

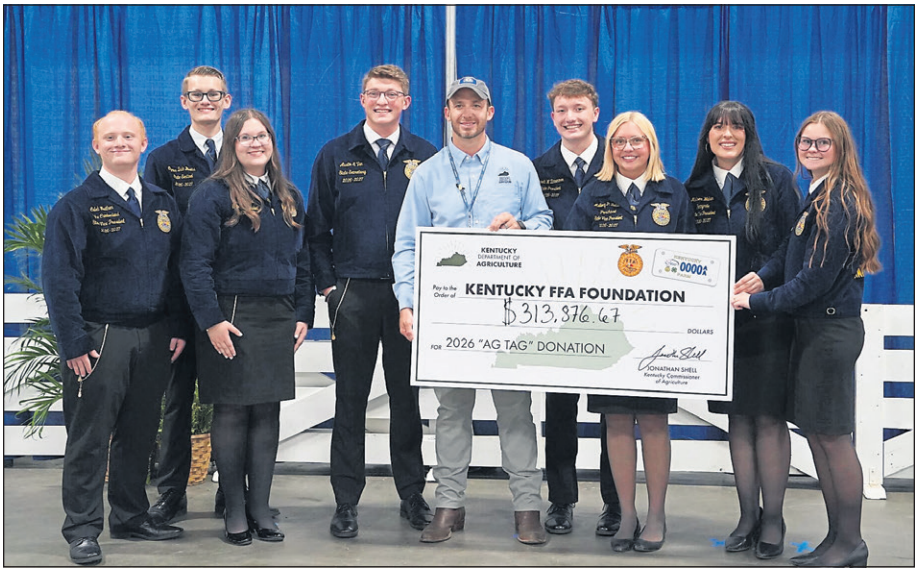
More than \$250,000 raised for FFA, 4-H through Ag Tag donations

BY MESSENGER STAFF

Almost \$1 million was raised this year by Kentucky drivers who participated in the Ag Tag Program. More than \$940,000 — \$941,630 to be precise — was donated, according to the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

This brings the cumulative total donated since 2024 to more than \$2.8 million, according to the department.

“Kentucky farmers and agricultural enthusiasts have helped us reach another fantastic total for the Ag Tag Program this year,” Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell said. “This couldn’t be possible without the wonderful support of those who see value in supporting the next generation of farmers through their donations to the Ag Tag Fund. It’s



Kentucky's Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell presents this year's Ag Tag contribution check to the state FFA. More than \$940,000 was donated through license plate renewals and purchases.

that generosity that will help ensure Kentucky agriculture has a bright future.”

The \$941,630 total includes funds generated by the purchase or renewal of Kentucky’s

farm vehicle license plates and the new “Friends of Agriculture” special plates, which became available in February and allows non-farm vehicles to support the Ag Tag Program.

The farm license plate generated \$927,585, while the “Friends of Agriculture” special plate generated \$14,045, the department stated. The fees are divided equally between Ken-

tucky 4-H, Kentucky FFA, and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, each group will receive \$313,876.67 this year.

“Half of the 4-H and FFA donations are returned to local councils and chapters, meaning leaders in the donating community can use those funds to cover the cost of 4-H and FFA camp and other leadership programs for youth,” a department press release stated. “County 4-H councils regularly use Ag Tag dollars to provide 4-H camp scholarships and travel for life-changing, educational experiences...FFA chapters were free to use the money to meet the greatest needs in their community, such as FFA jackets for students in need or helping cover travel costs to leadership

events.”

Ag Tag funds are generated by making a \$10 voluntary donation when buying or renewing the aforementioned license plates. At the time of publication, the Grave County-specific numbers were not available, but half of the money raised for FFA and 4-H goes “back to the county where the tag is purchased,” according to the department press release.

“The Ag Tag program is a powerful example of how a small investment can create a lasting impact,” said Sheldon McKinney, executive director of the Kentucky FFA Foundation. “What starts as a farmer making a \$10 voluntary donation grows thousands in annual support for Kentucky agriculture and its young people.”

‘CRAZY COINCIDENCE’

Area counties experiences rare ‘quake-nado’ event

BY KENNA WILLIAMS
FOR THE MESSENGER

Shortly before midnight on Wednesday, area counties were hit with a combination of intense straight-line winds, a 2.5 magnitude earthquake and a confirmed tornado warning — all of which occurred almost exactly at the same time.

On Thursday, WPSD Local 6’s Chief Meteorologist Trent Okerson and Meteorologist Mike Javer spoke about the overnight storms, noting which local counties saw the most damage. Additionally, Nathan Moran — research scientist at the Center for Earthquake Research and Information at the University of Memphis discussed the tornado-earthquake and — like Okerson and Javer — called the weather event a “crazy coincidence.”

“In the historic record, in 1782 of all things, there was a hurricane hitting Pensacola, and they experienced an earthquake at the same time. That’s the only coincidental weather-earthquake event that I know of,” Moran said. “I’ve been studying it for over 25 years now, and it’s always full of surprises. There’s never a dull moment.”

Straight-line winds, which were more powerful than the tornadoes in some areas, struck the region as the storm swept through. On Thursday, it was confirmed that an EF-1 tornado — with peak winds of 100 miles per hour — touched down in northeast Carlisle County and moved east-southeast into Graves County. A large macroburst also occurred across northeast Carlisle and northern Graves Counties with widespread straight-line winds of 80 to 105 mph. While damage was predominantly reported in Carlisle and Graves Counties, other counties experienced the “crazy coincidence” as well.

“The highest official reported wind speed that we saw was an 82-mile-per-hour wind gust in Kirksey in Calloway County,” Okerson said. “The radar signature

for the storm, kind of in between Cunningham and Lowes, had more of a tornado signature with radar. For the rest of the storm, it was primarily hurricane-force type winds. It’s probably likely that we had widespread 70 to 80 mile per hour winds — and probably some occasional gusts that were well over 80 miles per hour.”

While talk of a super El Niño has become a major discussion online, both Okerson and Javer clarified that the weather event was a separate occurrence.

“I would say there’s a low-end impact with El Niño on our weather pattern right now,” Javer said. “They’re more of a wintertime thing. You’re really going to start to see the changes in our pattern when it comes to the winter — not so much the summer at this point. We’re getting to a strong El Niño now, but we’re not at that super level yet.”

Okerson added that El Niño does not directly cause any one particular storm or event, but it can influence the seasons. Similarly, Moran

shared that while people may equate weather with seismic events, the two may not be as closely intertwined as some believe.

“In the past, people did equate weather with earthquakes. Way into almost the 20th century, people thought of it as another weather phenomenon,” Moran said. “For instance, the weather bureau ancestor in the 1870’s — one of the things of data they collected was earthquakes, and eventually it split off into separate fields. But for the longest time, weather and earthquakes were seen as synonymous.”

Moreover, Moran claimed that the number of earthquakes in 2026 is within the average range. He also recommended that people who experience earthquakes report it to the United States Geological Survey’s “Did You Feel It?” website. Not only does this help inform others of a possible earthquake in the area, but it contributes to seismological data.

“When you put it on Facebook, that data does not get gathered; it evaporates. Any bit of data on earthquakes is good data, and any way we can collect it, we can. But we

don’t collect social media data,” Moran said.

He also reminded the community about what to do when an earthquake occurs — shelter in place, ride it out, leave the building afterward and prepare for aftershocks.

“Earthquakes, even the small ones, are a reminder that preparedness for earthquakes or storms go hand in hand,” Moran said. “An earthquake that can cause damage is like a storm that can cause damage, and the preparation for one can feed into the preparation for another.”



Community member Sandra Hall reports that Wednesday night and Thursday morning storms caused tree damage in Melber, Kentucky.

For further education on earthquakes, Moran suggested visiting the

CERI and the Kentucky Geological Survey websites.



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