

Raising Hope program helps build healthier farm community

BY JENNIFER ELWELL
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

LEXINGTON — Twenty-five people have credited the people and partners behind Raising Hope for saving or significantly improving their lives.

Cheryl Witt, associate professor and assistant dean for undergraduate programs at the University of Kentucky College of Nursing and agricultural health Extension specialist in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment, beamed as she recalled those who returned and thanked the Raising Hope team for providing preventive care. Witt remembered one farmer who took advantage of a carotid artery screening, and it was found to be 98% blocked.

“We referred him immediately to a vascular surgeon,” Witt said while standing just outside the health screening pavilion at the National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville. “We’ve made impacts on people’s health, and we’ve caught something maybe they didn’t know they had.”

What began as a vision shared by Witt and other rural health and safety advocates has grown into one of Kentucky’s most impactful public health collaborations — one that is providing UK College of Nursing students with meaningful, hands-on clinical experiences.

A PARTNERSHIP ROOTED IN NEED

Raising Hope, an initiative administered by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA), was created in 2020 to promote the physical and mental health of Kentucky’s farmers and farm families through research, prevention strategies and community-based outreach. The initiative was a complementary companion to KDA’s award-winning Farm Safety and Health program, led by safety director Dale Dobson for more than 25 years.

Witt, who is often called the “Ag Nurse,” said the need was clear. More than 95% of Kentucky farms are small, family-run operations, and farmers often face significant barriers to health care access — long distances, limited time, cultural expectations and a deep-rooted self-reliance that can prevent them from seeking preventive care.

“We did an informal survey about rural health care, and there was a statistical difference between men who saw a health care provider on an annual basis versus women,” Witt said. “Most women are encouraged to get their annual checkups, but men typically don’t seek preventive screenings. Even with things like colon cancer, if you catch it early, you have a 91% chance of living a perfectly normal



UK College of Nursing student Paige Runice checked Richard West’s blood pressure while he visited the Raising Hope health screening pavilion at the National Farm Machinery Show. West is a farmer in Lewisburg.

By Jennifer Elwell

life. So, why not bring those screenings to the farmers and provide education and postpone the inevitable?”

Raising Hope travels the state and nation, training farmers and first responders in rural safety, health and rescue. The boots-on-the-ground approach — meeting farmers where they are, rather than waiting for them to seek care — became a cornerstone of Raising Hope’s model.

Thanks to strong support from state leadership — including Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell — the Raising Hope Safety, Health and Rescue team has expanded. The Kentucky General Assembly recently doubled the program’s budget to \$1 million annually for two consecutive fiscal years, enabling even more outreach and services.

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF RURAL HEALTH NURSES

For UK nursing students, Raising Hope provides an experience unlike any traditional clinical rotation. Instead of hospital floors, they find themselves at farm shows, county events and community gatherings, embedded directly in Kentucky’s agricultural culture.

Witt explained that this exposure builds cultural humility and prepares students to care for rural populations like those they will most likely serve, no matter where they practice in the Commonwealth.

“In any nursing practice, you want to make sure you are respectful of all cultures, and farm life is a culture,” said Witt. “Not only do they get the hands-on experience, but they are also exposed to that culture, and it enhances that

part of their practice. We also use this as a recruitment tool for rural nurses. There’s a nursing shortage everywhere, but especially in our rural areas.”

Senior nursing students Amelia Vogel and Candace Townsend described the work as part education and part advocacy — helping farmers understand their health risks, receive screenings and connect with doctors to prevent future hospitalizations.

“I talked to a farmer the other day who said the closest hospital is an hour away, and they don’t have a primary care physician,” said Townsend. “Or they haven’t seen them in 10-plus years. That happens a lot, so we’re here with Raising Hope and their partners to do blood pressure checks, EKGs and other screenings. We are trying to get the ball moving on farmers’ health.”

Both students agreed that working through Raising Hope is a great opportunity to learn what public health advocacy is really like.

“A lot of our clinical experiences are in the hospital with people who are already sick,” said Vogel. “Here, we are advocating for them to get screenings and get with doctors for checkups so they don’t end up in the hospital. Public health clinicals are working to make health care accessible.”

Senior nursing student Paige Runice explained how this rotation introduced her to an aspect of nursing almost never discussed in the classroom: the complex intersection of occupational and rural health.

“As we talk to them and do the screenings, we are finding that they are not seeking the help they need

because they think they can manage it on their own,” Runice said. “And thankfully, we have been able to catch some of these serious issues that are going on.”

CLINICAL IMPACT IN REAL TIME

The UK College of Nursing offers a wide range of health screenings with the assistance of Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH).

From blood pressure and AIC checks to EKGs and carotid ultrasounds, these screenings are crucial for detecting cardiovascular risk and chronic disease in their early stages and have identified life-threatening conditions that farmers never knew they had.

Witt explained that during the National Farm Machinery Show event, students and their mentors discovered someone was in new atrial fibrillation, which puts a person at a higher risk for a stroke.

The program’s mental health support, provided through the UK-administered Southeast Center for Agricultural Health and Injury Prevention, has been equally critical. Coordinators have fielded crisis calls in the middle of the night and helped farmers access emergency and long-term resources — another reason for the growing list of lives saved.

FARMERS FEEL THE DIFFERENCE

For farmers like Richard West of Lewisburg, the impact is deeply personal. After losing his mother to colon cancer at 58, he now takes advantage of every screening available.

“It was a wake-up call,” West said. “I had my first colonoscopy at 36, and they found two polyps. Now I get

regular check-ups. Colon cancer is treatable with regular check-ups.”

He also explained that while he never thought he would be one to worry about skin cancer, he has had a few precancerous spots removed. He credited the Raising Hope program for encouraging him to have more regular health screenings.

Michael Oliver, a farmer in Cadiz, Kentucky, learned the severity of his hearing loss while at the Farm Machinery Show. Heuser Hearing Institute, which partners with Raising Hope at farmer health screening events, fitted Oliver with hearing aids within a couple of days of his hearing test. He told Witt that he was looking forward to finally hearing his grandson speak, a child who could only whisper

due to an illness.

A MISSION OF ACCESSIBILITY

In Dr. Witt’s words, the message is simple: All Kentuckians deserve access to care, no matter where they live.

“Raising Hope will come to a group of two or 200 — and we will show up ready to help.”

From student education to farmer wellbeing, the program’s impact is evident.

“I think it’s important for us to be here to advocate for farmers who aren’t advocating for themselves and to get them the help they need,” said nursing student Runice. “They do a lot for us, and it’s important for us to do a lot for them.”



LEGAL NOTICE

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
UNIFIED COURT OF JUSTICE
OWEN CIRCUIT COURT
CIVIL ACTION # 25-CI-045

GERMAN AMERICAN BANK PLAINTIFF

VS. NOTICE OF SALE

DANIEL ASHER, ETAL. DEFENDANTS

By virtue of a Judgment and Order of Sale rendered in the Owen Circuit Court on the 10th day of March, 2026, I will sell at public auction to the highest and best bidder on the front steps of the Owen County Courthouse, 100 North Thomas Street, Owenton, Kentucky at the hour of 10:00, a.m. on Saturday, April 4, 2026, the following described property:

Two adjoining parcels on the east side of Greenup Road in Owen County, Kentucky and bounded and described as follows as containing 1.00 acres and 0.13 acres and fully described in Deed Book 223, page 468 in the Owen County Clerk’s Office.

There is a manufactured home located on this property which has been converted to real estate.

Property Address: 2410 Greenup Road, Owenton, KY 40359
PIDN: 064-00-00-001.01

The amount of money to be raised and for which this sale is being made is the sum of \$27,409.18 adjudged due to plaintiff on its first lien on the property, together with interest thereon at the rate of 6.0% per annum, from March 10, 2026, until paid, plus court costs and attorneys fees.

The real estate shall be sold on the terms of 10% cash at the time of the sale, with the balance payable within 30 days, except that the deposit shall be waived if plaintiff is the successful bidder. Any purchaser, other than the plaintiff shall be required to execute bond, with surety thereon acceptable to the Master Commissioner, to secure the unpaid balance of the purchase price, and said bond shall bear interest at the rate of 6% per annum from the date of the sale until paid, and shall have the same force and effect as a judgment and shall remain and be a lien on the property until paid. The purchaser shall have the privilege of paying all or part of the balance of the purchase price prior to the 30 day period.

It is further provided that the property sold contains insurable improvements and the successful bidder at said sale shall, at bidder’s expense, procure a policy of fire and extended insurance coverage on said improvements in the amount of the appraised value, or the unpaid balance of the purchase price, whichever is less, as a minimum, with a loss payable clause to the Commissioner of the Owen Circuit Court or the plaintiff herein. Failure of the purchaser to effect such insurance shall not affect the validity of the sale or the purchaser’s liability thereunder, but shall entitle, but not require the plaintiff to effect said insurance and furnish the policy, or evidence thereof to the Commissioner if it so desires, and the premium thereon or a proper portion thereof shall be charged to the purchaser as purchaser’s cost.

When the purchase price is paid in full, title will be conveyed to the purchaser by commissioner’s deed.

The aforesaid real property shall be sold free and clear of any and all liens and claims except the following:

- a. All State and County real estate taxes payable on the property for 2026 and thereafter;
- b. Easements, restrictions and stipulations of record;
- c. Assessments for public improvements levied against the property;
- d. Any facts which an inspection and accurate survey of the property may disclose.

For further information, see the Judgment, Order and pleadings of record in the Office of the Circuit Clerk of Owen County.

/s/ Mark R. Cobb
MARK R. COBB
MASTER COMMISSIONER
OWEN CIRCUIT COURT

NASCAR suspends Daniel Dye after livestream mockery of IndyCar's David Malukas

BY JENNA FRYER
AP AUTO RACING WRITER

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR driver Daniel Dye was suspended Tuesday — the second known major penalty of his racing career — for mocking IndyCar driver David Malukas during a recent livestream.

In the video, which circulated Tuesday on social media, Dye used voices that made inferences about Malukas’ sexuality. He mimicked Malukas’ voice at one point.

Dye is a Truck Series driver for Kaulig Racing, which also suspended him. NASCAR ordered Dye to undergo sensitivity training. Dye apologized to Malukas in a social media post, calling his comments “careless.”

“I chose my words poorly and I understand why it upset people,” he wrote. “I’m sorry to anyone who was offended. That’s now I want to represent myself.

“I have some close friends in the LBGT+ community who would never want to feel less of themselves because of what I said, and that’s exactly why I should hold myself to a higher standard.”

He said conversations with those friends made him recognize that “a true friend would know better than to act the way I did.”

Malukas, a 24-year-old driver for Team Penske, often posts pictures on social media with a girlfriend.

This is the second time Dye has been suspended.

He was 18 and racing in the ARCA series when he was arrested at a Daytona Beach, Florida, high school and charged with felony battery for approaching a classmate and punching the student in the groin area.

The victim was treated at a hospital for a potential ruptured testicle.

Dye said it was a game and he’d be exonerated. He was instead indefi-



Wade Payne / AP Photos

Driver Daniel Dye (43) is seen during qualifying for the NASCAR Weather Guard Truck Series, March 16, 2024, in Bristol, Tenn.

nately suspended by ARCA, which is owned by NASCAR. Dye was reinstated when the charge was reduced from a felony to a misdemeanor.

Dye in his third full season of racing in the Truck Series. He moved to Kaulig Racing this year to drive for Ram in the automaker’s return

to NASCAR competition. Through three races, his best finish is 13th at Atlanta.

Dye raced at St. Petersburg, Florida, in the Truck Series when NASCAR partnered its third-tier series with IndyCar’s season opener. Malukas made his Team Penske debut that same weekend.