

## Looking back to April 9, 2020

Written by Christy Hoots

The following information was entered into the April 9, 2020, edition of The Ledger Independent:

### RCS providing WiFi spots for students

MOUNT OLIVET — The Robertson County School District has WiFi spots available for students who need to complete homework, but may be unable to access the internet at home.

RCS Teacher Billie Jo Gifford said she has worked to move WiFi routers from the center of the school building to the windows next to the board of education parking lot, in order to allow families to drive up and access the school's internet without having to leave their vehicles.

According to Gifford, Chromebooks and other devices are being checked out to students in order to allow them better opportunities to complete their non-traditional instructional packets. That, however, did not solve the issues with students being unable to access the internet.

"We are a one to one district and that means kindergarten through 12th grade each have a device," she said. "That means that a lot of the work the teachers are doing is online. Since we were going virtual — some of them don't have WiFi at their houses. To accommodate that, I moved these access points to the windows and this is our closest parking lot to the build-

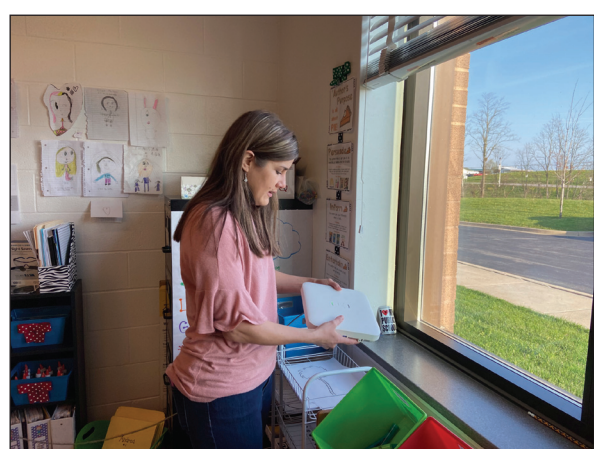


Photo by Christy Hoots

ing."

There is a sign in one of the windows with the access information.

"I've tested it on various devices and called our network provider who opened it up for full strength," she said.

Gifford said she has received good feedback from families who are utilizing the WiFi.

"Teachers are now altering their instruction," she said. "We did paper packets the first two weeks and now they can do more of the traditional instruction that they would have been doing in the classroom."

According to Gifford, WiFi access is not the only way the district is assisting students while they are working from home.

Some other things staff members have done include providing library books to students needing reading material, staff members record themselves reading books for students, RCS Coach Patrick Kelsch is providing a virtual boot camp episode on Thursdays, supplying school supplies to students, providing breakfast and

lunch Monday through Friday, the school based therapist is using telehealth to support the student's mental health needs and phone calls are made to students each week.

"(RCS Superintendent Sanford Holbrook) wrote personalized notes and taped them to candy bars to send out to students on Friday," Gifford said. "If a student received a lunch, they received a note."

Holbrook said the biggest concern of faculty and staff at RCS is the well-being of the students.

"Our biggest concern has, and continues to be, the well-being of our students," Holbrook said. "We're trying to make the learning process as easy as possible for the students who are at home completing NTI work. We want to be a school that did all we can to support them and help get them through this tough time. It's an unprecedented situation for everyone and we want them to know that, just like the governor says everyday, we will get through this."

## Could cheek swabs someday diagnose schizophrenia? Kentucky scientist believes so.

Sarah Ladd  
Kentucky Lantern

A University of Kentucky scientist has found two markers that can be collected through a cheek swab and indicate the presence of schizophrenia.

Bonnie L. Firestein, a professor and chair in the Department of Pharmacology and Nutritional Sciences at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, published her findings in early March in *Science Advances* after about a decade working on the concept.

She hopes to expand her research in the coming years with the hope of having an easy-to-use test available to patients within a decade.

Diagnosing schizophrenia now includes multiple steps — physical and mental health exams, tests and screens and potentially blood work to test which medication is best for that person, according to the Mayo Clinic.

People who have schizophrenia may experience "delusions (false beliefs), hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that don't exist), unusual physical behavior, and disorganized thinking and speech," according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Antipsychotic medications and therapy can help manage these symp-

toms.

About 1% of the U.S. population is on the schizophrenia spectrum, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Firestein believes having a test like the one she is working toward would make for objective testing and help decrease stigma around the mental health condition.

"I think that it's getting better. People are recognizing that mental illness is exactly that: It's an illness. It's nothing to be ashamed of," Firestein said. "It's like having cancer. I think that if we can show that there is a biological basis, people are much more accepting."

The study

For her study, Firestein had 27 patients with diagnosed schizophrenia who had no other neurological or psychiatric disorder and 27 control patients who had no diagnoses of neurological or psychiatric disorders. All participants were between 18-65 years old.

The participants who had diagnosed schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder took their medicines during the study and though most had at least one previous hospitalization for psychosis, none were in an inpatient program during the study.

The research revealed two markers, Sp4 mRNA and the HSP60 protein, can be collected through a cheek swab in one min-

ute and indicate the person has schizophrenia.

It's a long way from working independent of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Firestein said. These two biomarkers are a great start, she said, but "I don't think two biomarkers is enough" to definitively diagnose at this point.

She wants to expand the research to a larger population, study any differences in patients based on their race or gender and study patients in their first episode, which "refers to when a person first shows signs of losing contact with reality," according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, or NAMI.

"We have to figure out how many biomarkers would be definitive," she explained. "I'd say, at the beginning, in the early stages, you'd use the DSM with this to confirm."

UK is licensing the technology from this research, "ensuring

that future research and clinical expansion will continue in Lexington," the university said in a March release about the study.

"The more research we do in this area, the better we'll be able to home in on exactly what type of disorder patients have," Firestein said, "and also what the underlying mechanism is."

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## KY Senate president issues ambiguous response to court order halting judge's impeachment

Mckenna Horsley  
Kentucky Lantern

Senate President Robert Stivers responded Wednesday to a Kentucky Supreme Court ruling ordering lawmakers to halt the impeachment of a Lexington judge, but it's unclear if the Senate will comply with the order or move forward with a trial.

In a press release from the Senate Republican caucus, Stivers said the Senate was aware of the high court's opinion "and is carefully reviewing its implications."

The press release also included a schedule for impeachment proceedings and a trial in the Senate against Fayette

Circuit Judge Julie Muth Goodman though it says all dates are "subject to change as determined by the Senate or committee."

The release says: House lawmakers will be able to present their case against Goodman on April 16, 17 and 20. She and her attorneys may present their side on April 21, 22, and 23. The Senate Impeachment Committee is slated to present its findings to the full Senate on April 24.

The Kentucky Lantern asked for clarification about if the Senate plans to move forward with impeachment proceedings despite the court order, but a Senate GOP spokesperson did not

immediately respond.

The state's high court ruled 5-1 earlier this week that the impeachment of Goodman "encroaches upon the inherent powers of the Judicial Branch" and violates the separation of powers among branches of government. In the majority opinion, Chief Justice Debra Lambert wrote that Kentucky judges "must remain free to exercise the constitutional authority" given to them by voters "without fear that a legally incorrect ruling or even an appellate finding of abuse of discretion will result in the extreme sanction of impeachment."

The Court said the matter should have been instead referred to the Judicial Conduct Commission, instead of the House. It also said the JCC is reviewing the matter "to consider whether Judge Goodman's conduct warrants action."

Stivers in the release said he was "encouraged that the judicial branch, per the opinion, is now taking a more active role" in reviewing concerns about Goodman's conduct on the bench.

"Over time, I have heard directly from attorneys who have expressed serious hesitation about filing formal complaints against judges. Many fear professional repercussions or believe doing so could negatively impact their ability to effectively represent their clients. That is a troubling dynamic, and it underscores why transparency and trust in the disciplinary process are so important," Stivers said.

He added that the "Senate's focus remains on carrying out its duties as outlined in the Constitution of Kentucky, that each branch of government operates with integrity and that concerns about judicial conduct can be raised and addressed without fear of

retaliation."

The Kentucky House forwarded articles of impeachment against Goodman to the Senate earlier this month. The resolution accuses Goodman of committing "misdemeanors in office," but House lawmakers did not unanimously agree about Goodman's conduct while debating the petition.

The impeachment petition against Goodman was filed by former Republican state Rep. Killian Timoney, who is seeking reelection to the seat. Some of the cases at the center of Timoney's petition are still pending in courts.

Fayette County voters elected Goodman to the bench in 2019 to fill an unexpired term and reelected her in 2022 for a full eight-year term.

The proceedings against Goodman have drawn criticism from the legal community. The Kentucky Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (KACDL) filed

a brief in Goodman's case before the Supreme Court, saying that: "Attorneys must now wonder if judges will be able to rule fairly on suppression motions or take other justified actions favorable to the defense if judges have to look over their shoulder to see if an impeachment is in their future."

Meanwhile, some family members of victims that have disagreed with Goodman's sentences have spoken out in support of removing Goodman from the bench. The widower of Tammy Botkin, a woman who died in a 2020 hit-and-run in Lexington gave brief testimony during the House committee's public hearing on Goodman's petition. He said that he and other family members were shocked when Goodman dismissed charges in the case and an appeals court later reinstated them.

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