# Judge's Report

Dear Jackson County Community,



*County Judge Executive Paul Hays*

As we approach Thanksgiving, I find myself reflecting on how much I look forward to this holiday. Having our extended family gather at home—to share memories, laugh, watch old family films, play ball on the lawn, eat together, and simply enjoy each other's company—is a special time for all of us as we give thanks to Almighty God for our blessings. I hope your holiday is just as bright and rewarding.

I would also like to share a few updates regarding our county business:

- **Magistrate Preparation & Training**: Last week, the incoming Magistrates and I attended the KACO conference in Lexington. We completed hours of preparation classes, exchanged information with colleagues across the state, and spent valuable time discussing the issues our new Jackson County Fiscal Court will face in the coming year.

- **Fiscal Court Audits**: I have been in contact with our auditors regarding our previous years' records. Once the current audit is finished, we plan to move directly into the 2024–2025 audit. While audits can be challenging, they are essential for correcting past mistakes and improving our financial oversight moving forward.

- **Road Department Updates**: With local asphalt plants closing for the season at the end of last week, we secured enough blacktop to complete repairs on two slide areas on Union Church Road. While paving is paused until spring, our road crew is actively installing drainage tiles and clearing ditches to ensure an early start next year. We will also continue submitting proposals to the Department of Transportation for additional road improvements. This past summer, we successfully repaved four county roads and completed emergency repairs on several bridges and slides. I greatly appreciate our strong working relationship with the Allen Company.

- **Budget Planning & Operations**: This week, we begin preparing upcoming budgets for the Detention Center, Sheriff's Office, and County Road Department. Additionally, we are continuing to evaluate options for the Transfer Station to improve local service while reducing county costs.

Finally, I want to express my personal gratitude to every county employee who works hard to keep Jackson County moving forward. The dedication of our staff often goes unnoticed, but their efforts are essential to making our community a better place. Thank you all for your service and commitment—your hard work does not go unnoticed.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families.

Sincerely,
Paul Hays
Jackson County Judge-Executive

**Free Community Thanksgiving Dinner**
**Sand Gap United Baptist Church**
**Tuesday, Nov. 24th**
**from 10:30-2:00**
**Making A Difference,**
**One Spoonful at a Time. God bless**

**PUBLIC (LEGAL) NOTICE ADVERTISEMENT**

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**JACKSON COUNTY EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Pursuant to Section 324, Title III of the 1986 Federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986, 42 U.S.C. 11001 et seq., the following information is provided in compliance with the Community Right-to-Know requirements of the SARA Law, and the open meetings and open records provisions of KRS 61.800, 61.805, 61.810, 61.823, 61.826, and 61.835.

Members of the public may contact the Jackson County Emergency Planning Committee by writing Jamie Strong, Chairman of the Jackson County Emergency Planning Committee, 100 Main Street, McKee, Kentucky 40486, or contacted by telephone at (606) 287-3838.

The Jackson County Emergency Planning Committee conducts meetings at Jackson County EOC, 1901 McCammon Ridge Road, McKee, KY. 40447 or at other locations, in accordance with the Kentucky Open Meetings Law. Members of the public may request to be notified of regular or special meetings as provided in KRS 61.820.

Records of the Planning Committee, including the county emergency response plan, material safety data sheets, and inventory forms, or any follow-up emergency notices as may subsequently be issued, are open for inspection, and members of the public who wish to review these records may do so 8 am to 4 pm, Eastern Time, Monday thru Friday, at Jackson County EOC , as required by the Kentucky Open Records Law. The local 24-hour telephone number for purposes of emergency notification, as required by the SARA Law, is (606)287-9979.

*Happy Thanksgiving!*

# The Road to Mental Wellness

**With Desert Rose**




Disabilities and illnesses can be visible or invisible. Or sometimes a combination of the two. It can be ever changing depending on how the person is feeling or progressing in their illness. Both invisible and visible disabilities have struggles associated with it. Invisible illness is exactly what it sounds like, it is a medical condition that is not visible to others. Examples of invisible illnesses include psychiatric disorders, diabetes, heart conditions, and chronic migraine. A wide range of conditions can fall into this category, with symptoms such as chronic pain, debilitating fatigue, anxiety, sensory sensitivities, mental illness, and cognitive challenges. These conditions often lack visually identifiable indicators, making them difficult for others to recognize or understand. Whereas, visible illnesses have aspects of the condition that other people can see and, therefore, understand that there is a medical condition present. Examples include, someone with hair loss related to chemotherapy treatment for cancer, the use of a mobility device for someone with chronic pain, or particular facial features associated with down syndrome. This week is focused on the intricacies of invisible illnesses, however both versions of disability and illness have valid struggles.

Whether you have a disability or not you may have either thought or heard some of these sentiments before:

• A 40-something year old gets out of their car, that is parked in a handicap spot and does not use a mobility aid: "That person does not need the handicap parking space, they are not even disabled"

• This person has cystic fibrosis and struggles to breath when walking the distance though the parking lot.

• A 30-something year old has to cancel plans due to chronic pain and dizziness related to their condition: "He could walk yesterday, but now he can't? He just doesn't want to hang out with us, he always cancels."

• This person has chronic fatigue syndrome and is experiencing a crash after pushing himself through the work week.

• A 20 year old woman goes to the doctor complaining of increased fatigue, joint pain, and sudden weight gain: "You look fine and are too young to be sick. Just get more exercise and watch your diet."

• This person has ovarian cancer but will not find out for over a year due to being "too young" for ovarian cancer.

• A 15 year old girl is not keeping up with chores and homework: "She is just lazy and does not want to put the effort in."

• This girl has ADHD and wants to do her chores and school work but her executive functioning challenges make it so that she can't keep up with the demands of home and school.

All of these statements are rooted in ableism and the lack of knowledge about invisible illnesses. Unfortunately, it is not an uncommon experience in the invisible disability space. Having an invisible illness is hard. One of the reasons it can be hard is because people may not believe that you are sick and have a lack of empathy for your difficulties because they cannot see the difficulties nor experience them. It can also be exhausting to educate others and advocate for yourself so people will believe you. However, it is necessary to do so in order to have your needs met and take care of yourself. People with visible disabilities also need to advocate for themselves due to ableism in society. The difference for those with invisible disabilities is you also need to "prove" you are sick. And once you do, people may frequently forget because your illness is out of sight and out of mind to them. Although, living with the illness you do not get the luxury of your illness being out of sight and out of mind as you live with it daily. While having an invisible disability is burdensome, due to living in an ableist society, the ability to be able to "hide" your illness can be helpful when facing prejudice and discrimination. The problem is that people with invisible disabilities are often taught to lean into this and hide their disability, which tends to cause more issues than benefits. It is important to know that having an invisible disability is valid and it is not their job to hide their disability from others in order to make them comfortable. Having a disability is not something to be ashamed of; however, being taught to hide the illness (because it is invisible) can lead to feelings of shame or lead to minimizing their needs and experiences. Invisible illness means it is not readily visible to others. However, it does not mean that it is not valid and not visible to the person living with it every single day. Support may not be directed towards them because people can not see the need for support. This does not mean that they don't need support. People may make accusations that they are faking the illness or not understand the variability of symptoms day to day.

It Is important that if you experience an invisible illness that you can remind yourself that your disability is real and valid. Coping with the struggles that come with invisible disabilities mainly includes believing in yourself and your own experiences. If you are able to validate your experiences you can better advocate for yourself, notice ableism around you, and take care of yourself both mentally and physically. The more you are able to communicate about your experiences, even if others' cannot see it, the more likely you are to gain understanding from your loved ones and get support when you need it. As always, if you or someone you love feels suicidal or that they are in a crisis there is the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988 for confidential, free, 24/7/365 help. You can also chat at 988lifeline.org. Another resource is the Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741. The Crisis Hotline: 844-755-5325 Until next week, I'm Desert Rose signing off and wishing you all good mental health.

**Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988 for confidential, free, 24/7/365 help. You can also chat at 988lifeline.org.**

**Opinions Expressed in Columns are not necessarily those of the Jackson County Sun, its editors, owners or publishers.**