

AT HOME IN THE HEARTLAND

ELIZABETHTOWN, HARDIN COUNTY, KENTUCKY



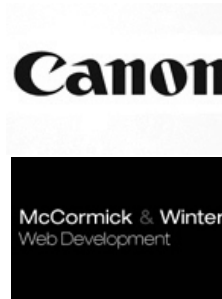
THE MOUNTAIN WORKSHOPS • OCTOBER 2010 • THE 35TH YEAR

The 2010 Mountain Workshops HARDIN COUNTY, KENTUCKY

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INVITED US INTO THEIR LIVES.

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Coming home to Elizabethtown

Hardin County is a community of contrast

Photo, this page

• Rik Hawkins, Elizabethtown-Hardin County Chamber of Commerce president and CEO, spreads out a shrimp boil as the chamber hosted a dinner for the Mountain Workshops staff and faculty.

PHOTO BY NINA GREIPEL

Cover photo • “I’ve been coming here since I can remember,” said G.D. Medley, left. “Maybe 70 years.” G.D. and Roy Sheroan, 88, wait their turn at Albert’s Barber & Styling Shop in Vine Grove.

PHOTO BY CAITLYN GREENE

Back cover photo • Cousins Coleman Pence, 3, dressed as a superhero, and Sara Kate Barnes, 3, dressed as a cheerleader, participate in “Burk-o-ween,” trick-or-treating from classroom to classroom at G.C. Burkhead Elementary School.

PHOTO BY CHRIS WILSON

Known by many travelers as the best place to refuel and refresh before negotiating Louisville traffic, Elizabethtown forms an urbane core at the center of historic Hardin County.

A fencerow of towering signs and garish lights along Interstate 65 conceal quiet pathways to rolling farmland and a mosaic of quaint villages, each with its proud heritage and traditions. Here in Kentucky’s sixth most-populous county, is the face of changing Americana. Hardin is a community of contrast.



Few who pause here realize that the brakes on their vehicles might have been produced in the county, as well as their windshields or the frames of their vehicles. While second- and third-generation farmers tend crops and livestock nearby, robotic arms place steel cylinders into state-of-the-art machines that use water pressure to shape the metal into frames.

Traffic flows endlessly through Elizabethtown, where I-65 meets two major state parkways, the Blue Grass and the Western Kentucky. Meanwhile, on less-travelled roadways, horse-drawn carriages carrying Amish families remain a common sight.

And then there’s “The Post,” as the locals call the vast Fort Knox, which covers most of the land in northern Hardin County.

Kendra Stewart, an “Army brat” who has lived on Long Island and the suburbs of Minneapolis, is busily involved as a volunteer in business, cultural and charitable activities. She describes her beloved “Heartland” hometown of Elizabethtown this way:

“Our community is about family, faith, friends, caring and kids. We love our sports and our festivals. We have big-city amenities in a small-town setting. We like progress, but not too much too fast. Hardin County has to be one of the most patriotic places in the USA.”

She’s referring in part to the number of military retirees who have located near Fort Knox. Speeches and performances are as

likely to be recognized by the Army chant “Hooah” as they are by applause.

The county uniquely houses two rival cities of similar population but differing demographics, traditions and characters. Elizabethtown, the county seat, is the older, more traditional and prosperous city, a regional center for health care, shopping, dining, education, entertainment and employment. Radcliff, at the other end of U.S. 31W – the Dixie Highway – developed around Fort Knox and is more diverse and transient.

Long respected as an ideal environment to grow up in and raise a family, the prospects of pursuing a career in the county have not always been as promising. But that’s changing, according to Rik Hawkins, chairman of the Elizabethtown-Hardin County

Chamber of Commerce, who points to the new role of Fort Knox as the Army’s consolidated personnel center. The Army has built an 800,000-square-foot building, which is expected to employ thousands of high-level, high-tech military and civilian employees.

To the south, planners see great potential in a 1,551-acre industrial development site in Glendale.

Charlie Thurman, a native of the county, and his wife, Claudia, returned to the southern Hardin County farming community of Sonora to check on a family home they were restoring. They stayed, began a business, Claudia’s Tea Room, and have been involved in the community the past eight years.

“You can have a greater impact here than in a larger community,” Charlie Thurman says. “It’s a great community that slowed down for about 20 years but it’s ready to speed up. It has wonderful opportunities in front of it.”

• **Warren Wheat**, retired editor
Elizabethtown News Enterprise

See Hardin County stories online: www.mountainworkshops.org



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Luke Bickett tries to prevent the door from closing on his wife, Carissa, and 19-month-old son, Jackson, engrossed in his father's power drill.

PHOTO BY EMMA TANNENBAUM



Elizabethtown wakes up as cars roll along West Dixie Avenue early Saturday morning, moments after the State Theater's neon marquee turned off.

PHOTO BY RUSSELL KUHNER



Smoke from a nearby forest fire creates an unusual pattern in the morning sunlight as it streams through the branches of a tree along U.S. 31W north of Elizabethtown.

PHOTO BY SCOTT WILLIAMS



Adeline Brine, 2, and her dog Lilo while away the afternoon at her home.

PHOTO BY ADAM REYNOLDS



Jonathon Smith, 15, left, and Donahvan Regan, 15, of Elizabethtown, have been best friends since Donahvan moved to Kentucky from California three years ago. Both boys' fathers work at Fort Knox, and they attend Elizabethtown High School. Donahvan's father was transferring to a job in South Carolina, and the boys wanted to have their goodbye skating session at one of their favorite skate spots, the Elizabethtown City Cemetery.

PHOTO BY JULIA WALKER THOMAS



Hillari Caso, 17, talks in her bedroom with her mother, Lari, about her school day. Laughing together is a regular activity for this close-knit mother and daughter.

PHOTO BY BAILEY HALL



Sophomores Brianna Trombley, left, and Keri Johnson back the Central Hardin High School Bruins during the district football championship against Meade County High School.

PHOTO BY GINO SILLER



Central Hardin High School's Antoine Keys, left, prepares his uniform as his teammate, Travis Puryer, steals a quick drink of soda from Colton Heibert before the game with Meade County High School.

PHOTO BY GINO SILLER



Brandon Slaughter enjoys a dairy treat with his friends at the local McDonald's after football practice.

PHOTO BY GINO SILLER



Mishala Nichols, a Central Hardin High School sophomore, prepares for a color guard competition as the sun sets during an after-school practice.

PHOTO BY MELISSA KEELEY



Sophomores Brandon Shugan and Claire Goodin enjoy a moment beneath the Friday night lights at Central Hardin High School. The Bruins were playing against Meade County High School for the district football championship.

PHOTO BY GINO SILLER



After football practice, Central Hardin High School senior Tristan Long goofs off with fellow students.

PHOTO BY GINO SILLER



Kira Conner, a first-grader at Helmwood Heights Elementary School in Elizabethtown, takes a reading break in the school's main hallway. She enjoys topics ranging from ocean life to the book "Cinderella."

PHOTO BY ZACK CONKLE



Caleb Blair, 8, raises his hands in victory after beating his mom Michelle in a race down a slide.

PHOTO BY JON GARCIA



Jonathan Knight, 26, a single father, works on a farm of plastic cows with his 7-year-old son Johnny in the living room of their home in Upton. Jonathan's real-life farm consists of 68 cows that he bought after he stopped farming tobacco.

PHOTO BY KIRSTEN AGUILAR



Peggy, a pet chicken owned by the Adams family of Rineyville, struts across the driveway in spite of deformed feet.

PHOTO BY J. BARRETT GRIFFIN



Janice Cook serves breakfast to her husband, Austin, at the home they built themselves in Hardin County.

PHOTO BY ZACK CONKLE



Robin Hildesheim, an employee at Tender Touch Senior Services in Elizabethtown, curls Dorothy Hansen's hair. "Dot is an incredible individual, and it is a pleasure to care for her," Robin said.

PHOTO BY DAVE KASNIC



The Bills, a hard-working and happy youth football team, must use nature's bathroom at the roadside field where they practice near University Drive in Elizabethtown.

PHOTO BY DUSTIN CHAMBERS



Coach Tom Cook talks Cameron Marlow, 7, through an injury during football practice for 7- and 8-year-olds.

PHOTO BY DUSTIN CHAMBERS



Carissa Breeding, right, her sister Caroline and their friend Nathan Nett play "Follow the Leader" on hay bales in a pumpkin patch maze at Wooden Farm in Elizabethtown.

PHOTO BY LINDSAY FENDT



Harley, a 6-year-old Rottweiler, hangs out in the shade of his favorite weeping willow tree. The dog was diagnosed with bone cancer, and his owners, Richard and Mary Ray, plan to spread his ashes around the tree.

PHOTO BY KAITLIN KEANE



Birds hop from field to field in the fall to feast on the remnants of corn harvested in the countryside of Elizabethtown.

PHOTO BY JON GARCIA



Camera in hand, Pat Curry stomps out sparks from a fire spreading in a soybean field. Pat, who documents fire scenes for the Glendale Fire Department, arrived at the scene ahead of her crew.

PHOTO BY KIRSTEN AGUILAR



A horse in harness awaits its owners outside a strip mall in Elizabethtown.

PHOTO BY EMMA TANNENBAUM



Customers test rocking chairs in front of the Bucksnot Trading Post in Sonora.

PHOTO BY DAVID TOZCKO



A fire that started at Fort Knox creates a smoky haze near Kentucky Veterans Cemetery Central in Radcliff. Cold weather and rain caused the smoke to linger.

PHOTO BY KAITLIN KEANE



Known as "Moses," Donald Moore is often seen riding around Upton on his motorized bicycle collecting material to build his house.

PHOTO BY KIRSTEN AGUILAR



Pam Harper displays one of her 400 hats while taking a phone call from a friend.

PHOTO BY UDAY KHAMBADKONE



Dairy farmer David Thomas, 57, has a chuckle while feeding one of his calves. Born and raised in Elizabethtown, he wonders if the Thomas family farm can survive the next few years. "Most people just think milk comes from the store, but out here, there's a lot more to it," David said.

PHOTO BY JOSH MAUSER



Russell Hargan, 76, is a woodworker with Parkinson's disease. His final project before the disease destroys his motor skills is building caskets for himself and his wife. After finishing his casket, Russell asked more than 100 family members and friends to sign it and drive a nail into the bed of his final resting place.

PHOTO BY JESSICA SEIFERT



The old and the new converge at the crossroads that is Hawke's Service Station. The cash register still cheerfully accepts U.S. currency.

PHOTO BY SAM ENGLISH

Thank you Hardin County

During the 18 years that I've been privileged to be a part of the Mountain Workshops, people have often asked me if they all begin to run together and if the towns we document start to look the same.

The answer is always an unequivocal "No." Each experience has been unique, not only with the places we visit but also with the people we meet and the stories they share with us.

Our time spent in Hardin County was equally unique. The people of Elizabethtown, Radcliff and several other communities that dot the landscape here had an abundance of stories to tell: some funny, some poignant, all of them timeless. We were able to include some of those stories on the pages of this book. We wish we could share them all in print.

The communities are not the only part of the Mountain Workshops that change. Each year the Workshops evolve to accommodate new personnel, educational programs, software and technology. This year's Workshops were the largest to date, with 168 people involved on site, including participants, sponsors, faculty, support staff, lab assistants and high school educators.

We also entered into a partnership with Dataeam, a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing research and promoting education throughout Kentucky. Dataeam, which generously provided the majority of the 92 Apple computers used in our network, also brought 10 Kentucky teachers and two representatives from the organization to participate in educational sessions with our journalism professionals from across the country. They also were able to observe the behind-the-scenes operation of the Workshops and attend the nightly presentations and critiques. At the end of the five-day educational marathon, the looks on the teachers' faces – a mixture of exhaustion and exhilaration – told me that they had been fully initiated into the Mountain Workshops family!

Although the faces and places of each county we visit are truly unique, there are some things that need to remain the same. Without those things the Mountain Workshops would not be possible. For starters, we depend on the people willing to open the doors of their businesses, their homes and their lives to a group of strangers on a mission to document their communities. The people of Hardin County welcomed us with great warmth and kindness. We also rely on our sponsors who provide personnel, equipment, software and other critical support each year.

It's simple: Without this support, the Workshops could not exist. Then we have our all-volunteer faculty and staff who come from throughout the country, willing to part with their families and valuable vacation time to spend countless hours doing the seemingly impossible. Their expertise and commitment make it possible for us to provide the very highest level of training at a reasonable cost.

Each year, we start with a wild notion and a few empty rooms. We fill those rooms with computers, a maze of cables, a dedicated group of experts, energetic participants and willing student assistants. From all of the frenetic activity of the Workshops, we somehow manage to produce this book, along with our website, documentary video presentation

and print exhibition – our humble offering to a community so gracious in receiving us. We inspire journalists to excel in their careers. They go home and spread the good news about what they have learned and about the good people they have encountered along the way. All of these constants come together to keep the Mountain Workshops fresh year after year.

And this year was no different.

Thank you Hardin County for being so unique and unforgettable.

• **James H. Kenney**, director

The Mountain Workshops at Western Kentucky University



PHOTO BY NINA GREIPEL

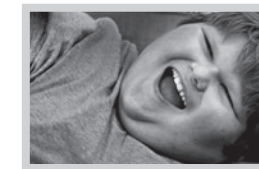
ABOVE • Photo coach Mark Osler, a freelancer photographer based in Denver, Colo., helps sequence the story of Uday Khambadkone.

The stories we tell

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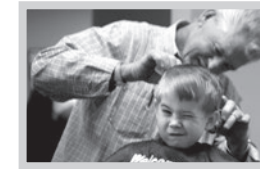
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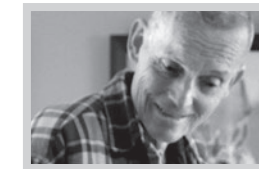
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Cultivating the past

Photography by JOSEPH ABELL
Editing by DANIELLE ELISE BARTLEY



ABOVE • Steve Wooden makes his way to his shed to perform maintenance on a combine. “When my dad was alive, I would always take care of the machinery, and he and Rita would run them,” Steve said. In the years since Steve’s father died, he has taken on additional responsibilities around the farm.



ABOVE • Farmland and strip malls live side by side in Hardin County. While other farmers have sold their land to commercial developers, the Woodens have kept their 500-acre farm intact.



ABOVE • Steve and his wife, Rita, recall stories of the early days of Hardin County told to Steve by his father.

The barn that Steve Wooden and his father built 20 years ago still stands, just like the one his grandfather built years before. The land they farm was purchased by Steve’s grandfather, Charlie, in 1938.

Since then, it has been preserved and cared for by the Wooden family for three generations. While other family farms in the area have sold to developers, the Woodens have strived to preserve their way of life.

“We’ve got about 500 acres here that we farm,” Steve said of the sprawling land where they grow soybeans, corn and alfalfa.

Steve’s wife, Rita, operates a produce store on their property. Members of the increasingly suburban community surrounding them will often stop in for fresh produce and perhaps to ask for tips on growing a better tomato. Rita’s hand-painted pumpkins, gourds and fall wreaths line the walls of the store, once a dilapidated equipment shed.

Steve and his father did most of the renovation work on the shed themselves, a little at a time.

“This shed was in really bad shape, and it was either tear it down or renovate, so we decided to make something out of it,” Rita said.

Virtually everything on the farm holds a special memory for Steve and Rita. Among those memories is a handmade banjo that was passed down to Steve from his grandfather.

Even the road they live on is named for the family.

Just in front of the shed, next to the straw maze where customers’ children play in the fall, is a large tree under which Steve’s father used to sit.

Steve’s father, Jack, was a large, stout man. He was a hard worker and a rock upon which the family had come to rely.

“We lost dad to cancer in 2007,” Steve said quietly. His father, who also was his teacher and mentor, continued to help Steve and Rita on the farm even in his old age.

Today, under that tree where Jack used to sit, is a small memorial to the man who was such an important part of their lives. A plaque rests at the base of the tree with an inscription: “When someone you love becomes a memory, that memory becomes a treasure.”

Talon's world

Photography by SAMANTHA RAINEY
Editing by DANIELLE ELISE BARTLEY



LEFT • Talon Spell, 10, right, and his fourth-grade classmates line up for a bathroom break after lunch.

BELOW • “He is stared at everywhere we go. He always takes a deep breath and asks, ‘Mom, why do they have to be so mean?’” said Megan Garrido, Talon’s mother.

Like many 10-year-olds, Talon Spell likes playing outside, riding bikes and playing video games. He looks forward to coming home after school and hopping on his bike, pretending it’s a horse and capturing the invading Indians.

With an imagination like Talon’s, one can transport to the pioneer days or even further back to the Jurassic era. His active imagination helps him escape his reality, which includes several health problems, including obesity. Early use of steroids because of childhood asthma caused Talon’s weight to escalate. At 286 pounds, he stands out among his fourth-grade classmates.

Talon struggles with being bullied at school.

To help with his weight, his mother, Megan Garrido, walks with him up and down their street to get his heart rate up. On their way home from school, she encourages him to make it to the top of the hill. With the support of his family, Talon has made progress with his weight.

“He is so proud of the fact that he can ride his bike with his friends,” Megan said. “He wants to be like the kids at school.”

For the first time, he can even start dressing like other kids.

“He has asked for a pair of jeans for three Christmases in a row,” Megan said. She recently found him that pair of jeans.



ABOVE • Talon’s mother tickles him to cheer him up after he became upset because no one would play “Jurassic Park” with him.

Joshua's journey

Photography by ARMANDO SANCHEZ
Editing by DANIELLE ELISE BARTLEY



ABOVE • While working with his occupational therapist, 17-month-old Joshua Bland crawls under the table toward his mother, Mikki Bland. An occupational therapist comes to his home three times a week to help develop his motor skills.

A person must be brave in a world of giants. Surrounded by towering objects and daunting distances, Joshua Bland explores with earnest wonder. Fascinated by the magic of gravity and its relentless grasp on his new environment, he holds on to whatever is close in hope of conquering his adversary.

When faced with the challenge of crossing a territory that offers nothing to grasp, he looks at his fragile hands, glances over his shoulder and walks into the unknown.

After three steps he realizes he may be in over his head. Descending to earth, he sees the hand of divinity reaching to save him. She catches him before he hits the hardwood floor, holds him close and says, "Good job Joshua!"

As a mother, Mikki Bland couldn't be more proud of her son's attempts, but three steps is the farthest that the 17-month-old had ever gone. Joshua was born with galactosemia duarte, a condition that leaves him with only one third of the enzymes needed to break down glucose, and pyloric stenosis, an enlarged stomach muscle. As if these two weren't enough, he also developed a severe case of acid reflux which confined him to a special high chair – even when he was sleeping – for the first nine months of his life. Luckily after he turned 1, his galactosemia duarte became benign, a surgery reduced his stomach muscle and his acid reflux subsided.

Now Joshua must catch up to children his age. Since he was immobile early on, he did not develop motor skills for walking and feeding himself at the same rate that other children do. He sees an occupational therapist three times a week and attends a class for developmentally delayed children at Lincoln Trail Elementary School in Elizabethtown every Friday.

Despite his setbacks, Joshua continues to look at the world around him with awe. He crawls across the rooms in his home pointing at the doors and lights as if they hold a secret he has not yet unraveled, questioning the possible and what he can learn from his brightly colored toys that scatter his world.

For Mikki, seeing Joshua discover what so many other children his age have is all a mother could want.

"Him being as mobile as he is now is completely beyond my wildest dreams," she said.



ABOVE • Mikki Bland kisses her 17-month-old son, Joshua, after picking him up from his babysitter. Mikki's husband, Caleb, drops Joshua off at 8 a.m. before he goes to work, and Mikki picks Joshua up.



ABOVE • Joshua is still unable to feed himself or walk without assistance.



ABOVE • Joshua feeds his mother while she holds his hand.

A class act

Photography by CHRIS WILSON
Editing by DANIELLE ELISE BARTLEY

To her students, Jan Raine is a focused and attentive guide, connecting them to a world of learning. “Most kids are frustrated at school,” Jan said. “I don’t want them to come here and get that same feeling. We’re making headway, and that’s all that counts.”

As the director of the Radcliff Reading Clinic, Jan gives one-on-one mentoring sessions with children and occasionally adults. She has taught there since 1988 after a 20-year career as a primary teacher. The clinic – with its tall book shelves and small study rooms – can be filled with kids who are studious or having temper tantrums. Either way, Jan is there to improve their reading, writing, grammar and math skills, sometimes squeezing into small chairs or children’s desks to be at their level.

An arm around a student’s shoulder or a pat on the head is all Jan needs to do to show encouragement. “I just care a whole lot, and maybe I can give them something along the way that will make a difference in their lives,” she said.

Since her children are grown and her husband died three years ago, the majority of her time is spent taking care of her students. Jan wants and expects the same from her students as she did from her children when they attended school. “They’re kind of like mine,” she said.

“Sometimes you get close to the families, and they rely on you.”

Connie Clem takes her 8-year-old grandson, Tanner Hess, to the clinic on Friday afternoons for sessions with Jan. “She’s excellent – she’s so knowledgeable,” she said. “She’s a class act. She really is.”

To Jan, it’s just a matter of giving back to the community.

“This is pretty much my life,” she said.



LEFT • “Lane, you are so much smarter and you are so much better,” Jan Raine says during a home study session with fifth-grader Lane Ashley. Lane has shown a lot of improvement since he’s started working with Jan. After studying, Lane was rewarded with playing “Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?” on the computer.

BELOW • Jan works as the director of the Radcliff Reading Center, creating study plans and mentoring students one-on-one.



ABOVE • Tyler Bowman ponders spelling words that he’s been working on. Some students come to Jan’s house in Rineyville to study.

Healing harmonies

Photography by JOSH MAUSER
Editing by MICK COCHRAN

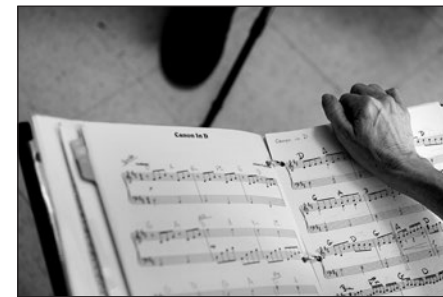


ABOVE • Lorinda Jones, a music therapist from Elizabethtown, shows Roberta Hartfield, a patient in Norton Audubon Hospital, how to strum a dulcimer.

Music is an integral part of Lorinda Jones' life. The music teacher uses her skill and empathy to help heal the souls of patients.

"My low couldn't have been any lower until you walked in. This is such a treat for me," said Ed McGuire to Lorinda. "I have never had a private concert before." As Lorinda played her harp for Ed at Norton Audubon Hospital in Louisville, tears welled in his eyes.

After learning the piano when she was younger, Lorinda wanted to know more. She has mastered several instruments, including the Appalachian dulcimer and the harp. "Music is what has always made me feel good about myself," Lorinda said.



She dedicates every Wednesday to travel. Lorinda drives from her home in Elizabethtown to Louisville to participate in Norton Audubon Hospital's music therapy program. Helping people is what she loves to do, and Lorinda has been a music therapist for almost 15 years. The gratitude from patients shows in their faces. Patients react immediately after she sings, plays music and interacts with them. Music therapy is a break in the redundancies of the daily routine in the hospital.

"It makes me feel like I can make a difference in someone else's life," Lorinda said.



LEFT • Lorinda enters a patient's room at Norton Audubon Hospital in Louisville. She carts instruments from room to room, offering her services as a music therapist.



ABOVE • Too weak to hold and strum a real harp, Roberta Hartfield plays an electronic harp.



LEFT • Lorinda plays the harp for Ed McGuire.

FAR LEFT • Lorinda chooses Pachelbel's "Canon in D" for a session of music therapy.

Francis and Johnnie

Photography by KATHERINE VANCE
Editing by MICK COCHRAN



LEFT • Brothers Francis, left, and Johnnie Simpson have been cutting hair for nearly 50 years. While growing up with their five other brothers on a farm in Hardin County, both boys decided at an early age to become barbers.

Johnnie and Francis Simpson are more than just barbers. After cutting hair in Elizabethtown for nearly a half century, the brothers have become confidantes, comedians, debate partners, therapists, local historians, newsmen and friends for countless people of all ages in the community.

"It's not a job, really, to us," Francis, 69, said, a smile creeping up slowly beneath his mustache.

"It's about the people, you see," Johnnie, 70, said. "It's about being able to read people and relate to them."

Francis and Johnnie were two of seven boys in the Simpson family raised by their widowed mother. The two men have built houses on the property where they grew up and live there with their families. The pair joke that as children, the seven brothers shared one bed, and that is why they have been able to work together and get along since they opened their first barbershop downtown in 1964.

"We don't agree all the time, but we never go to bed angry at the other about something," Francis said.

"He's a lot of fun. It would be hard getting along without him."

The two brothers bring two distinct personalities to the Hair Tech salon. Johnnie never seems to meet a stranger. He is brimming over with stories and jokes, which he seals with a wink and a familiar smile. Francis' voice has a slow, easy drawl, giving him a laid-back air and a dry wit.

These two personalities are the reason some clients have been coming back for decades, and the clients are the reason Francis and Johnnie still love their work.

RIGHT • Johnnie Simpson sometimes has to endure some serious body English on youth cuts.



BELOW FROM LEFT • The brothers offer a variety of styles for a variety of clients, both young and old; when Johnnie is not cutting hair, he catches up on the news; a collage on the wall near Francis' barber chair reminds folks that this is a family business.



Labor of love

Photography by JULIA WALKER THOMAS
Editing by TARA-LYNNE PIXLEY

Steve and Debbie Caswell knew something was different about their daughter. As they watched her grow they realized she was becoming withdrawn and communicating less and less. At 3 years old, Katie Caswell was diagnosed with autism.

"I had heard the word (autism)," Steve said, but he really didn't know anything about the developmental disorder.

Katie's parents and grandmother tried to learn as much about autism as they could. As soon as she heard of the diagnosis, her grandma, Kate Thomas, rushed to the library to study about the disorder. Since then, Kate has written several books about being the grandparent of an autistic child.

As Katie grew, she attended special education classes and autism camps.

"We had a therapist for a long time, 10 years," Debbie said.

"We had a tough year on the farm one year and couldn't really afford to have her come out anymore. From there, we decided to take care of all of the at-home care ourselves," Steve said.

Since then, her parents have been



Katie's only liaisons to the outside world. It is difficult for others to understand what Katie is trying to convey. Like many autistic people, Katie often uses one word answers or parrots, confusing people who do not interact with her frequently. Katie also can become easily overstimulated because she is sensitive to smells, sounds

and textures. These sensitivities often make the world a surprising and frightening place for Katie. At home, with her parents, is her safe place.

In 2012, Katie will graduate from Central Hardin High School in Cecilia. Her parents have high hopes for her future.

ABOVE • Katie Caswell, 19, enjoys the last of a fall afternoon on her Upton farm. She jumps on the trampoline almost daily.

RIGHT • Katie reads with her teacher, Erin Atkinson, at Central Hardin High School in Cecilia, where Katie is a junior. Katie also participates in a school-run job therapy program at a restaurant in Elizabethtown.



LEFT • "Music is a big part of her life; even before she was born I would sing hymns to her and waltz with her in my belly," Debbie Caswell said. Katie often plays the keyboard in her father's room at night.

BELOW • Katie and Steve Caswell walk daily for exercise on their farm.





ABOVE • Katie shoots baskets in the barn on the Caswell farm.



FAR LEFT • An evening bath is a daily routine for Katie and her mom.

LEFT • Debbie gives her daughter a kiss while helping her get ready for bed.



LEFT • Debbie and Katie enjoy a quiet moment at day's end. "I know that God doesn't give us anything we can't handle," Debbie said. "I love that little girl."

Teacher, sister, friend

Photography by WESLEY BACON
Editing by MICK COCHRAN

Every weekday evening, Lara Beard, a special education teacher, walks the trails hidden within the trees at her home in Elizabethtown.

The golden, late-afternoon sun paints a warm glow over the fallen leaves crunching beneath her therapeutic clogs during one of her walks in October. Behind her, six cats and two dogs trot along at her feet.

"This is my favorite time of the year," Lara said. "I wouldn't trade this place for anything."

Students call Lara their big sister and friend.

When they are having emotional difficulties during a class, she sits down, places a gentle hand on their backs and softly talks them through their dilemmas. She assures them that they will get through this and that they are not alone.

Lara teaches at James T. Alton Middle School, located in Vine Grove. Her strongest interest is working with children who have autism and Asperger's syndrome.

"I remember feeling just like them when I was their age," Lara said. "I was exposed to the bad in the world at an early age, and I was often awkward and nervous in social situations."

Lara strives to spread awareness of mental disabilities and help others understand what it means to live with these issues daily.

She knows what it feels like to be held back by health, whether mental or physical. She suffers



ABOVE • Lara Beard, a special education teacher at James T. Alton Middle School, reads to her students as a part of a class she created. Lara requires students in the class to read and analyze Harper Lee's classic novel "To Kill a Mockingbird."

from asthma, diabetes and cardiomyopathy, a heart condition that hospitalized her for 11 days in 2009.

While in the hospital, Lara's students decorated her door, sent her flowers and called her often.

"The kids keep me going," Lara said. "I like them because I can be myself, just like when I'm

with my animals."

Her work with students, along with the bond she has with nature and her animals, help heal her body and soul. She surrounds herself with the things she nurtures, and in the end, she cares for them as much as they care for her.



FAR LEFT • Kayla Britcon, a seventh-grade student at James T. Alton, applies makeup before her class presentation. Kayla has Turner syndrome, which affects her bones, growth and immune system.

LEFT • Lara comforts Nathan Logsdon, who learned he was assigned to a different class.



ABOVE • Austin Hendrie, 13, watches his classmate Kayla Britcon give her presentation. Austin has been diagnosed with a severe case of Asperger's syndrome.



RIGHT • All students in Lara's seventh-grade class are on Individualized Education Programs because of special needs.

A family tradition

Photography by COOPER NEILL
Editing by MICK COCHRAN



ABOVE • Rich Griendling smooths out the clay in a life-size sculpture of an Army soldier.

Rich Griendling's father, Frank, aspired to be an artist. But Frank, who grew up during the Great Depression, put away his sketches and paintings to help support his parents and nine siblings.

"He always had a certain (artistic) ability," Rich said. "So I was always aware of that ability and connection to art."

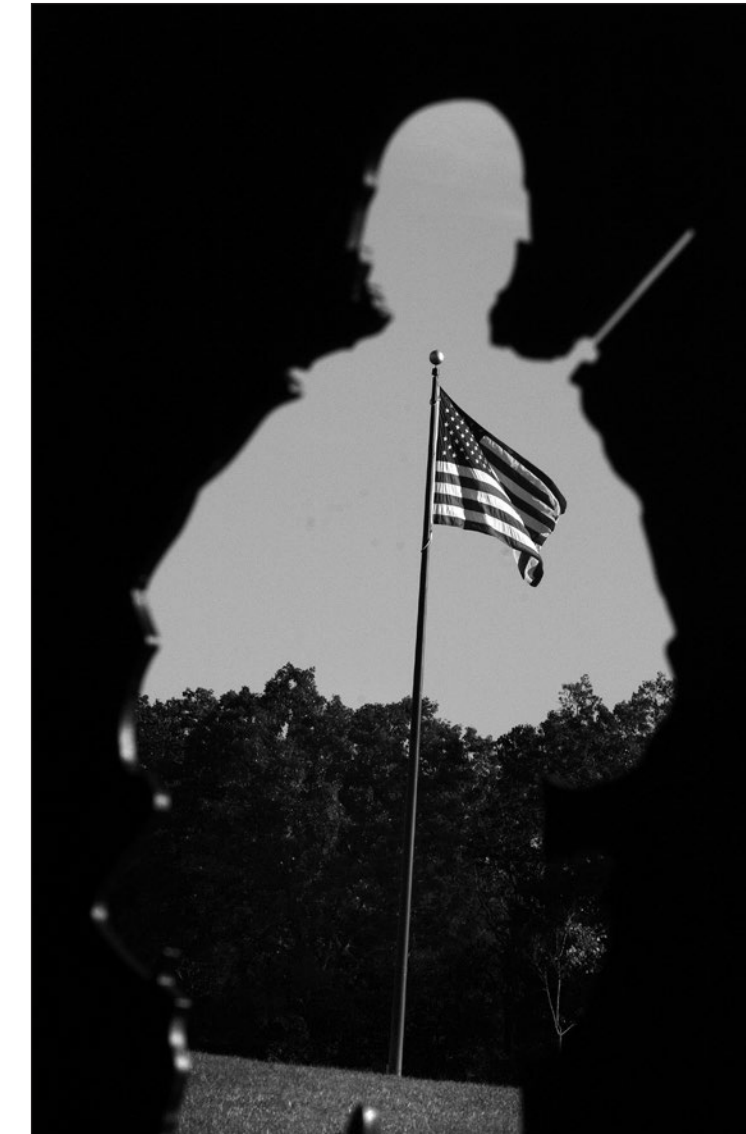
Frank's art resonated with Rich, who dreamed of becoming a professional artist since he was 5. After an erratic career as a young freelance artist, Rich found success carving sculptures of children for hospitals, schools and agencies in the state.

"My father was always astonished when people would pay me money for stuff," Rich said.

Rich said his work gained popularity because of his attention to detail. He spent hours with his favorite subjects – his two sons.

Rich's recent projects have focused on the military, but he continues to use his family to keep him motivated and inspired. As a centerpiece for his first military sculpture series, Rich used a life-size bronze statue of his father, a World War II veteran, standing at attention. The piece is located at the Kentucky Veterans Cemetery Central near Fort Knox.

"It really does make things more interesting when I know the person involved," Rich said.



LEFT • Rich's workspace remains fairly organized while the faces of past casts hang above. The faces hanging include celebrities, but more important to Rich, they include his two sons at different points in their lives.



ABOVE • A sculpture created by Rich stands in his living room in Elizabethtown. The sculpture depicts modernization and is not for sale.

LEFT • The flag at the Kentucky Veterans Cemetery Central near Fort Knox is shown through a silhouette of an Army soldier created by Griendling.



ABOVE • Three clay heads depict the artist's father, Frank Griendling, center, and two Medal of Honor recipients, John Collier, left, and Ernest West.

An old boy's toys

Photography by DEREK POORE
Editing by MICK COCHRAN

A fine layer of dust covers thousands of figurines spread throughout Hardin “Sonny” Hatfield’s Glendale home. The figurines, most of them wood or tin, cover countertops and fill cabinets. Each one has a story, and Sonny knows them all.

Sonny smiles as he picks up each trinket, some of which he made himself. The toys bring joy to Sonny, who has battled depression for years, said his daughter, Angela Carter, who owns a photography studio in Glendale.

Sonny’s wife died three years ago. Dust has since become a constant presence. “That’s one thing I’ve got a lot of,” he said.

For 15 years he has made toys by hand. His favorite subjects are characters from Mickey Mouse and Popeye cartoons.

“I timed myself once,” Sonny said of his whittling speed. He can take a piece of wood from a walnut tree and carve it into a small figurine in 20 minutes. Larger pieces take a few days. Some are outfitted with wires and cranks that, when gently turned, dance and flit like the original Steamboat Willie cartoon.

Sonny has a story for every model train and every children’s book. Post-World War II toys from Allied-occupied Japan are a favorite part of his collection.

Sonny spends most of his days among his toys. When he ventures out, he spends mornings spinning yarns with friends while eating scrambled eggs and drinking coffee at Brooks General Store and Cafe in Sonora.

“I don’t like to eat alone,” he said. “It’s just better when you have someone to talk with.”

Editor’s note: Sonny Hatfield died Feb. 16, 2011.



ABOVE • Sonny’s meticulous work requires a lot of light and a lot of patience.



LEFT • A collection of toys crowds a cabinet in Sonny’s workshop.

LEFT • Sonny keeps many of his creations but gives others away as gifts.

RIGHT • Sonny relocated several log cabins, then rebuilt and connected them at his home in Glendale. He carved the eaves of his house by hand.



ABOVE • Sonny likes walnut because termites won’t eat it.



LEFT • A mouse-eared doorknocker opens and shuts its eyes when visitors use it.

BELOW • Mickey Mouse characters abound in Sonny’s workshop.



Blessings and sacrifice

Photography by JESSICA SCOTT
Editing by MICK COCHRAN



ABOVE • Sister Michael Marie Friedman, principal of St. James School, shepherds children back to the classroom. She has been with St. James School since 1990, when her order, the Ursuline Sisters of Mount St. Joseph, asked her to take the position.

Sister Michael Marie Friedman knew she was on the right path when she left her home in the boot of Missouri to go to boarding school, and eventually a convent, in Kentucky.

“The calling wasn’t a tap on the shoulder,” she said. “It was just a feeling that I needed to do it.”

More than four decades later, Sister Michael is the principal of St. James School, Hardin County’s only Roman Catholic school. Sister Michael oversees nearly 400 students in preschool through eighth grade.

Sister Michael wakes up at 5 a.m. to eat oatmeal and pray at her tiny pine table in the kitchen.

An hour later, she switches on the lights in St. James and puts on a pot of coffee for her staff. Behind stacks of paper and a row of videotapes, Sister Michael reviews test scores, orders Christmas presents for her staff and checks email – all before directing traffic and helping students enter the school safely.

Meetings, phone calls and occasional stints as a substitute teacher fill the rest of Sister Michael’s morning and afternoon.

Twelve hours after the start of her day, she makes the three-block drive to her home. There, she watches the news, reads the paper and eats a TV dinner while fielding calls from staff, friends and family.

“This is what I do,” Sister Michael said. “I come home and deal with everyone’s issues.”

Sister Michael, the only Ursuline sister in the area, knew that her calling would mean a life of sacrifice.

“I view it as a blessing, not as giving up a lot of things,” she said.



LEFT • Paperwork is a daily chore for the principal of St. James School, the only Roman Catholic preparatory school for kindergarten through eighth grade in Hardin County. “It seems you leave (home) when it’s dark and come home when it’s dark,” Sister Michael said.



LEFT • Cards, mementos, recipes and reminders are taped to Sister Michael’s refrigerator in her Elizabethtown, home.

RIGHT • Sister Michael checks student progress on a vocabulary test while substituting.



FAR RIGHT • “Home” is all about a comfy chair and lots of reading material.



Building a family

Photography by LINDSAY FENDT
Editing by GREG A. COOPER

On Sept. 11, 2001, Carla Breeding watched the World Trade Center towers in New York City crumble with one thought continuously running through her mind: "I am going to die before I get to be a mom."

That morning, before the news from New York burned across television screens, Carla had excitedly put the first part of an international adoption application in the mail. She knew that the tragedy would make the already long and grueling process of adopting a child from abroad that much longer and more difficult. And so it was. That year China restricted the number of single parents who could adopt to 5 percent for each agency. Carla was chosen and was all set to go to China to pick up her daughter, when the SARS epidemic broke out, delaying air traffic to Asia indefinitely.



ABOVE • Carla Breeding works in the Hardin County Department of Education, where she recently took a job in the human resources department. That job brought her back to Elizabethtown.

"I kept imagining horrible things happening that would prevent this from happening," Carla said.

All of these fears were washed away in 2002 when Carla first held her daughter, Carissa, in a hotel room in Changsha, China, where she and other adoptive parents went to pick up their children.

"I knew immediately which one Carissa was," Carla said. Back in their hotel room, the new mother "just laid there and watched her sleep for hours."

Soon after she brought Carissa home to Elizabethtown, Carla knew she wanted another daughter. She applied for another adoption and in 2005 made her way to China again — with Carissa in tow this time — to meet her second daughter, Caroline.

"Getting Carissa was about me becoming a mom and fulfilling my dream," Carla said. "Getting Caroline was about completing our family. There was just something telling me we weren't done yet."



ABOVE • Carla picks up her daughter Caroline during a preschool service at their church. Carla regularly helps out at the church.



ABOVE • A proud mother takes a snapshot of her daughters at a pumpkin patch in Elizabethtown.



RIGHT • Carissa Breeding, center, and her friend Catherine Appelman, left, take their seats for math class. Both girls were adopted from China.



RIGHT • Alva Breeding gets a goodbye hug from her granddaughter Carissa. After she took a job in Elizabethtown, Carla and her two children moved in with Alva.



ABOVE • Elli Willoughby blows out the candles of her first birthday cake in the United States with help from her father, Virgil Willoughby. Attending the party were Elli's friends, Carissa and Caroline. The kids met through a mutual friend at church. Elli was also adopted from an orphanage in China.

In sickness and in health

Photography by ALYSSA ORR
Editing by GREG A. COOPER



ABOVE • Ted Zaehring loses his balance while reaching into the refrigerator in his home. Ted continues to suffer from debilitating liver damage and other injuries from an auto accident more than 40 years ago.



RIGHT • Ted has blood work done at the Fort Knox Ireland Army Community Hospital. The 66-year-old's ammonia levels rose sharply the week before, requiring a five-day hospitalization.



ABOVE • Ted works at his makeshift desk at his home in Elizabethtown.

Although he has faced health problems for more than 40 years, Ted Zaehring's life is filled with an enormous amount of love from his family. Ted, 66, and his wife, Darlene, have been married for 43 years and share nine children and 20 grandchildren who live throughout the United States.

When he was 22, he was traveling back to Fort Bragg, N.C., during the holidays and was involved in a car accident that left him with no spleen and a damaged liver. The medical problems resulting from the wreck still require treatment in the hospital.

While Ted makes frequent doctor visits to monitor his worsening condition, Darlene's love and hope continue to keep her optimistic.

"I plan for the worst; that way if it happens I don't fall to pieces," Darlene said. "If it does happen, then I say, 'That was easy!'"

While she keeps a positive outlook, she isn't ready to be alone.

"It scares me to think of being alone because I have relied on him so much," Darlene said. "I would be lost without him."

Ted and Darlene don't let his frequent doctor visits run their lives; rather, they focus on a healthy marriage as well.

"I learned a long time ago it takes two to make a marriage," Ted said.

They continue to live, learn and love each other as their longtime bond holds them together.



ABOVE • Ted and Darlene pray before lunch in their Elizabethtown home. Their youngest daughter, Maggie Bowman, comforts her crying 2-year-old daughter in the next room. The Mormon faith, which the Zaehringers have practiced since April 1979, plays an important role in their lives. Darlene said that the first time they stepped through the church doors, “It felt like we had gone home.”



ABOVE • Ted gets ready for a walk while his daughter, Maggie Bowman, and her daughter, Hailey, read together on the living room couch. Toby, Maggie’s 1-year-old Great Dane, tries to join in on the fun.

The long journey home

Photography by GAILY LIGAIYA ROMERO
Editing by GREG A. COOPER



ABOVE • “I hope I like it over there. I just know it’s going to be different,” says Sarah Gertrude Conder, 90, as she packs only what is necessary for her stay at Allegro, an assisted living facility in Elizabethtown. A hip fracture put her in this physical therapy facility for two months. Allegro will help Sarah in her transition to a normal life.

BELOW • “I’ll remember you always,” Gertrude says while hugging Sumon Alpiger, a housekeeper at Helmwood Healthcare Center. In the two months she spent recuperating at Helmwood, she formed a strong bond with Sumon.



LEFT • “God is good. I cannot count the blessings,” says Gertrude during a sermon at the Allegro assisted living facility in Elizabethtown. Despite suffering from a hip fracture two months earlier, she remains positive through her strong relationship with God.

“**G**oal met, goal met, goal met,” says the physical therapist at Helmwood Healthcare Center, checking off Sarah Gertrude Conder’s accomplishments during two months of physical therapy. She broke her hip on her 90th birthday and is now preparing to leave Helmwood and move to Allegro, an assisted living facility.

“I’m excited to leave,” Gertrude said, but she’s not in the clear yet.

Before she’ll be fully ready to return to the Sonora house that’s been hers since 1945, Gertrude will need to spend 30 days in assisted living.

Gertrude’s daughter, Regina Grubbs, who lives in Lexington, came to town to help her pack her belongings in preparation for the move. The two even returned to the family home to pick up a few practical odds and ends — a nightgown, a bathmat, extra blankets — to make the 90-year-old former school cook and dietician more comfortable at Allegro.

If her healing process continues to go well, Gertrude will soon return to the house where she has lived on her own since her husband died in 1992.

She has embraced each step in her recovery with good spirits and determination.

“I feel like I’m getting closer to home,” she said.





RIGHT • Physical therapist Christy Hunt works with Gertrude at Helmwood Healthcare Center.



ABOVE • “They say life is good for you, so I like to have fun,” Gertrude said. Even a hip fracture did not prevent her from enjoying the little things in life and sticking to a normal routine, like getting her hair permed at the salon.

Teacher's assistant

Photography by DUSTIN CHAMBERS
Editing by GREG A. COOPER



ABOVE • Regena Senay assists in Melissa Gregory's kindergarten class, one that is full of energetic and inquisitive children. Robby Eldridge reaches for the sky to answer a question about the days of the month.

Regena Senay, a widow for 25 years, searched for a place in the world for seven years after her husband's death. When she found Morningside Elementary, that place saved her sanity.

For Regena, 72, everything has its place. She lives in a modest, orderly home — four rooms with faux flowers that require no maintenance and minimal furniture. One room still holds the belongings of her three children. Drawings done by grandchildren adorn the walls.

Morningside's importance to her doesn't always show. But don't be fooled.

She is a teacher's assistant and her desk sits closest to the door to the kindergarten classroom. During activities, she makes a point to help the kids with special needs. At her desk, she manages small but important tasks such as shoe tying, correcting math or organizing daily reports. She helps more than she teaches, but when the opportunity to teach presents itself, she takes it.

A student's place to her is trying to understand, trying to get the right answer, trying to pay attention and sometimes just trying to sit still. She doesn't always seek those expectations with warmth, but they always are met with respect. There's no mistaking her desire for the children to succeed. She finds happiness in helping the children in Melissa Gregory's class.

"I wouldn't have anything to do if it weren't for the school," Regena said.

After school, she sits on her couch and usually nods off early. It's soup for dinner, and she skims through pre-recorded VCR tapes of soaps before bedtime.

The simple routine and her simple dwelling don't diminish her love of the place she calls home. Her husband, Joseph, built most of the house himself.

"I love this house," Regena said. "I say, 'I'm not leaving until they drag me out.'"

Joseph died from a heart attack that occurred as he cranked a lawnmower in the front yard. She heard the lawnmower rev but not start, and that drew her outside.

Her next-door neighbor, a 72-year-old man, mows lawns for a living. When he doesn't have work, he starts a mower and just sits on it to relax, a reminder to Regena of a love lost.

But beyond the inherent solitude of living alone, Regena enjoys providing care and lively interaction with her peers, particularly at her church group.

She is happy.



LEFT • Regena is the shoe-tying queen in her kindergarten class at Morningside Elementary School.

BELOW • Regena organizes the boys as they wait to go to the restroom before lunch.





ABOVE • Regena asks every child in the cafeteria line: "Peas or macaroni?" Peas were a rare choice.



ABOVE • Regena enjoys a ham sandwich after returning home from getting her annual flu shot. Her companion, Sissy, begs for a crumb.

The collector

Photography by KAREN EVANS
Editing by GREG A. COOPER

David Willmoth Jr., three-term mayor and lifelong resident of Elizabethtown, arrived last to a lunch meeting of the Hardin County United Governance Subcommittee.

The tall, soft-spoken mayor took a seat at the end of the table and ordered only a salad, possibly still full from a hearty breakfast provided at the 7 a.m. Rotary Club meeting. A typical day in the life of the mayor of the Hardin County seat — a growing community expected to expand because of the federal government's base realignment at nearby Fort Knox — involves a lot of meetings and often, a lot of eating.

That's what the mayor does, but it's not what the mayor is.

David is a self-described collector of "everything and nothing," and when life gets out of whack for him, collecting realigns him.

His office provides a showcase for vintage baseballs, duck decoys and model Corvettes.

But when it comes to his true love, an adage used to talk about covering politicians comes to mind: "Follow the money," because David loves to collect U.S. and national currency.

He pulled from a lockbox an envelope stuffed with old bills, each one ensconced in a protective sleeve, and he proceeded to share his favorite part about collecting currency — the history of the United States revealed in the beautifully engraved notes.

But all history lessons come to an end, and David waded through stacks of papers and rolls of development plans to get to his desk to answer the day's correspondence — the currency of mayors.

RIGHT • Elizabethtown Mayor David Willmoth Jr. reads through a stack of mail, mainly from Hardin County residents and organizations.



ABOVE • David and Matthew Hobbs enjoy a laugh over lunch at Bub's Cafe.

LEFT • Two weeks before Election Day, David checks the local evening news.



Driven to read

Photography by WAVERLY WYLD
Editing by GREG A. COOPER

Everybody gets invited to her party.

The hostess, Lisa Wardeck-Huffer, of Elizabethtown, doesn't offer attendees cocktails or pigs in a blanket. She and her bookmobile deliver to everyone and anyone a few laughs, smiles and knowledge, and a passport to go anywhere they please through reading.

Since 1987, Lisa, 51, has been traveling throughout Hardin County in the bookmobile, a hostess who reads to children at day care centers, visits senior living facilities and chats up locals at community "pit stops."

On a typical day, she motors down U.S. 31W in Hardin County, rock music blaring from the speakers while she makes as many as 12 stops a day. The avowed music lover calls Pearl Jam her favorite band, and it rates a tattoo, the group's name, on her right arm.

"People know I'm silly," she said.

They also know her vivacious personality, her passion for reading and her knack for homing in on every visitor's reading niche, offering spot-on recommendations for all.

The bookmobile has a long history in Hardin County, and many drivers have filled Lisa's role. In fact, Lisa trained three drivers before applying for the full-time job.

Lisa is originally from Munfordville. She married Norman Wardeck. Sixteen years later he died of lung cancer. They raised two sons, Paul, now 27, and Trigg, 24. She married Todd Huffer, and they

have been together for 11 years.

While raising Paul, Lisa spotted an ad in the local paper for a part-time job at the library. She spent many of her childhood years in a library close to her home and decided to pursue the bookmobile job.

She got it.

"I'm one of the lucky ones," she said. "I have my dream job now."



LEFT • Lisa Wardeck-Huffer cruises through the countryside to her next Hardin County stop.

BELOW • Sunshine Child Care students line up to check out books.



ABOVE • Children at Jungle Zone Child Care Center hang on to each word as Lisa reads a story.

Blending family time

Photography by ADAM REYNOLDS
Editing by TANNER CURTIS



ABOVE • Adeline Brine's morning routine involves lots of hugs and kisses from her mother, Annika Hale, and a good deal of prodding to get her up and ready for the day.

RIGHT • Weekdays start early for Audrey, 4, left, and Adeline, 2, when they are taken to preschool and day care at 7:30 a.m. by their mother.

BELOW • Annika, a single mother, takes a rare moment to relax with Adeline at their home.



Before the rising sun cuts through autumn's morning chill, the Hale household is abuzz with activity. Everyone has somewhere to go.

Steve and Andrea are off to work. Their daughter, Annika Hale, bundles her two girls, Audrey and Adeline Brine, for preschool and day care. Then she heads into Elizabethtown to begin a long day of study, followed by work in Radcliff.

All too brief, this gathering is one of the rare moments during the week the family is together.

Urged by her parents, Annika moved into their country home in Meade County, allowing her to study and work part time. With her full schedule there are days when Annika doesn't return home until after midnight.

Fortunately, Annika's parents have been there at every step, supporting her and looking after their granddaughters with all of the doting affection expected from grandparents.

On Saturday mornings the family can relax and share each other's company over a leisurely breakfast. It's their favorite part of the week.

"My girls need the world," Annika declared.

RIGHT • Steve Hale corrects his granddaughter Adeline's "equipment malfunction" during one of their favorite activities, a picnic at Camp Carlson Army Recreation Area.

BELOW • One of Annika's duties during the second shift at the North Hardin Health and Rehabilitation Center in Radcliff is delivering dinner to her assigned residents.



ABOVE • The Brine sisters, Adeline, left, and Audrey play on the jungle gym in their grandparents' backyard.

Fighting the unknown

Photography by EMMA TANNENBAUM
Editing by TANNER CURTIS



ABOVE • Sarah Mason gives music lessons to her son Matthew, 9, in stripes, and friend Rhianna Chabassol, 6, right. Joining them at the piano are two of Sarah's other children, Isabelle, 7, left, and Emilyanne, 1. Sarah homeschools Matthew and his three siblings. Since Matthew has trouble concentrating, she has switched him to a computer-based curriculum in the hope that the graphics and movement will help keep his attention.

“**T**hen Princess Leah gets captured, and they're like, we have to save her, and then it's like, um. ...” Like many 9-year-old boys, Matthew Mason knows the Star Wars movies inside and out and enjoys recounting his favorite scenes.

Unlike other 9-year-olds, Matthew has had to overcome odds stacked against him. His heart is on the right instead of the left side of his body, causing lung collapses. He has no spleen, problems with his liver and stints in arteries that help prevent congestive heart failure. Matthew and his family await the results of recent tests for Williams syndrome, an incurable genetic defect that would explain a lot.

Matthew's mother, Sarah, and father, Russell, want Matthew to live a full life without his medical issues getting in his way. Matthew is very active but tires quickly.

The Masons realize their son will have to deal with many situations on his own. They encourage him to take responsibility for signing in at doctors' offices, carrying his charts and test requests and knowing his medicines and the times he should take them.

As a special treat after they finish studying, Sarah takes all the children to Freeman Lake to feed the ducks. As she watches, Matthew runs around the park with his siblings and shouts in delight when the ducks swim toward the chunks of bread he tosses in the water.

Sarah smiles. “I just hope that we find an answer,” she said.



LEFT • Matthew checks his blood sugar levels. Matthew's mother believes in healthy foods and limiting the amount of sugar and processed foods her family eats. Doctors are concerned that Matthew may be pre-diabetic and asked Sarah to introduce more sugar into his diet to test his reaction.

BELOW • A receptionist at Hardin Memorial Hospital points Matthew toward the waiting room. Matthew's undiagnosed illness has multiple symptoms, including his heart being located on his body's right side, instead of left.





ABOVE • Matthew becomes lost in thought while eating breakfast.

RIGHT • Isabelle Mason, 7, and her mother, Sarah, share a moment while doing chores. Matthew works intently with his Legos.



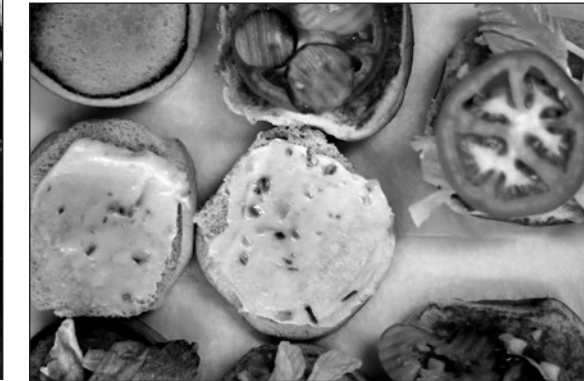
ABOVE • Seth Mason, 3, left, his brother Matthew and Rhianna Chabassol feed the ducks after a morning at the hospital.

Burger revival

Photography by VICTORIA TAYLOR
Editing by TANNER CURTIS



ABOVE • Mike Pirtle jokes with his granddaughter, Kaylyn Bowen, during her dinner break at work. Kaylyn and her grandfather enjoy grilled pork tenderloin over a salad.



TOP LEFT • Mike wears his favorite hat every day as he stops at the drive-in for meals.

TOP RIGHT • Foundations for the signature “Laker” burger are placed on a cutting board while the meat is being cooked. The Laker burger, the drive-in’s most popular menu item, includes two beef patties, tartar sauce, three buns, cheese, special sauce, pickles, onions, lettuce and tomato.

ABOVE • Another day at the Laker Drive-In comes to an end as Phyllis Mumford works through the required nightly cleaning list.

“When it was gone you realized just how much you missed it,” said Michelle Bowen, co-owner of the Laker Drive-In. Michelle, a native of Stephensburg, grew up enjoying the deep-fried fries, cheesy burgers and creamy milkshakes the community cherishes.

Laker Drive-In was built during the 1960s next to a high school. Then, after almost 40 years of flipping burgers, the Laker owners locked the doors for good.

The disappointed residents of Stephensburg had to wait several years before they could sink their teeth into a “Laker” burger.

Michelle and her father, Mike Pirtle, became business partners and rejuvenated the Laker Drive-In. The restaurant was restored to look exactly as it did when first opened. The only major changes were inside the kitchen area. “I stripped the restaurant down to three walls and basically had to rebuild it all because it was in such bad shape,” Mike said.

Months after completing the restoration, Mike underwent open-heart surgery, wearing his trademark tattered khaki hat. “Everyone asks me why I don’t get a new hat, but I’ve survived an open-heart surgery with this hat, so I don’t guess I’ll get rid of it.”

Four months after the surgery, Mike has slowed down the pace of his life and enjoys stopping by the restaurant twice daily in his signature hole-ridden hat. “I don’t cook at home anymore,” he said. “I just come in here and have the girls fix somethin’ for me to take back to the house.”

Residents have been flocking to the walk-up burger shack because, as Michelle puts it, “It has always been about the community and family. That’s what the Laker is.”

Mamaw's farm

Photography by AMANDA DAVIDSON
Editing by TARA-LYNNE PIXLEY



LEFT • Sarah Mraz, 30, of White Mills is renovating her grandmother's 1920s farmhouse. Sarah's grandfather, Granville Sallee, used to wear the overalls now hanging from an old doorway in the living room. "I tried them on once," Sarah said. "They do fit me."



ABOVE • A message emblazons a shed on Sallee Farm.



RIGHT • Sarah plays with her dog, Lexi, in the backyard.



LEFT • Sarah and P.J. Mraz make dinner together while their dogs, Lexi and Allie, play.



ABOVE • A framed photo of Sarah and P.J. on their wedding day sits beside a framed photo of Sarah's grandparents, Granville and Mamie Sallee. Sarah's grandfather died before she was born, but she was close to her grandmother.

On past Christmas Eves, about 75 people would squeeze into Mamie Sallee's small, White Mills farmhouse to celebrate as a family. Years later, her granddaughter went to the bank to save that memory-filled home.

"I can remember where furniture was," said Sarah Mraz, 30. "The way the house smelled, the stories, and how Mamaw used to sing when she would sew. She didn't have a great voice, but it was great singing."

Mamie, then 94, moved into a nursing home in 2004. Her cherished farmhouse was put up for auction so she could receive government assistance to pay for her new residence. She died seven months later.

"I didn't want anyone outside of the family to buy the house, and at the time, no one in the family was looking to

buy," Sarah said. "There are just too many memories here."

Sarah decided to purchase the home and 30 acres her grandmother owned. Sarah and several family members now own the 110 acres that comprise Sallee Farm.

She is renovating the home while maintaining the integrity of the 1920s-era residence.

"Some people told me I should bulldoze the house over and start fresh," Sarah said. "That might have been the most logical thing to do, but I just couldn't see doing that."

Sarah married P. J. Mraz in 2009, and her husband moved to the farm from his sailboat in Tampa, Fla.

"I like how the house is important to Sarah," P. J. said. "It's neat that there is something from her family that she can hold on to, because I don't have anything like that from my family."



ABOVE • Pam Adams enjoys a moment of solitude as she takes a break from working at her dog kennel and training facility at her Rineyville farm. “I rarely get time for myself, so when I do get that time, I like to do something relaxing and quiet usually,” she said.

Looking at the Adams family home from the road, a visitor can see that Circletop isn’t a traditional family farm where mom stays at home raising the kids, fixing lunch for dad and the farmhands.

Pam Adams, 54, operates a dog kennel and training school at the 11-acre farm in Rineyville, where she works and lives with her husband, Mark, 47, and their son, Jud, 15.

“You just have to have a love for the dog,” Pam said. “Each dog gives

me something – a look, a rub or maybe it’s just money in the bank for keeping them. If I can make any dog a better dog, that’s my goal. Each dog that comes through here is like a grandchild to me.”

She can board up to 50 dogs at a time and offers a 10-week obedience training program for dogs and owners. Pam compares the structure of the training program to building a house. A solid foundation must be in place before any construction – or training – can occur.

Pam even transports her canine trainees via a large van, taking the dogs into situations that provide real-life distractions they will encounter with their owners. The Adams own seven dogs that interact with the boarded dogs daily.

Pam’s dedication and love for the animals requires a huge amount of time and effort from both herself and her family.

“It’s her passion,” Jud said. “It’s what she loves to do. She’s strived to do this for a long time, and it’s part of our lives now. ... There’s times where I just don’t want to do it, but I push through and do it anyway. But most of the time I enjoy it. I take after her in that way.”



ABOVE • Pam works with a German shepherd enrolled in her obedience training course for dogs and their owners.



ABOVE • Pam tries to teach Syndi to climb onto the roof of a doghouse on her farm in Rineyville.



LEFT • Three resident dogs at Circletop Farm anticipate the return of Pam.

RIGHT • Pam's day goes to the dogs. She keeps up to 50 dogs at a time at the boarding and training business she operates.



RIGHT • Jud Adams pitches in when his mother, Pam, needs an extra hand running her boarding kennel.

FAR RIGHT • Pam sits with Junior, an obedience-training student at Circletop Farm.



Head of the class

Photography by KELLY LAFFERTY
Editing by TARA-LYNNE PIXLEY



ABOVE • Once a month, some members of the Vine Grove High School class of 1956 get together to play cards. A game called “Golf” is played by Vonnie Lou Keltner, from left, Betty Rose Jones, Thelma Willow and Elizabeth Ann Whelan. “Just wait ‘til we’re a hundred years old,” Thelma said. “We’re still gonna be playing this.”

When Thelma Willow makes the rounds to All of Us, a Vine Grove restaurant and one of her hangouts, eating isn’t necessarily her priority. She greets cooks, waiters, owners and friends by asking, “What’s up, girl?” or “How are you, girl?” “Every place I go I see somebody I know. ... You gotta keep active and keep busy,” the Vine Grove resident said. “If I just stayed at home I’d wilt away.”

Thelma, 74, was born and raised in the Hardin County hamlet, and she seemingly knows most

everybody who lives there.

She’s president of the Vine Grove High School class of 1956, and she schedules get-togethers and reunions with her classmates. Thelma points at each person’s picture in her senior class yearbook and discusses his or her life. She knows where they live or if they’ve died.

She knows all of it.

“It’s easy to remember,” Thelma said. “There’s 56 people in our graduating class, and I graduated in 1956.”

She checks her Facebook account several

times each day from the desktop computer in her bedroom. Thelma has more than 100 Facebook friends, ranging from her family, high school classmates and students at North Hardin High School, where she taught English as a Second Language.

“I’m on Facebook every day seein’ what everybody’s doin’,” Thelma said. “I’m nosy.”

Though Thelma’s days slow down, the action doesn’t stop. She relaxes with family and her two dogs, Petie and Annaleese. Then she picks up the phone, ready to plan the next busy day.



LEFT • Dr. R.B. Faulkner gives Thelma a quick kiss before she leaves his office after a checkup. “See, he calls me honey. We’re buddies,” Thelma said. R.B. has been her doctor for almost 25 years.



ABOVE • “This is too slow for me,” Thelma says while searching for books to label. Thelma volunteered at St. Brigid Catholic Church in Vine Grove to help in its library. “I like fast-paced things,” she said.



LEFT • Thelma relaxes in her home while preparing for a nap with her dogs.

Family style

Photography by DAVID TOCZKO
Editing by TARA-LYNNE PIXLEY

The remaining original member of the breakfast club at the Brooks General Store and Cafe in Sonora, “K” Copelin smiles a toothy grin as he recalls the good old days when his cousin, Delores Copelin, was a 12-year-old waitress working in her parents’ shop.



Ela Mae decided to convert part of the general store into a cafe.

At Brooks General Store and Cafe, customers are treated like extended family. Regulars filter in, catching up on the news of the day.

“It’s like one big happy family,” Hardin “Sonny” Hatfield said, as he enjoyed his favorite breakfast, sausage and grape jelly.

Business spikes on Meatloaf Thursdays, which features Ela Mae’s recipe. Some customers phone ahead to place their order to ensure they get a slice of meatloaf.

“When it’s gone, it’s gone,” Delores said.

While the meatloaf may run out, customers hope the good food and family atmosphere continue.

“I just love what I do,” Delores said. “I’ll do this as long as I can pay the bills.”

ABOVE • A dollhouse version of the Brooks General Store and Cafe sits atop a display case at the entrance. Longtime customer Hardin “Sonny” Hatfield made the model as a present for owner Delores Copelin.



RIGHT • Delores keeps a watchful eye on her dining customers.



ABOVE • “The Meatloaf Special” is a Thursday lunch staple at the cafe. Patrons often call ahead of time to reserve a serving.



FAR LEFT • “K” Copelin, 80, of Sonora, listens intently to the conversation around the breakfast table. He is the last remaining original member of the breakfast club that started when Brooks opened in 1961.

LEFT • Larry Akers, 70, enjoys a breakfast of biscuits and gravy. Larry is a lifelong resident of the South Hardin County community and is one of the cafe’s regular diners.



ABOVE • Carlton Brooks, 74, Delores’ brother, leaves the cafe after breakfast. A regular customer, this was his last visit before going on an extended vacation to Texas.

LEFT • Rhonda Copelin, 36, chats with lunchtime patrons. Rhonda is the daughter of Delores.

Brandon's mission

Photography by BRYNN ANDERSON
Editing by MEGAN TAN



LEFT • Brandon Frederick, 16, helps Adam Sisoumankhara, 8, read "Grace's Letter to Lincoln" during the Panther Place Afterschool program, while Zion Love works on math problems.

“Brandon! Brandon! Can you please help me, Brandon?”

Brandon Frederick can't sing like Justin Bieber. He can't dunk like LeBron James. He doesn't know Miley Cyrus. But to the kids at the Panther Place Afterschool program, he is more important than any of them.

Brandon leaves high school every weekday and goes to the Valley View Education Center where the shy, soft-spoken 16-year-old Hurricane Katrina

survivor is surrounded by energetic, outgoing third-graders.

“I was scared and lonely,” Brandon said. “I thought I would never see my dad again. We came to Kentucky from New Orleans with nothing, and Red Cross was there to help. I know what it's like to need, and I don't want anyone to go through that if I can help.”

He has volunteered almost 300 hours for the Red Cross and United Way, but his love for helping

people has grown even stronger since he started volunteering for the Valley View Education Center.

Panther Place provides an educational experience for at-risk children in Elizabethtown.

Brandon entered the lives of those kids four years ago, helping them and changing him.

The Panther Place kids run up to Brandon and hug him every day. And, every day he's there – laughing, teasing and teaching – just because he wants to help.

RIGHT • Brandon, a survivor of Hurricane Katrina, wrote a book about his experiences.



FAR RIGHT • Carol Ann Christian uses Brandon's book to discuss resilience with students at Helmwood Heights Elementary.



LEFT • Brandon plays “Old Maid” during the annual family visitation at Panther Place Afterschool program in Elizabethtown.

Homeless again

Photography by ARKASHA STEVENSON
Editing by MEGAN TAN

“It’s like wrestling a wildcat,” Tyanna Beverly says as she tries to change her 2-year-old’s diaper.

Savanna, sprawled on her parents’ bed, tries wriggling away from her mother while spoon-feeding peanut butter to her 15-month-old brother, Harlyn. The spoon falls and sticks to the hotel room’s already stained carpet. Tyanna lets go of her hold.

“Our children are everything to us,” she said.

Whatever her children need, Tyanna says she will fight to get it for them. Savanna and Harlyn’s main need right now is a roof over their heads. For Tyanna and her husband, Tim, that is a daily struggle.

For the past four months, the family has lived in various Elizabethtown hotels. For the past two weeks, a room at the E’Town Motel has been the Beverlys’ home.

But on this day they learn that their room had been rented to someone else. Tim and Tyanna pack their belongings in garbage bags while the children sleep.

“Kids can sense when you are stressed,” Tyanna said. “I have to be strong for them.”

Tyanna is able to stay strong until 5 p.m., when the landlord’s heavy knock on the door wakes Harlyn, and the shouting begins.

“Just give us one more hour,” Tim pleads. The landlord responds by hauling trash bags out the door.

The bags and Tim fit in the Isuzu Rodeo a friend lets them use. The rest of the family doesn’t. Tim drives off to store their belongings. Tyanna follows, pushing both children in their stroller. A few minutes later, the family is together in a friend’s backyard, their belongings in a shed.

“I’ll put a tent up,” Tim said.

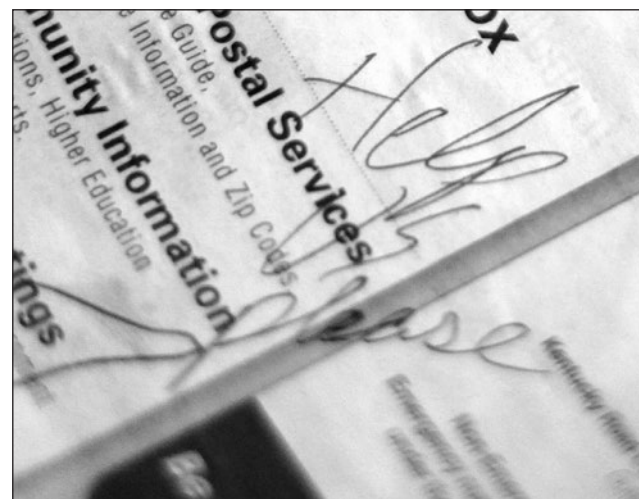
“No,” Tyanna told him. “It’s too cold.”

Back in the hotel room, the phone book is open to a page of emergency numbers. Across it, Tyanna had scrawled:

“Help us please.”



ABOVE • The Beverly family waits for a break in traffic before dashing across the street to the E’Town Motel. The motel was their home for two weeks.

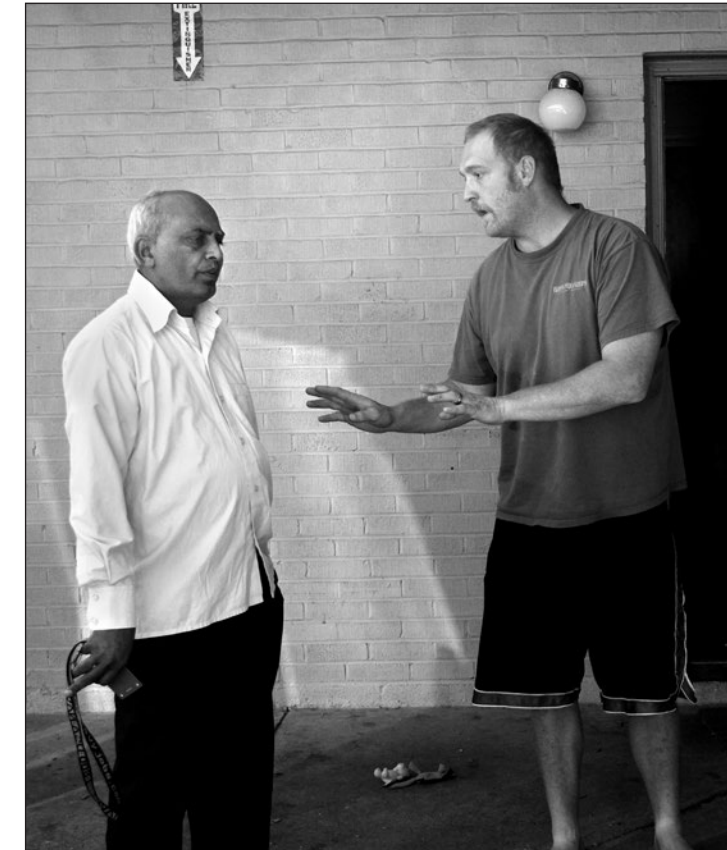


LEFT • A phone book bearing Tyanna’s message lies open in the Beverlys’ vacated motel room.



ABOVE • After learning that her family must vacate a motel room they lived in for two weeks, Tyanna ponders a backup plan.

RIGHT • Tyanna scribbles the numbers of Elizabethtown hotels on her hand with a purple marker.



ABOVE • Tim Beverly pleads with the landlord of the E’Town Motel for more time to find a new place to live.



ABOVE • Tim's No. 1 concern after being told that he and his family had to leave their hotel room is that the state will take away his children.

RIGHT • Tyanna hugs her daughter, Savanna, as she contemplates her next move. "We have nowhere to go," she said.



BELOW • Harlyn Beverly, 15 months, watches while his parents pack the family's belongings.



ABOVE • Tyanna pushes her children to a friend's house. In a few minutes, they would join Tim, who was storing the family's belongings.

Strong heart

Photography by BRITTANY SOWACKE
Editing by TARA-LYNNE PIXLEY

The halls of Lincoln Trail Elementary School in Elizabethtown ring with one name – Erin. Teachers, bus drivers, custodians and schoolmates of all ages greet her with happy shouts and high-fives. Walks to lunch become a parade of “hellos.”

This has always been Erin Rasmussen’s school experience. The fact that she suffers from brittle-bone disease hasn’t slowed her down.

At age 7, Erin weighs a mere 25 pounds and is just 30 inches tall. She uses a motorized wheelchair at school and leaves it there overnight.

Erin broke both of her legs in utero, and her left femur was broken at birth. She was diagnosed with Type III osteogenesis imperfecta and has broken 12 bones since she was born.

“We weren’t sure of anything,” said her father, Philip Rasmussen, 35. “It was very scary.”

Erin refuses to let her diagnosis define her abilities. She participates in school plays, including the upcoming production of “The Nutcracker.” She dances in gym class, her aide, Sheila Fonda, wheeling her to the music.

“Her attitude is almost overwhelming to you as a person. Every day is a challenge in her life, but she never sees it that way,”

said Lisa Jagers, 43, Erin’s reading teacher. Erin uses a walker at home and during physical therapy at school, a rare accomplishment for someone with Type III.

“She should be in movies; she’s so dramatic,” says Kara Reeder, 33, Philip’s girlfriend, as Erin pretends to slide off the family’s overstuffed couch. Despite her flair for theatrics, Erin doesn’t whine about her condition.

“She does sometimes ask questions (about the disorder), but she never feels sorry for herself,” Philip said.

“I’ve always encouraged her to just try things. I show her once, and she does it.”



ABOVE • “I love you, Miss Fonda,” says Erin, 7, as her school aide, Sheila Fonda, 45, buckles her in for the bus ride home from Lincoln Trail Elementary School.



ABOVE • “My room is on the second floor, but I can crawl all the way up on my own,” Erin said. Despite her brittle bone disease, “She’s very independent,” said Philip Rasmussen, her father.



ABOVE • Maycie Barzy, 7, foreground, and Erin, 7, both of Elizabethtown, stretch in gym class at Lincoln Trail Elementary School.



ABOVE • Gracie DeWitt, 6, and Erin read aloud at school. Although only 30 inches tall and unable to walk on her own, Erin doesn't shy away from class participation.



LEFT • “Swing, swing, I want to swing today,” Erin chanted after lunch. “She just loves to twist in her swing,” Sheila Fonda said.



ABOVE • Ella Dodd and Halle Stroop, both 7, help Erin during a math exercise. “She’s brought such joy to our class,” said Kim Fox, 40, Erin’s teacher. “They just all gather around (her). They want to include her.”



BELOW • Erin cruises the hall at school in a motorized wheelchair, her primary mode of transportation.

35 years

1976 / ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS

1977 / MAIN STREET

1978 / LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES, KY.

1979 / CLAIRFIELD, TENN.

1980 / BURKESVILLE, KY.

1981 / BURKESVILLE, KY.

1982 / TOMPKINSVILLE, KY.

1983 / MORGANTOWN, KY.

1984 / CELINA, TENN.

1985 / EDMONTON, KY.

1986 / SCOTTSVILLE, KY.

1987 / LIBERTY, KY.

1988 / RUSSELL SPRINGS, KY.

1989 / ALBANY, KY.

1990 / MONTICELLO, KY.

1991 / LAFAYETTE, TENN.

1992 / COLUMBIA, KY.

1993 / JAMESTOWN, TENN.

1994 / GLASGOW, KY.

1995 / SMITHVILLE, TENN.

1996 / CAMPBELLSVILLE, KY.

1997 / RUSSELLVILLE, KY.

1998 / FRANKLIN, KY.

1999 / CENTRAL CITY, KY.

2000 / BOWLING GREEN, KY.

2001 / HOPKINSVILLE, KY.

2002 / CAVE CITY, KY.

2003 / BARDSTOWN, KY.

2004 / LEBANON, KY.

2005 / LAWRENCEBURG, KY.

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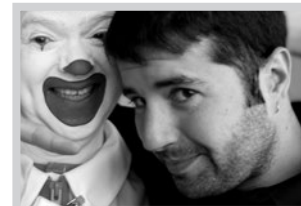
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- Justin Shaw
- Mandy Simpson
- Katie Simpson
- Aaron Snyder
- Jake Stevens
- Ryan Stone
- Megan Tan
- Holly Thompson
- Kohl Threlkeld
- Morgan Walker
- Dillon Ward
- Adam Wolffbrandt

TO VIEW MORE STORIES FROM HARDIN COUNTY 2010, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.mountainworkshops.org

A snapshot. A moment of time frozen in place. A piece of history that can never be replicated.

Western Kentucky University professors Mike Morse and David Sutherland realized this in 1976, when they led a crew of photojournalism students on a field trip. Their mission was to document the few remaining one-room schoolhouses in Kentucky and Tennessee.

Now, in Elizabethtown, the Mountain Workshops continues this labor of love: archiving life in Kentucky while teaching journalists the art of storytelling.

The size and scope of the Workshops have evolved. In 1976, two professors and a dozen students camped out and processed their film in a primitive, makeshift darkroom. During the 35th annual Workshops, a team of about 50 coaches and staff worked with 70 participants to create photo stories and multimedia projects in bustling Elizabethtown and the surrounding rural areas of Hardin County. Their workplace, the former Robert Bosch Tool Corp. on Park Road, was transformed from an empty factory into a state-of-the-art production facility, filled with computers, audiovisual equipment, studios and even a makeshift auditorium, all connected by hundreds of yards of cable and kept humming by a hustling technical staff.

The result of this weeklong frenzy? This book for one thing, plus a museum-quality photo exhibit, a website documenting Hardin County 2010, and 70 exhausted visual storytellers who now see the world in a new light.

The excitement of the week began with a welcome from Mountain Workshops Director James H. Kenney. Then, each participant drew a single piece of paper from a hat that would refocus his or her life for the next five days. On it was a story idea developed by research staff. One assignment for each participant. What might seem like a simple task is not always.

Each photographer was limited to 600 digital photos for the workshop. They were all warned to plan their shoots carefully

because they might get their best pictures on the last day of shooting. Videographers had to make smart decisions before gathering content because the time for editing and production was so limited.

“They have to think before they click,” said second-year shooting coach Denny Simmons, a photojournalist for the Evansville (Ind.) Courier & Press. “The most frustrating thing is when they don’t learn from their mistakes. You go through the successes, the non-successes, and sometimes downright failures.”

Each day, participants went out into the community to capture the pulse and personality of Elizabethtown and Hardin County. Each day, their coaches – top professionals in photography, multimedia and writing – critiqued their work and guided them through the storytelling process.

“Getting into the journalist’s mindset was very frustrating,” said Scott Clark, a participant from Bloomington, Ind. A photographer who had been working primarily with advertising, Clark attended the Workshops with hopes of improving his

storytelling. He got off to a rough start when he had a collision in a rental car on his way to a photo shoot.

He learned the most from the evening presentations by the coaches, who showed their work and talked about their experiences, some in the towns and fields of America and others in far-flung places, including war zones.

“Their personal projects are the ones that are inspiring,” said Clark.

On the last day, after all of their hard work, the participants prepared to show their stories to an audience of their peers and to say a few words about their experience in Hardin County.

“To them, I think it will be like dessert,” said Simmons.

And here it is, dessert. Enjoy.

• **Lori E. Cook**
Freelance journalist



PHOTO BY NINA GREIPEL

ABOVE • Mountain Workshops students draw their stories from a hat at the beginning of the workshops.

“Our community is about family, faith, friends, caring and kids.”

Kendra Stewart
Elizabethtown resident



THE MOUNTAIN WORKSHOPS • OCTOBER 2010 • THE 35TH YEAR