

COMMUNITY

Safe Haven Baby Box dedicated at Rowan County EMS



Photos by Cecil Lawson

Local officials and community organizations took part in a ribbon-cutting ceremony to dedicate the Safe Haven Baby Box on Tuesday, Dec. 16.



Addia Wuchner, Executive Director of Northeast Kentucky Right to Life, standing, along with Homer Ledford, Rowan County EMS Director; Chief Jeff Anderson, Morehead Fire Department; and Past Jeff Fannin, Bluebank First Church of God.

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Community members gathered at the Rowan County EMS at American Legion Way on Tuesday, Dec. 16, to cut the ribbon on a newly-installed Safe Haven Baby Box. The Baby Box allows mothers or parents not able to care for their newborn or infant children

to place them in a safe, secure location with immediate access to medical care. This initiative was a collaboration between the Morehead/Rowan County Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Morehead, the Rowan County Fiscal Court, and Northeast Kentucky Right to Life. This marked the sixty-first Baby Box placed in Kentucky, among 402



Rowan County Judge/Executive Harry Clark

across the United States, and the 150th dedication ceremony in 2025. According to State Representative Nancy Tate, who spoke at the ceremony, there have been 71 infants placed in the Safe Haven boxes in the United States, including 3 in Kentucky. She noted that, following an incident in which an infant was left on the steps of a church in Bowling Green in December,



Outside and inside views of the new Safe Haven Baby Box, located at 200 American Legion Way, at the Rowan County EMS headquarters.

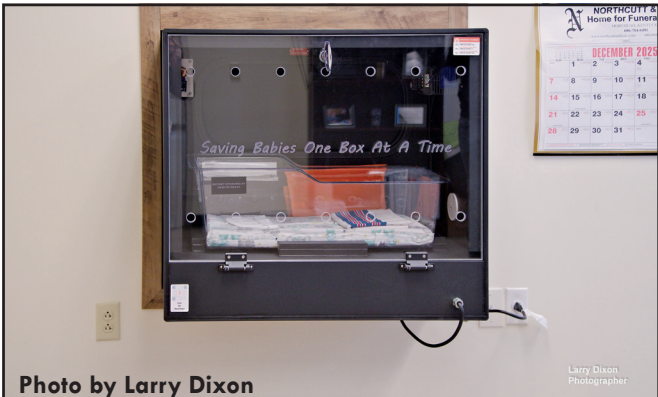


Photo by Larry Dixon



State Representative Nancy Tate

the Kentucky General Assembly took action to become the 3rd state to pass a Safe Haven law, followed by legislation to allow baby boxes at fire stations, EMS, and allow signs to be placed where young people congregate to announce the service. She said these pieces of legislation passed with any opposition. "This is an issue everyone can get behind," Tate said.

Rep. Tate also said that the Safe Haven baby box is not for everyone, but it was "an important tool in a tool kit." Addia Wuchner, Executive Director of Northeast Kentucky Right to Life, said mothers in distress use the Safe Haven boxes because they love their newborns and want a better life than they feel like they can give. "It's a heart-felt choice," she said. "There's no shame, no blame, no name." Wuchner also said that part of the General Assembly's legislation was allowing the placement of signs with an 800 number in schools and places where young people congregate to let them know about the baby box, in both English and Spanish. Morehead Fire Chief Jeff Anderson read a statement from Mayor Laura White-Brown, who was away for family medical issues. The placement of the Safe Haven

baby box ensures that "no parent feels alone, and no child is without protection," her statement said. "It's not just a box, it's a door to safety, compassion, and hope." County Judge/Executive Harry Clark and County EMS Director Homer Ledford both made brief statements thanking the community for collaborating to make the baby box happen and for creating a "lasting symbol of hope, compassion and a second chance." Pastor Jeff Fannin, Blue Bank First Church of God, noted before leading the blessing, that he and his wife had adopted two children from China who had been left on the roadside in a basket when they were two days old. The Safe Haven Baby Box is located outside of Rowan County EMS, at the County Services Building at 200 American Legion Way.

School Board wraps up 2026 with student, staff recognitions

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Rowan County Board of Education members ended 2025 with their meeting on December 16 with a showcase of student achievement and staff appreciation. Students from McBrayer Elementary School were featured in the December monthly recognitions with the presentation, "Unwrapping Learning." These students explained how their Creation Station 3-D printing business, greenhouse collaboration with the Rowan County Senior High School Ag Department, and their student leadership tied in with the qualities of the Valiant Viking: innovation, collaboration, and leadership. Lindsey Johnson, CTE teacher at Rowan County Senior High School, and sponsor of the Educators Rising Club, thanked teachers at McBrayer Elementary School and Rowan County Middle School for allowing students in the teacher career pathway to gain 12 field hours by observing classrooms in those schools. FRYSC Director Kellyn Gussler recognized the district's Family Resource and Youth Service Center Directors and their assistants for each school: Charles Graham and Susie Schuster, Rowan County Senior

High School; Whitney Wattercutter, Rowan County Middle School; Sarah Johnson, Tilden Hogge and Rodburn Elementaries; Laura Hurst, and assistant Tammy Cooper, Clearfield and McBrayer Elementaries. Anthony Workman, with the audit firm of Kelley Galloway, delivered the district's FY 2024-25 financial audit. He said the audit gave the district a clean, or unmodified opinion on the district's finances, with no major findings. He noted there were eight minor findings, all related to compliance issues with

school activity funds. Board members voted to approve the FY 2024-25 audit as well as district's annual financial report. Director of Pupil Personnel Denine Sargent reported that attendance for month four of the school year was up 2 percent from last year, with an average daily attendance of 94 percent, averaging 60 more students. She said they are keeping an eye on chronic absence data and letters had been sent out to students' parents designated as Tier 2 and 3 to release them from this status.

"We are growing, and attendance is improving," Sargent said. Assistant Supt. Brandy Carver presented the annual Comprehensive District Improvement Plan and individual Comprehensive School Improvement Plans, and board members voted to approve

them. Board members held a first reading of the 2026-27 School Year calendar. Sargent said for next year's calendar, an additional instructional day was added for the second semester, and the calendar will retain the full week fall break, full week break for

Thanksgiving, two weeks for Christmas break, and a full week for Spring break. Board members also approved an 8 a.m. start time and 3:00 p.m. end of day for all schools in the district. They also set their first meeting date for 2026 for January 15 at 6 p.m.

Dr. Grace Jones joins Bath Veterinary Clinic

Bath Veterinary Clinic is proud to announce the addition of Dr. Grace Jones, who joined the practice this month. Dr. Jones brings a wealth of experience across a wide range of animals including cattle, horses, small ruminants, dogs, and cats. Dr. Jones is originally from Scottsville, Kentucky. She earned her bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry from Western Kentucky University and continued to Auburn University, where she received her DVM. After briefly practicing in Texas, Dr. Jones returned to her home state and is excited to join the team at Bath Veterinary Clinic.

Her professional interests include soft tissue and orthopedic surgery, dentistry, chronic disease management, equine reproduction and lameness, large animal field services, and client education. While she enjoys the versatility of this career, her favorite days consist of calf pulls, draining wounds, and colic's. Bonus if it's all in one day. Dr. Jones also has a strong interest in organized veterinary medicine and believes continued collaboration and advancement of the profession is a shared responsibility among veterinarians. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time outdoors—especially biking, swimming, and backpacking with her dog, Vada, across the country, with a goal of section hiking the entire Appalachian Trail. "We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Jones to Bath Veterinary Clinic" said Dr. Ben Wilson. "Her diverse skill set, combined with her prior experiences in Texas and Kentucky, make her an invaluable addition to our team and to the community we serve." Local pet and livestock owners can now schedule appointments with Dr. Jones, who looks forward to building lasting relationships with families and their animals throughout Bath County and beyond.



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