

Looking back to June 15, 2018

Written by Jonathan Wright

The following information was entered into the June 15, 2018, edition of The Ledger Independent:

Being a 'servant to all'

Good Samaritans stopped by Maysville during the week to serve the community and share the good news.

Maysville was visited by the charity group Kentucky Changers, which aided the community by performing construction projects to residents' homes throughout the week. The organization's goal is to serve through construction projects and spread the gospel in the process.

"Our primary purpose is to spread the gospel, and we use construction as our avenue to do that," said Barry Akins, one of the crew chiefs that oversees his group's project.

Thursday saw the Kentucky Changers work on homes on Carolina Avenue in Maysville, where porches needed rebuilt, wheelchair ramps installed and roofs repaired. The bulk of the workforce on these projects are teenagers and young adults who volunteer their time over the summer to help the needy.

"We usually have four projects a year, and this is the first one of this year," Akins said, referring to the work they've done in Maysville. "Next week is in Covington, then there's a break, and there's Russellville, and then Richmond-Berea.

Cody Lockhart, assistant crew chief, said the Changers performed 16 projects in Maysville over the week, with 14 crews who split up to work them. Crews are structured with a crew chief, assistant crew chief and an adult leader. The teens who work in the crews come from all around the state, though there are some who are Maysville residents.

"In some cases, nobody really knows each other the first night we're assembled into a crew," Akins said. "We go to church together on Sunday, and then we visit the homeowner. We'll have a small practice project on Sunday just to teach basic skills and evaluate each kid."

All of the materials and funding used for the project are provided through a variety of means, whether it be through the city, or donations.

"Different cities have different funding," Akins said. "Sometimes it's the association, the Baptist association for this area, that will provide a lot of the funding. Sometimes the city actually provides some of the funding, and then a lot of private donations."

Cody Ray, 16, from Greensburg, has been working with the Kentucky Changers for four years. He said he loves meeting and helping people and discovering new methods of sharing his faith.

"My preacher, one day, said there was this camp where you go and work, but while you work, you learn about God," Ray said. "I thought, 'huh, that sounds fun,' so I went, and I fell in love with it."

Although construction and community service appears to be at the forefront of the group's activities, the children receive greater satisfaction from sharing their faith.

"It's a lot of work," said Autumn Sidebottom, 15, also from Greensburg. "Last year we didn't get a good chance to talk to our home owner too much, but this year we've had a lot of chances to talk to her and she actually got saved yesterday, and that's the greatest part about it."

Christy Burton, the homeowner in question, is overjoyed to see people coming together to help one another. Seeing the Kentucky Changers at work gives her hope for humanity.

"There's still good people in this world," Burton said.

McConnell admitted to hospital, spokesperson says

Mckenna Horsley

Kentucky Lantern

Longtime Kentucky Republican U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell has been hospitalized.

"Senator McConnell was admitted to the hospital this morning. He is receiving excellent care," said Stephanie Penn, a spokesperson for McConnell, in a Sunday afternoon statement.

The statement did not say why he was hospitalized, nor if he is in Kentucky or Washington, D.C.

McConnell, 84, was previously hospitalized in February. At that time, he had checked himself in last week "after experiencing flu-like symptoms."

He announced last year that he would not seek reelection to the seat he's held since his election in 1984.

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KY gov blasts GOP leader over medical cannabis prosecution comments: 'Complete lack of humanity'

Sarah Ladd

Kentucky Lantern

A Republican leader who said agencies cooperating with an "unlawful expansion" of qualifying conditions for medical cannabis should be prosecuted reached "a new record low" with the comments, Gov. Andy Beshear said Thursday.

This came days after Kentucky House Majority Whip Jason Nemes asked Attorney General Russell Coleman to help ensure agencies "not cooperate" with Beshear's expansion of qualifying conditions for medical marijuana prescriptions, which he did via executive order in early June.

"I would say to the Governor, and to everyone who supports this: You are jeopardizing the program in its entirety because this General Assembly is not playing around when we say we want the tightest medical marijuana program in the country," Nemes said on Tuesday during an interim legislative committee meeting.

During his weekly press conference Thursday, Beshear said he was "surprised" by "an attack from one lawmaker who called on the Attorney General to prosecute people dying of a terminal illness for securing medical cannabis. I mean, that's a complete lack of humanity."

"I mean, an individual with ALS, you want to prosecute. And that is certainly not leadership, and even for that individual, is a new record low," Beshear said. "Let me say this: Sometimes we see people make these threats, and in this

current culture, I think they think it's masculinity, but masculinity isn't the bully on the playground. It's being the person that stands between the bully and the person they're picking on."

"That's my job," Beshear added, "to stand in between those bullies and these individuals that have these very serious conditions that are saying 'just give me something that isn't addictive, that isn't opioids, and that can help me.'"

Nemes responds

In Nemes' Tuesday comments, he said the governor had "skirted that law" by signing an executive order after the General Assembly declined to expand conditions that allow Kentuckians to get medical cannabis.

He specifically said "any organization — any licensee — that participates" in the expansion should be at risk. He didn't mention patients.

On Thursday, Nemes told the Lantern that Beshear's comments were "unfair."

"I said licensee. I'm not talking about a sick person," he said. "For six years, I've put everything I had in that bill and got it passed."

"I put my heart and soul and everything I had for sick people," Nemes said. "I'm very proud of this, of getting that bill passed."

He wants to see conditions expanded in the future, he said, but not before the program is even fully operational.

"I'm not coming at this from the perspective of someone who's not supportive of the program," he

said. "I've proven that, and the governor knows this."

To Beshear's argument that the initial law included symptoms that overlap with the expanded conditions, Nemes said "I respect that, we discussed that."

Ultimately, though, it should be up to the doctors if the symptom is severe enough, he said.

"But even if he's right.... that's not for him to decide," he said. "I want this program to be successful. But what he's doing right now is he's jeopardizing it."

In 2023, the legislature legalized medical marijuana for Kentuckians suffering from chronic illnesses including any type or form of cancer, chronic or severe pain, epilepsy or other intractable seizure disorder; multiple sclerosis, muscle spasms, or spasticity; chronic nausea or cyclical vomiting syndrome; or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In early June, Beshear said the law suffered from a "lack of clarity." He signed an executive order directing the Office of Medical Cannabis to issue an emergency regulation clarifying that Kentuckians have access to medical cannabis if they have these additional conditions: Terminal illness, sickle cell anemia, ALS, Parkinson's disease, HIV, AIDS, Huntington's disease, muscular dystrophy, wasting syndrome, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, neuropathies, severe arthritis, fibromyalgia and glaucoma.

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Republican attorneys general urge EPA to classify mifepristone as a water contaminant

KY's AG Coleman part of group; scientists say claim lacks evidence

Nada Hassanein

Kentucky Lantern

Republican attorneys general from 14 states and 19 GOP members of Congress are asking U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin to classify and regulate the abortion medication mifepristone as a water contaminant.

Mifepristone is prescribed as part of a two-drug medication regimen to terminate a pregnancy. Studies have shown medication abortion to be safe and effective.

In a letter last Friday, the state officials argued that mifepristone is "a growing threat to the country's waterways." The letter was signed by the attorneys general of Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Nebraska, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas.

A concurrent letter, led by Republican Rep. Chris Smith of New Jersey, made similar claims and was signed by 18 other GOP members of Congress.

Environmental health science experts say there is no evidence

that mifepristone in wastewater causes harm to the environment or to humans.

"There's no evidence that medication abortion is affecting U.S. water systems, including drinking water and aquatic wildlife," the Center for Biological Diversity, which advocates for stronger environmental protections, says on its website.

The GOP letters cite a 1996 FDA Center for Drug Evaluation and Research statement that said harmful environmental effects from mifepristone were "not anticipated," while acknowledging that the drug may enter the environment via excretion or disposal of pharmaceutical waste. But drug trace amounts in water are a common occurrence, experts say, and state environmental agencies and scientists check for harmful contaminants in water as part of protocols and research.

In 2025, state lawmakers in seven states introduced nine bills that included claims about medication abortion and its effects on the environment and water. State lawmakers also introduced legislation calling for testing for mifepristone

in water systems.

Last year, Republican members of Congress brought up similar concerns in a letter to the EPA.

The U.S. Supreme Court decided last month to preserve telehealth access to mifepristone until after the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled on the merits of the high-stakes federal lawsuit Louisiana v. Food and Drug Administration.

Medication abortion accounted for nearly two-thirds of all clinician-provided abortions in states without abortion bans in 2023, according to the most recent data available from the Guttmacher Institute, a research and policy organization focused on advancing reproductive rights.

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