Kentucky State Police charges Logan Co. man with child sexual exploitation offenses

Submitted by Kentucky State Police

RUSSELLVILLE, Ky. (Aug. 4, 2026) — On August 4, 2026, at approximately 1:01 p.m., the Kentucky State Police (KSP) Electronic Crime Branch arrested Austin Cole Epley, 25, on charges related to child sexual abuse material.

Mr. Epley was arrested as the result of an undercover Internet Crimes Against Children investigation. The KSP Electronic Crime Branch began the investigation after discovering the suspect sharing images of child sexual exploitation online.

The investigation resulted in a search warrant at a residence in Russellville on August 4, 2026. Equipment used to facilitate the crime was seized and taken to KSP's forensic laboratory for examination. The investigation is ongoing.

Mr. Epley is currently charged with eight counts of distribution of matter portraying a minor in a sexual performance under 12 years old. These charges are Class-C felonies, punishable by five to ten years in prison. Mr. Epley was lodged in the Logan County Detention Center.

The Kentucky Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force is comprised of more than twenty-six local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. The mission of the ICAC Task Force, created by the United States Department of Justice and administered by the Kentucky State Police, is to assist state and local law enforcement agencies in developing a response to cyber enticement and child sexual abuse material investigations. This support encompasses forensic and investigative components, training and technical assistance, victim services, prevention and community education. The ICAC program was developed in response to the increasing number of children and teenagers using the internet, the proliferation of child sexual abuse material, and the heightened online activity of predators searching for unsupervised contact with underage victims.

Artisans Inc. celebrates grand opening of $8.4 million manufacturing facility in Lexington, creating 55 new Kentucky jobs

Custom apparel manufacturer opens first Kentucky location

Submitted by the Governor's Communications Office

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 5, 2026) – Today, First Lady Britainy Beshear joined local officials and leadership from Artisans Inc. to celebrate the grand opening of the company's new $8.4 million manufacturing facility in Lexington, a project that is creating 55 new jobs for Kentuckians.

"Today's grand opening is another big win for our commonwealth's robust manufacturing sector," said Gov. Andy Beshear. "This project is bringing great new job opportunities for Kentuckians in the Lexington region. I want to thank the leaders of Artisans Inc. for their commitment to our state and welcome them to their New Kentucky Home."

"I'm excited to join Artisans Inc. and the Lexington community in celebrating the grand opening of this new facility, which will provide great new job opportunities for Kentucky families," said First Lady Beshear. "Family-owned and -grown businesses are an important part of our commonwealth, and I know this team will be welcomed with open-arms as they make Lexington their new home. I am proud to welcome them and I look forward to celebrating their success for years to come."

In early 2025, the company decided to close its facility in rural Wisconsin and consolidate with its existing location in Lexington. Almost two years later, Artisans is fully operational at its new facility on Mercer Road, offering decorated apparel for resorts, colleges and schools and retail shops across the country.

"What began as a family business in rural Wisconsin more than 60 years ago, Artisans Inc. has always believed that our people are our greatest strength," said Kyle Foster, president and CEO of Artisans. "As a 100% employee-owned company, this investment in Lexington is an investment in our employee-owners and in the future of our business. We're grateful for the warm welcome and support we've received from state and local leaders here in the Bluegrass State and look forward to becoming an active member of the Lexington community while creating quality jobs for years to come."

Artisans Inc. was founded on a family dairy farm in Glen Flora, Wisconsin, in 1963 by Orlo and Bernice Dukerschein. The fledgling operation was simply Orlo, Bernice and their six children screen printing T-shirts, sweatshirts, ribbons, buttons, decals, emblems and banners. By 1991, the company had outgrown its location on the family property and built a production plant in Glen Flora, and by 2000 had expanded to a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility. Fast forward though decades of growth and success to 2017, when then-owners Bev and Gordie Dukerschein, ready for retirement, sold the company to their employees under an ESOP structure, making Artisans Inc. a 100% employee-owned enterprise.

Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton spoke on the opportunities this project will create: "We are excited to welcome Artisans Inc. to Lexington and to celebrate the opportunities this investment will create for our community. Attracting businesses like Artisans Inc. signals that Lexington is open for business and reflects the confidence companies have in our city. The company's presence in Lexington will create high-quality jobs for our talented workforce, while further strengthening and diversifying our local economy."

Nick Nicholson, Commerce Lexington's 2026 Board Chair, welcomed the company to its new home: "We are excited to welcome Artisans Inc. to their new home in the greater Lexington region. Manufacturing is one of Commerce Lexington's strategic targets, and this new facility in Fayette County further strengthens a key sector of our economy. We look forward to working with the team at Artisans Inc. to ensure they have the resources to be successful."

Artisans Inc.'s investment and job creation furthers what has been the best six-year period for economic growth in state history.

Since the beginning of his administration, Gov. Beshear has announced more than 1,300 private-sector new-location and expansion projects totaling over $50.7 billion in announced investments, creating more than 70,000 jobs. This is the highest investment figure secured during the tenure of any governor in the commonwealth's history and $29 billion more than the next highest total.

Gov. Beshear has announced some of the largest economic development projects in state history, which have solidified Kentucky as the battery capital of the United States: AESC's $2 billion, 2,000-job gigafactory project in Warren County; Ford Motor Co.'s $2 billion, 2,200-job commitment in Louisville, as well as its $2 billion, 2,100-job project at the Kentucky 1 plant in Hardin County; Shelbyville Battery Manufacturing's $712 million investment, creating 1,572 jobs in Shelby County; and Toyota's $1.3 billion investment in Scott County, among others.

The Governor announced Kentucky once again set an all-time record for products shipped globally, with $51.6 billion in exports in 2025, representing a 7.65% increase over 2024.

Unemployment rates fell in all 120 counties between December 2024 and December 2025.

The Governor's administration also secured the largest General Fund budget surplus and Rainy Day Fund. In 2023, Kentucky recorded over 2 million jobs filled for the first time ever and has stayed above that number ever since.

In addition, Kentucky has secured rating increases from major credit rating agencies Fitch Ratings, S&P Global Ratings and Moody's Investors Service.

Earlier this year, Site Selection magazine ranked Kentucky in the top five nationally and second in the South Central region for economic development projects per capita in its 2025 Governor's Cup rankings. In June, Area Development magazine awarded the commonwealth a Silver Shovel designation in its 2025 Shovel Awards, which highlight states for attracting high-value investment projects that will create a significant number of new jobs in their communities.

Gov. Beshear also announced a new initiative, called New Kentucky Home, to increase economic investment, attain and attract talent, and increase tourism across the state.

To encourage investment and job growth in the community, the Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority (KEDFA) in May 2025 preliminarily approved an incentive agreement with the company under the Kentucky Business Investment program. The performance-based agreement can provide tax incentives based on the company's investment and annual job targets.

Additionally, KEDFA approved Artisans for tax incentives through the Kentucky Enterprise Initiative Act (KEIA). KEIA allows approved companies to recoup Kentucky sales and use tax on construction costs, building fixtures, equipment used in research and development and electronic processing.

By meeting its annual targets over the agreement term, the company can be eligible to keep a portion of the new tax revenue it generates. The company may claim eligible incentives against its income tax liability and/or wage assessments.

In addition, Artisans can receive resources from Kentucky's workforce service providers. Those include no-cost recruitment and job placement services, reduced-cost customized training and job-training incentives.

For more information on Artisans Inc. visit ArtisansInc.com.

A detailed community profile for Fayette County can be viewed here.

Information on Kentucky's economic development efforts and programs is available at NewKentuckyHome.ky.gov. Fans of the Cabinet for Economic Development can also join the discussion at facebook.com/CEDkygov, on Twitter @CEDkygov, Instagram @CEDkygov and LinkedIn.

Louisville mayor calls for a data center moratorium as city considers regulations

Liam Niemeyer
Kentucky Lantern

The mayor of Kentucky's largest city is calling on city council members to pass a temporary ban or moratorium on data center construction within the city while the local government mulls over potential regulations restricting the siting and impacts of large data centers.

In a Tuesday afternoon press conference, Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg said that by enacting a temporary ban on data center construction, it would ensure any new requests to build data centers in the city would be reviewed under data center regulations the city is considering.

The city is continuing to hold public hearings this week seeking feedback on a regulatory framework on siting data centers that would ban any data center larger than 500,000 square feet from being built.

Local leaders began to consider such regulations following backlash from residents after the city's planning and zoning commission approved in March the siting of a 1.6-million-square-foot data center in West Louisville.

"I believe it's critical that once we get through this public hearing process, which is continuing, that we approve these proposed data center regulations," Greenberg said. "We must ensure that no additional actions related to data centers are taken while these outdated regulations are still on the books."

In June, city council members on a planning and zoning committee voted to table an ordinance to enact a data center moratorium after the chair of the committee argued such a moratorium should be used as a last resort.

Council member Shameka Parrish-Wright, who is challenging Greenberg in the mayoral general election this fall, questioned the timing of the mayor's announcement with a Monday email she had sent to city council members urging them to un-table the moratorium ordinance.

"It is interesting that after months of this ordinance languishing in committee after being tabled, and after weeks of poor publicity, the mayor suddenly chose to take a position on data centers only after I called for this item to be returned to the table," Parrish-Wright said, accusing Greenberg of "using his weekly address to appear as though he has been on the side of his constituents the whole time."

In recent months, counties and smaller cities across the state have passed temporary moratoriums on local data center construction after hearing strong concerns from residents about the potential impacts of such projects, including on local water usage, potential increases to electricity bills and more.

Louisville's remaining public hearings seeking commentary on its proposed data center regulations will be held in person and online on August 5, August 6 and August 10.

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