

Local students awarded Kentucky Farm Bureau awards

A record \$980,750 in scholarships awarded to Kentucky students

SUBMITTED
The Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) Education Foundation announced on July 21 it had awarded the highest amount in post-secondary education scholarships in the program's history.

In partnership with county Farm Bureaus, the KFB Education Foundation awarded 634 Kentucky high school seniors a total of \$980,750 in scholarships at both the state and county level. This brings the total amount of scholarships awarded to more than \$4.8 million since the program's inception in 1953. The following is a list of local award winners:

SPENCER COUNTY FARM BUREAU SCHOLARSHIP — \$2,000 EACH

- Savanna Arnold

- Greyson Humes
- Kendall Slaughter
- Ryann Truax

KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU INSURANCE AGENTS ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP — \$1,000 EACH

- Ryann Truax

For a complete list of 2026 recipients by county, visit www.kyfb.com.
“Kentucky Farm Bureau is proud to celebrate this record year for our scholarship program,” said Eddie Melton, KFB President. “These stu-

dents represent the hard work and determination that define Kentucky's young people, and we're honored to help open doors for their futures. Whether their paths lead them to agriculture or another field, investing in them means investing in the next generation of our rural communities.”
Statewide scholarships include students attending a Kentucky college, university, community college or proprietary school who are pursuing a degree in agriculture or a related field; students

attending a Kentucky college or university who are pursuing a four-year degree in animal health/veterinary technology or a related field; students attending a Kentucky college or university who come from farm families; and more. A total of 113 county Farm Bureaus awarded scholarships to local students.
For more information about Kentucky Farm Bureau's scholarship program, visit www.kyfb.com/federation/programs/youth-development/scholarships.



From left, Executive Director of Veterans Rural Outreach Sean McCulloch talks with Charles Burns who moved into a VRO tiny home recently from Eminence.



Charles Burns gives a tour of his kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping quarters in his VRO tiny home on Bradshaw Street in Shelbyville. Burns told the Local that the house has a washer and dryer, microwave, stove and refrigerator.

BAND OF BROTHERS

Transition housing lifts veterans from hardship to success

BY JOE DURBIN
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Veterans Rural Outreach (VRO) of Shelbyville opens its doors to homeless veterans from Henry, Shelby, Oldham, Spencer and Jefferson Counties. What began with emergency shelter, meals, home repairs and advocacy in 2015 has grown into a broader mission of restoring dignity and building community for veterans in need.

VRO has six tiny homes, 360 square feet each, in Shelbyville, for homeless veterans who meet specific requirements to help get them back on their feet. The veterans must have a DD 214 showing character of service is honorable. If they are suffering from an addiction, they must provide proof of recovery from a substance abuse residential rehabilitation treatment program. The veteran cannot be a convicted sex offender, have a felony conviction or be suffering relapse.

The six homes are already filled with a growing waiting list. The current residents are from Henry County, Jefferson County and Shelby County.

VRO was started by six Vietnam War veterans, a Marine Corps veteran and a Kentucky National Guard veteran — Robert Baker, Barry Campbell, Jim Fegenbush, Stanley Fister, Gerald “Jerry” Karem, Carlen Pippin, Robert “Bobby” Pridemore and Gerald Sebree.

Pippin is the only one who isn't a Kentucky native. Pippin was raised in Cookeville, Tenn.

VRO says the heart of their mission is a transitional housing program, designed to equip veterans with the tools, resources, and support they need to thrive.

They are more than just tiny homes though. The Veterans Village Community Center, opened in 2020 and located at 506 Bradshaw Street in Shelbyville, provides many functions for veterans. It serves as a place for veterans to meet with Veterans Affairs personnel and others to aid veterans with claims.

The National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS) sends two representatives the third

Saturday of every month to help veterans with health claims, eligibility for VA assistance, eligibility for disability and other needs. If home repairs are needed for the vets, then Habitat gets involved.

The Community Center also has a free meal on Thursdays at 6 p.m. The full meal is for veterans, first responders and their family and friends from Shelby and surrounding counties. Veterans are welcome to bring a dish or dessert, but it is not required.

VRO Executive Director Sean McCulloch began his position in May. He came from Germantown in the Highlands and graduated from Eastern High School in Louisville in 1986.

McCulloch spent nine years in the United States Navy. He was a HT-DC2 (Hull Technician and Damage Controlman) E-5 when he left the Navy. He spent the majority of his naval service in Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA) in Norfolk. “We repaired ships when they were pier-side and didn't need to be dry-docked at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard,” shared McCulloch.

McCulloch has suffered from serious challenges over the years since leaving the Navy including homelessness, unemployment, lack of transportation and substance abuse.

After leaving the Navy, McCulloch built yachts for Pluckebaum Custom Boats Inc. in Prospect. He lost that job when they closed their doors and worked the boat-building circuit in Kentucky and Southern Indiana until opening a home construction business. McCulloch said when COVID-19 hit in 2019, he couldn't get people to let him come into their homes to work, and that caused him to lose everything and end up homeless.

In addition, McCulloch said that he was going blind from service-connected injuries and was unable to receive necessary eye surgery from the Veterans Administration because it was so expensive. The VA would only pay a portion of the expense for the

surgeries. Bennett & Bloom Eye Centers in Louisville ensured his surgeries were performed after Dr. Lawrence Tenkman, an ophthalmologist, enrolled him in part of a study allowing him to receive free treatment. He has had eight eye surgeries and can see now.

McCulloch lived in a tiny home in 2024 and part of 2025 before moving into a VRO transition apartment on Main Street in Shelbyville, paying \$650 a month plus utilities. Steve Meador is the landlord and rents to veterans transitioning successfully from VRO.

McCulloch shows the program can work as he bought a home in Highpoint Village in Shelbyville in August 2025 utilizing his VA benefits.

“The measure of success for Veterans Rural Outreach and Veterans Village comes from the residents that have the opportunity to transition through the program while living in mini homes — their own space — through the many resources that are made available for them,” stated Pippin. “The first residents arrived on Oct.1, 2020. To date, we have served 50-plus veterans in transition to a better life. Five now own their homes, and one is a landlord with a second home for rental property.”

Pippin said McCulloch is the right man to lead the VRO, “Sean is a successful homeowner and an example to all others seeking success. VRO is blessed beyond words now that he is directing the programs and a poster story for others to follow. He was God-sent to the VRO and the community as a guiding light for others to follow. He sets the example of a spiritual leader by constantly going beyond the call of duty, giving and assisting everyone to become another success story.”

McCulloch is assisted by Breanna Cornett, who has an M.S. degree in social work and is “also a spiritual blessing with her knowledge and compassion for the residents, making them a dream team,” shared Pippin.

Current VRO resident Charles Burns had been homeless in Henry County for three years

due substance abuse, a divorce and job loss but says McCulloch and VRO has been “a life changer” for him. Burns was able to transition into a tiny home in June.

Burns was in the Navy for four years and got out as a BM3, Boatswain's Mate Third Class (E-4)

with an honorable discharge. Burns said the VRO has helped him receive his VA medical and dental benefits, as well a SNAP benefits.

Pippin is quick to give all the credit to God though, “Divine intervention has made the Veterans Rural Outreach a success story

and the dream of ‘a band of brothers’ come true. All the honor and glory belong to God.”

McCulloch said any veteran in need can call him at 502-657-8784 for assistance. For more information, visit vroky.org.



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