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\$1.00 (tax included)

## A Lesson in Dedication

NICKY KELLER NAMED TEACHER OF THE YEAR



The Harrodsburg Herald/April Ellis

### Keller Honored by Mercer Chamber of Commerce

At the Feb. 13, annual Mercer Chamber of Commerce awards dinner, Nicky Keller was presented the Jane Coomes Educator of the Year presented by Chamber Board Member John Holiday. See additional photos on page 5A.

## Burgin City Council to explore planning and zoning options

April Ellis  
Herald Staff  
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with certain issues, and he said his response is always, "Nothing."

The City of Burgin held a special-called meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 10, where Council Travis Keebortz questioned the need for planning and zoning. Previous councils have shied away from rejoining the Greater Harrodsburg Mercer Planning and Zoning, but at Tuesday's meeting, the council voted unanimously for the city attorney to draft an agreement with planning and zoning and to begin fact-finding on what it would mean for the Friendly Little City to have zoning.

"We need to look at planning and zoning," said Irvin.

City of Burgin Attorney John Wood explained they would have to establish an agreement with the Greater Harrodsburg Mercer Planning and Zoning, and it would have to be approved by the City of Harrodsburg, Mercer County Fiscal Court and City of Burgin and ordinances would have to be passed by each governing body.

Irvin asked for feedback from the council.

Councilman Syndicat "Sid" Dunn said in years past, some residents were for it,

Councilman Travis Irvin said he is repeatedly asked what the city can do to help

See Burgin | 5A

## Community effort led by Amy Branam opens warming center to protect residents during extreme cold

April Ellis  
Herald Staff

When dangerous winter temperatures approached Central Kentucky, Amy Branam felt a calling to act. That conviction led her to launch The Mission, a faith-based nonprofit that recently coordinated an emergency warming center to protect vulnerable residents across Mercer County.

Branam said her inspiration came from faith and from watching her family serve others, including her husband, Patrick Branam, and her son, Braydon Branam, who has spent winter nights distributing warm clothing and food to people



Photo Submitted

The Mission set up cots at the Harrodsburg Baptist Church ROC for residents to use during the snow and freezing temperatures.

in need, sometimes traveling life-threatening wind chills, as far as Lexington.

As forecasts predicted See Community | 4A

## Sheriff's office gets clean audit

April Ellis  
Herald Staff

State Auditor Allison Ball today released the audit of the 2024 financial statement of Mercer County Sheriff Ernie Kely. State law requires the auditor to annually audit the accounts of each county sheriff. In compliance with this law, the auditor issues two sheriff's reports each year: one reporting on the audit of the

sheriff's tax account, and the other reporting on the audit of the fee account used to operate the office.

Auditing standards require the auditor's letter to communicate whether the financial statement presents fairly the receipts, disbursements, and excess fees of the Mercer County Sheriff in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The

sheriff's financial statement did not follow this format. However, the sheriff's financial statement is fairly presented in conformity with the regulatory basis of accounting, which is an acceptable reporting methodology. This reporting methodology is followed for all 120 sheriff audits in Kentucky.

The auditor noted no See Sheriff's | 3A

## Mercer receives \$2 Million to accelerate BIG development

April Ellis  
Herald Staff

On Wednesday, Feb. 11, \$2 million dollars in federal funding for the Wilkinson Farm Mega Site Industrial Park, newly named the Bluegrass Innovation Gateway (BIG), was announced by U.S. Congressman Andy Barr's office. The investment will help Mercer County continue developing BIG and position the region to attract manufacturers. This funding was secured through the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Appropriations Bill.

The funding, awarded to the Mercer County Fiscal

Court, will support infrastructure and site development needed to bring the mega site closer to full market readiness. Local leaders say the investment builds years of work to make the property one of Kentucky's most competitive locations for large-scale industrial recruitment.

The 958-acre site north of Harrodsburg, purchased by the industrial development authority from Kentucky Utilities for nearly \$19.85 million last year, is positioned as a major industrial and innovation hub. With frontage on U.S. 127, access to Norfolk Southern rail, and close prox-

See Mercer | 3A

## Tourism officials create plan for balanced event funding

April Ellis  
Herald Staff

The Harrodsburg Mercer County Tourist Commission (HMCTC) held its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at the Diamond Point Welcome Center. The commission began review-

ing a scoring rubric to rate events, enabling greater transparency into how tourism funds are dispersed for local events.

"It's important when people ask how we award money, we can show them the rubric and the money given is based on fact," said

See Tourism | 4A



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