. Clark, Thomas D. Clark, Loyal Jones, Allan W. Eckert, Harry M. Caudill, Edwina Pendarvis and many others.

By the late 1990s, the JSF had become a successful publishing house. As we grew, I decided to offer publishing opportunities to new authors, too. The JSF was able to jump start the publishing career of Mark Maynard, Dr. Robert French, John McCauley, and many others including local journalist Pam Hall whose novel “The Johnsons of Appalachia: What the Heart Endures” will be in print by September. A synopsis of her 390-page book follows:

When Jesse Johnson loses his Quaker wife, Nancy, just minutes after she gives birth to their second child, he has no idea how he can tend his farm and care for two helpless, dependent children. He knows he will never love again, yet his children need a mother and he needs a house-



The cover of *The Johnsons of Appalachia*.

keeper. When Nancy’s cousin, Nancy Anne, steps in to help, Jesse proposes a marriage of convenience, determined to honor his wife’s memory. However, Nancy Anne’s steadfast devotion and gentle spirit begin to awaken feelings Jesse never thought he could have again. Can a man who fears that loving again dishonors the past find the courage to embrace the future? Will Nancy Anne’s patient love be enough to heal a heart that has been broken by loss? Set in the hills of North Carolina and eastern Kentucky, “The Johnsons of Appalachia: What the Heart Endures” is a historical romance of sacrifice and second chances that reminds us that, even after profound loss, love can bloom again.

Pam Hall is a native of Ashland and has lived here all of her life. She is married to Timothy Hall and mother to two children, Brittany and Andrew. She sang professionally in Southern Gospel music for many

years and is a published songwriter with BMG Music Group, Daywind Music Group and BMI in Nashville. In addition to being a historical romance writer, she writes for the “Greater Ashland Beacon” and “Greenup Gazette” newspapers. In 2023 she won second place in the state for her article about her husband’s family and their 100 years of firefighting service in Kentucky. She serves on the Board of Directors for The Friends of Keith Whitley Corporation based in Elliot County. She also has an Associate in Arts Degree, emphasis in Humanities, from Ashland Community and Technical College. Mrs. Hall’s new novel, along with hundreds of other pieces of regional fiction, is available at the JSF Bookstore, 4440 13th Street or by calling (606) 326-1667 or by visiting our website at jsfbooks.com.

JAMES M. GIFFORD, Ph.D., is CEO and Senior Editor at The Jesse Stuart Foundation.

Ashland man gets five years for sexual abuse in Greenup

BY AARON SNYDER
THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

An Ashland man was sentenced to five years in prison on a first-degree sexual abuse of a victim under 12 on Thursday in Greenup County Circuit Court.

Gary R. Preston, 81, was transported from the Boyd County Detention Center, where he is jailed on more sexual abuse charges in a case that has not reached resolution yet.

The crimes in Greenup County occurred as far back as 1990, according to court records. At the time, the charge was considered a Class D felony, which carries a maximum of five years.

Assistant Commonwealth’s Attorney David Flatt read a victim impact statement in Greenup County Circuit Court in front of Judge Brian McCloud Thursday.

The abuse has “affected all aspects of my life,” the victim said in the statement. “My relationships, mental health, physical health, cognitive development, and even my ability to learn and develop professionally.”

“The greatest tragedy and injustice in this whole situation is that, at 81 years old, he has gotten to live a productive life while tearing mine and my family’s lives apart through this cruelty and abuse,” the victim wrote. “... All while he got to live his life without repercussion.”

The victim said she is overprotective of her daughter “so that she does not have to suffer this way,” and her relationship with family members has been “irreparably damaged due to always feeling I had to ‘hide my secret.’”

The victim said Preston has proven he “cannot be trusted around children time and time again and, as a result, should never be released from prison.”

“I do not want him to ever be free and able to hurt any other child ever again,” the victim added. “I implore you to never grant Gary Preston parole; not only because of what his actions and presence in my life has caused but also because of the risk he poses to other children.”

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Virginia man indicted on rape, sex abuse charges

BY AARON SNYDER
THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

A Greenup County grand jury has indicted a Virginia man on sex-related charges in Greenup County.

Khamron D. Sigler, 22, of Fredericksburg, Virginia, was indicted on two counts of first-degree sex abuse and a second-degree rape charge.

Sigler is in jail on a \$100,000 cash bond.

An indictment is a formal accusation and is not necessarily an indication of guilt. Anyone named in an indictment should be presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

The following were also

indicted last week:

- John B. Lawrence, 43, of Garrison, was indicted on charges of first-degree fleeing/evading police and first-degree wanton endangerment.

- Tyler C. Denney, 39, of Ironton, was indicted on charges of third-degree assault and first-degree attempted escape.

- Corey J. Millican, 29, of Catlettsburg, was indicted on the following charges: second-degree wanton endangerment, third-degree assault,

second-offense operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol, third-degree assault of a peace officer, resisting arrest, third-degree escape (attempt), disorderly conduct, failure of owner to maintain required insurance and disregarding traffic control device.

- Nicole Sheffield, 50, of Greenup, was indicted on a first-degree criminal mischief charge.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Brandon Spangler, 16448 State Rt 854, Rush, KY, has filed an application with the Energy and Environment Cabinet to construct a bridge on his property located 2.1 miles from the intersection of Us Rt 60 & State Rt 854 on Rush Creek. Any comments or objections can be submitted via email to: DOWFloodplain@ky.gov Kentucky Division of Water, Floodplain Management Section, 300 Sower Blvd. Frankfort, KY 40601. Call 502-564-3410 with questions.
Published: July 30 and August 1 & 4, 2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Ashland Board of Education is seeking community leaders, who live within the Ashland Independent School District, to serve on its Local Planning Committee. The committee will meet during the 2026-2027 school year for the purpose of creating a new District Facilities Plan.

Interested parties should submit their intent to be considered (with a valid address) to Ashland Independent Schools, ATTN: Amy Wessel, 1820 Hickman Street, Ashland, KY 41101 or via e-mail: amy.wessel@ashland.kyschools.us on or before August 21st, 2026.

Published August 1, 2026

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Dr. Farzad Amiri
Professor