ROOTED IN BEAUTY | SOMERSET, KENTUCKY

THE 2011 MOUNTAIN WORKSHOPS

"It's the most beautiful place in the world." | BARRY BURKETT, CATTLE FARMER AND DENTIST

The 2011 Mountain Workshops
PULASKI COUNTY, KENTUCKY

SOMERSETMOUNTAINWORKSHOPS2011

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SPECIAL THANKS: We would like to thank the entire population of Pulaski County for making this a special event.
We will never forget you.

"It's the most beautiful place in the world." | BARRY BURKETT, CATTLE FARMER AND DENTIST

Coming home to Somerset

We find Pulaski County to be a community of contrasts

Photo, this page • A Mountain Workshops participant documents a rainy downtown day in Somerset.

PHOTO BY
MARK OSLER

Cover photo • A weekly game of rummy is a ritual for (clockwise from left) Kenneth Brown, John Evans, Donald Mincey and William Elliott. They've played cards several times a week for about a year. "Well, there's not much else to do around here," Kenneth said.

PHOTO BY
SHELBY MACK

Back cover photo • Pat Weistein, Alex Truett's speech therapist since January, has a loving moment with him after spelling, counting and reading lessons. Alex, 8, is autistic. His father, Lenny, found Pat while in the check-out line at Burke's Outlet in Somerset. He was on the phone with his wife discussing where to could find a good speech therapist.

PHOTO BY
JERRY ENGLEHART, JR.

The sun rises here over rugged hills, passes over the bustling city of Somerset and sets over rolling farmland.

This is Pulaski County, where the coalfields of Appalachian Kentucky give way to the Pennyroyal region of fertile land pocked with caves that stretches to the west.

The landscape inspires strong opinions among many residents.

"It's the most beautiful place in the world," says Barry Burkett, a local root-canal specialist.

Barry, who grew up in the county, knows whereof he speaks. He traveled the world in the Navy before returning home to a piece of the farm his grandfather bought nearly a century earlier.

The diversity of the terrain is matched by the local economy which has a strong tourism base, nicely balanced by significant business contributions in manufacturing, service, healthcare and agriculture.

The county includes part of Lake Cumberland, the largest man-made reservoir in the Eastern U.S. The lake draws hundreds of thousands of visitors a year, pumping millions into the local economy, and also attracts new residents.

Brett Call moved to Pulaski County to become resource manager at the lake, after other postings around the country with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He, his wife Sherry and their six children live on a small farm.

It is a welcoming community, he says, with a small-town feel but adequate amenities, and easy access to nature in the woods or on the water.

"It's big enough to get what I need," Brett says, "and small enough to get a smile when I buy it."

The U.S. 27 corridor through Somerset and beyond is lined with hotels, restaurants and stores along a tourist trail that leads not only to the lake, but to the popular Cumberland Falls State Resort Park and the Big South Fork National Recreation Area. But tourism isn't the only game in town.

Just beyond the city lights the county's hardworking farmers rank among Kentucky's top producers of cattle, goats, hay and vegetables. The factories here make everything from wood products to auto parts, and one company employs hundreds of workers providing online support services. Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital, the hub for advanced medical services in this part of the state, is also one of the county's largest single employers.

Somerset, a town of 11,000, prides itself on a history that goes back more than 200 years. Many well-kept historic buildings clustered around the city square reflect this pride of time and place.

Clearly, a lot of people have found a lot to like here. Some, like Barry Burkett, are rooted in family trees that go back for generations, while others take their time discovering its charms.

When Renny Smith left the county, he wasn't looking back. He was heading for college in New York, and bright lights were in his future. But his father died when Renny was in graduate school, so he came home to take over the family monument business.

Still he saw the move as temporary, but things can happen. Life-changing things like a wife and kids. In the 20-plus years since, he's come to appreciate family connections, the strong sense of community, and the creative energy of a local arts colony. Plenty of things to do here, but it's small enough to be safe.

"I can't imagine there being a better place in the United States to raise children," Renny says. "I'm really lucky – to have tried to get out and fate pushed me back. I'm thankful for that."

• Bill Estep
Lexington Herald Leader

Faces

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Dusk draws near over downtown Somerset on a Friday evening.

Photo by Sam Oldenburg

Lynn's Lunchbox on Maple Street in downtown Somerset has been the local favorite for burgers since 1922. Sandi Lynn Simpson has owned the Lunchbox for six years. She brought the diner back to its original concession-style menu and original design with a few upgrades. The stools have been resurfaced and repainted but use the original frames.

Photo by Justin Philalack

Nature is working to absorb an old tow truck into the landscape of rural Burnside.

Photo by Spencer Bakalar

Decades of weathering can be seen in a long-abandoned storefront on the backroads of Burnside.

Photo by Spencer Bakalar

Allison Sobieck, 31, gives 2-year-old daughter Rae Elizabeth a warm hug instead of the pie she wanted, because dinner is a few minutes away. Allison and her husband, Chuck, own the Doolin House Inn in Somerset.

PHOTO BY NAT BAYJAY

After the Somerset Zombie Walk which began downtown, John Walters,28, and Katie Phelps, 28, both of Somerset, wait to place their orders at a McDonalds on Hwy. 27.

PHOTO BY LESLYE DAVIS

Amon's Sugar Shack opens each morning at 5 a.m. The bakery has become a popular gathering place for the people of Somerset.

Photo by Heather Cassano

"Active Day" is one of two adult day care programs in Pulaski County. For the diverse group of individuals who are in the program, "Active Day" is a place to receive health care, meals, social interaction, and exercise. Ranging in age from 17 to 97, this tight-knit group exhibits a broad range of physical and mental disabilities. Yet "Active Day" remains a place filled with laughter and hugs.

Photo by Tim Harris

The sidewalk in front of her furniture store in downtown Somerset is a frequent gathering place for Teresa McCarty and her friends and family. On Tuesday evening she sat out there and chatted with her dog and sister in law, Louanna Shirks (left).

Photo by Shelby Mack

On a beautiful fall afternoon, Dr. Larry Sear Nichols, 64, took his 3-year-old granddaughter, Jocelyn Grace Beard, across the block to Dairy Queen in downtown Somerset to get a hot fudge sundae.

Photo by Tim Harris

Koko, left, and Kibo get a break from routine search and rescue missions to take a ride into the city. The standard poodles are veterinarian Tammie Bumgardner's oldest “girls” on her rescue team.

Photo by Sarah Coulter

Rusty Glencaster, 62, and his dog Ringo visit with Dave Crockett, 49, who sells the local newspaper, the Commonwealth Journal. “I am old fashion when it comes to news,” said Glencaster, referring to his preference for print over the internet.

Photo by Sarah Gerace

The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers lowered Lake Cumberland in 2007 as part of a repair project, exposing a big swath of bare bank. That lowered business at Lee's Ford Marina and Resort, says owner J.D. Hamilton. He has lost more than $1 million. "It's like a hill and you get up it then realize there is valley and another hill," Hamilton says.

Photo by Jerry Englehart Jr.

Vehicles drive over a bridge on Highway 80 that spans the Fishing Creek tributary.

Photo by Jerry Englehart Jr.

Pulaksi County senior lineman Tyler Abney holds a bouquet of roses before stepping onto the field with his parents during senior night cermonies. The Maroons wore pink jerseys in the game for breast cancer awareness.

Photo by Eric Shea

Middle school student Brynlee Bigelou, 13, lifts weights in the Somerset High School weight room with the varsity basketball team while her friends Jensen Pierce, 13, and Topanga Brown, 14, spot her. All of the girls attend Meece Middle School.

Photo by Ariana McLaughlin

"Get your feet off the ground," says coach Chuck Sobieck during a football practice at Somerset Christian School.

PHOTO BY NAT BAYJAY

Ella Williams, 18, of Somerset, Ky teaches a "tot" gymnastics class at Missy's Gymnastics. As young as two years old, the children start learning power tumbling and dance.

PHOTO BY JOSH MAUSER

A family of kittens take refuge from gusty weather on the porch of a downtown Somerset home.

Photo by Natalie St. John

Resting on the finger of a student, a screech owl stares at a photographer at Southwestern High School's Raptor Rehabilitation Center in Somerset.

Photo by Morgan Walker

For six weeks in the fall, students and local residents visit Bear Wallow Farm in Nancy to feed goats at the petting zoo, take hayrides and get lost in the farm's four-acre maze.

Photo by Carolina Hidalgo

Frisky, curious horses await the warming sun on a ranch off route 435 northeast of Somerset.
Photo by Tony Hoare

A cow is loving the warming sun after a chilly October night on route 435 northeast of Somerset.
Photo by Tony Hoare

No better roads lie ahead for this retired American icon that sits in William Fulcher's field off Kentucky 39 northeast of Somerset.

Photo by Tony Hoare

Nick Palmer and his daughter, Inasent Palmer, pull a large timber from the rubble of a demolished tobacco warehouse across from the Pulaski County Board of Education in Somerset.

Photo by Charles Weibel

In preparation for next year's crop, unused tobacco sticks are bundled and stacked on the Muse family farm.

Photo by Brittany Sowacke

Burnside Mayor Ron Jones and his wife, Emma Lou, celebrate their grandaughter Crystal's achievements with a trophy room in their home. Crystal's grandparents raised her from the age 5, when her father died.

Photo by Michele Kraus

A heavy fog hangs in the October air as the sun rises over Cedar Creek Vineyard and Winery in Pulaski County.
Photo by Katie Rausch

A goose takes off from a Burnside Marina dock during the early morning hours to join his flock waiting on the opposite shore of Lake Cumberland.
Photo by Whitney Leaming

Patriot, a three-year-old bald eagle, is part of the Raptor Rehabilitation Center at Southwestern High School in Somerset. The program gives care to injured birds with a goal of releasing them back into the wild.

PHOTO BY MORGAN WALKER

Goats in a field near Teresa Avenue in Somerset look for something to eat.

PHOTO BY ALIX MATTINGLY

The sun sets beyond Lake Cumberland in Pulaski County. The lake is about 50 feet below its normal level because of a crack in the Wolf Creek dam.

Photo by Sam Oldenburg

The Norfolk Southern Corp. railroad “Rathole” double-track mainline goes through Burnside, south of Somerset. The track runs along the former Cincinnati, New Orleans and Texas Pacific Railroad right-of-way. The line handles dozens of coal and mixed-freight trains per day. It got the name “Rathole” because it passes through multiple stone-cut tunnels between Burnside and Harriman Junction, Tenn.

Photo by Luke Sharrett

Gravestones stand watch through the night at Mill Springs National Cemetery outside Nancy. The cemetery, operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, lies near the site of the 1862 Battle of Mill Springs, the first significant Union victory in the Civil War and the second-largest battle, in terms of caualties, fought in Kentucky.

Photo by Sam Oldenburg

A Somerset resident spends his morning with head phones in his ears and a cigarette in his mouth outside the Somerview Personal Care Home assisted living facility.

Photo by Megan Tan

Sandi Gibson and her son, Brayden Stephens, 3, take a break from raking their leaves into Halloween trash bags to play together in their front yard in Ferguson.

Photo by Morgan Walker

Isaac Call, 4-year-old cowboy investigator, searches for clues and shoots invisible villains while his mother cans apple pie filling.

Photo by Charles Weibel

The Mountain Workshops

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PHOTO BY NINA GREIPEL

ABOVE • Los Angeles Times staff photographer, and Pulitzer Prize winner Carolyn Cole addresses her participant team members at the beginning of the Mountain Workshops.

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James H. Kenney, *director*
The Mountain Workshops at Western Kentucky University

The stories we tell

A table of contents

Helping farmers

PHOTOGRAPHY Katie Rausch
EDITING Jabin E. Botsford

ABOVE • Veterinarian Bruce Burkett runs the only practice in Pulaski County that treats large animals.

Dr. Bruce Burkett requests a suture. His assistant hands him the curved, threaded needle and then pushes up Burkett's glasses, which slipped down his nose as he leaned over to concentrate on a patient.

Bruce is trying to save a valuable Holstein dairy cow suffering from a rare, twisted stomach. The successful surgery has the Holstein up and eating within minutes.

Bruce 52, grew up on a tobacco and corn farm. He says he became a veterinarian because it would keep him involved in agriculture.

"I don't know what else I would do," he says. "Since I was in middle school, this is what I wanted to do."

Now in his 28th year as a veterinarian, Bruce maintains his passion for treating large animals, mostly cows and horses, even though that part of the practice has dwindled. He used to do nothing else, but treating cows and horses now accounts for only about 15 percent of his time.

Bruce says his is the only independent veterinary practice in the county that does large-animal work. Many vets don't do such work because "you can't make a living" at it, he says.

Many farmers have stopped hiring independent veterinarians like him to regularly check their cows.

Local Mennonite farmers mostly keep Bruce's large-animal business going. Mennonites often do regular checks, during which Bruce assesses their herd's health.

During such a check, farmer Mervin Weber asked Bruce to inspect a cow that stopped eating and began losing her balance. Bruce put his ear to the cow and flicked her

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ABOVE • Burkett gives a tour to a high school class at the Somerset Animal Hospital.

LEFT • Veterinary instruments dry after being washed but before being sterilized at the hospital.

side a few times, then diagnosed the problem as a twisted stomach.

After surgery later that day, Alyssa Wilson, a licensed veterinary technician who works for Bruce, says she would rather have him sew her up than a medical doctor.

"He takes more care and makes them look much better," she says about Bruce's suturing skill.

Wilson, one of 10 employees at Somerset Animal Hospital, often assists Bruce outside the office on large-animal calls.

Bruce's wife, Pam, manages the office.

Bruce spends most of his days caring for cats and dogs, including spaying and neutering. He comforts the owners of family pets he couldn't save.

Routinely, though, he hops in his car and heads out to a farm to check on someone's cows.

It actually costs his practice money to care for large animals, he says. But Bruce keeps doing it because some farmers need the service.

"Business-wise it doesn't make sense, but I enjoy it," he says. "It's a public service, so I'm going to keep doing it."

LEFT • Bruce Burkett, right, and Alyssa Wilson, a veterinary technician, pull a sick cow into position for surgery. "I figured I'd be a large animal vet all my life," said Bruce, one of two veterinarians at Somerset Animal Hospital. "It was a profession I could stay in touch with agriculture through." But he said large-animal work now makes up only 15 percent of his business. Mennonite farmer Mervin Weber, background, owns this cow.

LEFT • Burkett treats beefalo at Evelyn Garrett's farm in Eubank.

Love of the land

PHOTOGRAPHY Demetrius Freeman
EDITING Jabin E. Botsford

ABOVE • State Rep. Tommy Turner looks for squirrels to hunt. "Where is he?" Tommy said as his dog barked into the trees. "I love hunting and spending time on my land," Turner said.

State Rep. Tommy Turner is equally comfortable hashing out legislation in the state's capital or roaming his farm in the rugged hills of eastern Pulaski County.

The farm has been in his family more than 150 years.

Tommy, a Republican, has been in the General Assembly for 16 years. He dresses casually, refuses to carry a smart phone and handles his own appointments. He likes to travel the county talking to small groups.

"I like meeting people in person, not through e-mail or the computer," he says.

Carol Sexton, who works at the Pulaski County Public Library, says Tommy helped get money for libraries in the state. "He's a good man who loves Somerset," she said.

During legislative breaks, Tommy spends time with his family and on his farm. He hunts squirrel, trains hunting dogs, goes fishing and rides all-terrain vehicles.

"I love my job, and I enjoy doing it, but my true love is farming and being out in nature," he says.

Scott Hyden, a hunting buddy, says he learned a lot from Tommy about training hunting dogs.

"Tommy is just a good old boy," Scott says.

Tommy maintains a close relationship with his grandson, Blake, 9.

"Blake is my best buddy, my first grandkid," Tommy says. "I'm glad he gets to grow up on this farm."

Tommy knows Blake is growing up in a different world than he did.

"Me and my buddy used to go out coon hunting at night, and the dogs would run so far in the woods that you would spend all night going in after them and wouldn't return until sun break," he says. "My parents didn't worry, not one bit. But in today's world, they would have a search-and-rescue team out looking for you."

ABOVE • Turner and fellow Republicans listen to Todd P'Pool's speech at party headquarters in downtown Somerset. Turner was selected to introduce James Comer, who is running for state Agriculture Commissioner.

LEFT • Turner picks up his grandson, Blake, 9, from school. The two have always had a special bond.

Having the faith to fail

PHOTOGRAPHY Megan Westervelt
EDITING Mick Cochran

ABOVE • Before the children leave for school and their father heads to work, the Call family members pray for Mormon missionaries around the world and give thanks for all they have.

RIGHT • Reading resolves the dilemma of what to do on a rainy day for Isaac Call, 4, left, and his cousin Sydney Call, 10.

Ethan received his father's middle name. Cedar was named after the trees near her parents' first home. Christiantha Rose became "Rose" after too many people misspelled Christiantha, an old family name. Canyon was called "Baby" for the first few days of his life, until his nature-loving parents chose his name. Isaac, the youngest, drew his name from his mother because she knew it was meant for him. But the list started with Faith. Faith Elaine Call was born 16 years ago, one year after Sherry and Brett were married.

"It took a lot of faith to have her," Sherry says. "We were just married and still in college."

The couple knew that instilling teamwork, patience, positivity, resourcefulness and sustainability in their children would be their most important charge in life. So, Sherry and Brett purchased a farm in late 2010. The family spent 2011 learning to run the farm by reading library books and talking to neighbors.

"We're not afraid to fail," Sherry says. "We do it often. That's how you learn."

Now the farm's 35 acres hold 23 chickens, 17 beef cattle, eight goats, four pigs, three rabbits, two cats, a dog and one milk cow. But the children are still the most important crop.

"Our family motto has always been 'Save the world, raise good kids,'" Sherry says.

RIGHT • Brett Call and his daughters Faith, 16, and Cedar, 11, tend to goats on their 35-acre farm in Somerset.

ABOVE • Faith Call, 16, dons rubber boots to check for eggs and feed the birds in the chicken coop every day before sunrise.

ABOVE • Sherri Call, the mother of six, delivers a gentle message to her youngest, Isaac, 4, to tone down the tantrum he began to throw.

ABOVE • Ethan Call, 15, and his father, Brett, work around the dining room, which is set for a dinner of homemade cheese and vegetable soup. Despite their hectic lives, all members of the Call family eat together every night.

ABOVE • Cedar Call, 11, disappears into a feed barrel while her father, Brett, rounds up the family's four pigs to feed them on the family's Longwood Hollow farm in Somerset.

Farming genes

PHOTOGRAPHY Leslye Davis
EDITING Rodney Curtis

ABOVE • Charles Bishop sets out with a bottle of milk for a calf that's being weaned from its mother. As he walks through the field between the barn and the milk parlor each morning, heifers follow along behind waiting to be fed.

ABOVE • After the first round of milking, Mark and Charles Bishop clean the stalls.

RIGHT AND BELOW • Jersey cows make up the majority of the cattle on the Bishops' farm.

ABOVE • As Mark finishes milking, he tags cows on their way out of the stall to help him identify which of the cows are contrubiting to higher than normal bacteria counts.

On the outskirts of Eubank, a slate-blue horizon signals the beginning and end of each day at the Bishop family's dairy farm.

With farm-ready boots and worn denim, Charles and Mark Bishop make their morning rounds on land that has been in their family for 97 years.

Charles sets out across the dew-drenched, prickle-planted field between his home and milking parlor. The golden light of the morning calls attention to creases on his hands and face, constant reminders of years of hard work. Mark follows behind, searching for the pack of resting cattle to steer toward the parlor.

The pace is leisurely but methodical, ushering cows toward the parlor, cycling them through the milking stalls and then turning them back out into the field. On sunny days, the two men clean equipment and work on emptying the grain bin.

Aside from routine milking, rain signals a day of rest or an opportunity to catch up on work outside the farm. After a rainy Wednesday morning in the milking parlor, the two men return to the house and settle into chairs in the living room. Charles turns on the television, flipping between detective shows, the news and *The Price is Right*.

After lunch with his mother and father, Mark's eyelids become heavy, and he drifts off to sleep. "That's what farmers do when they come in and get warm," his mother, Mary, says.

With winter creeping in, Charles says he is excited for the spring. "When the green grass starts growing, it brightens things up," he says.

Certain tasks irritate Charles' arthritis, causing him to require more assistance from Mark. With each new year, the tasks that Charles taught Mark as a child become Mark's responsibility.

Soon, Mark will carry the Bishop family farm into the next century.

Distributing books, delivering love

PHOTOGRAPHY Spencer Bakalar
EDITING Mick Cochran

ABOVE • Pulaski County bookmobile driver Marlina Coomer drives her route in the county.

Marlina Coomer pauses in front of each of the nine women in the dimly lit parlor at Crestview Assisted Living. Some lean forward, allowing Marlina to get both arms around their thin, stooped shoulders. Others sit slumped, waiting for a lighter touch on their backs. Light and dark hair mixes as each woman leans her heads on Marlina's shoulders.

"All right, I love you all," Marlina said.

"Love you too," each replied, lightly tapping her back. Some grasped her hands, reluctant to let go.

After gathering her books and heading outside, Marlina murmured, "It's hard to pick which nursing home is my favorite, but I really love coming here." Reaching the door of what was designed to be a bread truck, Coomer climbed inside and got to work re-shelving books.

Marlina Coomer operates Pulaski County Public Library's bookmobile, driving almost 10 hours each day delivering books, a warm smile or even a 30-minute visit to people who don't have ready access to the local library—people like Libby Carter. Libby has read almost every novel in the bookmobile. Each month, Marlina fills Libby's worn cardboard box with dozens of new books chosen especially for her. During a stop at The Children's House on a cold Thursday morning, Marlina greets a dozen preschoolers climbing on hands and knees up the steep, metal steps of the truck, their eyes widening at the sight of thousands of books. "I've never seen anything like this before!" a boy whispered. "You've never been on the bookmobile?" Marlina asked. "Well, take a look around!" She guided him gently toward the children's section.

Books are a small part of the bookmobile's appeal. Marlina's love for her community is the big thing.

"I didn't get this job because I'm organized or even because I'm a good driver," she said. "I got it because I love people."

ABOVE AND BELOW RIGHT • Coomer regularly reads to the lower grades at Jordan Christian Academy. "You know I played 'Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?' last week,and you know what?" Marlina said. "I wasn't!"

LEFT • Children from Jordan Christian Academy scramble for princess books and superhero magazines. The Pulaski County Bookmobile stops every month to give rural residents access to the library.

ABOVE • The Pulaski County bookmobile sits parked amidst the barns behind "Miss B" Dykes' house.

ABOVE • Coomer visits and reads with many elderly residents of Pulaski County. Here she prays with 93-year-old "Miss B" Dykes as she says, "Lord, please bless Miss B, and thank you for the time I've spent with her."

Cutting teeth

PHOTOGRAPHY Khristopher Kramer
EDITING Mick Cochran

ABOVE • Sixteen-month-old Bennett Taylor and her mother, Dr. Brandi Prather, stroll around the neighborhood where they catch up on gardening tips from neighbors.

LEFT • Prather takes care of more than just her patients as her daughter, Bennett, comes to work with her every day.

Sixteen-month old Bennett Taylor sees the dentist seven days a week. Little Bennett seems to enjoy it. Her mother is Dr. Brandi Prather, the only pediatric dentist in Pulaski County.

Every work day Bennett waddles around her mother's office, smiling and waving with an upside down hand. She hitchhikes, catching rides with her uncle Trae Prather, a technician; with her grandmother JoAnn Prather, the office manager; and with everyone else who works there.

"She's the office mascot." says Brandi.

Bennett acts as an ambassador of calm, making her rounds from patient to patient. Every day the staff breaks for lunch. Bennett breaks for a nap upstairs.

One Thursday while Bennett was upstairs, a car horn started blowing, "Whose car alarm is that?" Trae said. Before anyone responded, it stopped. Masked faces tipped back toward the work of tooth cleaning. It started again. "Beep! Beep! Beep!"

"Whose car is that?" Trae said again

It stopped.

It started. "Beep! Beep! Beep!"

Trae finally caught sight of the alarmed car. "That's mom's van!"

Bennett was upstairs playing with her grandmother's car keys.

RIGHT • Sometimes16-month-old Bennett seems to take as much interest in patients as her mother.

RIGHT • Bennett gets a second organic breakfast shortly after her mom sees her first patients.

BELOW • Bennett seems to soothe the nerves of nearly everyone in the office.

ABOVE • Bennett is accustomed to amusing herself while her mother treats her pediatric patients.

Clippers and conversation

PHOTOGRAPHY Alix Mattingly
EDITING Jabin E. Botsford

ABOVE • Ron Wheeldon of Jerry's Barber Shop touches up 7 year old Cody Nichols' mohawk. Cody, of Somerset, got the haircut in preperation for the youth football season.

Customers entering Jerry's Barber Shop are greeted by the familiar buzzing of hair clippers and the twang of country music.

A lot has stayed the same around Jerry Wheeldon's shop in the nearly 50 years he has been cutting hair – even the chairs.

Jerry can't remember wanting to be anything but a barber.

"My dad used to say that I had said I wanted to be a barber since I was 8 years old," Jerry says.

There's no appointment necessary at Jerry's two-chair shop near downtown. Customers stop by when they have a chance and get a trim, catch up on local news and talk about sports.

The discussions aren't likely to change, but one thing will: Jerry is planning to retire.

"It's been enjoyable for me," Jerry says. "After 50 years, it's about time to retire, isn't it?"

There won't be a retirement party for Jerry, who also is on the Somerset City Council. He just plans to hang up his clippers and go fishing.

While Jerry will be busy trying to catch fish big enough to brag about, his son, Ron Wheeldon, plans to keep cutting hair at the shop with his own son, Brannen. He will finish barber school in the spring of 2012.

Ron joined the family business after he got tired of working in a factory. He worked full-time for a year and a half while also going to barber school, earned his barber-pole stripes by cutting hair alongside his father.

Jerry's retirement is no surprise to regulars, but it does mark a big change in a local institution.

"I've been coming here since I was 10," says Keith Ashley, 30. "When I started I had a head full of hair; then I got married and now I have a big piece of bologna back there."

Many customers have been coming to Jerry for haircuts their entire lives. At times, three generations of a family come to the shop for a cut.

Some can't believe that, after 50 years behind the chair, Jerry will lay down his comb. "He might fish a little more, but he won't quit," says longtime customer Larry Stewart.

ABOVE • Ron and Jerry Wheeldon watch television to pass time while they wait for customers to arrive. Jerry's Barber Shop does not take appointments, so the barbers don't know how busy they will be on a given day.

RIGHT • Ron Wheeldon's hair clippers carry his initials. Ron began cutting hair in 2000 after working in a factory for most of his career.

‘If you break it, I can fix it’

PHOTOGRAPHY Sammy Jo Hester
EDITING Jabin E. Botsford

At age 95, Ira “Red” Cornett still gets to work at his machine shop every day promptly at 9 a.m.

His wheelchair keeps Red from working as he once did, but he pitches in by instructing employees. He considers fixing machinery a God-given gift.

“If you break it, I can fix it,” he says. “That’s my talent.”

Red started Cornett Machine Shop in 1947, the year he moved from London to Somerset with his wife, Mary. The couple raised two sons and two daughters.

Red’s business includes two shops. At one, workers make and repair bearings and crankshafts on engines in cars, trucks and farm machinery. At the other, internationally known Cornett Racing, workers build dirt-track racing engines.

Red, Mary and their children have all worked in the shops. Sons David, 64, and Jack, 54, now manage them. Red instilled a strong work ethic in his children.

“He’s hardworking,” Jack says. “He was raised in the Depression, and if you didn’t work, you didn’t eat.”

Jack, who manages the race shop, won a national award for engine-building five years in a row.

“Mom and dad took me to the races,” Jack says. “I got bit by the bug. It’s all I ever wanted to do.”

Red’s wife has Alzheimer’s disease, and Red goes home daily to have lunch with her and pray.

“They have a 70-year love affair that will never end,” says one of Mary’s caretakers, Donna Keith, 52, of Somerset. “He refuses to give up on her and he never will. It is inspiring.”

Red is well-known around Somerset.

“Everywhere we go, everyone just has some story telling us how he has helped them,” says his daughter, Arlene Warner. “It’s been a great legacy.”

Yet, at 95, Red dismisses talk of retirement.

“I ain’t finished all my work yet,” he says.

RIGHT • Ira ‘Red” Cornett, 95, is a well known in Somerset. He opened Cornett Machine Shop in 1947.

BELOW • Greg Oaks, 52, of Waynesburg builds an engine for a dirt-track race car. When he is finished, the engine will be shipped to New Zealand. Oaks has worked at Cornett Machine Shop for 20 years.

ABOVE • Ira “Red” Cornett leaves his workshop to go home for the weekend.

Cruising with the oldies

PHOTOGRAPHY Kevin Cook
EDITING Patty Reksten

ABOVE • Keith Floyd checks out Carter Blevins' 1973 Datsun 240Z. Blevins is a member of the Somernites Cruise car club.

ABOVE • As many as 70 cars drove to Cumberland Falls for a "fun run" before taking part in the Somernites Cruise final car show event of 2011.

LEFT • Keith Floyd directs a driver during the Somernites Cruise final car show of the 2011 season.

In a small garage lit entirely by an old Gulf sign, Keith Floyd slowly and carefully polishes his 1970 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme.

"It's the kind of car that I wanted as I kid," the 47-year-old said of his blue convertible. "There is nothing better than cruising down the road with the top down and listening to some tunes."

Floyd has been active in Somernites Cruise, a popular car club that has led the City of Somerset to put up signs saying it is the "Car Cruise Capital of Kentucky."

Since its inception in 2001, its impact on the community and economy has boosted tourism drastically, Floyd says.

"Besides (Somernites) being the largest car show in Kentucky – in the rinky-dink middle of nowhere – we get cars from 15 to 20 states," he says. "Some people ask, 'How do you guys do it?' and I tell them the Lord has looked on us."

Floyd moved to Somerset from Arkansas when he was 16 and while he was interested in Volkswagens, Chevelles and Datsuns, he says he knew he wanted an Oldsmobile.

In his down time, Floyd spends his time between his property management company and an insurance company he manages with his wife of 27 years, Latisha.

"Really, it's just a passion and I support his love of Somernites," Latisha says. "That's just what a good wife does."

While Floyd wants to get another car, a 1966 or 67 Volwswagen Bug, it probably won't happen soon, he said with a laugh.

"I can't do it," Floyd says. "I got one girl in college, and another just got married."

Turning wood to art

PHOTOGRAPHY Natalie St. John
EDITING Jabin E. Botsford

ABOVE • In the final stages of production, Chris Ramsey shines a light through the the thin wood of a custom hat to help him ensure that it is not becoming too thin.

Chris Ramsey is deep in a grove of hardwoods, squinting up through the flame-colored leaves at a large dark knot, called a burl, choking the upper reaches of a dying cherry tree.

"Other people look at a burl and see disease. I see money," says Ramsey, a master wood turner. "The burl itself is worth maybe a hundred fifty, but I'll turn it into five or six thousand."

A large burl is prized among woodworkers because it has beautiful, swirling patterns in the grain of the wood.

Chris is an artist with a lathe who transforms pieces of cherry, maple and other hardwoods into hats, mirror frames and other items that sell across the country.

Chris began turning wood almost as a lark in the late 1990s after his identical twin, David, bought a lathe. At first, Chris made simple candlesticks and vases, never imagining that his hobby would someday turn into a full-time career that would garner him an invitation to the White House.

There were some bumps along the way. After a gallery owner told him he had no talent, he gave up wood-turning.

"I unbolted my lathe from the floor, packed up all my stuff," Chris says.

However, a chance encounter with a master wood turner in Ohio reignited his interest.

Before long, Ramsey stumbled into making his signature lightweight hats, turned from a single piece of wood, when he noticed that a planter he was making for his wife looked like a Pilgrim hat.

The demand for Chris' hardwood vases, bowls and hats grew enough to allow him to leave a job in telecommunications that he didn't like. But he didn't fully understand how popular his work had become until U.S. Rep. Harold "Hal" Rogers, R-Somerset, asked Chris to make a cowboy hat for President George W. Bush.

Bush was so delighted with the hat that he invited Chris to a ceremony in the Oval Office. Bush bought the first hat, and Chris measured the president's head for another one.

"It's really surreal. Here was the most powerful man in the world, holding something that I made with my own two hands," Chris says.

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RIGHT • Using a lathe, professional wood turner Chris Ramsey carves a cowboy hat from single 135-pound piece of cherry.

BELOW • The family pugs, Gracie and Jax, prefer a nest of wood shavings in Chris Ransey's workshop to their kennel.

ABOVE • Each hat Ramsey makes is shaped a little differently. He and his son, Jonathan, try on Chris' siganture hats to find the best fit.

The former president now owns five of Chris's hats.

A swirl of attention and upswing in business followed his visit to the White House.

While Chris takes delight in his encounters with high-profile customers such as country music stars and comedians, he says the most rewarding result of his success is being able to play an active role in the day-to-day lives of wife, Kathy, and two sons, Logan, 14, and Jonathan, 10.

Chris is his own boss. He enjoys working in the shop in the basement of his home, knee-deep in a drift of wood shavings, listening to the whir of his lathe.

While Logan, a promising athlete, hones his pitching skills, 10 year old Jonathan learns the woodworking trade, assisting Chris every chance he gets. "He doesn't want to play sports or hang out with friends – he just wants to be in the shop with me!" Chris says.

Chris feels a deep sense of gratitude.

"Being able to do something I love with all my heart, being able to support my family. Only 3.5 percent of the people in the world get to do something they absolutely love, and I'm in that 3.5 percent," he says. "I'm very, very lucky."

LEFT • Ramsey's hats start out round, then take on their characteristic elliptical shape while drying in wooden braces beneath heat lamps.

ABOVE • Using a woodburning tool, Ramsey creates a precise pattern of squares over the surface of a hat. Pigments are then applied to create a pattern that closely resembles a Hopi basket.

The wide reciever

PHOTOGRAPHY Eric Shea
EDITING Mick Cochran

ABOVE • Pulaski County junior wide reciever Aaron Hall says he tries to set a good example for his teammates with his faith and positive attitude.

"He can't do that, you know."

Aaron Hall is a junior at Pulaski County High School. He loves his family, his girlfriend, and football.

But Aaron has had obstacles to overcome.

He is a varsity wide receiver who was born with only a palm and a thumb on his left hand and one weak kidney due to poor blood flow in the womb.

Aaron's mom, Donna Hall, says doctors put one restriction on Aaron. "After a while, when they realized he was going to be healthy, they said his only limitation was that he should never play football because damage to the good kidney would hurt. But he was in fifth grade when his little brother came home with a football helmet and pads. He said, 'I want to try that, too.'

"We knew early on that we could not baby this child. We could not make it easy for him because we wouldn't be there for the rest of his life."

From an early age Aaron gravitated towards sports.

"Every coach he had, he had to prove himself," Donna says. "Start from scratch. Every time he meets a new person he has to start from scratch. He has to win them over. "

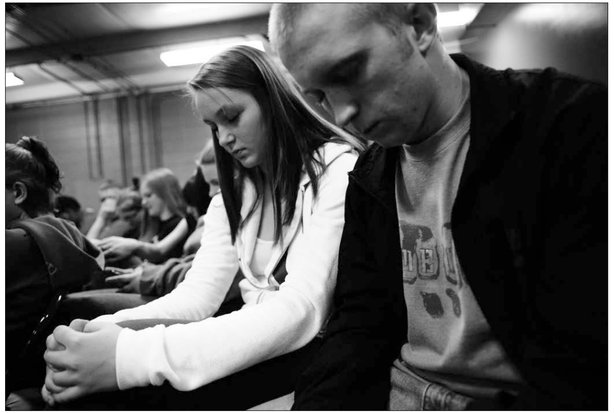
Joey Hall, Aaron's father, says, "Coaches used to say, 'He can't do it, we'll let him be on the team, but he can't do it, you know.'"

Aaron's faith makes him optimistic.

"I guess sometime it just hit me," he says. "I wouldn't even be here without the Lord. I just think it's important. It's really my passion. Football is not everything. God gives you everything to play football, but in the big scheme of things, you've got to do it for Him because He gave you the ability to play."

Teammate Tyler Jackson says Aaron leads the team more than most seniors do. "By the way he plays and his attitude. His heart, he doesn't give up. He's a positive person. He encourages when you're down, and he'll motivate you."

His coach, John Hines, says, "Aaron's a great kid. He has tremendous ability to be a leader through his actions. The great thing about Aaron is even though he was born with a disability, he has never been one to play the 'woe is me' card and say 'oh look what happened to me' and have that kind of attitude."



ABOVE • Aaron Hall and Hall's girlfriend of seven months, Sarah Howard pray together during a Wednesday night service at Oak Hill Baptist Church.

LEFT • A poster from Sarah sits in the stairwell of Aaron's Science Hill home.

ABOVE • In true teen-aged fashion, Hall texts his girlfriend while his mother talks with him about school projects. Aaron takes two advanced placement classes at Pulaski County High School, where he maintains a 4.0 grade point average.

ABOVE • Southwestern High School's Jordan Maggard dives to tackle Aaron Hall in Pulaski County's last home game of the season.

LEFT • Later, Maggard pats Hall on the helmet as the clock runs out in the fourth quarter.

Striving for perfection

PHOTOGRAPHY Ariana McLaughlin
EDITING Patty Reksten

LEFT • Kelby Cowan and Mariko Krause have their first period art class together. Both girls are seniors at Somerset High School.

RIGHT • Before heading to Friday's football game, Mariko applies mascara in her room after basketball practice.

BELOW • Mariko coaches a girls intramural basketball team. "I haven't had practice with them yet," she says. "I hope that's not bad."

ABOVE • Mariko still leads her varsity basketball team in warm-ups, drills and team prayer when they practice in the Somerset High School gym, even though she's not team captain.

Mariko Krause has a drive unlike 'most any other teenager.

"She hasn't changed that much since she was a child, strong-willed, she came out very independent," says Mariko's mother, Atsuko.

Determined to graduate at the top of her class, she has tenaciously pursued excellence in academia, motivated by her desire to become an orthopedic doctor. She also is a "big sister" to a kindergartner at Hopkins Elementary School through the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. When the school bell rings on Friday, instead of running to a friend's house, Mariko rushes out the door to piano lessons, only to return to the school gym for basketball practice.

"A lot of it is her parents; her mother is from Japan and her dad was raised in an orphanage," says Chris Adkins, Mariko's basketball coach at Somerset High School. "Also, I think a lot of it is that she doesn't have cable."

But who has the time anyway?

"I don't really have anything else to do," she says. "I can't just sit down and watch TV."

Despite being shy at times, Mariko was chosen homecoming queen this year.

"She has different kinds of friends," says Mariko's father, Richard Krause. "She can be friendly with the poorer kids in school, the foreign kids, jock. She is good friends with the boys. She is able to tailor her attention to different kinds of people."

While running from place to place with her busy schedule, Mariko keeps everything in line with little hesitation or struggle.

Despite her confidence in so many areas, she is afraid of taking the wheel of a car on her own and has only a driver's permit.

"(Mom) just chauffeurs me wherever and gets mad at me for it," Mariko says.

College is in her future, of course, but she can't decide where.

"I'm just excited and nervous to go," she says.

ABOVE • During AP English, Mariko asks Alex Lange if she can help edit his English paper during a peer review session at Somerset High School. "He's one of my really good friends," Mariko says. "I probably consider him one of my best guy friends."

ABOVE • Mariko and Emilie Ridings, 6, read books once a week at Hopkins Elementary School. Mariko is a member of Somerset High's Big Brother Big Sister program.

RIGHT • Mariko's teammates pull a prank on her at Casa Grande, a local Mexican restaurant. Her teammates told the waiters it was Meriko's birthday, a month after her actual birthday.

FAR RIGHT • Mariko and her teammates don't just practice together. They also socialize together, as they're doing in the student section during this cold night at a football game.

The book beyond its cover

PHOTOGRAPHY Sarah Gerace
EDITING Rodney Curtis

ABOVE • With a heightened sense of hearing due to her missing three of the five senses, Jessica Van Burggen enjoys spending time in her room listening to a local contemporary Christian radio station or playing her electric keyboard. Her hearing is so heightened that she can pick up on individual sounds or conversations in a crowd.

ABOVE • Jessica is the only one who lives downstairs in her family's two-story house in Science Hill. Her parents, Bob and Cathy, decided this would be best because if she decided to stay with them she could have her own kitchen and entrance.

RIGHT • With a couple inches difference between her left and right leg, Jessica takes her shoes once a year to Shriners Hospital for Children in Lexington. There they are altered to make walking easier.

At first glance, you see the outside – something Jessica could not control. But inside, comes an inspiring story of determination.

So, read on because her story involves something that has affected fewer than a dozen people in the world.

Jessica was born with a syndrome called cerebro-oculo-nasal hydrocephalus, which causes malformations in the eyes, nose and brain. Where most have a nose, Jessica developed a crevice. Her brain growth was stunted as well, due to undrained spinal fluid.

Countless surgeries have tried to fix all that, but Jessica cannot see the outcomes because she was born without optical nerves and has been blind since birth. But with that came heightened senses of taste, smell and hearing. She can hone in on an individual conversation in a crowded room.

The conversation her mother, Cathy Van Burggen, wants to focus on is the inside story.

She proudly draws attention to Jessica's track ribbons, cheerleading awards and pictures of her at the prom, which her mom did not know Jessica attended until a visit to Jessica's school – a sign of her daughter's growing independence. Jessica has driven a boat and ridden horses.

Jessica attends Kentucky School for the Blind in Louisville, which led to more opportunities – a job at the Louisville Zoo and work at a Hard Rock Café, the Ronald McDonald House and Bear Grass Christian Church.

"That's another thing," Jessica's mother says. "Jessica never cries or gets sad."

Not bad for a girl who wasn't supposed to live more than a couple days.

"I am doing pretty well then, aren't I?" says Jessica to her mother.

Tumbling forward

PHOTOGRAPHY Lauren Wood
EDITING Patty Reksten

ABOVE • Katie Dalton, 14, (center) helps one of her mates get a leg up on a cheerleading stunt. Sam Heuer, left, and Sarah Henry provide helping hands during an afternoon practice. Katie, a "flyer" last year, prefers the ground during stunts.

Katie Dalton won a state gymnastics championship, national gymnastics competition gold medals and plans to compete in the Miss Kentucky Pageant in January 2012.

Countless medals and awards adorn her bedroom. Sometimes it's hard for her to remember which ribbon or medal goes with which event.

What Katie might achieve before she turns 15 is anyone's guess but hers.

But she doesn't leave much to guessing.

"I always want to do it perfectly, and I'll do it until I do it perfectly," she says. "I do the same thing every day: Go to school, go to cheer, go do homework and go to bed."

The formula gets results.

She went out for track in the spring, and she missed by inches tying the state record for her age in the long jump.

Head coaches of the University of Kentucky and University of Tennessee made a point to personally introduce themselves to her at cheerleading camp last summer. Katie wants to cheer and run track in college.

Her life at age 14, in Meece Middle School, keeps tumbling forward.

LEFT • Teammates Sam Heuer, 15, left, and Katie have a close relationship even though Sam is a year older and new to the team.

"She doesn't realize how big it is that Division One colleges are looking at her, and she's only an eighth-grader," says her stepfather, Rick McCrystal.

Not necessarily.

Katie's penchant for perfection runs from little details such as pulling her hair back to make it just so, to nailing the moves in a cheerleading routine. Grueling cheer practices can take up to three hours, and then she heads to the gym to perfect her gymnastics skills most nights of the week. Her motivation can waver, but she goes back at it the very next day.

She has spent a lot of days doing that.

Katie started competing in gymnastics at age 4, which also plays a big part in shaping her independence. Joining the cheerleading team was new to her, and it took some adjusting to get used to the responsibilities of shifting from solo performance to a group. After three years of cheerleading, Katie still falls back on her gymnastics tendencies. She can enjoy time with the team, but remains quite content doing her own thing.

Even a group of cheerleaders can become a unit.

"Well, tons of the time my friends go to the movies, but I have cheer," she says. "I'd rather pick my team than going with my friends."

Even in class, while her mates talk loudly, joking and laughing together, Katie quietly takes everything in, doing her work and listening intently.

She keeps tumbling forward, quickly, from teenager to young woman.

Sometimes it takes a burst of text messaging to remind people she's just 14, but it's fleeting.

"I don't want to quit, because I don't want someone to get better than me," Katie says about cheering – and tumbling, running and winning.

"I don't know where I'd go without it."

ABOVE • Katie takes a media time-out to watch the phone video her friend Katie Eubank, center, took of Katie's tumbling pass at Somerset Elite Training Center. Katie started competing in gymnastics at age 4 and got into cheerleading three years ago.

LEFT • Katie practices with the Somerset High School varsity cheerleading team at Hopkins Elementary School. Katie attends Meece Middle School and is on the defending state champion team for the second year.

BELOW • Katie's accomplishments at age 14 are something to shout about.

LEFT • Adilynn Frei, 5, listens closely during a talk with Katie at Somerset Training Elite Center. Adilynn's mother, Aislynn, owns the gym where Katie first took gymnastics at the age of 2.

Loves her animals

PHOTOGRAPHY Sarah Coulter
EDITING Patty Reksten

LEFT • Veterinarian Tammie Bumgardner, with the help of her husband and unofficial assistant Buck, prepares a cat for spaying. Tammie believes in low-cost spay and neuter procedures.

The clean sounds of paws hitting hardwood floors and cold wet noses pressing against glass windows follow Dr. Tammie Bumgardner whenever she takes the 30-yard stroll from her veterinary practice to her log cabin. Koko, Kibo, Suki, Reba, Kojak, Rudy, Archie, Mandy, and Lolly all watch her leave and anxiously await her return.

The veterinarian runs with a pack of nine dogs, from Standard Poodles to German shepherds, to a three-legged amputee mutt. They are each a testament to her tireless work with animals.

Tammie and her husband, Buck, run Buck Creek Animal Clinic in Eubank.

Tammie and Buck's story begins in Arizona where Tammie was a doctor in a large veterinary practice. In 2004, she became interested in training dogs for search and rescue. Buck, who had been working with search dogs in Kentucky since 1990, took his pack to Arizona for a training session. And the rest is history, as they say.

Soon after, Tammie joined Buck on his 80-acre family farm. They used their savings to build a log cabin on top of a hill, and Tammie began a mobile veterinary clinic where she could treat patients in a trailer.

With the rise in gas prices and a lack of proper post-operative care, Tammie decided the mobile part of the practice had to go, and Buck set to work building the clinic, named after the creek that runs along the couple's property.

Tammie spays or neuters 40 animals a month on average. She says she made a mission of out low-cost neutering when she moved to Kentucky.

While Buck works as Tammie's unofficial assistant, helping in her in any way she needs around the clinic, he is also her partner in search- and rescue-training and frequently goes on emergency calls with their dogs.

The couple's search-and rescue-team is highly regarded in the state, being trusted with many urgent rescue missions.

"We do about 50 rescue missions a year, traveling both locally and out of state," says Buck.

The couple came together over their love and passion for animals. They have made a life out of it and couldn't be happier.

"He says our time together feels like it has just been five minutes," Tammie says with a smile. "Five minutes on fire," Buck says.

ABOVE • Tammie's obedience class lines up for a group portrait on their last day of class in a park gazebo in Eubank. Many of Tammie's obedience students also visit her farm for search-and-rescue training from her husband, Buck.

LEFT • Tammie and her husband, Buck, chat before starting their busy day working at the Buck Creek Animal Clinic. The couple shares their California King bed with their oldest dogs, Koko. Kibo, Suki and Rudy each night.

Puppy love

PHOTOGRAPHY Lauren Vied
EDITING Ron Page

LEFT • Before heading to a Lake Cumberland Kennel Club meeting, Bob Walther and his dog Sam enjoy the sun. Sam, age 9, is Bob's only dog that is not a therapy pet.

The jangle of dog tags echoes off bare walls and brings life to a fluorescent-lit hallway. From a dark room, a voice says, "Ooh, a puppy! How cute is that puppy?"

"Would you like to have a visitor?" a man in a light blue crew-cut sweatshirt asks.

"Oh, please!" exclaims the nursing-home resident.

Bob Walther is the proud owner of three rat terriers, two of them therapy pets. Trained through the "Love on a Leash" program, Bob takes Ollie and Speckles to see patients in nursing homes, rehabilitation centers and the hospital in Somerset, making nine to 10 visits a month.

"Smiles transfer like magic over to you, and you get joy out of it," Bob says.

"It's a sacrifice of love for Bob," says Gloria Sams, a former president of the local Love on a Leash chapter.

Love on a Leash is a way for Bob to give back to his community and make his days worthwhile. He gets satisfaction knowing he and his therapy dogs can reach people, even the ones who are "meaner than mules," he jokes.

Workers at nursing homes and the hospital say their patients get a significant lift when the therapy dogs visit. Most would stay in bed all day if a therapy pet didn't visit, workers say.

When Bob first started making visits, his dad, Tom, didn't understand why he liked visiting people with his dogs. Then Tom had a brain tumor removed in mid-August. Bob and his dogs now visit him nearly every morning, and Tom sees firsthand the benefits. As Ollie curls up in between his legs in bed, Tom smiles. "It makes me feel good…or better."

RIGHT • Ollie takes a breather from playing on the grounds of Crestview Assisted Living before visiting residents as part of the Love on a Leash program.

BELOW • Sherry Moore, a recreational therapist, and Walther sit on the floor, with dogs in the "Love on a Leash" program. Bob visits Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital once a month with his dogs.

LEFT • Walther and his therapy dog, Ollie, visit Bob's father, Tom, at Sunrise Manor Nursing & Rehabilitation Center. Tom is recovering from surgery in mid-August to remove a brain tumor.

Life's second chance

PHOTOGRAPHY Michael Rivera
EDITING Rodney Curtis

Silence fills the air. Leaves continue their transformation to golden orange.

Cattle speckle the horizon, completing the pastoral vista called the Burkett farm.

The landscape offers a dream sequence – and that fits Barry Burkett's life perfectly.

"It's the most beautiful place in the world," he says, and he knows the world.

Burkett, a Somerset native, now 57, held a lifelong dream to farm and practice medicine in Somerset and started living that dream in 2003.

"I found a way to do it," he says.

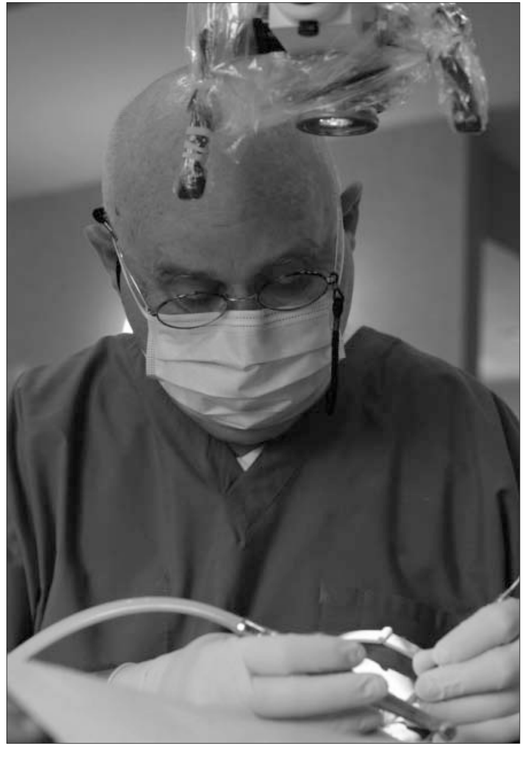
And a roundabout trip it was: He enlisted in the Navy in 1966. "Before that, I was going nowhere," he says.

He traveled throughout the world, married his wife, Susan, in 1970. They raised three children, but going back to Pulaski County always remained on his mind.

In 1997, he bought part of the original farm his grandfather purchased in 1907. The demand for his work as an endodontist helped make that possible.

"After 9-11, I knew it was time for me to come back home," he says. "I couldn't have done this without being an endodontist. And I want to keep on working . . . I still have a lot to give. I've saved the best for last."

So, Burkett got the second chance that eludes many in life.



RIGHT • Barry Burkett started Lake Cumber-land Endodontics as part of a lifelong dream. **TOP** • The Burketts live in a cabin that he built in 2001. "I wanted to be home after 9-11 happened when I was living overseas." **MIDDLE** • Cattle rush to the feed bins at Burkett's call. He has run the beef cattle farm since 2003. **BOTTOM** • "Being 57 years old you think young and feel good," says Burkett.

ABOVE • At age 57 Barry Burkett runs his beef cattle farm in Nancy. He keeps his barn full of memorable items of his travels in the Navy where he served as a dentist.

Familiarity breeds content

PHOTOGRAPHY Tony Hoare
EDITING Rodney Curtis

The grass grows greenest right under Ruth Ann Burton's feet. Some constantly search for a life on the other side of the horizon.

Not Ruth Ann.

Consider this: Ruth Ann lives near Somerset with her husband, Jeff, and four children. Ruth Ann has never lived anywhere except Somerset, aside from two years at Richmond's Eastern Kentucky University.

Her parents live a mile away. Jeff's parents live just seven miles away. Ruth and Jeff started dating during their senior year in high school year and married seven years later.

So why does Ruth Ann feel so comfortable staying put?

"Other places or other people can't make you happy," she says confidently. "That is why I believe that happiness is a choice."

Don't misunderstand. Her life comes with challenges. Jeff took a promotion from state probation officer to the director of county jails for the state Department of Corrections. That means a daily 96-mile, almost two-hour commute – each way – to Frankfort. So, Ruth Ann inherited a large share of minding the kids, work, church work and other activities.

Her youngest, Olivia, born with Down syndrome, adds another challenging dimension to her life.

But Ruth Ann believes that among all her children Olivia provides "the unexpected, the little things that make us laugh. Who is perfect? Olivia teaches my other children to look past the imperfections and accept one another."

Challenges represent God's gift for deep learning, she says.

Ruth Ann? She wouldn't be content anywhere else doing anything else.

ABOVE • Ruth Ann Burton feels her foundation strongly under her feet as she attends the October revival at White Oak Baptist Church in Nancy with her son, Ross, and daughter, Olivia.

LEFT • Olivia Burton has Down syndrome and is a student at Pulaski Elementary in Somerset where her mother teaches fifth grade.

ABOVE • After finishing his daily three-and-a-half hour commute, Jeff Burton finds his bliss with daughter Olivia.

Being Julia

PHOTOGRAPHY Shelby Mack
EDITING Ron Page

ABOVE • Julia Blenkhorn visits her friend Thelma May Meece at Sunrise Manor Nursing Home. Julia tries to visit her regularly since Thelma moved to the nursing home after her husband, Cecil, died.

Julia Blenkhorn never leaves the house without kissing everyone goodbye. She lost her husband, the father of her children, when he was only 32. She knows that any goodbye could be the last.

Julia lives with her daughter Millie Tucker and her family. About 15 years ago, it became dangerous for Julia to live on her own because of her diabetes. More than once her blood sugar dropped so low in the middle of the night that she didn't wake up in the morning, and one of her daughters had to come to her aid.

Though she admits that it would be quieter and she would have more privacy if she lived on her own, she likes being a big part in the busy lives of her four grandchildren. Millie home schools them, so they're always around. Every day, the family has a big lunch together at the dining room table.

Outside the home, Julia supports her grandchildren in all that they do. Whether it's Girl Scouts or basketball, Julia is there for every meeting and game.

Faith is also important to the family. Julia wants to be sure that they are all together in heaven.

"There's love in a church family," she said.

Julia was raised by her grandparents after her parents divorced. Because of that she feels the need to be a big part in the lives of her own grandchildren. She can't see it being any other way.

"Different things in life has happened," she said. "But no matter what, love is there."

ABOVE • Julia helps her daughter, Millie, with household chores after a lunch of chicken and dumplings.

ABOVE • At Cedar Grove Baptist Church, most of the songs performed are done by request. Julia often is called on to sing by herself.

ABOVE • Julia leads her grandaughter Gidget's Girl Scout troop every Thursday with help from Julia's daughter, Millie. This week they learned about the American flag. Julia is a veteran and describes herself as very patriotic.

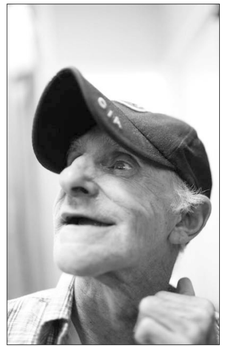
Active love

PHOTOGRAPHY Tim Harris
EDITING Rodney Curtis

ABOVE • Mattie takes a break from daily activities at Active Day in Somerset while a playful fellow client hides from the camera. Active Day is one of only two adult daycare programs in Pulaski County. For the very diverse group of individuals who attend, Active Day is where they receive health care, social contact, excercise and education.

LEFT • Addie Hyden, who has worked at Active Day for 13 years, leads a daily excercise in which center clients bounce a giant beach ball back and forth. "Everything we do has a purpose," says Mary Oakley, Active Day director.

BELOW • Ronnie is a client of Active Day of Somerset.



Active Day of Somerset is a place filled with people who love.

Whether it is painting fingernails on fingernail Friday, playing an impromptu game of indoor corn hole or singing karaoke, the community at Somerset Active Day, an adult day care serving mentally and physically disabled adults, is always looking to have fun.

"Everything we do has a purpose," says Mary Oakley, the center's director.

The people who come to Active Day, referred to as "clients" by the staff, are a diverse group of individuals who range in age 17 to 97. They have been everything from railroad hobos to carnival workers and are dealing with a variety of issues including Alzheimer's disease, developmental disabilities, stroke and heart attack recovery, and loneliness.

Clients' last names are kept private. For many of them, Active Day is the only time they get out of the house to have any sort of socialization.

"I like the people," said Sue, a regular client of the center.

Somerset Active Day is the only option for help that many of the clients' families have. It is one of two adult day care facilities in Pulaski

continued on page 99 ›

LEFT • Miss Ruby, 97, is the oldest client at Active Day. She has Alzheimer's disease. Ranging in age from 17 to 97, this tight-knit group of clients has a broad range of physical and mental disabilites.

ABOVE • Bobbie Jo Stuton, staff worker, dances with Sherry, a client at the center, before Sherry gets on her bus to leave for the afternoon.

RIGHT • Active Day clients Orbille, left, and Carl joke around with one another during snack time.

good-quality, supervised health care. But this is becoming more and more difficult to accomplish. Medicare pays for all but one of Somerset Active Day's clients. As expenses for running the center rise, Medicaid payments remain the same, putting strain on Mary and her staff.

"It makes it hard for us to provide some of the quality we would like to," says Mary. The one thing that makes it easier, she says, is her great staff.

"We have the best staff," says Mary. Workers include nurses, speech pathologists, physical therapists and community volunteers who provide many services. They bathe, feed and entertain clients. Active Day has four buses that provide transportation to and from the center for about 85 percent of the clients. Others are brought by their care givers.

"The bunch I have now are here because they want to be here; it's not just a job," says Mary.

The community that has developed among the nurses and the clients and between the clients and each other is very tight knit. Keri, one of the clients, says she loves being part of a group.

Mary says many clients probably would stay at Somerset Active Day 24 hours a day if they had the option.

"What they have here is their lives," she says, and Mary and the staff and volunteers of Active Day are trying to make each life has full as possible.

The unofficial mayor

PHOTOGRAPHY Megan Tan
EDITING Rodney Curtis

Newton says, "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction," and for Somerset, Ky., the law is the same. Somerset loves Elaine Wilson as equally as Elaine Wilson loves Somerset.

As director, president and board member she loves it every second Monday of the month at 9 a.m., every second Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m., every Monday at noon, every Tuesday at 7 p.m., every Wednesday at 6 p.m., and every day from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Sometimes her love overlaps but "to-do lists," written and vocalized, help Elaine maintain balance.

She's the mother of the Rotary Club, Hospice of Lake Cumberland Inc., Somerset Independent Schools, First Baptist Church, and the Professional Development and Cultural Diversity program at Somerset Community College (SCC), who tries to love all of her children equally.

She says her purposes are to give back to the community and to educate people about cultural similarities rather than differences. To her everyone is equal.

Her mother taught her that. At a young age growing up in poor neighborhood in Lexington, she was told by her mother that no one was better than her. Her mother's words gave her the confidence to walk into a room filled with any kind of people. For Elaine, everyone is the same, but for the community she stands out.

People describe her as "a fine lady," "an outstanding lady," "a kind lady." Somerset Mayor Eddie Girdler says she is "a woman with progressive ideas to change the community for the better."

The mayor, her colleagues, the maintenance staff, her neighbors, people in the Kmart parking lot, Somerset librarians, the desk woman at the Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital, the choir director and children at the SCC International Festival are a part of the Wilson universal law of love. She directs them, hugs them and makes them laugh. She likes to make people happy.

Newton never intended for his law to define the love one person has for her community, but then again he didn't know Elaine Wilson.

ABOVE • Elaine Wilson, left, and Judy Grozdits contribute to the soprano section of the First Baptist Church choir in Somerset. The two traveled with the choir to Italy.

LEFT • During the weekly health and wellness program at Somerset Community College, Elaine takes part in a discussion about dairy products in the diet with Becky Blair, back, and April Spears.

ABOVE • Elaine gets a word in with Violet Claycomb during choir instuction at First Baptist Church in Somerset. Elaine started attending the church in 1981 and is known for her singing.

ABOVE • After receiving shockingly high blood pressure readings, Elaine waits for the Kmart pharmacy to fill her prescription. She says high blood pressure is a genetic health issue she has faced for many years. Most of her family members, including her mother, died from heart attacks.

RIGHT • Elaine and Dr. Zenab Abdel Alim engage in dialogue during the 2011 SCC International Festival. Reflecting her native country, Zenab made an Egyptian presentation in the college's library and introduced middle school attendees to culture with baklava.

ABOVE • Elaine ends her day by watching television and talking on the phone with a friend. Her 12-hour day started at 7 a.m. preparing for the sixth annual International Festival at Somerset Community College.

On their own

PHOTOGRAPHY: Crystin Faenza
EDITING Patty Reksten

ABOVE • Their mother, Patty Loveless died in June 2011, but twins Madison and Dylan, 10, know they can count on each other and their father, Ricky.

When the life of Patty Loveless ended in June 2011, her husband, Ricky, began his life as a conductor, turning a complicated set of daily challenges into a symphony for him and his children, twins Madison and Dylan.

Patty lost her battle with colon cancer after a three-year struggle. Ricky, a Lexington firefighter, now shoulders the burden of maintaining strong family ties and rituals that were so important to Patty – along with juggling his responsibilities as father and firefighter, with the help of family and friends.

Ricky works 24-hour shifts every third day at the Lexington Fire Department. So a key player in his orchestra is his sister, Vickie Calder.

Vickie works a full-time job and has two of her three children still at home, but she remains dedicated to Ricky, providing care for the twins and making sure they get where they need to be.

When Ricky solos, he must deftly switch from the role of father to that of mother, including fixing his daughter Madison's hair in the morning. Madison loves cheerleading. Dylan competes on his school's academic team. Ricky is teaching both how to raise sheep.

In between, he cleans house, does laundry and makes sure he gets the twins' schedule down pat. It takes a lot of energy, something the kids have plenty of but which Ricky can lose quickly.

Despite the Loveless family's hectic life, they never forget Patty.

"We talk about Mom all the time," says Ricky.

He never wants the twins to forget life with their mother. The family often shares stories about Patty, and she even left a piece of herself for the family – a book in which she recorded her voice.

Despite the household's symphony of energy and love, a somber note of loneliness fills the house after the twins go to sleep. Ricky recovers from the day by watching television.

"It's really different," Ricky says. "If I've ever watched TV it's been on the couch cuddling with a woman."

ABOVE • Ricky works hard to keep family rituals strong, including a kiss at bedtime. Raising 10-year-old twins leads to a crazy schedule, but Ricky fosters strong family bonds.

INSET • Dylan holds a picture of the twins and their mother, Patty. The twins often talk about her and want to keep her a part of their lives forever.

LEFT • Ricky hangs out with his son, Dylan, on the front porch.

ABOVE • Twins Madison and Dylan, despite diifferences share a strong connection. She is outgoing and a cheerleader; he is shy and competes on an academic team.

RIGHT • The Loveless family spends the afternoon before Ricky's 24-hour firefighter shift by watching television and relaxing together.

ABOVE • Ricky assigns Madison and Dylan a side of the kitchen when putting the dishes away after washing.

Tobacco farmer

PHOTOGRAPHY Brittany Sowacke
EDITING Patty Reksten

Carter Muse is a man of constants. His weathered hands are a tan reflection of the tobacco crops he has dedicated his life to harvesting. His determination to continue farming, despite being 78 years old, had a lot to do with avoiding what he calls "the rust."

"If I just let the old machinery sit in the barn, it will rust over and be worthless and that's how the human body works," he says. "I'd be all wore out if I just sat in a chair all day."

Each day he wakes at 6 a.m., watches an hour of news, then goes out to oversee the workers on his farm; a routine that is as deeply engraved as the texture in his hands.

The house Carter was born in is now 50 feet below the Cumberland River. The home he shares with Illene, his wife of 53 years, overlooks the same waters by twice that height. His birth certificate lists the Bud Post Office as his birth place. It no longer exists.

He didn't have electricity until he was 16, a year after his father built the home Carter still lives in. Carter has experienced financial stress and wanting over the years, but bears no regret for the life he chose so long ago.

"Anything you work for, you'll appreciate it more," says Carter.

Over the years, he has had a deep impact in his community. Almost every day, Carter eats at Mill Springs Pizza in Nancy, along with a host of farmers from throughout the area. All have known each other by first name their entire lives and share a deep connection through the land they farm.

"I want to leave my farm and my community in better shape than I found it in," says Carter.

His family is just as connected.

"I could call for help from anyone, niece, nephew or aunt at any time and they would be here as soon as they could," says Carter.

LEFT • After 78 years of tobacco farming, Carter Muse's hands map the story of his life. "The better you are to your land, the better it is to you," Carter says.

None of his family has moved farther than a few miles away. Although they never had children of their own, Illene and Carter helped raise a nephew, Darren, after his father unexpectedly died.

Now with a family of his own, Darren, his wife Amy and their son Drew live about 400 yards from the home Darren grew up in.

Even with family in place to take over the farm once Carter is no longer the caretaker, he worries that soon his farm will cease being a tobacco farm.

"It used to be everyone grew tobacco, but now it's just a few of us left," says Carter.

"I'd be all wore out if I just sat in a chair all day."

Carter Muse
Tobacco farmer

ABOVE • Part of the 2011 tobacco crop hangs in a barn to cure on Carter Muse's 98-acre farm in Nancy.

ABOVE • Carter checks the year's tobacco crop on his 98-acre farm in Nancy. "This year's plants are the worst I've ever had," says Carter. "They're about half what they should be."

RIGHT • Carter Muse and Gary Keeney discuss their disappointing tobacco predictions for this year's crop due to severe droughts. Carter said he will yield only about half a crop at the end of the season. "It used to be that everyone had tobacco on their farm," says Carter. "Now it's just about 10 of us in the county."

ABOVE • The Muse family farm sits in the center of 150 acres of tobacco fields. Now 78, Carter has been farming all his life. He admits he considered stopping at points but old habits die hard. "I'll keep going for another 12 years perhaps."

ABOVE • "You could stack this whole house full of money but you could never take my wife away," says Carter, "and more, if she passes away, I'd take no other one. Just her."

36 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.
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1990 / MONTICELLO, KY.
1991 / LAFAYETTE, TENN.
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1993 / JAMESTOWN, TENN.
1994 / GLASGOW, KY.
1995 / SMITHVILLE, TENN.
1996 / CAMPBELLSVILLE, KY.
1997 / RUSSELLVILLE, KY.
1998 / FRANKLIN, KY.
1999 / CENTRAL CITY, KY.
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2002 / CAVE CITY, KY.
2003 / BARDSTOWN, KY.
2004 / LEBANON, KY.
2005 / LAWRENCEBURG, KY.
2006 / MADISONVILLE, KY.
2007 / DANVILLE, KY.
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To view more stories from Pulaski County 2011, please visit our website:

www.mountainworkshops.org

There's the story you want to tell, and then there's the story you have to tell.

When 59 aspiring storytellers gathered in Somerset for the 36th annual Mountain Workshops of Western Kentucky University, the Big Question on everyone's mind was, "What will my story be?" On that day they would get an assignment – an idea – for a story. They would soon realize that they would have to answer the Big Question and they had just five days to do it.

The assignment didn't seem promising to Western Kentucky University senior Shelby Mack. Her subject was Julia Blenkhorn, a 70-year-old woman described as active in her community.

"The story wasn't an obvious one," Shelby said, and she was sure it was going to flop when Julia informed her that there wasn't much happening in her life that week. But Shelby found herself drawn to the older woman. The two of them spent hours just talking while Shelby's camera sat idle on the floor. Then Shelby realized that this was her story: a quiet piece on a profound change of life as a family matriarch relinquished her role as primary caregiver.

"The most important thing I took away from it is that everyone has a story," Shelby said. "Just because it's not right in your face doesn't mean it's not interesting."

When Shelby arrived on Oct. 18 for the first day of the workshops, a team of 35 volunteers had already spent long days transforming the hulking, abandoned shell of a houseboat manufacturing center into a state-of-the-art newsroom. The volunteers, most of them WKU students affectionately known as "labbies," had created a network of 90 computers and four servers to handle a constant flow of data. The network would process 25,000 digital photos, endless hours of video and audio content, and dozens of written stories for workshop presentations, web publications and of course, this book.

PHOTO BY NINA GREIPEL

Workshop participant Sam Oldenburg, left, prepares to shoot aerial photographs of Somerset from a sherrif's department helicopter at the Lake Cumberland Regional Airport. Los Angeles Times staff photographer Rick Loomis, right, joined and shot video.

And there on the first day, ready to take our aspiring storytellers on this intense, five-day journey were 46 coaches and creative staff, professionals in photography, writing and all facets of multimedia communication. This crew, representing such esteemed media outlets as the Time magazine, USA Today, National Geographic, MSNBC and MediaStorm, offered one-on-one training every day to every Mountain Workshops participant.

But first, there was the matter of the Big Question. On the first day, each storyteller pulled a tiny slip of paper from a hat. Each slip of paper contained a few details about someone living and working in the city of Somerset or the surrounding countryside of Pulaski County. It was a kind of lottery, and the slip you got could make your day – or perhaps even change your life.

Lauren Vied, a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, pulled a slip about a program that brings therapy dogs to visit the ill and elderly. A good start, but the woman who ran the program was not interested in being photographed, so Lauren moved past the rejection and found Bob Walther, a volunteer with a deep connection to the program. Bob's father, who was being treated for a brain tumor, loved his canine visitors. At college, Lauren was struggling in her documentary photography class, finding it difficult to gain access to subjects. Here she took her time getting to know Bob, and their relationship added a vital component, an emotional connection, to her photos.

"If you're going to be so intrusive as to put a camera in someone's face at their most vulnerable moments, then you have to be open to them the same way," Lauren said. "In the past, I'd never spent as much time building a rapport as I did with Bob."

Stories shift, change and evolve. And so do the storytellers.

• **Melissa Gagliardi Poore**
Louisville Courier Journal

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