

LTADD celebrates 58 years of regional progress at 2026 Annual Meeting

ELIZABETHTOWN - In a celebration of growth, leadership, and the power of regional partnership, the Lincoln Trail Area Development District (LTADD) hosted its 58th Annual Meeting, bringing together its Board of Directors encompassing leaders, both elected officials and citizen members, from across its eight counties and 26 cities representing more than 280,000 residents in the Lincoln Trail region.

The celebration, held Wednesday, Jan. 21, at the Historic State Theater in Elizabethtown, focused on the growth of the ADD through new innovative services and the reorganization of the ADD's departments to work more efficiently for its members.

"Three years ago, we began a journey to transform this agency," LTADD Executive Director Daniel London said. "We moved to an entrepreneurial operating system because we knew that to serve this region effectively, we had to build a depot of talent, bringing in leaders and experts who are the best in their fields."

London pointed to the addition of engineering and communication services, both which can be tailored to the specific needs of LTADD's member counties and cities.

"The need for these services continues to grow and, in turn, we continue to grow to meet demand," London said. "From GIS mapping, engineering and new bridge projects to communication services - both first in the state solutions for area development district members, we are providing the gold standard of service to our member counties."

Because of the new services and the need to better align business strategy and efficiencies by creating ownership of each discipline which will create additional revenue to serve its members, LTADD underwent a reorganization in the fourth quarter of 2025.

Restructuring its areas of local government support, economic development, workforce and aging services and including its two new services of engineering and communications, LTADD is better positioned to meet its members' needs through the divisions of Community Asset Planning & Engineering (CAPE); Community Aging & Social Engagement (CASE); Community & Regional Economic Development (CRED); Finance, Asset & Compliance (FACT), and LINC Communications.

"The reorganization sets us apart by design," London said, noting organizing by business divisions is also a first for state ADD agencies. "The results of our reorganization speak for themselves. Three years ago, we had only 34 employees, and today, we are projected to be at a record-breaking team of 52 by the end of Fiscal Year 2026. Our budget has grown from \$15.2 million in Fiscal Year 2023 to more than \$30 million in Fiscal Year 2026, all of which represents increased investment and service back into our eight-county region.

"This year, we aren't just celebrating numbers; we are celebrating a team that has truly bought into a culture of excellence," London added. "That's what this team has done in providing a return on investment to our team owners. That's not money that has fallen from the sky or COVID money, it's money our team has gone out to earn and put to work for our team owners."

None of what LTADD has accomplished would be possible without support from

the board of directors and employees, who have worked hard to build a culture that makes the agency a place where the best of the best want to work, London said.

"We cannot do what we do without a great Board of Directors who believe in our vision," London said. "They are the owners of this progress, and the culture our employees have built is a direct reflection of the support and leadership they provide."

The event also featured the installation of new officers and the presentation of the district's most prestigious service awards.

Hardin Circuit Court Judge Larry Ashlock administered the oath of office to the 2026 LTADD officers: Chair Washington County Judge-Executive Timothy Graves, 1st Vice Chair Hodgenville Mayor Jim Phelps, 2nd Vice Chair Becky Miller, Secretary Elizabethtown Mayor Jeff Gregory, and Treasurer LaRue County Judge/Executive Blake Durrett. As part of the transition of leadership, Graves presented outgoing Chair Marion County Judge/Executive David Daugherty with a commemorative gavel and team jersey, honoring his three years of dedicated leadership.

The highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of three awards recognizing exceptional commitment to the Lincoln Trail region:

Longtime board member Ted Brown of Breckinridge County was honored on his resignation from the board after 32 years of service. A former Mayor of Irvington, Brown was celebrated for his strong attendance and decades of civic devotion.

Palmer A. "Pete" Peterson Memorial Award: Washington County Judge/Executive Timothy Graves received the district's highest honor for its board members. Judge Graves has demonstrated exceptional dedication to LTADD through his visionary leadership and active participation in numerous LTADD bodies since joining the board in 2019. His commitment is most notably seen in his enthusiastic leadership to reestablish the Hazard Mitigation Council and his roles on the Executive, Budget, Regional Transportation & Highway Safety, and Water Management Planning councils. As the 48th recipient of the annual award, he was recognized for going above and beyond his official duties to advocate for both Washington County and the broader eight-county region.

Dorothy M. Dolle Memorial Award: Janet Hobbs of Meade County was honored for her "servant leadership" and advocacy for seniors. Hobbs has been a vital voice on LTADD's Aging Advisory Council, serving as its chair since Fiscal Year 2021-2022 and continues to serve in this capacity.

In his closing remarks, Judge Daugherty emphasized that LTADD's mission of bringing civic and governmental leaders together remains the cornerstone of the region's success.

"Collaboration is our greatest strength," Daugherty said. "At LTADD, we believe that when local and regional leaders align, there's no limit to what we can achieve. Your steady support and partnership are the engines behind our success. Because of you, LTADD is more than just a service provider, it's a catalyst for a better, more connected region for all 280,000 of our citizens."

Commander Academy teacher named district nominee for Kentucky Rural Education Teacher of the Year

SPRINGFIELD – Schools for the past five and a half years, first as a secretary for the special education department before taking on the role of head teacher at Commander Academy, the district's alternative school, three years ago.

"I pursued the role as teacher at Commander Academy to work with students who need higher supports," said Ballard.

"I saw an opportunity to teach with compassion, foster relationships, and meet students where they are emotionally and academically. The best parts of my job are the kids and the relationships I have built with them. Seeing our students re-engaged, confident and happy to be at school is extremely rewarding."

Ballard said she was humbled to learn that she had been nominated for the award. "It makes me feel appreciated when some days I feel like I'm not making a difference. It reaffirms my desire to continue the work with our students, and I am deeply grateful to work in a district that believes in its



Tiffani Ballard

students and supports educators. I am so thankful to work alongside a dedicated principal and instructional assistants that are committed to the growth of our students."

"Mrs. Ballard leads Commander Academy with heart, consistency and an unwavering belief in our students," said Commander Academy Principal Chad Willis. "She creates a safe, structured environment where students feel valued and understood, often for the first time in their educational journey. Her ability to build trust, set clear expectations and celebrate growth, no matter how small, has transformed our program and the lives of the students we serve. I am thrilled that she is on our team, and she is more than deserving to represent Washington County for this award nomination."

"Mrs. Ballard brings a thoughtful, student-first approach to her work every day," said Director of Special Education and Director of Student and Staff Supports Amanda Mattingly. "She understands that success looks different for every learner and designs supports that help students re-engage, build confidence, and see

a path forward. Her leadership at Commander Academy reflects a deep commitment to helping students overcome challenges and achieve meaningful, lasting growth."

"Mrs. Ballard has worked tirelessly to ensure that every student, regardless of past challenges and current situation, has the opportunity to succeed," says WCS Superintendent Dr. Robin Cochran. "Mrs. Ballard never gives up on a student. She individualizes instruction, motivates learners, and consistently teaches them to see life with a 'glass half full' mindset. She has secured co-ops, internships, and employment opportunities, while also providing meaningful life experiences through tours of local businesses and industries to build career pipelines. She loves her students like her own and sets high expectations for herself and those she serves, making a lasting difference in her school and community."

The Kentucky Rural Education Teacher of the Year will be selected from nominees representing school districts across the state.

Attorney General Coleman asks for continued funds for Body Armor Grant Program

LEXINGTON – Alongside law enforcement and elected officials, Attorney General Russell Coleman is asking for continued funds for the Body Armor Grant Program. On Thursday, at The University of Kentucky Police Department Headquarters, General Coleman praised the leadership of the General Assembly for delivering for law enforcement. Looking to build on the success of the program, he asked for \$10 million a year, for the next two years. The funds would ensure Kentucky's law enforcement have vests, shields, helmets, and other life-saving equipment.

"We have fitted more than 2,400 law enforcement professionals with soft body armor. Twenty-nine of those vests are right here at UKPD. Along with 80 carriers, 160 rifle plates, and eight ballistic shields," said Attorney General Coleman. "These aren't percentages or numbers—what we're talking about today is the difference

between mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, making it home to their families at the end of their shift."

"At the University of Kentucky Police Department, we've sworn an oath to protect and serve this campus community — no matter the threat, no matter the hour," said Joe Monroe, University of Kentucky Police Department's Chief of Police. "Thanks to Attorney General Coleman's Body Armor Grants Program, we've received critical tools to help keep our officers safe and ready. This equipment strengthens our ability to respond to the most serious threats and reinforces our commitment to protecting the students, faculty, staff and visitors of this university."

In 2024, the General Assembly appropriated \$15 million to create the Body Armor Grant program in the Attorney General's Office. Before the program, 20 percent of Kentucky's law enforcement were wearing expired body armor or none at all. In the last

two years, General Coleman has closed the gap to less than one percent.

"As Senate Budget vice chair, I was proud of and supported the Kentucky General Assembly's decision to provide the Attorney General's request for the funding that made this possible," said Sen. Amanda Mays Bledsoe, R-Lexington. "That support was grounded in a simple belief: when we invest in officer safety, we get real results."

During a recent standoff with an armed suspect in Scott County, two deputies used a shield acquired by funds provided through the program to protect themselves from gunfire.

"This program isn't just about the equipment- it's about protecting the men and women who put themselves in harm's way for others. When officers have the right protection, they can do their jobs with greater confidence and a much better chance of going home safely at the end of the shift," said Jeremy Nettles, Scott County Sheriff.

Comer secures \$1 million in funding for Springfield Industrial Park waterline improvements

WASHINGTON – Last week, Congressman James Comer (R-Ky.) announced that the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 (H.R. 7148), recently passed by Congress, includes \$1 million in federal funding to support rapid growth related to the new industrial park in Springfield, Kentucky.

This funding bill now advances to the U.S. Senate for consideration.

Congressman Comer led efforts in Congress to secure funding for critical waterline improvements at the Springfield Industry Park, supporting continued growth and ensuring reliable access to clean water for the City of Springfield and communities throughout Washington County.

"I am proud to support the City of Springfield in its efforts to modernize essential waterline infrastructure, strengthening service reliability, safeguarding public health, and fostering long-term economic growth for the region. I will continue working in Congress to support Washington County and strengthen critical infrastructure across Kentucky's 1st Congressional District," said Congressman Comer.

"Congressman James Comer's leadership in securing a \$1 million Community Project Funding

request is making a direct investment in Springfield's economic future," said Springfield Water and Sewer Commission General Manager, Daren Thompson.

"This funding will allow the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission to complete critical infrastructure upgrades at the Clearview Commerce Center industrial park, a key driver of business growth and job creation. By expanding water capacity through construction of a new

booster pump station, this project will strengthen service for existing employers and open the door for continued development. We are grateful for Congressman Comer's strong advocacy and partnership in delivering an investment that will support economic opportunity in our community for years to come,"

This funding for the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission will support rapid growth for the community's industrial park. Providing

clean water and sufficient water pressure to these industries, while also having the capabilities to attract additional business to the area, is key to supporting local economic growth and employment. As part of the project, a constant-pressure booster pump station will be constructed inside of the Industrial Park, which will sustain pressure to meet growing demands in a rural area primed for economic growth.

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