



WHERE THE SOUTH BEGINS | HENDERSON, KENTUCKY

THE 2012 MOUNTAIN WORKSHOPS

The 2012 Mountain Workshops  
HENDERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY



Photos by Nathan Morgan (bottom right), Nina Greipel (all others)

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE PEOPLE OF HENDERSON COUNTY FOR MAKING THIS A SPECIAL EVENT. WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOU.

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RIVERBEND ACADEMY ART SCHOOL  
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**Photo, this page** • Rays from the rising sun catch the upper decks of the Queen of the Mississippi, docked at Henderson's riverfront with the CSX railroad bridge crossing the Ohio River in the background. The 150-passenger riverboat plies the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.

**PHOTO BY**  
KATHERINE McLEAN

**Cover photo** • Rachel Farmer laughs as her daughter, Abby, 8, embraces her at grandmother Nancy Evans's home after Rachel's 13-hour shift at Henderson Pediatrics and the Methodist Hospital.

**PHOTO BY**  
JULYSA SOSA

**Back cover photo** • Just before dinner, Seth Coomes (middle), 10, was riding a RipStik being towed by his friend on a bike when he took a tumble. Carlos Krous (left), and Almarrow Talbott, 9, help him test out his ankle. "If we're not riding bikes, we're playing Xbox," says Carlos. "We laugh a lot."

**PHOTO BY**  
JON HERNANDEZ

This is a place of crossroads. Rivers from the east flow past here – the mighty industrial Ohio and the scenic Green – en route to the Gulf of Mexico.

Winds from the west sweep across the plains, bringing rain to some of the nation's most fertile cropland.

This is the northern boundary of the South and the southern boundary of the Midwest – where the tea is sweet, the barbecue is smoky and grits are on the menu.

This is Henderson, Kentucky.

The summers are sweltering and the winters bring snow. But the times in between are glorious, with dogwoods flowering pink and white in spring and maple trees blazing yellow and red in fall.

This is home to farmers and factory workers, artisans and coal miners. The people here speak with the friendliness of Southerners and the modesty of Midwesterners. They'll hold the door open for strangers and offer detailed directions when asked.

And strangers are plentiful here, attracted by the vast cypress sloughs along the rivers, where great blue herons, bald eagles, Canada geese, and a dazzling variety of songbirds and migratory waterfowl make Henderson County a destination for birdwatchers. Fishermen and hunters, too, are drawn to the wildlife of the woods and wetlands, as seasons permit.

The town of Henderson was established by the same visionary people who had convinced Daniel Boone to guide settlers across the mountains into what was then the wilderness of Kentucky.

Fortunes were made here raising dark tobacco 150 years ago, and many of the fine old homes here are remnants of that era. So are the wide downtown streets and the old brick stores. Trees shade the oldest city park west of the Appalachians.

Over the years, a few presidents have visited, and a few people who once lived here went on to become famous.

An early 19th Century immigrant named John James Audubon preferred wandering the forests and sketching wildlife to running

his store and steam mill in town. He failed as a businessman and left town, but went on to international acclaim as a painter of birds. His works today are valuable, and many can be found in the museum at the hilly state park in Henderson that bears his name.

An early 20th Century laborer and part-time musician named W.C. Handy lived in Henderson for several years, married and discovered his calling here. He is now known as the Father of the Blues, and thousands of music lovers gather each summer on the Henderson riverfront for a free music festival named for him.

Folks here enjoy having visitors, whether at festivals or on those regular visits by luxurious riverboats that disgorge their passengers for a look around and a little shopping. The rivers have regularly brought new faces to town for over a century.

But this is also a place where old friendships are cherished. Out in the county, farmers gather every morning for an early breakfast at places like the Geneva Store; and in the city, pals will meet after work to unwind at ancient watering holes like Wolf's Tavern or Metzger's.

Henderson is also a place of families, some who have had ancestors here for so many generations that they are hard-pressed to declare exactly how they are related, but they are.

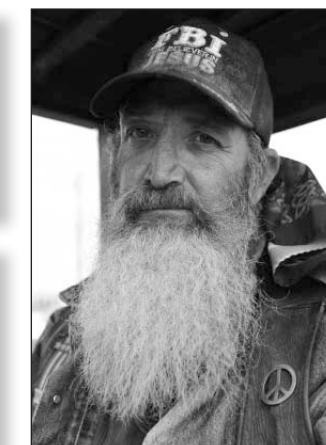
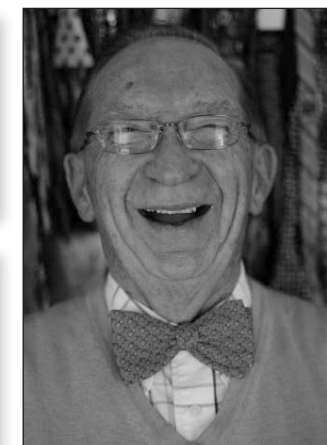
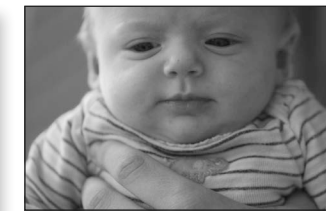
As much as anything, Henderson is its own community. Yes, the city's population of 27,000 people is dwarfed by that of Evansville, Ind., a few miles across the Ohio River. But residents here don't view Henderson as a mere bedroom community.

It may be smaller, but it is older than Evansville and every bit as proud.

"I do think we have a culture of our own," declared lifelong Hendersonian and former mayor Joan Hoffman. "We're a community of true individuals, people with their own thoughts and initiatives and ideas."

For them, Henderson is not just a town. It is their town.

• **Chuck Stinnett**  
*The Gleaner, Henderson, Ky.*



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Gene Gass (left), Harold Clark and J.B. Speed wait their turns to play in a pool tournament at the Gathering Place, a senior center in Henderson. Gass and teammate Steve Lorraine, both of Henderson, were playing against Clark and Speed, who are both from Owensboro. Monthly pool tournaments pit men from Owensboro and Henderson against each other. The winning senior center gets to keep the trophy until the next month. The men play a challenging form of the game called “bank pool” in which a player must call each pocket and bank the ball off a rail on the table.

PHOTO BY ARIANA VAN DEN AKKER



Ethan Macer, 11, goes in for a shot in a pickup game against his cousins and neighbors, Preston Royster, Hunter Fraiser and Cameron King before dinner.

PHOTO BY MARGARET CHEATHAM WILLIAMS





Campbell Walter, 81, prays alone after the 7 a.m. mass at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church. Campbell says he was baptized here, married here and “next thing will be to be buried here.” Campbell says his grandmother and mother also attended mass at this church, where he was an altar boy in his youth.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW BUSCH



Randy Abbott casts a fishing net into the Ohio River. Randy’s daughter, Paisley Sofia, was born 12 weeks prematurely. Although still in the hospital, she is gaining weight and her health is steadily improving. Even so, Randy says fishing is “about the only thing that’ll calm me down.”

PHOTO BY STEPHEN REMICH



Hal Branson, 79, a retired minister, still feels responsible for visiting members of his community – in this case, Cindy Jones, 58, who is recovering from colon cancer surgery in St. Mary's Medical Center in Evansville, Ind.

PHOTO BY MADDIE MEYER



General pediatrician Rachel Farmer does a head-to-toe examination of Joel Glover while his brothers (from left) Kobe, 6, and Diamond, 12, watch at Methodist Hospital. Rachel has been Joel's doctor since his family moved to Henderson last December.

PHOTO BY JULYSA SOSA



Baylee Butler's feet dangle above the pedals during her piano lesson with Julie Nantz at Julie's home and business, N Tune Piano Service.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW BUSCH



Cece Bruner, 39, helps her 2 year old daughter, Nancy Marie, learn to ride a tricycle. Nancy Marie has been learning to ride for about a year. The trike was a gift from her aunt and uncle. "I'm afraid she'll fall off," Bruner says. "I think we're a little overprotective."

PHOTO BY JACOB HILL



In Cindy John's garden is a quaint cottage full of old treasures that have been collected over the years. The Johns family built their home in Henderson County 10 years ago.

PHOTO BY ABBY O'BRYAN



On a windy afternoon in Henderson County, the goats at Bill Fulkerson's farm take cover in a small barn from the blowing dirt and leaves. The farmer has more than 20 animals, including goats, chickens, horses and dogs. "I take pride in my animals," Fulkerson says. "I'm retired and they are what keep me from going insane."

PHOTO BY ABBY O'BRYAN





Zach Foster scratches Big Boy, one of the kittens he and wife Ammie found about two months ago. They took in five emaciated kittens and the mother cat and nursed them back to health. The couple also has six dogs, five of whom are rescues. "Our hearts are bigger than our wallets," he said. The couple found a home for one of the kittens but the other four still need homes.

PHOTO BY ARIANA VAN DEN AKKER



While trying to keep her one-month-old daughter from crying in the park, Amber Adams of Corbin, Ky., puts a blanket over her to shield her from the winds. Amber was watching her other daughter Adelyn, 2, play on the local playground with a friend.

PHOTO BY SAMMY JO HESTER



Presley Chambers, 6, and Layla Tanaka, 3, play on the family lawn mower. Their father, Rafe Tanaka, was born and raised in Henderson.

PHOTO BY JULYSA SOSA



First grader Huston Cox sleepily looks out the window on his morning bus ride to A.B. Chandler Elementary School, a rural school near Corydon.

PHOTO BY PEYTON HOBSON



Students from Henderson County High School hang out on the banks of the Ohio River in Henderson. Some students say they come here because of the lack of entertainment in the city.

PHOTO BY IAN MAULE



The Henderson County High School Marching Band, "The Colonel's Brigade," directed by Keith Vincent, practices nine hours a week. Keith admits the team works hard in extreme weather and says "There's not a band out there that has more heart."

PHOTO BY BRITTANY SOWACKE



Matthew Dotson (right), 17, and Morgan Brady, 16, from Henderson County High School await Morgan's tryout for "Les Miserable." They met in the middle school choir in seventh grade. "But we just got together three weeks ago," says Morgan. "Mr. Vincent (band director) doesn't like PDA (personal displays of affection), so we have to wait until practice is over," Matthew says.

PHOTO BY BRITTANY SOWACKE



Neal Beck, 21, dangles his daughter, Harley Mattison, just out of reach of her mom, while they relax outside of their home.

PHOTO BY THEOPHIL SYSLO





Shawn Pirtle, 18, relaxes with Jason Herron, 16, on a couch they placed on a trailer next to Jason's home on Gabe Street. Shawn says he was homesick from school and came over to hang out with Jason, who says he's home-schooled by his parents. "I just want to graduate and be done with school, I'll probably go find a welding job," Jason says.

PHOTO BY JERRY HABRAKEN



Henderson County High School seniors on the homecoming court pose for a group photo in the school cafeteria before the homecoming game.

PHOTO BY CAMERON CLARK



Linda Nichols directs traffic to allow children from Holy Name of Jesus Catholic School to cross the street. Nichols has worked as a crossing guard at the corner of 2nd Street and Adams Street for the past 20 years. Nichols has had to avoid oncoming cars more than once, she says. "I like my job except when people don't pay attention to me."

PHOTO BY CARTER McCALL



For 11 years Raymond and Bettye Abbott have eaten breakfast at McDonald's where they mingle with friends. "For \$3.48, I can't make breakfast at home," Bettye says. They have lived in Henderson all their lives, apart from Raymond's military career. When he returned from service and found Bettye still single he went to the Pine Room Cafe where she worked and said to her, "I want a sausage sandwich, a double Cola and a date." They were married in Henderson 47 years ago. Raymond retired from his career at Whirlpool's refrigerator plant in Evansville, but is a full-time minister at United General Baptist in Evansville.

PHOTO BY CAMERON CLARK



To refill his greaser with oil lubricant, Wayman Kellen trudges through an expansive shed bearing an accumulation of tools from the past. Wayman says that some may call it junk, but to him every tool serves a purpose.

PHOTO BY COOPER BURTON



Jessica Santiago is a former migrant worker now employed by Triple E Farms to wash agricultural equipment.

PHOTO BY GRIFFIN MOORES





Brandon Skipworth, 42, has been welding for 12 years at Stinson Bros. Welding.

PHOTO BY KATHERINE McLEAN



David Lee runs Lee's Taxidermy out of the basement of his home in Hebbardsville. He has been doing taxidermy work for more than seven years, the last three with a license. It started as just a hobby but expanded to the point where he quit his die casting job to work full-time on his business. "During regular hunting season I don't get to hunt," David says. "It's the busiest time of the year." While he has mounted two deer in a day before, David mounts about four deer a week. It takes him seven to 10 hours per deer.

PHOTO BY DANNY GUY





Nathan Baird, 8, dressed as Star Wars character Savage Opress, listens to piano teacher Julie Nantz during his lesson. The costume helps with Nathan's reluctance to play.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW BUSCH



Coretta Shirley, 75, has been collecting rings since she was young. "I get a ring here. I get a ring there. I love all of them," Shirley says.

PHOTO BY JERRY HABRAKEN



Tim Lashbrook, traffic control worker for the city of Henderson Public Works department, spray-paints parking lane numbers on the freshly paved Main Street.

PHOTO BY BRITTANY SOWACKE



A Cadillac Coupe de Ville sits outside of Butler Automotive in Henderson with a price tag of \$6,400.

PHOTO BY VEASEY CONWAY



Leamon Woodward, 91, takes his Silver Yorkie, Bucky, out for one of his many daily walks. Leamon received Bucky from his daughter, Marlyn McCormick, after his wife passed away 10 years ago. "He's my buddy," Leamon says.

PHOTO BY IAN MAULE



While waiting for their brother's tennis practice to end, Elizabeth (left) and Makaela, fourth-graders at Evansville Christian School, amuse themselves by making "duck noises," with grass along The Ohio River.

PHOTO BY BRITTANY SOWACKE





The Strong Women's workout group in Henderson, Ky. meets three times a week to exercise in the Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church gymnasium.

PHOTO BY CARTER MCCALL



Liam Morgan, 3, plays with the weights at the Henderson County Family YMCA while his father, Kevin Morgan, 51, teaches a taekwon do class. Liam and his 5 year old sister, Addison, usually take a swimming lesson before their father's class.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW BUSCH



# Center stage in Henderson County

The 37th annual Mountain Workshops of Western Kentucky University took center stage – literally – in the historic Ohio River town of Henderson for 10 days in October of 2012.

At the Fine Arts Center on the campus of Henderson Community College, a drama played out on center stage of the auditorium where 126 journalism students and professionals from across the country gathered to tell stories about a very special place and time: Here and now.

The stage seemed like a perfect venue for our debut of “a week in the life of Henderson County.” But unlike most of the stories told on this stage, ours are about real people. Our audience, the folks who read this book or watch the videos presented on our website, will find plenty of drama in these stories. Real tears, real laughter, real life.

Before we could begin our documentary project in Henderson, we needed a lot of help from its citizens, civic leaders and elected officials. First, we got permission to transform the Henderson Fine Arts Center into Mountain Workshops Central. The stage was the perfect place for teaching, and it soon became the hub for our activities, which would start each morning and continue until the wee hours of the next morning, every day.

Several days before the opening of the workshops, our “set designers” were on the scene, building a network of over 90 computers. On the stage, they created workstations with computers for editing and teaching. And they created a “stage within a stage” complete with seating, a sound system and a large projection screen for the nightly critiques and presentations by world-class photojournalists. They even made great use of the Fine Art Center’s stage lights, with the help of Professor Steven D. McCarty, the center’s technical director, to create a comfortable mood for these nightly presentations.

Behind the scenes were the producers and directors of the Mountain Workshops, who put together a website containing all of our stories about the Henderson community; created an 18-minute multimedia show about the workshops; printed 50 museum-quality photographs for a future gallery exhibit; and designed and edited this book.



PHOTO BY NINA GREIPEL

ABOVE • Mountain Workshops student Ian Maule found his way to the rooftop of a downtown Henderson building to shoot from a different angle.

At the Mountain Workshops, where everyone volunteers his or her time, success is built on people who work ridiculously long hours with little sleep and no pay.

The payoff here is to help educate a new generation of journalists, helping them become better storytellers through their photography, video, audio, picture editing and writing.

And what production would be possible without its sponsors? The company logos that appear in this book and on the website are a testimony to an industry that believes in our educational mission. Two of our sponsors, Canon and Nikon, even shared our stage with us, for the first time sending technicians to clean and check cameras brought in by workshop participants and volunteers. We hope this becomes an annual tradition.

Like wandering troubadours, we travel from town to town and depend on the locals for their help finding and telling the stories that make each community unique. Here, we are indebted to so many. I want to especially thank Chuck Stinnett of The Gleaner, who joined the Mountain Workshops as a writing coach and shared his great skill and enthusiasm with us every day. Gleaner photographer Darren Phegley, who graduated from WKU and has been telling stories in Henderson ever since, introduced us to many of the people he knows so well. And Danielle Crafton, public information officer for Henderson

County Schools, was a wellspring of information about school and community. Even Mayor Steve Austin got in on the act, supplying us with his own handwritten list of story ideas.

After 10 days, we packed up and quietly exited the stage at the Fine Arts Center. Back home in Bowling Green, we declared the 37th annual Mountain Workshops a resounding hit. We hope you feel the same way. And we hope you enjoy this book – our tribute to the people of Henderson County who so graciously invited us into their lives.

Thank you.

• **James H. Kenney, director**

The Mountain Workshops at Western Kentucky University  
<http://www.mountainworkshops.org>



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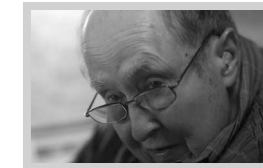
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**FAR LEFT** • Constance Brooks puts her son, Caiden Williams, 1, into her mother's car outside Walmart before going to school. Constance purchased a set of medical scrubs from Walmart to wear for "job day" during Henderson County High School's Spirit Week that precedes Homecoming. Constance says she would like to become a nurse.

**LEFT** • After Caiden threw a 30-minute tantrum, Constance finally calms him down by putting him in her bed. "It's not easy. It doesn't get easier. You never just get used to it," Constance said about being a mother.

**W**hen Constance Brooks began her junior year at Henderson County High School in 2011, she was 16 and her son Caiden was barely two months old. She couldn't sleep or study. At school, she struggled to stay awake. At home, she held her son in one arm while trying to do her homework with the other. She was bitter and angry.

"I used to freak out all the time. I used to feel like it was so hard," she says. "It was really bad when Caiden was first born. I missed a lot of days" of school.

Unintended teen pregnancy rates have declined nationally, but the consequences are all too familiar and often bad. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 50 percent of teenage mothers drop out of high school.

Constance has family, friends, counselors and mentors trying to help her beat the odds. "I just feel like you shouldn't blame the world for everything," she says. "It was my mistake to have sex and now he's here, and I'm going to do my ultimate best to take care of him."

Constance loves her son deeply. She says when she looks into his eyes, "I don't know how to describe it. I feel connected to him. I see a little of myself in him."

Constance wants to provide a good life for her son and is learning along the way. "I always fear that I'm not going to be a good enough parent. I always fear that because I'm 17 and not a totally mature person that when I think that I'm doing right, I'm actually doing wrong."

She knows what others think. She knows that

society judges teenage mothers. Even so, women like Jenn Forker mentor Constance and other teen moms through the Christian group Young Lives. Jenn has Constance and Caiden over for dinner at least once a week. And Young Lives meets two to three times a month.

It was friendship at first sight for Constance and Jenn. "I think I get as much out of it as she does," Jenn says. "My goal is just to love her and not judge her—as a lot of the world does."

As a teen mother, Constance and Caiden's challenges aren't likely to go away anytime soon. But neither will her love for her son. "It's not easy. It doesn't get easier. You never just get used to it," Constance says. Even so, "I think he changed me for the better."



**ABOVE** • Constance talks with Roddrick Armstead before going to a pep rally at Henderson County High School. Even with her parental responsibilities, she wants to finish high school and graduate with her class. "I want people to know that I didn't take the easy way out or make any excuses not to go to school."



**ABOVE** • Constance plays with Caiden shortly after he awakens. A senior at Henderson County High School, Constance lives with her mother while caring for Caiden. She says that having a baby has been full of joy, but the responsibilities of motherhood have refocused her priorities. "It just opened my eyes," Constance says.





**ABOVE** • The final step in the Santiago Salpo family's morning routine is to take a minute to sit and relax before they all start their day. Vicente and Mirka enjoy their video games as their mother, Adelino, sits erect while watching a Hispanic news station.

Her feet sank into the floor and her heart sank to her stomach. It had rained and her house was no longer a home. It was a cesspool. Adelino Santiago lived in a small shack with a dirt floor that had turned to mud. She wiped the muck from her children's bodies, but it was no use. The mud swallowed everything, tainted everything. That was Mexico — her beloved home but also her jail cell. She knew she must get out. She knew there was more.

Today, Adelino Santiago lives in Henderson with her husband and three children. Her husband, Vicente Salpo, works all day, for as many hours as he can get. Adelino works during the hours the children are in school. Their eldest daughter, Maria, 18, works as a full-time waitress.

Funds are tight in the household, and the majority of the revenue is invested in Mirka, 9, and

Vicente, 7. Those youngest two children, Adelino describes with ecstasy, are “true Americans,” having been born here. Adelino, Vicente and their daughter Maria are willing to do anything to ensure a better future for the children. Sacrifices are made daily in order to provide Mirka and Vicente with material goods the family deems necessary to help the children assimilate into American culture. Their hope is that Mirka and Vicente can fit into this culture so they can be successful within it.

Despite her own disconnect with American culture, Adelino selflessly encourages her children to embrace it. She fears that by pushing them into a culture that is foreign to her, she risks disconnecting with her own children. Yet Adelino drives Mirka and Vicente to adopt America without her. She is willing to break her own heart in order for her children to have a better life.



**ABOVE** • Vicente sprawls out while watching television. He watches Disney Channel in his parents' room while his mother watches Hispanic channels in the living room.



**ABOVE** • Part of Adelino's daily morning routine is fixing her daughter Mirka's hair for school. Mirka stands sleepily as her mother pulls and tugs at her hair, manipulating it into an intricate design.



**ABOVE** • Adelino provides the glue that holds the Santiago Salpo family together, and she tries to make sure they understand their heritage by cooking a traditional Mexican dinner every night.



**ABOVE** • Vicente, 7, helps his mother learn English and she helps him maintain his Spanish. A couple of times a week they participate in these informal lessons, another step Adelino takes to stay connected to her children.





**ABOVE** • Vicente is reclusive and shy around his school mates, but one feature that makes him stand out is his “bowl” haircut.

**TOP RIGHT** • Mirka and Vicente attend Southern Heights Elementary School. The siblings are native Spanish speakers and Erna Hargis is a teacher from the Migrant Program who helps them with their English.

**RIGHT** • Vicente recites the Pledge of Allegiance at school every morning but still struggles with the words.



**ABOVE** • Vicente, 7, stands in line with his fellow students at South Hights Elementary school.



**ABOVE** • Timothy Karl Johns, known to family and friends as “T.K.,” spends much of his time at his family’s camp, the Brain Injury Adventure Camp. Johns’ family started the camp after T.K. suffered a brain injury nine years ago.



**RIGHT** • T.K.’s days are simple. “I don’t do anything,” he says. “I just smoke my pipe and sit around.” Eighty percent of T.K.’s cerebellum was damaged in a snowboarding accident leaving him in a wheelchair and nearly immobile.

**T**imothy Karl Johns – they call him “T.K.” – was good at everything. His talent in all aspects of life, including skateboarding, snowboarding and art did not go unnoticed by those who knew him. His future was bright.

At 25, T.K. decided to move to Colorado to indulge his passion for snowboarding. It changed the Henderson native’s life forever.

“I had a bad feeling when (T.K.) told me he was moving to Colorado,” T.K.’s father, Tim Johns, says. “I couldn’t quite put my finger on it, but something just didn’t feel right.”

His father’s fears were confirmed when he received a call that T.K. was in the hospital.

Snowboarding down a mountain trail, T.K. hit a strip of dirt causing him to fly into the air and land on his head. T.K. was unable to move for hours. The snow patrol found his still body almost completely covered in snow.

Doctors gave T.K. two days to live, but T.K. didn’t give up. The impact of the fall damaged 80 percent of his cerebellum, severely damaging his brain. He was in a coma for three months before he woke up and began a long road to recovery.

Nine years later, the 34-year-old has come a long way from where he was after the accident. Though T.K. is in a wheelchair, he slowly is learning how to regain his abilities.

“It’s not a dream for me (to walk) it’s a probability. I will walk,” T.K. says. “I know I will walk.”

He is always positive about his situation.

“Getting hurt was not the worst thing that ever happened to me.” T.K. says. “It made me much more grateful.”

T.K. may not be able to do everything he used to but doesn’t let that stop him. He tries to walk when he has the opportunity, participates in physical activities, such as the high ropes course at his family’s Brain Injury Adventure Camp in Henderson County.

His life has changed, but that won’t stop him from living his life as if it hadn’t.



**ABOVE** • T.K. and his dad, Tim Johns, sit on a high platform after completing a large section of the ropes course at the Brain injury Adventure Camp in Robards. The Presbyterian Church of Henderson provided 42 acres of land for the camp.



**LEFT** • While the change in T.K.’s life has been dramatic, he is still the same T.K. he was nine years ago before his brain injury. His injury left him in a wheelchair and unable to perform the tasks he used to love: skateboarding and snowboarding. But he says that he is now more grateful for the things he does have.

## In sickness and in health

PHOTOGRAPHY AND STORY Ariana van den Akker  
EDITING Mick Cochran

Sitting at the table, eating breakfast as they have done countless times over 50 years of marriage, Darrel Boling suddenly makes an obscene gesture at his wife, Opel. He doesn't like it when she wipes food off his face.

She knows he doesn't mean anything by it; the gestures started only after he was in a severe scooter accident that left him completely dependent upon her.

"I'm just thankful that it's not worse, and that I still have him at least, but it's not easy," Opel says. "It's lonely. It's so lonely. I just miss him so much."

After Opel and Darrel retired from factory jobs, she imagined they would spend more time going out together and relaxing.

But on July 7, 2005, Darrel decided to buy a gas-powered scooter. When he rode it out to show friends, the scooter slipped on loose gravel and Darrel fell into the road. He was run over by a car, the impact cracking his skull and changing his life. Darrel was in a hospital for four months.

The first year after the accident was the hardest. Darrel sat and cried for most of each day. Sometimes he tried to escape the house or fight Opel.

"I just kept thinking maybe he would come back, maybe he'll be himself again," she says after tucking her husband into bed.

Darrel knows what's going on around him, but he struggles to communicate.

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**TOP AND ABOVE** • After coming back from the bathroom, Opel Boling asks her husband of 50 years, Darrel, "Did you miss me? Did you? Are you afraid you're gonna lose your honey? Well, I'm your honey." Opel Boling puts two of husband Darrel's pills on his first bite of dinner.



**LEFT** • Opel caresses husband Darrel's head at Lowe's before shopping for a pumpkin and some flowers. Opel has been Darrel's primary caregiver since 2005, when he was injured in a severe scooter accident. "I took our wedding vows seriously," she says.



**LEFT** • Darrel Boling holds onto the dresser while his wife, Opel, undresses him for a nap. Opel had the bracelet made for him after his accident in case anything happens to him and she's not around. Darrel wears the bracelet everywhere.



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Most of the time, he just shrugs or points or shakes his fist.

After that rough first year, things got better. Darrel now cooperates when Opel changes his diapers and gives him a bath. They go out every day. When they are home, she makes sure there is a Western on TV, because she knows it makes him happy.

Above all, Opel wants to make sure that Darrel knows she isn't going anywhere. In May, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

"I still feel the same," she says. "I love him, and I'll take care of him until he dies."



**ABOVE** • "Hey there handsome guy, you look so good!" Opel says as she shaves Darrel's face before giving him a bath.



**LEFT AND ABOVE** • Opel undresses Darrel, and leads him to bed so she can change his diaper before his afternoon nap. "He can't do much for himself anymore," she says. "At first he was really angry about it, but he's gotten used to it now."



**ABOVE** • Opel reads a novel after she put Darrel to bed. She can relax only when he is asleep.



# Wan'ke's world

PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORY Jerry Habraken  
EDITING Emily Free

At 39, Crystal Ellis was childless by choice. Then the daughter of her longtime partner, James Hazelwood, got sent to jail. Her 11-month-old child, Wan'ke, could either be adopted by James and Crystal, or be sent into the foster system.

Six years later, Crystal has a mother's unconditional love for 7-year-old Wan'ke.

"Wan'ke is my special little man, that's what I call him," says Crystal. "He's loving, he's caring, he's helpful and funny...He made me fall in love with him."

It's 5:45 on a typical weekday morning. James and Crystal are both sipping coffee. A loud "Wooooooooooooo!" roars from Wan'ke's room as he hits a home run while playing his Wii. He runs into the kitchen and yells, "I won! I won!" James and Crystal stop and laugh before going back to their routine.

At school, Wan'ke's exuberance has earned him a seat apart from the other clusters of students in his second-grade math class. His teacher, Laura Kopshever, hopes being less distracted will help Wan'ke do better work.

After school, Wan'ke works with Crystal every day on his math and spelling. "He's gonna be doing work and improving as long as he's under my roof," Crystal says.

When the homework is done, Wan'ke rushes outside to shoot hoops; he dreams of becoming a professional basketball player. Wan'ke shoots and shoots, relentlessly chasing every rebound and missed shot.

"He will shoot around until it gets too dark to see sometimes," says James. "Then he asks to turn the porch lights on."

When Wan'ke was a toddler, he called James Pappa and Crystal Momma. That took Crystal aback at the time. But after years of raising him as her own, she looks back fondly on a time six months ago when Wan'ke told her, "I know Arnetta is my mother, but I'm choosing to call you mom."



**ABOVE** • When Wan'ke Hazelewood, 7, was 11 months old, his grandfather, James Hazelwood, 59, gained custody of him from his daughter Arnetta. Along with James, Wan'ke is also being raised by James's long-time girlfriend Crystal Ellis, 46.

**RIGHT** • James helps his grandson Wan'ke put his shoes on before school while he plays Marvel Alliance, a superhero game, on the Playstation 3. "I want to be the hulk for Halloween," Wan'ke says. "We're both tough."



**ABOVE** • Wan'ke rushes to catch his bus to South Heights Elementary School where he is in the second grade. Wan'ke wakes up at 5:30 a.m. so he can catch his 6:30 bus. "Wan'ke waits until the last minute to get up and ready for school," says Crystal.



**ABOVE** • Crystal helps Wan'ke with his math homework. "We do homework every night," Crystal says. "He's got to put in some work time before he can play."

**LEFT** • Wan'ke, goofs off with Thomas Chaney (right), 8, as they line up to go to reading class at South Heights Elementary School.



**ABOVE** • James and Crystal watch on as Wan'ke shoots basketball in their backyard. Wan'ke says he wants to be a professional basketball or football player when he gets older. "He will shoot around until it gets too dark to see sometimes," James says. "Then he asks to turn the porch lights on."



**ABOVE** • Crystal walks in to wake up Wan'ke for school. Wan'ke usually sleeps in his parent's bed. "One way or another, even if he ends up going to bed in his own room, I'll feel a warm body next to me by the morning," says Crystal.

Over the course of a weekend, Matt and Michelle Eblen saw their heartbroken home turn into a full house.

After three years of ineffective fertility treatments, they gave up and decided to become foster parents, with the longer-term hope of adopting one young girl to call their own. They got cleared on a Friday. By Monday, they had two brothers. Just four months later, they also had the boys' two sisters. They couldn't stand to see the siblings separated.

"I thought it would be weird at first, that we would just sit here and stare at each other," Michelle says. "But it wasn't, it was instant family."

Fast forward six months. Michelle was cleaning out the bathroom cabinet and found an old pregnancy test. She figured, "Why waste it," and was floored to see a blue plus sign appear. Ten tests later, the couple finally had to admit Michelle must be carrying child number five.

"First thing that came to my mind was the kids and how they were going to react," Michelle recalls. "At first I was excited, but then it was quickly gone."

Their oldest, Hadilynn, struggled with fears that she would be displaced. Hadilynn's birth mother had given her up not long after having her younger sister. "She was old enough to know



what her mom did but not old enough to understand why," Michelle recalls.

Hadilynn did have the most trouble adjusting; she often threatened to run away. Now she helps change Bentley's diapers and loves keeping him entertained.

As a farmowner and businessman, Matt is constantly moving. He jumps seamlessly between managing workers and paying bills, fetching lost lunchboxes and traversing thousands of acres of farmland in his green John Deere combine. At home, the parents are a pair of orchestra conductors, directing their children through chores and bath time with grace, delivering discipline with a kiss, celebrating a complete day with a few quiet minutes of TV, then sleep.

Despite all that, Matt jokes that he's the one with the easier load – something Michelle is more than happy to agree with. She spends the day with 2-year-old Bentley under her wing, running errands, doing laundry for seven people and keeping all her children feeling loved and happy.

To make sure she's first in the pick-up line, she's always 45 minutes early to pick them up from school.

Michelle is determined to make up for the time in their lives that she and Matt missed. It makes her listen to them constantly for fear that the one time she doesn't listen they end up needing her the most.

"I feel like if it were different kids, it wouldn't be the same feeling," Michelle says. "I just feel like we were meant to be."

**LEFT** • The Eblen family gathers to pray following storytime. "You really need the Good Lord in your life, you know, just to make it. Sometimes you need a miracle," says Matt Eblen.





**ABOVE** • Matt drives a tractor alongside a combine driven by his father as it unloads harvested soybeans into the back of his vehicle. The soybean crop flourished while the corn harvest at Triple E Farms was hurt by the year's drought.



**ABOVE RIGHT** • Matt watches as soybeans harvested from his field pour out from the bottom of his truck at the Gavilon grain elevator along the bank of the Ohio River in Henderson.



**RIGHT** • From front to back Collin, 7, Hadilynn, 8, and Annabelle, 4, ride their toy four-wheelers around their yard after getting out of school.



**LEFT** • Bath time is “boys time” in the Eblen household. Whenever he’s home from the farm in time, Matt gives his three sons a before-bed bath. Bentley (left), 2, Collin, 7, and Aaden, 5, wait their turn for Matt to wet their hair.



**FAR LEFT** • Matt watches from the hallway as his children brush their teeth and get ready for bed.



**LEFT** • Michelle gently touches the chest of her two year old son, Bentley Eblen, to stop him from climbing the ladder of his siblings’ bunk bed before putting him to sleep.



Scotlyn Phegley, 2, comes out of the bathroom, pants around her ankles, wet. The big sisters come to the rescue and get some fresh clothes while the other little girls are at school in the dining room with their mom, Rhonda.

“Does ‘giraffe’ have a hard G or a soft G?” Rhonda asks. Rhonda helps Brooklyn with grammar with her left hand while breastfeeding Dawson with her right.

“It may be one of those days, guys, everyone needs to keep their attitude in check,” Rhonda Phegley says after her eight children climb into their 15-passenger van.

“We’re a big family,” she says. Rhonda and her husband, Darrin, have eight children between the ages of 8 months and 16 years: Dawson, Scotlyn, Emalyn, Brooklyn, Gabriel, Justis, Malayna and McKenna.

Six of them are home-schooled.

“We didn’t plan to have eight kids. We didn’t plan in any direction,” Darrin says. “McKenna was the only one we planned. From then on they just came, and we didn’t stop it.”

Despite working three jobs, Darrin spends more time with the children than do most fathers. Rhonda home-schools

the children, cooks, cleans and is family activity director in the evening.

Everyone has a job to do. The two oldest, McKenna and her sister, Malayna, 13, pick up a lot of the slack around the house. “Malayna does the hair and I find the shoes,” McKenna, 16, says. They get the little girls – Scotlyn, 2, Emalyn, 5, and Brooklyn, 6 – dressed and ready to go every morning. They also help with their youngest brother, Dawson.

The glue that keeps the family together is their faith. The Phegleys have instilled Christian principles into their children.

“It’s a God thing. I get up every day knowing that the list of things I have to do cannot get done by me. My whole existence is a prayer request,” Rhonda says. “I wish I had been raised like this.”

Though she won’t ever allow her teenagers to date, Rhonda wants all of her children’s relationships to be like the one she has with Darrin — along with lots of grandchildren.

“The best things are that there is more love, more joy, there is just more of all the good things. All of the good things about a family being together and laughing, there is just more of that,” Rhonda says.



**ABOVE** • The Phegley family has a tradition of holding their arms up when they ride over train tracks. The family is made up of eight children ranging from eight months to 16 years.

**LEFT** • Rhonda Phegley sits at the kitchen table where she home-schools six of her eight children. The family typically has school from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.



**ABOVE** • Seven matching cups hang over the sink in the Phegley’s kitchen for seven of their eight children. Dawson, the youngest of the eight, was not yet born at the time the cups were given to the other children.



**ABOVE** • The Phegleys sit against the wall at the Rudy-Rowland Funeral home during a visitation for a family friend who passed away.

**TOP RIGHT •**  
Scotlyn Phegley (left) brushes her teeth with sister, Brooklyn.



**TOP LEFT •**  
Dawson Phegley, the youngest child of eight, hugs Rhonda while they walk in a Henderson park.



**RIGHT •**  
Scotlyn, 2, sits on her sister McKenna's shoulders in the doorway of the Phegley's family room.



**ABOVE •** Rhonda and Darrin hold hands while praying before their meal at Cancun Mexican Restaurant.



**ABOVE •** Scotlyn Phegley, 2, comes out of the bathroom after having an accident. Her sister, Malayna, is unaware of what has happened.



**H**enderson is far from Fadumo Farah Abdi's birthplace in Mogadishu, Somalia. But it is now her home.

The fifth grader's young life has been filled with conflict and challenge, separation and sadness. When Fadumo and her older cousin, Nura, lost their parents in the Somali

Civil War, their aunt, "Big Fadumo" Kalif, took them in.

The three fled Somalia to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and, with assistance from a refugee agency, eventually flew to Bowling Green for permanent relocation in 2010. Big Fadumo's former job at a Tyson chicken-processing plant brought them to Henderson, where

they live with an uncle.

Most of Fadumo's classes at Bend Gate Elementary School are geared towards native speakers of English, but she receives individualized English Language Learning instruction four times a week.

Immigrant children often learn English quicker than their elders. Fadumo helps her

**ABOVE** • Fadumo Farah Abdi listens in Karen Beasley's fifth grade class at Bend Gate Elementary School.

aunt learn English, and she and her cousin often act as translators.

While a Muslim hijab covers Fadumo's hair for most of the day, she wears a shirt screen printed with Mario video game characters. She chose her new sneakers more for their light-up soles than their fit. Karen Beasley, Fadumo's teacher, says she has fallen in love with Fadumo's "quirky, funky personality."

When Fadumo brought home a letter from school asking for a copy of her birth certificate, she worried about receiving a class demerit if she couldn't produce one. She doesn't know her real birthday, but records at the immigrant services agency estimate it as Jan. 1, 2001.

Somali communities in large U.S. cities have support structures that help immigrants assimilate. While Henderson's schools and agencies have done much to help Fadumo and her family, they must make much of this American journey on their own.



**LEFT** • Fadumo laughs with friend Emily Hope during lunchtime at Bend Gate Elementary.



**LEFT** • Fadumo's cousin, Nura Omar, practices math in her apartment after school. The temporary henna tattoos on her hands and forearms were applied during a wedding celebration for her aunt and guardian, "Big Fadumo" Abji Kalif.



**BOTTOM LEFT** • Fadumo Abdi tries on sneakers in Kmart. The following day she complained that her feet hurt.





**ABOVE** • Fadumo (center) helps her aunt and guardian, “Big Fadumo” Kalif, read a children’s book in English.



**ABOVE** • After school, Fadumo runs from the bus stop to her apartment. While Fadumo’s house is just over the boundary in a different school district, teachers and administrators kept her at Henderson’s Bend Gate Elementary, the same school her older cousin attended.



# Retirement with a purpose

PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORY Maddie Meyer  
EDITING Naomi Driessnack



ABOVE • Bobbie Branson (right) joins her husband, Hal, and Lady, a foster dog. Three of Lady's puppies stay close to their mother.

As she turns the door knob to enter her house, Bobbie Branson can hear the jingle of dog tags and is quickly surrounded by five members of her family. Her face breaks into a broad smile as she bends over to embrace her dogs, then greets her husband, Hal. The two have been married for 57 years, and are dedicated to staying active in the community in which they were both raised.

"It's important to make a contribution," Hal says. "It's your rent for being on the earth. You gotta give back somethin'."

The Bransons do just that through fundraising for New Hope Animal Rescue Center. Their passion is illustrated best through their fostering of puppies. Over the past six years they have fostered approximately 650 animals.

Bobbie and Hal's backyard is also home to eight goats, 25 homing pigeons, 19 guinea fowl, five peafowl, 22 hens, eight cats, a cow and a pond full of koi, catfish, grass carp, bluegill and goldfish.

Caring for the foster dogs who aren't permanent residents involves basic training, a lot of cleaning and healthcare. Trips to the vet are a common occurrence, especially with puppies coming to the Branson home from off the street. Through these interactions, a bond is quickly formed with each animal for these self-proclaimed "critter lovers".

"When they leave here it's sad for us because we pour our heart and soul into them," Bobbie Branson said.

"But we love it," Hal quickly added. "Better to have loved than lost than to never have loved at all."



ABOVE • Hal takes a sip at the breakfast table on the small family farm.



ABOVE • Bobbie cuddles a puppy she is fostering for New Hope Animal Rescue Center, where she and Hal volunteer.



ABOVE • Hal prepares to milk his three dairy goats, Naomi, Penny and Raney. Hal and Bobbie drink the milk every morning with breakfast.

**RIGHT** • Hal mixes feed for his dairy goats before milking them. He milks the goats daily at 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

**BELOW** • Hal hauls firewood from a fallen pecan tree. Bobbie grew up the farm where they live today.



**ABOVE** • Hal and Bobbie share a morning blessing before breakfast. Hal is a retired minister, and both are very involved in the Spottsville Baptist Church.



**RIGHT** • Faith Bennett yawns during her U.S. Government class at her small Catholic high school, Majesty Academy, in Owensboro.

Typically, by the end of the week, Faith is exhausted because she gets two to four hours sleep a night. In spite of her responsibilities and homework load, she has straight A's.

**BELOW** • Faith sweeps the kennel of her dog daycare and overnight facility, Woofers Watchers, while Oreo watches from her enclosure.



**F**aith Bennett, 16, climbs onto the bed and starts gently shaking her younger sister. “Lily, Lily, time to get up.” The girl doesn’t stir until the deep voice of their motionless father sleeping beside her, rings out loud and firm, “Lily!”

Faith grabs Lily’s arm and pulls her to the edge of the bed. “You’re getting too old for this,” she says, sounding strained as she carries her sister past the exposed feet of their father and to the bathtub, telling her to get in.

This has been the morning routine for the Bennett family of Henderson since April when Darlene Bennett, Faith and Lily’s mother and Ron’s wife, died suddenly of a heart attack. The next night the three of them climbed in bed together and held onto what they still had – each other.

“Eskimos, they’ll all sleep together to stay warm because it’s life-sustaining. We all sleep together for comfort and protection,” says Faith.

In the hospital, Faith answered her mother’s phone that wouldn’t stop buzzing with clients of her Woofers Watchers dog hotel business. The high school sophomore fielded calls and organized people who took care of the dogs while Faith waited to hear if her mother would make it.

Faith says she and her father never discussed it. Faith just took over the business. It’s not unusual to see Faith with two iPhones, one raised to her ear as she types on the other, taking notes while she schedules an appointment with a client. Faith has one employee, an older woman named Faithful. Faithful takes care of the dogs a few times a week while Faith is at school or if nobody else is at home.

The morning after her mother died, Easter Sunday, Faith updated her Facebook page to let friends know. She wrote, “Yesterday, I lost my best friend. My other half. And the most amazing human I’ve ever met. The person I would run to when I was hurt, sad or angry,

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**ABOVE** • Faith’s eight year old sister, Lily, gets her hair styled before school. Faith is up each morning at 5, wakes her sister an hour later and helps her prepare for the day. Since their mother died in April, Faith has assumed many of the parenting roles for her sister and is the sole operator of Woofers Watchers, the family’s dog day care and kennel her mother created.

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and somehow she would always make it better, no matter what. Today, I celebrate the most important day. The day that gives me hope. Without today there would be no eternal life, no hope for the lost, no comfort for those left behind. People ask me if I'm angry at God. And I respond with a resounding, 'no.' Yes, I have many questions, but I know Jesus came, died and was risen for HER, and for us, so I can see my mommy again one day. And for that, I am so eternally thankful."

Seventy-nine people "liked" that post. People still approach Faith to thank her and tell her how much it affected them.

She says that Lily is her reason to keep going. "I gotta take care of her," Faith says. "It's my responsibility. If anything happened to her, I feel like I would have let my mom down."



**ABOVE** • Faith hauls a load of laundry out of the living room to be washed as her dog Napoleon watches from the couch.

**RIGHT** • Lily sits in bed with the television on as Faith gets in bed on this Friday night. Faith says she tries to be in bed early enough on Friday nights to get 16 hours sleep. Because of her myriad responsibilities, Faith gets between 2-4 hours sleep on school nights.

**FAR RIGHT** • Faith pauses in front of a portrait of her late mother Darlene before getting dressed for the day. Faith says the mornings are the hardest for her because she's so exhausted and she's still plagued with nightmares about her mother's recent death.







Linda Moss comes to Kelly's Mane Event each week for more than a shampoo and set.

"It's a good place to learn about the weekly news," she says. "If one of them doesn't know it, the other one definitely knows. If you are feeling depressed or having a bad day, they are always laughing and going on, and they lift your spirits."

Attorney Ike Norment and his wife have been clients for almost 10 years. He started coming to the salon after his secretary recommended it.

Kelly Alvey, 48, a hair dresser for 30 years, bought the salon 18 years ago after running Princess Beauty Salon on Main Street for more than six years. Her new place was called the Cardinal Beauty Shop, but she renamed it.

"I knew that most of the patrons would remember my name," Kelly says. "Also, I liked the play on words of 'mane' as in hair. Like a lion's mane."

Kelly is proud of the business she has built — and grateful for the many friends her work has given her.

"The people I work with are like a family to me," she says. "In the working world today, you spend more awake time with your working family than with your home family. People really have to trust us, because how many people do you let touch your head and face? It becomes a personal bond. You build a clientele that stays with you. You build a strong relationship with them."

"I've been here for 14 years and I still love it," says Judy Brown, who went to beauty college with Kelly and now works in her shop. "Just a group of good people. My boss, Kelly, is like my daughter to me."

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**ABOVE** • Kelly talks with longtime client Rhonda Gillham about the popular novel "50 Shades of Grey."

**LEFT** • Pam Leadingham has her hair shampooed after getting her highlights redone. Leadingham, who teaches math at South Middle School, has been a client of the salon for a decade.

**FAR LEFT** • Kelly Alvey tells Rhonda how her hair frizzed on a recent trip to Jamaica.

**RIGHT** • Kate Smith, 92, reads "People" magazine while she waits for her hair to dry.

**BELOW** • Carolyn Robards has been a client for almost 30 years and was best friends with Kelly's aunt.

**BOTTOM** • Verna Mitchell, 78, her weekly updo done.



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Kate Smith, 92, comes to the salon every Friday morning to have her hair done. How long has she been a client? "Oh, years!" she says. "I don't know how many years, but a long time."

The ritual of women coming in for a weekly shampoo and style is disappearing as so many now style their own hair at home. But for some of Alvey's older clients, getting their hair done is a way to get out of the house. "This is the only time

they get to socialize," she says.

"I've buried a lot of customers," Kelly adds. "We do go to the funeral home and fix their hair. I figured that's the last thing I could do for them."

As Kelly washed Dr. Michael Mayron's hair, she told a visitor that the neurologist diagnosed her vasculitis, an inflammatory disease that destroys blood vessels, in 2002.

"But she is the one that saves my self esteem every three weeks," the doctor replied. "Nobody is

better than Kelly."

While undergoing treatment in 2003, Kelly went through a divorce. She got legal advice from Norment and emotional support from many other clients.

"After I got divorced, not having children, not being able to work, these people supported me mentally and physically," Kelly says. "This one thing remained strong. My marriage failed. My health failed. But they didn't."



**TOP** • Kelly blow-dries Jean Berger's hair after doing her hair. While washing her hair, Kelly accidentally got Berger's clothes wet.

# Living his legacy

PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORY Dorothy Edwards  
EDITING Patty Reksten

**A**t 90 years old, Herman Alles shuffles through the front door every day knowing he is the last of his family to own Alles Brothers Furniture Co., which was founded in 1860 and his father, Jacob, moved to Henderson in 1899.

Jacob told his son to work hard for what he wanted, and Herman has carried that advice through his lifelong career as a businessman. "I go through life, never borrowed money from no one," he said, taking pride that he has always managed his own finances.

"He wishes he could get back out and work the floor," Patty Payne says about her boss of 20 years. He was once a gifted salesman, she says.

Employees say he is a good boss, and that's one reason some of them have been there for decades. Maggie Townsend, 82, has worked for Herman for 28 years. "We have birthdays and such for him; it's kinda a second family," she says.

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**RIGHT** • Herman Alles lives with his sister, Mary Frances Alles, 92, in her home, with caretakers who rotate from day to day. Alles Brothers Furniture Co. has been in the family since 1860, when it was founded in Jasper, Ind. It has operated in Henderson for more than 110 years. Neither Herman nor Mary Frances has children, so the company's future remains uncertain.



**LEFT** • When he is not working at the furniture store, Herman cares for his indoor and outdoor gardens.



**ABOVE** • Herman types order forms at in his office at the store. He prefers to work on an electric typewriter he has been using for almost 40 years. "I can't do any good with a computer," he says.



**ABOVE** • When Herman is not at home, Mary Frances depends on her dog, Oscar, for companionship.



**RIGHT** • Maggie Townsend greets Herman during her shift at the furniture business

**FAR RIGHT** • Herman leaves work at the end of the day.

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Neither Herman nor his sister, Mary Frances, 92, can live by themselves. They suffer from a hereditary condition that has left many elderly members of their family with hunched backs. Caregivers visit them daily.

"I am so happy to have these ladies from church," Mary Frances says. "They have been so good to us."

When Mary Frances' health began to decline, Herman moved into her house from his own next door. "Some days she does better than others," Herman says of his sister.

Herman spends most of his spare time gardening from his power chair. His yard is covered with a vast variety of flowers.

"I like to garden," he says. "I can sit in my chair and all my aches and pains go away."



**RIGHT** • Herman tends to his garden behind the house he shares with his sister, Mary Frances. "I just like to go out here and ride around on my chair," he says.

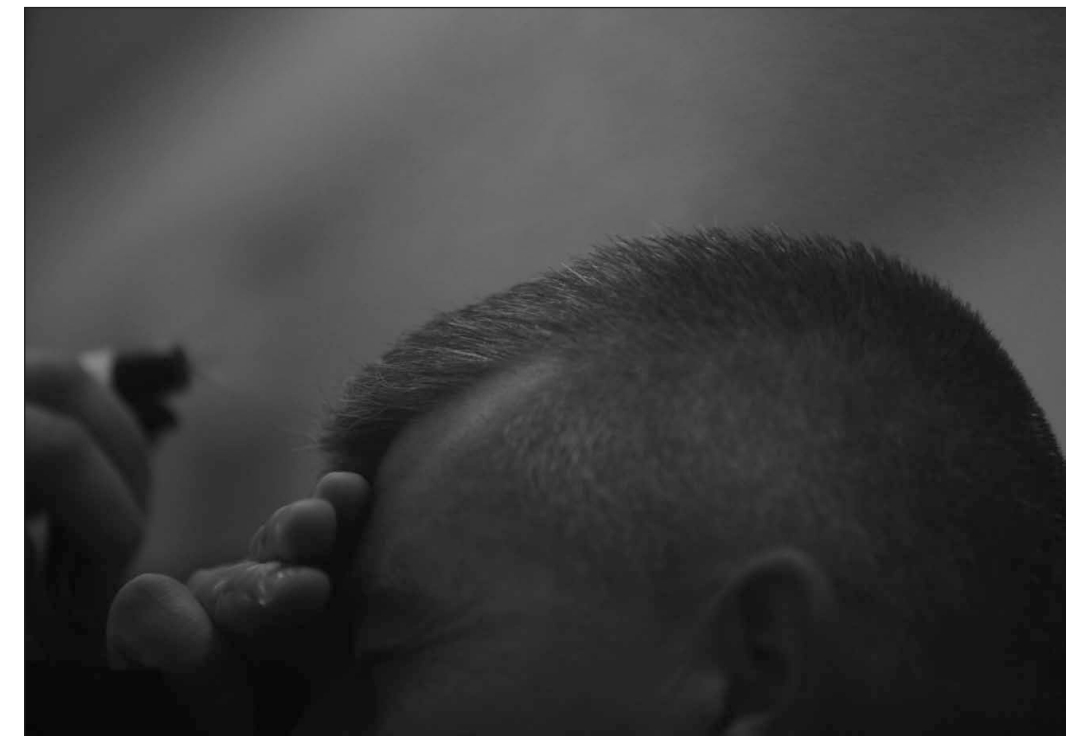






**LEFT** • Mac's Barber Shop, a mainstay in the East End neighborhood, is home to two barbers, longtime patrons, and daily laughs.

**BELOW** • Ryan "Mac" McElhaney, owner of Mac's Barber Shop, puts the finishing touches on a haircut at his Henderson barber shop.



**T**he oldest barber in Henderson doesn't take appointments. To get a hair cut from 85-year-old Don Burris, you drop by Mac's Barber Shop, a small white building that is a fixture in the historic East End neighborhood.

Don was born and raised just a block from the shop, and cut countless heads of hair there from 1979 until 1998, when Ryan "Mac" McElhaney dropped by and asked him if he'd ever thought about retiring. The retirement didn't last long—within a year, Don was back at Mac's.

Mac remembers the advice Don gave him when he took over the shop: "My suggestion to you is, don't change anything."

Too much change might upset the regulars. For his first two years as owner, Mac left the shop unchanged. When he did make changes, they were small.

Mac's Barber Shop embodies the spirit of East End: Don was at the hospital for the birth of Mac's mother; both barbers will make house calls for customers who can't make it to the shop. Men who have had their haircuts here for decades now come with young sons in tow.

"You learn a lot of things. You hear a lot of lies, too," Don says with a laugh. "It's hard work, and you don't get pensions or paid vacations as a barber."

"You don't see any barbers retiring at 55 or 60 years old," Mac says. But they both say they enjoy the people—their neighbors.

"It helps, knowing you've got so many friends," Don says.

**OPPOSITE** • Don Burris retired more than a decade ago but still cuts hair two days a week at Mac's Barber Shop in Henderson's East End "just to have something to do," he says. Tuesdays are busier than Wednesdays for Burris, who doesn't take appointments; his customers just drop in.

## Cool beans and barbecue

PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORY Jabin Botsford  
EDITING Katie Meek

It's a cool crisp early morning as Chris Waldrige begins tossing large amounts of chopped hickory logs and bark into a 52 year-old all brick smoking oven stained and charred from years of old fashioned traditional barbeque smoking.

The 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. window is Chris's favorite time of day and the most enjoyable part of work for him because it allows him to think and just be alone from the stresses and worries of life.

Chris has been working as a cook at Thomason's Barbecue for the last eight years.

"I couldn't ask for a better job and boss," Chris says. "You laugh about something every day here."

But maybe it's not a job.

"I like to think we are all a big family here," owner Frank Gibson says. "We probably joke around a little more than we should sometimes."

Frank has kept Thomason's style and process of cooking and preparing food as original as possible.

"That hand pulling is labor intensive; no one does that anymore," Frank says. "I know there are easier ways, but this is how we are going to do it."

Frank believes his customers really appreciate the quantity and extensive time they put into their products, specifically their barbecue baked beans. Since Frank bought Thomason's, his business has grown every year for the past 18 years and has gained more and more national recognition from newspapers, magazines and television shows.

"The beans is the best item we have going for us," Chris says. "If anybody comes here, they will be back, and if they don't, they don't like barbecue."



**ABOVE** • Norma Daniel (center), born and raised in Henderson, takes orders while the cook, Chris Waldrige (right), the cook, loads dip into a refridgerator at Thomason's Barbecue, a well-known barbecue establishment.



**ABOVE** • A comfortable and friendly atmosphere draws patrons to Thomason's Barbecue.

**LEFT** • Clarita Whelchel (left), jokes with other employees at Thomason's Barbecue while chopping some pork.



**ABOVE** • Chris Waldrige opens the door to the smoke pit at Thomason's Barbecue to cool it down so he can begin putting meat into the pit at 6:15 a.m. Chris has been working at Thomason's for eight years and starts cooking an assortment of dishes at 4 a.m. Chris says he enjoys the quiet of working alone in the early morning but also really enjoys the camaraderie with the other employees once they arrive.



Soon after Denise Smith graduated from high school in 1999, she fell in love. She married two years later, instantly becoming a mom to her husband's 3-year-old daughter, Madison.

They decided Denise would stay home and care for her stepdaughter. Soon she was pregnant with their daughter, Jacklyn. Two years later they had a son, Gage.

But a decade of marriage unraveled in 2011, and Denise found herself a single mother with three kids, including a stepdaughter who had become like her own. While her husband was supportive, nothing had prepared her for what lay ahead.

A high-school education and 10 years' experience as a homemaker didn't qualify Denise for a job that would support three kids, now 15, 10 and 8. Her first job, in a fast-food restaurant, earned her only \$60 a week.

In September 2011, Denise made a life-changing decision to enroll in Pat Wilson's Beauty College in Henderson, 30 miles from her home in Owensboro. At first, she was shy and insecure. Samantha Buckman, an instructor, remembers when Denise did her first roller set and ran to the bathroom in tears. Since then, though, Denise has experienced her own makeover, inside and out.

Denise has blossomed into a secure, confident woman with help from her second family at the beauty college. And she has learned skills that any community needs — and that can't be outsourced to another country.

With support from her ex-husband, Stephen Smith, and family, Denise says she is well on her way to independence.

"I'm proud of her," daughter Jacklyn says of her mother. "Really proud."



**FAR LEFT** • Kaye Gatewood of Henderson looks at hair color options with Denise Smith (right), her beautician at Pat Wilson's Beauty College. At left is Debra Messinmore of Livermore.

**ABOVE** • Denise finds pages in a magazine that show services she might want to offer as a beautician. Each student must compile such a portfolio.

**LEFT** • Denise cuts Kevin Lynn's hair.





**ABOVE** • Bettye Willingham drives a bus for the Henderson County school system. Before she heads out each morning, she runs a safety check that includes checking the tires with a hammer, checking under the hood and pumping the breaks.

**B**ettye and Ray Willingham feel blessed to be from Henderson. Both Bettye and Ray's grandparents are from Henderson. And they love the fact that Henderson feels like one big neighborhood.

"People from Henderson are wonderful," Bettye says. "We always help each other out."

Bettye and Ray also feel blessed that she has a job that pays for their insurance. They feel blessed that their two grown sons, Chris and Chip, and four grandkids are doing well in nearby Bowling Green. And they feel blessed that they found each at a junior/senior mixer in high school and have been in love ever since.

With blessings on so many fronts, they feel compelled to share their blessings with the community.

A big way they share those blessings is through a business they jointly started last year, PartTime Farm, which caters to children and their families. They decided to start the business after Ray retired last year from being a maintenance worker at an aluminum factory in Henderson. The PartTime Farm contains a petting zoo, a bonfire, hayrides, a playground, pumpkin patch, duck pond, and much more.

"We love to have fun," Bettye says. "Our children had fun, and we want other children to have fun."

It takes a lot of work to maintain the farm, they said. But Bettye and Ray are rewarded when they see the happiness on the children's faces.

"All the hard work pays off when they're here," Bettye says.

The farm yields produce, eggs and beef. The couple likes to share the food with friends. As active members of Bellfield Baptist Church, they also go out of their way to visit and do favors for people in need.

Bettye has been a bus driver for three years. "I love my kids," Bettye says. "Just like I love my own."

For Bettye and Ray, a typical "retirement" isn't an option.

"We enjoy staying busy. Most like to sit around watching TV. We like to be involved in the community," Bettye says. "Hopefully it will keep us younger on the inside."



**LEFT** • Bettye exits the cart she and Ray use around the farm. Sarah, the dog, prepares to exit as well. "This is Sarah's spot," Bettye says. "She loves to ride up with us."



**LEFT** • Ray pours feed into the troughs for the cattle. "We help each other out," says Ray. "I take care of the cattle, Bettye takes care of the chickens." Ray says this particular feed is high in protein. The Willinghams have mainly beef cattle.



**ABOVE** • Bettye selects eggs from the chicken coop at PartTime Farm. She feeds the chickens and cleans the coop every day. At her farm, she allows groups, adults and children, to come in and pick the chicken's eggs. "I set aside some eggs for the kids to pick," Bettye says. She and her husband, Ray, run the farm where the public can buy pumpkins, eggs and enjoy the petting zoo, hayride, playground and bonfire.



**ABOVE** • Bettye and Ray are high school sweethearts. "Our first date was at the junior senior dance," Bettye says. "Ray was late." Bettye and Ray frequently tease and have fun with each other. "I guess you'd say we love each other," Bettye says. They've been married for 46 years.

A swimsuit calendar clings to the cluttered yellow wall, frozen on March 2011. “But, Dwayne,” Cheryl says, “it’s October.” “I like Ms. March,” he replies, “I don’t need anyone but her.”

Confined to a motorized wheel chair, Dwayne Varble spends his days watching the DVDs that Cheryl Mathias delivers to Medco Center of Henderson. “My favorite is Dancing with Wolves,” he says, “I must have seen that one a hundred times.”

Cheryl has worked in libraries for her entire professional life, and transitioned to the Bookmobile, an outreach program of the Henderson County Public Library, when she craved autonomy. Twelve years later, she continues to deliver materials to all walks of Henderson life.

She strives to bring stories to the otherwise inaccessible. Cheryl frequently visits childcare centers, nursing homes, government subsidized housing, and homes of the elderly.

“They are hungry for companionship,” Cheryl says, “and I like hearing their stories.”

Cheryl met her husband Jimmy when she was 13, and they were married immediately following her college graduation. “Though we have no children, we have plenty of children in our life,” Cheryl says. She and Jimmy invest their time into their large extended family of nieces and nephews.

An orderly line has formed in anticipation for her arrival at Henderson Manor, and one by one; each eager patron stepped into her world.

“I finally got some batteries,” one said as he perused the CD collection, “thank the Lord.”

“Part of it is escapism,” Cheryl says, “and I’m just looking for a good story.”

**RIGHT** • Slots in the front bumper of her van provide Henderson County Public Library bookmobile librarian Cheryl Mathias a foothold as she cleans her windshield while refueling.



**LEFT** • “It’s all about your attitude,” David Johnson tells Cheryl Mathias of aging. “Everyone is different.” David and his wife recently moved from Pleasant Pointe apartment for seniors to a nearby complex and asked Cheryl to begin to deliver books to his new address.

**BELOW** • “There’s one movie left in the player,” Fred Price says as mobile librarian Cheryl arrives to his room in the nursing home. “I’d hate to forget that.”



**ABOVE** • Freda Rigdon receives an issue of Reader’s Digest in exchange for the books she has finished. Mathias’ patrons take advantage of her personalized services in their own ways.







**ABOVE** • Rose Wheeler, the religion educator at the Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in downtown Henderson, crosses herself after noon mass.

**W**hen Rose Wheeler's father died unexpectedly of a heart attack 17 years ago, she had to console her grieving mother. Rose redirected her mother to find solace in the Catholic church, the faith Rose had remained close to, but from which her mother had drifted away.

She was in her mid-thirties and a career waitress. But working with her mom sent her to get a post-bacc degree in pastoral ministry.

"It's not a job. It's a calling," Wheeler says. "I was called to be part of the church."

Now, she's the director of religious education at the Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church. Rose is a resource for those converting to Catholicism and for those she calls "coming home Catholics," raised in the church but looking to rekindle their faith.

Rose begins her day at 5 a.m. with a 45-minute workout and two cups of coffee. She swings by her mother's house before dropping her grandson at school. At her office, she schedules baptisms and plans Sunday school lessons. Then it's off to give communion to those who can't attend mass, or to parishioner's houses for counseling.

Wayne, her husband of 21 years, usually checks in to coordinate who will pick up grandson Alex from school, as Rose works late more often than not.

Alex, whom Rose and Wayne have raised since birth, helps keep Rose from burning out. On Wednesday nights, she and Alex share an "Us Day." That may find them eating their dinner inside a teepee set up in the living room.

While Rose admits her work and home lives are intertwined, she doesn't view that as a problem. Rather, she fulfills her faith by helping others rediscover theirs.



**ABOVE** • Martha Wilson (left) receives communion from Rose at Medco Center of Henderson retirement home. Wheeler travels into the community to give communion to those who cannot attend mass.



**LEFT** • As part of her morning routine, Rose re-lights candles that have gone out during the night in the chapel.

**RIGHT** • Wayne Wheeler embraces Rose, his wife of 21 years. Wayne has been out of work for a year after an injury forced him to retire.



**BELOW** • Rose adjusts her grandson Alex's collar in her mother's house before school. Rose and Alex visit her mother, Wilma Clary, to help her with basic chores.



**FAR RIGHT** • Rose walks down the aisle of the church, eyeing the pews and fixing any bibles that may be sideways or out of place.





**ABOVE** • Ernie "Deacon" Lingerfelt, pastor of Warehouse of Worship and Soldiers of Truth in God's Army, two non-traditional churches in Henderson, paces between pews during a church service. He rarely stands at the pulpit while preaching at his church.



**ABOVE** • "When I wear this vest, people know who I am and what I stand for," says Ernie. "At first they are confused or even frightened, but I'm just here to talk about God."



**ABOVE** • Suazanne Moore (left) and Charlotte O'Bryant (right), both of Henderson, Ky, hold Tom "Batman" Simon, of Detroit, Mich., during one of Ernie's services.

**E**rnie Lingerfelt served a seven-month sentence for burglary in 1985. After being released, he fell back into some of the same behavior that landed him in prison, even after he felt God calling him to preach.

"If I didn't get saved, I would be back in jail or dead. I have no doubt about it," says Ernie, whom everyone calls Deacon. He finally accepted God into his life and was ordained as a pastor in 2007.

Two years later, Deacon became the head pastor at Warehouse of Worship, a non-denominational church, and Soldiers of Truth in God's Army, a motorcycle ministry. Both congregations include drug addicts, alcoholics and other people down on their luck. Deacon said he has never turned away anyone.

"I'm against religion," he says. "Religion says you have to look like us and talk like us. I preach relationships."

Deacon takes a non-traditional approach to being a pastor. He wears a T-shirt and jeans, and he rarely stands behind the pulpit while preaching.

"I never wanted to be put on a pedestal," he says. "I want to be with the people."

Deacon delivers donated food, coats and toys to people in need. Before each service he serves a meal to anyone who shows up at the Warehouse of Worship. Often, it is the best meal any of them, including the children, will get.

"If someone calls me in the middle of the night and needs to pray with me, I'll be there," he says.

Deacon's congregation seems to appreciate that he has experienced many of the problems they struggle with. The prison tattoos on his arms are a constant reminder of the past he hasn't abandoned but has overcome.



**ABOVE** • Ernie "Deacon" Lingerfelt performs an "anointing of the oils" on Ro Woodley during a church service. "I've been suffering. I've been angry," says Ro, whose son is facing a possible 50-year sentence for committing a violent crime. "I know God is good, but He has put me through so much and I said some horrible things. I'm so sorry for saying those things."





**ABOVE** • Robbie Williams passes the cypress trees on the wetland plot he and five friends purchased for the nearby John James Audubon State Park. The cypress trees are home to bald eagles during certain parts of the year. Since December 2011 the six friends have built a handicapped-accessible boardwalk and cleared more than two miles of trails. “A good farmer and a good environmentalist are the same thing,” Robbie says.

**RIGHT** • Robbie and daughter Anna laugh at a funny photograph Anna snapped of herself in a home studio where Anna experiments with art and photography. “I have lots of costumes,” Anna said.



The soil in Henderson County has been farmed for generations. The Williams Farm, like many others, is a result of decades of painstaking work, hardship and triumph.

Owner Robbie Williams owns a 600-acre plot of land on which he lives and raises soybeans, wheat, corn and cattle. He and his wife, Liz, have two daughters, Anna, 8, and Caroline, 19. Like many farmers, Robbie doesn’t just farm in one place but also leases around 5,000 additional acres from nearly 20 landowners all over the county. He oversees several employees on his leased and owned land and is “constantly solving problems,” he says. “It’s kind of like playing a chess game.”

Although problem solving is a large part of being the boss of an enormous operation, Robbie sees his work as deeply rooted in his family and in himself. “We need to all appreciate everything before us,” he said. “All the hard stuff was done by the people before us.” Robbie is tied to his family’s

farmland. He farmed some of the same lands he lives on today with both of his grandfathers.

In 2004 the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce named Robbie the “Agriculturist of the Year” for his immense support of the agriculture sector. Although farming is a way of life for Robbie, he also has a passion for land that involves more than just sowing seeds.

In December 2011, Robbie and five partners — Tommy Dempewolf and his son, Tom; brothers Scott and Houston Keach; and Will Esche — purchased some 650 acres wetlands located near the John James Audubon State Park. The group polled their resources to build wheelchair accessible boardwalks and trails on the land and their eventual goal is to have the land acquired by the state of Kentucky and sanctioned as a state park. After this acquisition of the land, the group was recognized by the Hometown Hero Award for what they did and were planning to do.



**ABOVE** • Drew Clements (far right) and Justin Parker (middle right) await instruction from Williams before driving to the wetlands near John James Audubon State Park. Drew and Justin are two of Robbie’s part-time employees. “I have to be the organizer,” Robbie says. “It’s kind of like playing a game of chess.”

# Always 110 percent

PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORY Cameron Clark  
EDITING Emily Free

It's a rare 17 year old who has the maturity to juggle the schedule that Casey Millhof does. What cheerleader would choose craft night for her church after the Homecoming game (where she was on the court) instead of going to the dance most of the high school is attending?

She wakes up at 5:30 a.m. and hits her snooze button five times because, even if she's tired, the snooze helps her feel like she "got more sleep."

By 7:15 a.m. on Wednesdays she is already at one of two middle schools as a representative for WyldLife, a Christian student organization aimed at reaching middle school kids.

Next she drives her Chevy Malibu to Henderson County High School (where she has a 4.0 average) and takes two AP courses plus "Student Bank" where she is the co-president. She has a co-op class where she is a paid administrative assistant for two to three hours a day and then heads to cheerleading practice. If she doesn't have cheerleading, she hits the gymnastics floor and completes a tumbling routine including eight back flips and three tumbling passes.

She eats a quick tuna sandwich at Subway, and because her shift at Sonic that evening was canceled, she attends the regional boys soccer game with friends. As if this wasn't enough, followed by Youth Group at First Assembly of God where she is an active member.

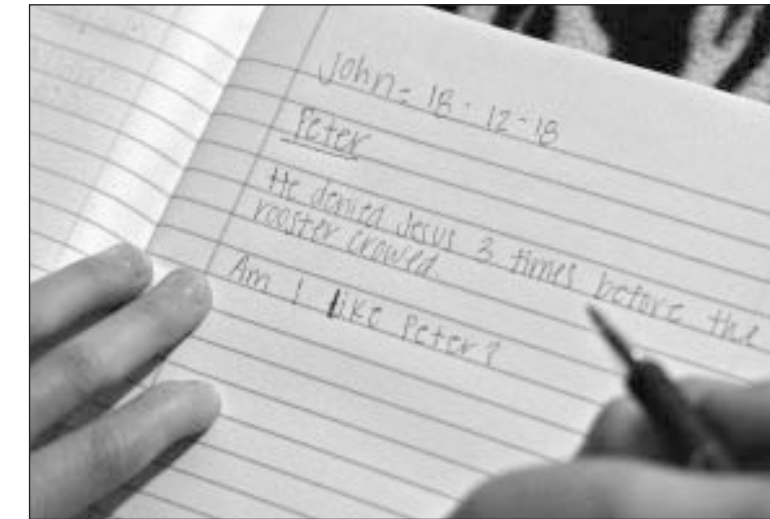
To close her day around 10 p.m. she receives a text from her WyldLife coordinator with a Bible passage that she reads and studies, and then prays before falling asleep to start it all again the next day.

Jessica Grace, Casey's Financial Services teacher, describes Casey as a "natural leader who lives her life as an example of her faith." Jessica has never heard Casey utter an unkind word about anyone.

Tony Rutledge, her cheerleading coach, says, "Casey is exactly what every coach wants. She gives 110 percent every day"



**ABOVE** • Bryce Hoffman (left) and Casey Millhof play Creationary at North Middle School. Casey, a senior at Henderson County High School, spends her sixth and seventh hours, as well as time after school, at the middle school assisting in the after-school program. Casey dressed up for "Twin Day," part of Homecoming Spirit Week festivities.



**ABOVE** • After reading the Bible on her iPhone, Casey writes about the verses John 18:12-18 before praying and going to bed after another full day. Her YoungLife leader sends a nightly text message containing a Bible verse for study.



**ABOVE** • Casey (right) and Holly Backer, cheerleaders at the homecoming pep rally at Henderson County High School, "pinked out" for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Their bows, shirts, socks and pom poms are pink.



**ABOVE** • Enjoying the Henderson County High School regional boys soccer game against Hopkinsville are (from left) seniors Casey and Holly Backer, both 17, and junior Savannah Vowels, 16.



**ABOVE** • Damien attempts to hug his girlfriend during bus change at Henderson County High School. Even though the two go to separate schools, they see each other briefly when Damien switches buses at the school.



**ABOVE** • Damien pushes fellow Central Academy student, Alex Skipworth, on the bus. The altercation never went past this shove from Damien, but was started when they both yelled comments at each other about who was the tougher man.

Walking into the building feels like walking into a correctional facility. The walls are plain, with holes cut in the top of the drywall so students in each room can hear students in other rooms. Cameras watch every move. Adjacent to each classroom are “time out” rooms, which are more like solitary confinement.

This is Central Academy, a school for students who have been in various degrees of trouble, suffer severe learning disorders, or are otherwise not typically developing. “Everyone is scared of these students,” says Vice Principal Zack Windell. “But

we are willing to help them.”

One of these kids is Damien Moore, an attractive soft-spoken 16 year-old with shaggy hair that usually covers his eyes and a don’t-look-at-me-the-wrong-way persona. Damien was sent to Central Academy after getting in trouble for possession of and trafficking a narcotic at Henderson County High School his freshman year. Enrolled at Central Academy now for three years, Damien hopes to return to Henderson County High School.

Damien suffers from severe depression, a result of a troubled past and the death of his two

grandparents whom he was extremely close to. He says he hides his emotions by putting up a “front.”

“It sucks so much, and dealing with it sucks because I guess people can tell and they’re like, ‘What’s wrong?’ And I’m like, ‘Nothing,’” Damien says. “And then I try to cover it up with a smile, but when I’m alone, it just gets to me.”

However, Damien is growing up and has made drastic improvements since he first walked into Central. He has plans to attend college and become a lawyer, something an average boy can’t do – and Damien is no average boy.

**OPPOSITE** • Damien Moore watches a slide show presentation during Art and Humanities class at Central Academy where he was transferred after getting into trouble his freshman year at Henderson High School. The presentation about the artist Rembrandt fascinated Damien, who has always been interested in art.



# Living for the lights

PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORY Jon Hernandez  
EDITING Naomi Driessnack

After first turning down Denise Drive and seeing its suburban houses, you wouldn't think twice about this street.

Then you come across one house that catches your eye. Elaborate Halloween decorations adorn the yard, transforming a simple patch of green grass into a graveyard filled with plastic skeletons.

But step inside the home and you'll find a different theme. University of Kentucky blue dominates the living room and classic rock radio can be heard throughout the house at all hours.

In the black recliner, a man with a large smile and an even larger heart greets you. Rick "Poncho" Lambert was born and raised in Henderson, and is the biggest fan on the Henderson County sports scene.

While attending Henderson County High School in the late 1960s, Rick was a part of the Colonels football team. Coach Mojo Hollowell dubbed Rick "Poncho," and it's stuck ever since.

Speak with anyone in Henderson and they'll tell you that you can always find Poncho in the stands or on the sidelines of any Henderson County High School game cheering on every athlete while inviting fellow fans to dig into his signature bag of bubble gum.

Poncho's deep love of sports started from playing as a youngster. "I guess I was born loving it," says Poncho, "I really miss it." Now in his early 60s, Poncho can no longer play sports, but that doesn't stop him from attending games and being Henderson's number one fan.

Poncho says that in 55 years of attending local games, he can recall missing games only twice. Poncho's love doesn't just drive him to attend games, he also donates to the athletic programs. His devotion is so great that in 2008, he was inducted into the Henderson County Sports Hall of Fame.



**LEFT** • Players at the Upward Basketball practice at Community Baptist Church get words of encouragement from Rick "Poncho" Lambert. Poncho has been coaching Upward Basketball for years, says Rev. Mary Wrye. "Poncho would do anything for you," Mary says. "He's a man with a huge, God-shaped heart."

**ABOVE** • Poncho gives words of praise to Henderson County Senior Kicker, James Bickers, after he completed a kick return that resulted in a touchback.



**ABOVE** • Poncho cheers on members of his Upwards Basketball League as they prepare for their 9 a.m. game at Community Baptist Church.



## 37 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.  
2006 / MADISONVILLE, KY.  
2007 / DANVILLE, KY.  
2008 / MAYFIELD, KY.  
2009 / MURRAY, KY.  
2010 / ELIZABETHTOWN, KY.  
2011 / SOMERSET, KY.  
2012 / HENDERSON, KY.

This year's workshop participants:

MULTIMEDIA

**Austin Anthony**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Shauna Bittle**, *Evergreen State College*, staff • **Benjamin Brayfield**, *Rapid City (South Dakota) Journal* • **Brett Carlsen**, *Freelance* • **Kathleen Flynn**, *Tampa Bay Times* • **Edmund Fountain**, *Tampa Bay Times* • **Adam Lau**, *The Baton Rouge Advocate* • **Deana Mitchell**, *ABCNews.com* • **Laura Elizabeth Pohl**, *Bread For The World* • **G. Ligaiya Romero**, *University of North Carolina* • **Russell Scalf**, *U.S. Airforce* • **Megan Tan**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Joanie Tobin**, *Harvard Business School* • **Andy Wallace**, *Freelance* • **Ivan Weiss**, *University of North Carolina* • **Anna Wooten**, *Gillette News-Record*

PHOTOJOURNALISM

**Lisa Di Giacomo**, *student, Columbus State Community College* • **Ashley Blue**, *University of North Carolina* • **Jabin Botsford**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Cooper Burton**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Matthew Busch**, *Freelance* • **Mika Chance**, *University of North Carolina* • **Margaret Cheatham Williams**, *Freelance* • **Connor Choate**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Cameron Clark**, *Cameron and Kelly Studios* • **Veasey Conway**, *Freelance* • **Dorothy Edwards**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Lisa Di Giacomo**, *Columbus State College* • **Lathan Goumas**, *Boston University* • **Danny Guy**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Jerry Habraken**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Jon Hernandez**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Sammy Jo Hester**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Carolina Hidalgo**, *Tampa Bay Times, Intern* • **Jacob Hill**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Peyton Hobson**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Pinar Istek**, *University of Missouri* • **Mark Mahan**, *Freelance* • **Ian Maule**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Carter McCall**, *University of North Carolina* • **Katherine McLean**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Maddie Meyer**, *Ohio University* • **Leah Millis**, *Freelance* • **Griffin Moores**, *Rochester Institute of Technology* • **Abby O'Bryan**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Stephen Remich**, *Freelance* • **Julysa Sosa**, *University of North Carolina* • **Brittany Sowacke**, *Freelance* • **Natalie Taylor**, *University of North Carolina* • **Michelle Tessier**, *University of North Carolina* • **Ariana van den Akker**, *University of North Carolina* • **Carolyn Van Houten**, *University of North Carolina* • **Julia Wall**, *University of North Carolina*

PHOTO EDITING/DESIGN

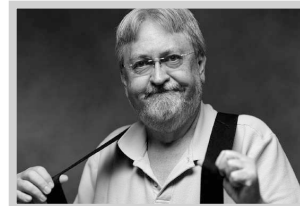
**Katie Meek**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Emily Free**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Naomi Driessnack**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Jeff Brown**, *Western Kentucky University* • **Eric Shea**, *Western Kentucky University*

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS DATASEAM ATTENDEES

**Randy Evans**, *Dataseam* • **Henry Hunt**, *Dataseam* • **Sabrina Back**, *Morgan County, Ky.* • **Jessica Bowling**, *Jackson, Ky.* • **Traci Mendez Campbell**, *Muhlenberg County, Ky.* • **Deloris Everley**, *Ohio County, Ky.* • **Jeff Hauke**, *Owensboro, Ky.* • **Jo Gentry**, *Ohio County, Ky.* • **Eddie Groves**, *Ohio County, Ky.* • **Meredith Jarboe**, *Ohio County, Ky.* • **Kim McClellan**, *Muhlenberg County, Ky.* • **Ben Thompson**, *Crittenden County, Ky.* • **Beth Travis**, *Muhlenberg County, Ky.*



James Kenney, *Western Kentucky U.*



Jim Bye, *Western Kentucky U.*



Tim Broekema, *Western Kentucky U.*



Jeanie Adams-Smith, *Western Kentucky U.*



David Adams-Smith, *Chicago Tribune (ret.)*



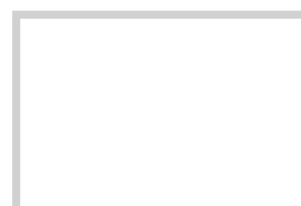
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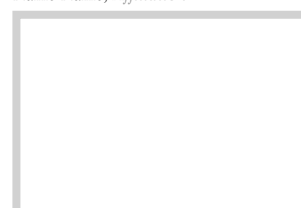
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## An epilogue | What we learned in Henderson

Some lessons were practical: Get a ladder! Fill the frame! Think before you shoot!

Other lessons were so much easier said than done: Get inside the circle. Find the heart of the story. Figure out what will make people care about your subject.

Looming over it all, the ultimate lesson: Never stop trying. Never stop learning. Never give up. Rise before dawn when every bone in your body wants to stay in bed, go out into that crisp air, and experience light in a way you never dreamed possible.

It was mid-October in Henderson, Ky., and 59 journalists were here to document life in this Ohio River town. They came from all over the country to learn visual storytelling from some of the best coaches in the business. Each journalist got an assignment, by random drawing from a hat, and each of them had five days to create a compelling story. Some would tell their stories in still photographs and words like those that appear in this book. Others would produce multimedia pieces for website production. All of them would work under the watchful eyes of 22 coaches, top professionals in their fields. Members of the Mountain Workshops Class of 2012 would have a chance to hone their skills, learn the latest techniques, and test state-of-the-art technology. Most would soon learn that it takes more than great equipment and great technical skill to make a great story.

Stephen Remich of Chesapeake, Va., started the week learning a practical lesson: He brought in a sweet photo of a fisherman casting a net into the river with a riverboat passing by—all in the glow of a setting sun. Photo coach Barry Gutierrez zeroed in on a flaw. Part of the man's foot was missing. Stephen said it was a frustrating reminder of an admonition by famed photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson: "Millimeters matter."

"Even when everything else is right," Stephen said, "you still have to get the foot in the frame."

Come Friday night, Stephen was despairing. His story assignment was Constance Brooks, a teen-age

single mom caring for an 18-month-old son. Somehow his photos made it look like her life was nothing but fun. Barry, his coach, knew what was missing: Stephen had not been able to enter her comfort zone, where she would become unaware of the camera. Then, early Saturday morning, Constance's son had a complete meltdown. When Barry saw the photo of Constance looking utterly defeated, eyes closed, still in her jammies and her hair a mess, there were high fives all around. "You did it," he shouted. "You cracked the circle!"

In a workshop on picture editing and book design, Ariana van den Akker's poignant but jarring photos prompted lessons about ethics, privacy and taste. Ariana, a freelance photographer from El Dorado Hills, Calif., was doing a story about Darrel Boling, who had suffered brain damage in a car accident, and his wife who has lovingly cared for him ever since.

One picture showed Darrel in nothing but a diaper and socks while Opel, his wife of 50 years, led him to bed for a nap. It was a strong statement about Opel's love and care, and some students thought it should be a major photograph in the book. Others thought it shouldn't run at all.

Editing coach Mick Cochran advised running it, but as a smaller element in the layout.

"You have to be honest and straightforward," said Mick, "letting people know they can trust you... The impact of the page is now a little more tender, and a little less jarring, and a little more compassionate."

Workshop participants like Ariana expect to go home with priceless lessons from the pros. But at the end of the Mountain Workshops, many participants are surprised by what they learned from their photo subjects, like the people of Henderson County who trusted them and let them into their lives.

"I learned a lot about what love means," said Ariana. "It taught me not to give up on the people you love."

Those lessons were the lessons of life.

• **Cynthia Mitchell**  
Central Washington University



PHOTO BY NINA GREIPEL

**ABOVE** • Workshops participant Pinar Istek, a senior at Missouri School of Journalism, says she used to be a city girl, but now enjoys the countryside. She was shooting a feature close to the Slough. Istek is from Turkey and came to the United States to study chemical engineering. She later switched to journalism.

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