

DECEMBER

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Louisville

THE
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2019

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TO

LOOKING BACK
AT ALL THE
MOMENTS THAT
HAD US GO WTF,
SMH AND OMG.



a

Ascent

AIRPORT TAKES FLIGHT.

BY DYLON JONES

"There have been conversations in our city about changing the name of Louisville International (Airport) to the Muhammad Ali International Airport and that is an idea that we can get behind," wrote Louisville Urban League president and CEO Sadiqa Reynolds in a 2017 *Courier-Journal* op-ed. Indeed, petitions to do exactly that had been circulating as early as 2016. In January, the city announced that the Louisville Regional Airport Authority (LRAA) had approved Mayor Fischer's motion to honor the Champ, and many in the city celebrated. "It is a fitting testament to his legacy," Lonnie Ali wrote in a press release. But at a community discussion *Louisville Magazine* hosted in partnership with the Muhammad Ali Center in June, some questioned if the renaming honored the airport more than Ali, who stood up for the rights of racial minorities, Muslims and anti-war activists. Can an airport really live up to a moniker like that? Or only strip it of controversy to benefit from the star power?

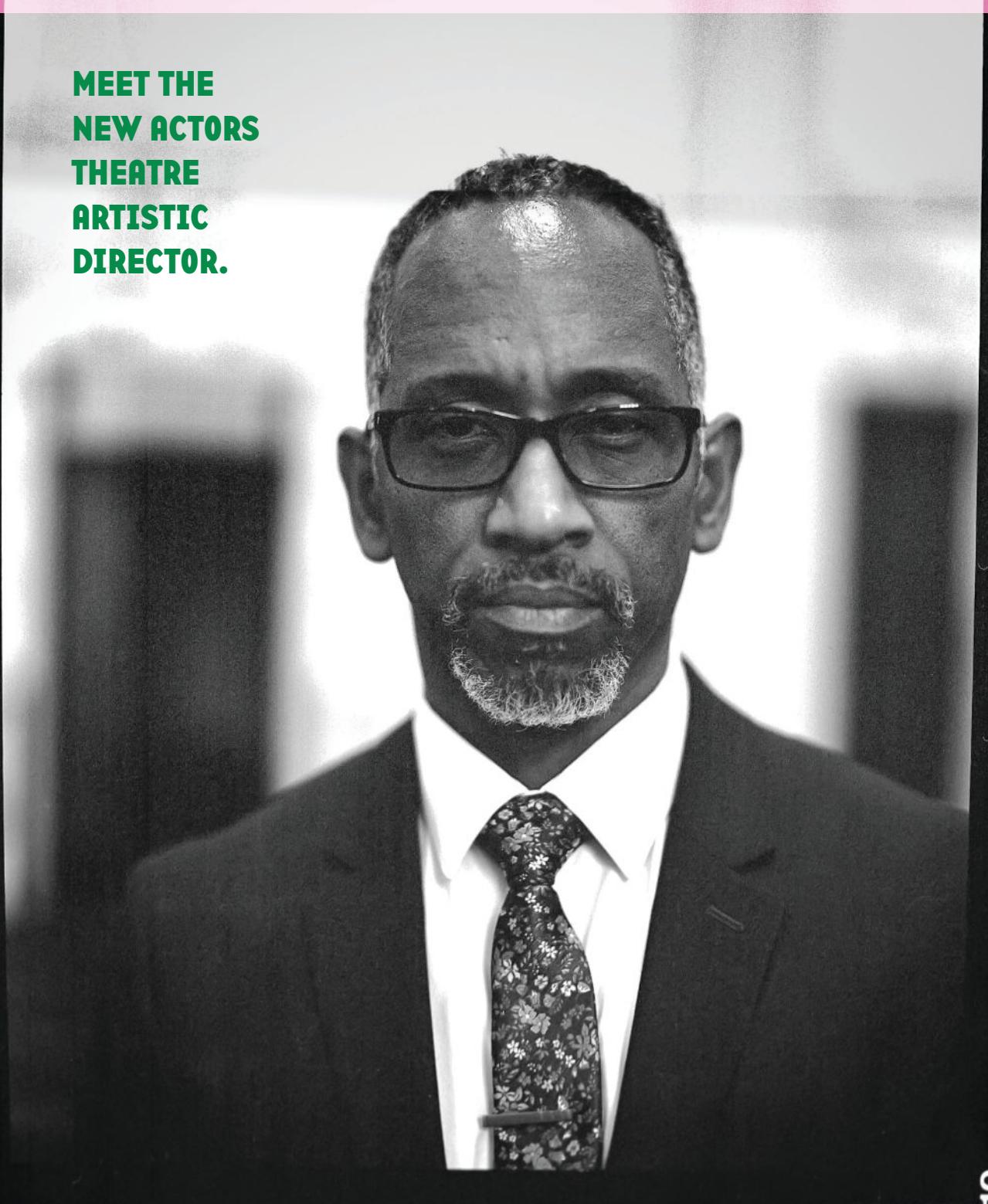
Either way, the Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport seems to be on an upward trajectory, with this year on track to see a record number of passengers. A \$100-million push to update everything from elevators to jetways will take place over the next three to five years, LRAA executive director Dan Mann told the *C-J*. From Feb. 28 to May 5, Allegiant Air will fly to New Orleans twice a week, and in April, American Airlines started traveling directly from Louisville to L.A. daily. This month, Southwest is adding a weekly flight straight to Fort Lauderdale and upping the number of flights to Baltimore, Chicago, Tampa and other cities. Catch us in the Sunshine State, y'all.

KODAK 400TX

53

KODAK 400TX

MEET THE
NEW ACTORS
THEATRE
ARTISTIC
DIRECTOR.



10

► 11

B

Break A Leg

BY TATIANA RYCKMAN

PHOTO BY ANDREW CENCI

Robert Barry Fleming became artistic director of Actors Theatre in June, but he's no stranger to Kentucky. The director and actor has worked on television programs and award-winning theater (most recently in Cleveland) since he left Frankfort as a teenager, but he's glad to be back home.

How it does feel to return to Kentucky? "When I left Kentucky when I was 17 back in 1981, if you had told me I would be happy to be back in Kentucky, I would have been like, 'You are on something.' But the reality is, it has been so powerful to come back home, and I think it's like reclaiming a part of your fundamental self after venturing out into the world and discovering so many other parts of yourself."

What were your expectations of Louisville as a place to make creative work? "Actors Theatre is such a prestigious organization; you can go across the pond to Europe and have people recognize Actors Theatre of Louisville. So there was no secret about the quality of the art that was being made here. That was kind of the given. I think what was unexpected was to have a Kentuckian lead that conversation."

"It's been really heartening to think about the work being centered in a Kentuckiana, Commonwealth worldview. Kentucky holds a really interesting place in the nation's narrative — the Civil War being one of our central conflicts that defined the nation. And I think that is reflected in the kind of complex racial dynamics, the complex gender dynamics, the complexity of what it means to be a Kentuckian, and in terms of the urban-rural kind of narrative. These are all quintessential Kentucky, but they're the quintessential America. The idea of being able to create art in a place that speaks so centrally to the concerns of the country is a tremendous privilege."

It sounds like the thing that surprises you most about working in Louisville is that you are the one doing this, not that Louisville has great things to offer. "Absolutely. Just a little anecdotal story: My father

died in 2011, and I came back to Frankfort for the first time in many decades. My mother said, 'Well, why don't we just stay in Frankfort?' And I literally said to my mother, 'Mom, there is one game in town in the state of Kentucky. It's Actors Theatre of Louisville; I don't know anybody there and there's not a snowball's chance in hell that I'm going to get a job there, so we have to leave.' It's the best way to eat your words."

What are your plans for Actors Theatre? "I've often said I just want us to be a whole lot more fun and have a whole lot more social impact. And that's kind of a cheeky way of saying our mission. We're really talking about unlocking human potential, building community and enriching the (lives) of people through the work that we do."

How do you balance your creative vision with the need to put on some of these more traditional staples? "A show like *Dracula* or *A Christmas Carol*, it's easy to refer to them as just pop staples, but popular shows have a very valuable place. If I can make you laugh, if I can scare the bejesus out of you, if I can delight you — there's an opportunity to process difficult, challenging things in a non-threatening way."

I've heard Louisville referred to as a "stepping-stone city." What do you think about that, and what do you think could be done to convince great artists to stay here or to attract new creative people to come in? "America's always had certain narratives, and many of them deeply distorted. They talk about many of the middle states in America as 'flyover states.' I've been to Paris; I've worked in France and Germany. I've gotten the pleasure of working on both coasts in all kinds of industries, from film (to) television, radio and the theater. I can't think of any place in the world (where) more meaningful impact, more illumination, more transformation and liberation could possibly happen through arts and culture work than where I am right now. One has arrived when they're here. Whether one recognizes that is not as much my concern."

Comeback

COLONIAL GARDENS RETURNS.

BY MICHAEL L. JONES



After 17 years of vacancy, south Louisville's Colonial Gardens is being reborn. The former beer garden near Iroquois Park had been vacant since 2003. But in July El Taco Luchador opened a new location on the site, followed by Union 15, a pizzeria and taproom, in August. Biscuit Belly plans to open in March 2020.

The loss of establishments like Colonial Gardens is still keenly felt in this proud South End neighborhood. Except for a handful of restaurants and the chains littering Dixie Highway, there are not many places to get a sit-down meal in the South End, so the rebirth of Colonial Gardens — a place that still holds memories for some locals — feels important. It's so nostalgic that people have been buying memorial bricks bearing the names of loved ones or momentous dates to be installed on the property.

German immigrants Carl Frederick and Minnie Senning opened Colonial Gardens as a beer garden and restaurant in 1902. The couple passed it on to their son, William, in 1920, just in time for Prohibition. William adapted to the times by transforming the property into Louisville's first zoo. In 1939, the property was sold to B.A. Watson for \$15,000, and he renamed it the Colonial Bar and Grill. That was the beginning of a downhill slide, as changing musical tastes began to make old-style dance halls obsolete. There was a psychedelic rock club there in 1968, when Marlene Yager moved to south Louisville. "I never went there, but all the young kids did," the 80-year old says today. "After it closed, the building just started wasting away. There was water in there up to my knees."

A group of local residents had Colonial Gardens landmarked in 2008 to prevent the site from becoming just another Applebee's or Walgreens. But that landmark status made it

harder to develop the site, especially as the structure continued to decay. In 2013, metro government purchased Colonial Gardens for \$430,000 in an effort to jump-start redevelopment. Underhill Associates, the only developer to bid on the project, bought the property for \$1, with a promise to invest another \$5 million in renovations. However, the original property had been split into three parcels, and two of them were rented, meaning the developer had to wait three years to take possession of the final parcel occupied by a Little Caesars.

Once complete, the high-end food court will house four restaurants sharing a 10,000-square-foot patio, harkening back to Colonial Gardens' roots. Underhill Associates built three new buildings that mimic the style of the original structure, which developer Jeff Underhill says was so badly damaged that his company will spend an additional \$1 million to bring it back to life. The patio is decorated with concrete zoo animals and has a replica of a trolley and a statue of Elvis, who reportedly performed at the site. There is also a South Louisville Hall of Fame near the restrooms that features posters and photographs from the property's past. Underhill says local residents have started cleaning out their basements looking for things to donate.

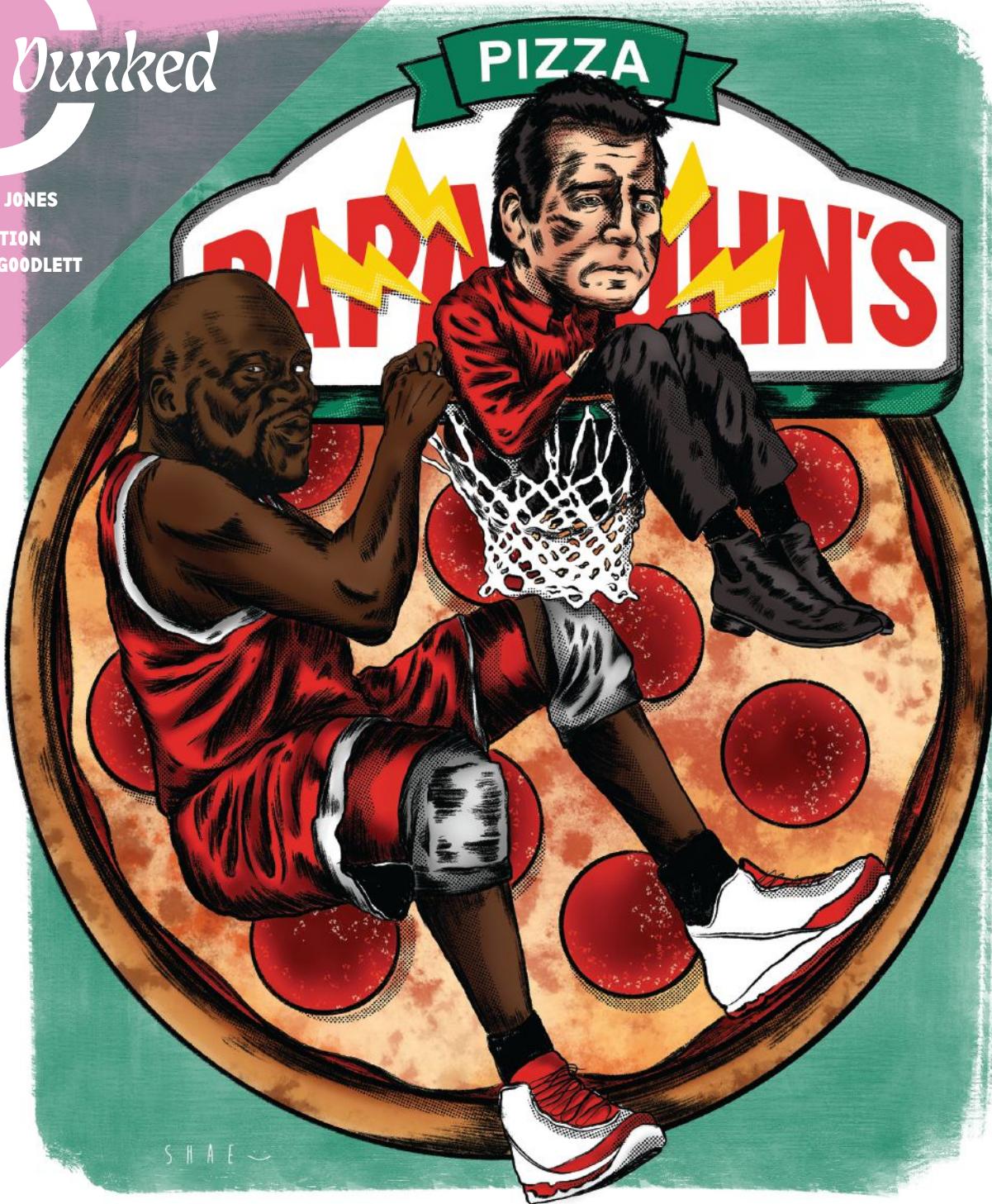
Yager has enjoyed several trips to El Taco Luchador. She has not tried Union 15 yet but has heard good things from her neighbors. Still, she can't help thinking about what might have been. "I always thought Colonial Gardens looked like a big barn," she says. "I would have liked to have seen something with a little more pizzazz. My neighbors are all happy about the new restaurants. They tell me I'm a grumpy old woman, and maybe I am."

Dunked

BY DYLN JONES

ILLUSTRATION

BY SHAE GOODLETT



SHAQ ATTACK.

In recent years, John Schnatter, the eponymous founder and face of Papa John's, has been busy rolling a pizza cutter through the brand's reputation. In 2017, he blamed lagging sales on NFL athletes protesting police brutality. The following year, he said — well, you know what he said. Papa John's stock price plummeted, and U of L took the company's name off Cardinal Stadium. Schnatter was removed as chairman and scrubbed from promotional materials, though he remains a large shareholder. One has to wonder if the company considered dropping the name "Papa

John's" altogether. But what would they change it to?

One option: Papa Shaq's.

Earlier this year, NBA Hall-of-Famer Shaquille O'Neal became the first black board member at Papa John's, bought into nine franchises in Atlanta and replaced Schnatter — who has moved onto a shaky PR redemption tour — as the face of the company. Why? Well, he said he wanted to help cultivate an inclusive culture at the company. But the \$8.25 million, three-year endorsement deal couldn't have hurt.

Eat-a-Thon

PHOTOS BY CHRIS WITZKE

It would have been easy to gorge on the Harvey's Cheese toasties — grilled cheese so good it deserves a name that doesn't imply Kraft singles. Or to fill up at Foko, led by the former Con Huevos chef. But we — three editors and photographer Chris Witzke — practiced some restraint, if you could call it that, grazing our way through the food counters at the newly opened Logan Street Market like horses out at pasture with no end in sight. At least the three-hour lunch felt that way.



FROM TOP: THE LIMBO OWNER OLIVIA GRIFFIN AT THE BAR-AND-RESTAURANT'S SATELLITE LOCATION. "DO YOU WANT TO ADD SPAM?" SHE ASKED US. "I KNOW THAT'S A WEIRD QUESTION. JUST SAY YES."; LIGHTNING TAQUITOS FROM FOKO; ALCHEMY OWNER NELSON MICHELANGELI.





CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: KIMCHI EGG BOWL FROM THE LIMBO; BACON-WRAPPED DATES FROM BRAMBLE. HARVEY'S CHEESE WHIZ JESSICA MCLENDON WITH OWNER ASHLEY URJIL-MILLS. THE CLASSICO "TOASTY" AND SHAVINGS FROM HARVEY'S.



BY ANNE
MARSHALL

PHOTO BY
CHRIS BURGETT

Frigid





IN 2019, THE CITY FUNDED MORE HOMELESS OUTREACH, MORE EMERGENCY SHELTERS. BUT WHERE'S THE HOUSING?

Each day begins as a rough sketch. There are encampments to visit, a list of individuals to check up on. But in homeless outreach, those you assist become the compass, redirecting plans on the spot. So it goes on a cold Friday morning this fall. Christen "Tiny" Herron and

Carrie Dorton, two outreach workers, stand outside the Lord's Kitchen just south of the University of Louisville's campus, talking with men and women who've come bundled in layers for a meal.

Herron and Dorton pass out socks and bus passes, then remind a young man of an upcoming appointment with a caseworker who's finding him housing. They agree on their next stop: a man living at a nearby abandoned property. But a young woman with dark hair tinted sapphire walks up in tears. She lifts a pink Mickey Mouse duffle bag to waist-height. "Let me see her," Dorton says, tenderly.

The woman, whose name we are not including, unzips the bag, pulls out a gray jacket and carefully scoops up a shivering Chihuahua-looking dog named Goldie. The dog's legs are as thin and stiff as pencils. Her ribs look like gills as she struggles to breathe. This woman and her dog have been a pair for years. After the sudden death of the woman's husband, Goldie pressed against her owner, giving relief from the loneliness and soft, eager love when their time on the streets turned violent.

Maybe it's cancer. Whatever it is, Goldie has not been eating, and her brown eyes strain, tired and pained. "This dog saved my life," the woman whispers through sobs so heavy she's gasping.

"You've been a good mama to her," Dorton says, rubbing the woman's back.

Goldie and her owner are now the morning's priority.

That same census showed a 17-percent increase from 2017 to 2018 of those experiencing homelessness due to domestic violence.

What's changed in recent years is the visibility of it all. As land has been cleared for waterfront development and a soccer stadium, well-hidden homeless camps have been forced to disperse, rattling a city now forced to see bodies cluttering sidewalks, even taking up entire blocks along Jefferson and Floyd streets. According to the Coalition for the Homeless, it's estimated that anywhere from 150 to 250 adults sleep on the streets every night. Even during January's polar vortex that produced sub-zero wind chills, 118 people spent the night outside.

Herron, a longtime advocate for homeless people, started the Forgotten Louisville, a volunteer organization that feeds and befriends those living on the streets. She says the outreach efforts have managed to fill a gap. "We're not just handing them a brochure and saying, 'Here are some resources,'" she says. "We're taking them to appointments. We're following up with them."

Numbers show the homeless population has grown slightly in the last few years. The most recent Louisville Homeless Census reported services to nearly 7,000 individuals, up 4 percent from the previous year. Certain subgroups have significantly spiked.

On this day, she and Dorton will drive under I-64 near Portland to visit a camp with about 10 loosely clustered tents. They'll urge a 60-year-old, who is in a wheelchair due to a

staph infection following hip surgery, to complete a housing assessment that could help him get a housing voucher. They'll load a wheelchair-bound 78-year-old into their car and transport him to an emergency shelter so he can avoid another 30-degree night. So far this year, the outreach team has served 755 people; about a third report having a mental illness, and nearly half have no income. Dorton and Herron have arranged thousands of services, from getting identification cards to helping folks access substance-abuse treatment and counseling.

Herron says she and Dorton have found homeless communities that were largely unknown until this year, like the one just south of the University of Louisville, where Goldie and her owner live. Many here live in abandoned properties or sleep on porches, sometimes navigating the streets as a family. "It kind of struck me when I came out here — the single mothers in their 40s with their sons in their 20s," Herron says. "A lot of this area is substance abuse, big-time." Human trafficking and prostitution in this area are "horrific," Herron says, women often getting abused, raped. Dorton, who once struggled with addiction and homelessness herself, adds, "You don't know how much trauma I hear every day."

While some homeless people "sleep out" due to addiction or their pets or not following shelter rules, there's also simply not enough

room. This past summer, a University of Louisville study funded by the city determined that "the number of shelter beds available can only accommodate 67 percent of the known people experiencing homelessness in Jefferson County." When it comes to shelter space for families, there are only enough beds to serve 54 percent of the need. In mid-November there were nearly 80 families on the family shelter waitlist.

While families tend to slip into spaces unnoticed, perhaps living in cars or with friends or spending the night in hospital lobbies, large encampments always draw attention. Twelve camps have been busted this year. (In 2018, Metro Council passed an ordinance mandating a 21-day notice before camps could be razed. But if a camp is on private property, that 21-day notice does not apply.) Herron says the clearing of camps downtown has only pushed homeless people into new spaces, like Okolona, Jeffersontown and Fern Creek. "Which is horrible, because all the services are (downtown) within blocks of each other," she says.

The U of L study urged city leaders to increase the number of beds in low-barrier shelters — emergency shelter with few rules. Pets are allowed. Couples can remain together. Someone can even come in high, though they can't use drugs or alcohol on the premises. In September, the city obliged, allocating hundreds of thousands of dollars toward low-barrier shelter space at three locations, the largest being Wayside.

On a recent evening, in Wayside's former gym, 100 beds are full. They've been full every night since the low-barrier shelter opened on Christmas Eve last year. A red curtain divides the gym. On one side, men and women, pets who sleep in crates. On the other, a few families. With so many animals and people, inevitably, there's a sour, musty smell. Fluorescent lights overhead never shut off completely due to surveillance cameras and guards that must keep watch. Instead, they dim at 11 p.m. "Eventually (the children) are able to settle down," says Nina Moseley, CEO of Wayside Christian Mission, acknowledging it's a grim setting for kids. That's why her staff and Herron and Dorton try to relocate families quickly.

That's no easy task. "A lack of family shelters and affordable family housing units are among the most urgent dimensions of today's local homelessness crisis," the U of L study reports. Currently, the city is 30,000 units short of housing for households that earn \$25,000 or less. Creating that much affordable housing would cost \$3.5 billion. And available funding for such projects, be it in the form of grants, foundation dollars or federal money, is a challenge to secure. Six local agencies did receive \$3.4 million in federal dollars this year, with the charge of housing and stabilizing homeless youth up to age 24.

Herron has already identified young men and women who will receive housing vouchers and supportive services with

that money. But, she says, for those who don't qualify, the shuffling in and out of shelters, hotels and camps will likely continue. "Until there's enough affordable housing, it's not going to end," she says.

Goldie's owner leans against Dorton's Ford Escape. "I can't go. I can't do it," she says, sobbing. Herron and Dorton have called My Dog Eats First, a nonprofit that helps care for homeless pets. They've agreed to cover the cost of Goldie's euthanasia and cremation. The woman nuzzles her nose and cheek into the fur behind Goldie's ear. Herron and Dorton are crying too. Goldie was part of their lives, often tagging along on outreach trips in the neighborhood. Herron's phone is full of Goldie pictures. "I'm thankful I don't get numb to this stuff," Herron will say later, wiping away tears. "It's tough; we go — *bam, bam, bam, bam* — to different situations. The burnout rate is so high doing this."

Over the next two hours, Dorton and Herron will take Goldie to a veterinarian, cradling her like a baby in the waiting room. It's an odd twist to their day, but at least they know the woman trusts them. "It's a big deal for her to hand us her animal," Dorton says. They will stroke Goldie as a sedative sends her into twilight. They'll hug and cry when the vet no longer detects life. With the dog gone, Goldie's owner will feel deep loss. How will she fill that void? "I'm worried about her," Dorton says. Herron nods. It's Friday afternoon, but she's on their list for Monday.

G

Gone

AS TOLD TO JOSH MOSS

Betty Jones died Aug. 16 at age 86, and her husband, Humana co-founder David Jones Sr., died a month later on Sept. 18 at age 88. Three of their five children — David Jr., Dan and Carol — shared stories about their parents.

David and Betty Jones in Louisville in the early 1950s.

David Jr.: “There was a rocking chair in the living room, and I have a distinct memory of Mom reading to me. There was a book called *Perri* about a squirrel. Reading was a fact of life in the house from the very beginning.”

Dan: “One of the first books she ever read to me was *Peter Rabbit*. I still have that whole set of Beatrix Potter books sitting on my bookshelf in my room in their house off Brownsboro Road. That’s one of the things I’m keeping as I clean it out.”

Carol: “I was always throwing a football with my dad.”

Dan: “I wanted to be a receiver, so he’d throw me these long passes and I’d make these diving catches.”

“My dad was a boxer when he was young, and he had these very powerful wrists and forearms. Whenever we would get splinters, he would dig them out with a needle — these big hands holding this tiny needle. And then he would apply this old-fashioned antibacterial. It wasn’t a gentle process.”

Carol: “I was really, really young when my dad taught me to shoot craps.”

Dan: “My parents didn’t have much money in those early days, and he just bought a set of those old electric barber clippers. He didn’t quite shave our heads, but he would just — we looked OK.”

David Jr.: “I came to see the foundation of my dad’s character as gratitude. And the biggest source of his own gratitude was that this amazing, beautiful woman with two college-educated parents from Crescent Hill who he met at U of L, she crossed the railroad tracks to the other side of town (in west Louisville) and chose him.”

Carol: “They were in a couples book club and met approximately every six weeks for 30 years. It’s still going. The conversations around the house were always — just huge vocabulary being thrown around.”

Dan: “Every morning they’d be sitting around the breakfast table reading the *Courier-Journal*, the *New York Times*. And my dad always read the *Wall Street Journal*. They kept the papers stacked for a week under this little table.”

Carol: “My dad would whistle when he got home from work, and my mom would go meet him and kiss him hello and he’d put his keys in the basket.”

Dan: “When sporting events were on, particularly like U of L basketball, U of L football, they would watch together, even though my mom was not a big sports fan.”

Carol: “My dad wanted to watch football, and so my mom would sit in there and knit or read a book. My dad would say, ‘Well, Mom really wants to watch the game tonight.’ You might hear her in the background: ‘Oh, Dave.’

“If I argued with one of them, the other one was backing them up, no question about that. They had their conversations behind closed doors and came and presented a united front. And I knew that they were a backstop. They would never call each other out on anything publicly, even in front of us. If they disagreed, that was going to be private.”

Dan: “He was in the Navy when they got married, then went to sea. Then they left so he could attend Yale Law School — just a completely different group of people than they grew up with. They came back and had five kids, and then my dad went through this, you know, sort of incredible transformation from a smart but poor kid into a very wealthy and successful business person.”

2019 Losses

WE WENT TO OUR ARCHIVES FOR WORDS FROM SOME OTHER LOUISVILLIANS WHO DIED THIS YEAR.

David Jr.: “No matter how successful her husband became, Mom was still going to be her own person. She was not going to be limited to being a corporate spouse.

“One of the great things about the business success was that they were able to travel together. They also lived apart internationally. My mom went back to get her master’s in French. One time she was in France, so he went to Berlin for six weeks and worked on his German. They kept themselves sharp individually.”

Carol: “Their choice of movies would appall me, but they would sometimes go up to New York just for the weekend to see French movies or foreign films that didn’t come to Louisville.”

Dan: “The Uptown Cafe on Bardstown Road was a favorite. They loved their life out in the East End, but I think they always felt rooted in the Highlands because that was where all their kids were born, and they lived a good chunk of their early marriage there.”

Carol: “Pat’s Steakhouse was one of their all-time favorites.”

David Jr.: “In July of this year, on their 65th wedding anniversary, they were talking and singing to each other. We were in Dad’s room at the Nazareth Home over by Bellarmine. My parents told us they had agreed when they got married that they would never go to sleep without resolving whatever dispute they were having. They said they never actually stayed up all night but came pretty close a couple times.

“I don’t remember exactly what we sang. Dad probably sang ‘You Are My Sunshine’ a little bit. He always said, ‘In the Baptist church, you were encouraged to make a joyful noise.’ And he made joyful noise, even if it wasn’t always clear that it was in the same key as everybody else.”

Carol: “My mom could follow a tune and had a pretty voice, but he was a horrible singer. To hear them singing together was hilarious. She would chuckle but would never call him out. But he knew so many lyrics. My dad sang ‘Thank God I’m a Country Boy’; we liked to listen to John Denver together. He’d sing ‘When the Saints Go Marching In,’ show tunes, songs from the 1940s during the war.”

Dan: “I’ve gotten a zillion notes about them and one of the repetitive themes is that when they were together, they were always holding hands.”

Carol: “Holding hands at church, at the theater, out for a walk.”

Dan: “At the very end of their lives, my dad’s sitting in a wheelchair next to my mom’s bed holding her hand.”

Carol: “Toward the end, my dad did say something like, ‘You know, I don’t know what’s coming after this, but I think I’ve made the best opportunity of this life.’”

Dan: “Eight days before my mom died she was on the phone with one of her oldest friends, from my dad’s days in the Navy. My dad and I were sitting there and we couldn’t get her off the phone.

“My dad had a sense of humor up to the end. There was this real friendly physical therapist at Nazareth who would always sing him this little song every morning. And he started reciting this poem about a purple cow, which was something that (our parents) used to recite to us. That was 48 hours before he died.”

Carol: “Their friends who we saw at the funeral were their same friends I saw growing up. I know those people’s children and their children’s children.”

David Jr.: “I’ve gotten some wonderful notes from people. Several have just said, ‘It’s a love story.’ Maybe I’ll look back on it that way, but I’m still just working through that they’re gone.”

Carol: “An experience that I’ve had recently was: I was watching my son play basketball out at Kentucky Country Day. We all graduated from KCD, and then I coached there like 20 years ago and I’m coaching there again. I looked across at the stands and my parents weren’t there. They watched games in that gym for 40 years; then they’re not there.

“It is shocking that suddenly they’re both gone so close together. They didn’t have to be apart very long, and that’s a good thing because neither of them wanted to be apart. They always wanted to be together. I guess the way I think about that is: They did things together.”

Activist Suzy Post died in January at age 85 *From a piece that happened to run in January: “I have just loved life. It is gonna piss me off to have to die before I really want to.”*

Longtime Jack’s Lounge bartender and the Kentucky Bourbon Cocktail Book co-author Joy Perrine died in March at age 73 *From February 2016: “Some bourbons are very vanilla, caramel, sorghum and molasses. Others are fiery and peppery. Others are citrusy. Some you get flavors of cherries and raisins. You get the spices, the cinnamon and nutmeg. Some I get pineapple. I can get coconut. I can get banana. On a really cold night, to me, there’s nothing better than being in front of a roaring fire with a nice little glass of bourbon in my hand.”*

Former Louisville Ballet director Alun Jones died in April at age 82 *From September 1980: When people marvel at his luring Mikhail Baryshnikov to perform with his company, he grins and says simply, “I just asked him.”*

Woody Porter of A.D. Porter & Sons Funeral Home died in June at age 72 *From September 2012: “The doctor told me each step I take could be my last. All the sudden, the other (artery) could close and — boom! — I’m just gonna have a massive stroke and die. When he told me that a little over a year ago, for about two weeks I was sort of depressed. Then I said, ‘I will not allow myself to live in fear.’ Why should I fear dying?”*

High Five

PUFF, PUFF, LAW PASSED.

BY JOSH WOOD

No, Louisville is not the next Denver: Weed is still very much illegal in Kentucky. But Jefferson County took a huge leap toward relaxing its attitude on marijuana when County Attorney Mike O'Connell announced in August that he would no longer prosecute possession cases that involved one ounce or less of marijuana when that was the only or most serious charge. It's not *exactly* decriminalization, but it's pretty close, and the move came after the Metro Council passed an ordinance that told LMPD officers to make pot possession their lowest priority.

The shifts on marijuana policy came after a *Courier-Journal* report in January showed that black drivers pulled over by LMPD were arrested for marijuana at six times the rate of white drivers. Meanwhile, African-Americans accounted for two-thirds of all marijuana charges in the city in 2017. "For me to truly be a minister of justice, I cannot sit idly by when communities of color are treated differently," O'Connell said in announcing the change.

While it may be too early to tell how big of an impact there might be, activists say it's a step in the right direction. "I think it's helped out a lot of people across the city," says Jaime Montalvo, the founder of Kentuckians for Medical Marijuana. "I know in my particular case, it may have protected me from being searched and eventually charged with a bunch of different things, because now the smell alone isn't enough to get a search warrant."

Montalvo, who uses marijuana to manage symptoms and pain from his multiple sclerosis, was arrested for growing marijuana in 2012 after a police dog hunting a bank robber in his neighborhood alerted on Montalvo's home. The arrest saw Montalvo lose custody of his child for six months, and he was put on probation for five years.

Matthew Bratcher, executive director of Kentucky's chapter of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, hopes the reforms will lower arrests. "If the cops know it's not going to go anywhere, chances are they're going to be even less likely to arrest somebody," he says. "When other cities have implemented similar policies, you do see a dramatic drop in the racial disparity of these arrests, which is always what you want out of these kinds of policies."

Activists hope the moves in Jefferson County will spur changes elsewhere in the state. Lexington is seen as a potential candidate for decriminalization. Paducah — right across the Ohio River from Illinois, where recreational weed will be legal on Jan. 1 — is another. The policy changes in Louisville, Montalvo says, "will help communities see that it's not the end of the world; the sky isn't falling. By all intents and purposes, we're decriminalizing something without allowing people to go and purchase it in a legal store."



"In
God
We
Trust"

SCHOOLS GET CREATIVE WITH A NEW STATE LAW.

BY JOSH WOOD

When a law requiring Kentucky public schools to prominently display the words "In God We Trust" went into effect this year, some school districts got creative in their compliance. In Fayette County, schools posted framed copies of dollar bills. In Jefferson County, schools put up posters describing how the words first appeared on U.S. coins in 1864 "largely because of the increased religious sentiment existing during the Civil War" and only later became the national motto. With critics of the law seeing it as part of an effort by religious conservatives to break down the division between church and state, creative displays were viewed as a rebellion. Fayette County's dollar bills generated statewide and national attention, leading Gov. Matt Bevin to say the district was trying to "undermine" the intent of the law. Republican state Rep. Brandon Reed of Hodgenville said he was disappointed to see Fayette County looking for "silly loopholes" to the bill he introduced. In Reed's LaRue County, the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln, schools put up images of pennies.



Journalism

INSIDE INSIDER'S LAST DAYS.

BY SARA HAVENS

It was just another day when I walked through the door of *Insider Louisville*'s office inside the First Trust Centre downtown. But when I walked out eight hours later, an air of uncertainty permeated the hallways.

That day was Thursday, July 25, and for most of the morning and early afternoon, my fellow writers — four Louisville journalists (there were six of us total, but one was on vacation that week) — went about our jobs as we normally did, publishing about one article an hour starting at 5:45 a.m. As culture editor, I had a few arts features and event roundups to work on, and I was expecting at least two pieces from our small but stable pool of freelancers.

My boss mentioned she'd be out that afternoon for a board meeting, but that hoisted no flags. Ever since *Insider* had become a nonprofit in late 2017, our board met regularly in the conference room. After their meetings, they'd always stop by and say hello. On this day, nobody did.

Insider, which began in 2010 as an "insider's scoop" — part hearsay reporting, part full-on journalism — had transformed from blog to online news outlet in the span of three years. One man's vision was bought by another's startup dreams, and thus the for-profit *Insider* was formed in 2013, staffed and fueled by local journalists who craved

a stable work environment. *Insider* assembled a team of editorial and digital talent and became a source of local news, covering local business, real estate, public policy, education, health and culture.

Reporter Joe Sonka and I both came off the heels of long stints at *LEO Weekly*, and we were grateful for the job security. Besides, we had more than 150,000 monthly readers, and an owner who was committed to making a viable business model. After four years, however, it was evident that we could not create a solid foundation with advertising, sponsored posts, events, etc. So we followed the route of a few choice national outlets: nonprofit.

It was a few minutes before 4 p.m. when I heard the conference door open and the sound of feet shuffling toward the exit. I had a question for my editor about the morning's lead story, but when I got to her office, she was gone. Somewhat confused and irritated — so what story does she want to go next? — I ran into another co-worker, in marketing, who looked as gray as our office walls. That's when I first felt the heavy cloud of uneasiness swelling through my body. Her boss, who attended the meeting, had acted strange afterward, and he, too, had left for the day in a hurry. The co-worker said he seemed distant, avoided eye contact. The few of us left at the office

swapped details about how upper management acted after the meeting. We began to panic.

I tried to remain calm until I knew the facts, but at happy hour, I never shook the feeling that something was wrong. And then the texts started coming from co-workers. Apparently, keeping secrets in an office full of journalists is damn near impossible, as a couple of my resourceful cohorts unearthed some information from notes left on desks in plain sight. One scribbling read: "cost analysis of shutdown." Another: "articles of dissolution."

Despite the gin, my stomach dropped.

But this is journalism, and it shouldn't be a shock if we're looking at national trends. Newsrooms have shrunk, roles have consolidated, respected publications have shuttered.

The next morning, an email from my boss came bright and early. It was for a meeting first thing. We found out *Insider* would cease publication on Aug. 7. We had to be out of the office by July 31. Our only severance would be unused vacation days.

Since then, I've come across many people who express disappointment in the closing. They want to know what happened. In my opinion, there are a few reasons. First, we worked in beautiful offices draped in our signature Florida-orange color and furnished with decor that was

both edgy and conventional — things we couldn't afford. Second, we had accrued debt from when the organization was for-profit, which makes me wonder if we ever had a fighting chance. Third, we didn't receive some large grants we had been awarded previously — most notably, the \$500,000 grant from the James Graham Brown Foundation that we nabbed in 2018. And finally, not everyone was willing to pay for local journalism, although I was blown away by the support and donations we did receive. It takes a lot to staff a newsroom of seven full-time journalists, two full-time marketers, one part-time accountant and about a dozen freelancers.

As for my former co-workers, most have thankfully found other jobs. Two went to the *Courier-Journal*, one to WDRB, and the others are beefing up their freelance portfolios. For me, I'm trying my hand at bourbon marketing for Mint Julep Tours and continuing to freelance and keep up with my Bar Belle blog on the side.

I'm proud of the work I did for *Insider*, especially in creating one of the city's first bourbon beats. I also believe covering Louisville's thriving arts scene was one of our best attributes, and it was something we put a healthy freelance budget toward.

We need good journalism now more than ever.

Insider taught us it isn't free.



BY DYLON JONES | ILLUSTRATION BY SHAE GOODLETT

The most foul-mouthed kid in the state couldn't have come up with more outlandish things to say about teachers than soon-to-be-former Gov. Matt Bevin. Remember that bizarre statement linking the teacher protests over pension reform to child molestation? *Bruh.*

We don't have the data to say for sure that teachers as a voting bloc knocked Bevin out of office, but the pension debate undoubtedly played a big part in upping turnout to the highest it's been in a gubernatorial election since 1995, earning Andy Beshear a razor-thin 5,189-vote win. And the narrative of teacher backlash toppling a Republican from power in a state that voted overwhelmingly for Trump has such a delicious sense of poetic justice that it's hard to resist. So, with that in mind: Matthew Griswold Bevin, you're expelled.

SHAE

I Lay of the Land

BY JENNI LAIDMAN
PHOTO BY MICKIE WINTERS

2019 was a giant year for Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest as it celebrated its 90th anniversary. Literally. Giants Mama Loumari and her youngsters, Elina and Nis, moved to the arboretum with the help of Danish artist Thomas Dambo, who built the supersized trio from recycled materials, including some Louisville Sluggers and bourbon barrels. Fans of the giants stormed the Bullitt County nature preserve to say hi. Forest visitors tripled, and, by year's end, are expected to top half a million. Giant lovers from every state, every occupied continent and some 22 nations — Australia trails only Canada in its number of giant guests — stopped by to meet the big visitors. And the dividends for Bernheim have been giant as well. Donations are up, memberships are up and gift-shop revenue jumped 90 percent. In fact, visitors so loved the giants that, when scoundrels made off with Elina's jewelry in March, Bernheim guests brought her more. They continued to bedeck her stick tresses with pink bows and her bracelet with beads and rocks late into the year. The timing of the giants' visit couldn't have been better in another way, as they create new allies for the conservation organization, which has squared off in court against LG&E's plans to extend a 12-inch natural gas pipeline across a three-quarter-mile stretch of Bernheim's newest property. So far, the giants haven't joined the fray against the utility. Loumari, who's "pregnant," has other things on her mind at the moment. But LG&E may want to worry about making enemies of such dizzying proportions.

BERNHEIM'S **BIG** YEAR.





Moscow Mitch

BY JOSH WOOD
ILLUSTRATION BY SHAE GOODLETT

MITCH'S ITCH.

Moscow Mitch. The name rolled off the tongue, sticking to Mitch McConnell like no other jab had over his 35 years in the U.S. Senate. Putin's Mitch may have conveyed the same message, but it was no Moscow Mitch, a name critics pinned to McConnell following his continued rejection of bipartisan bills to fund election-security measures — as intelligence officials continually warned of Russia's interference.

Soon after the nickname debuted over the summer, the Kentucky Democratic Party started branding everything from Russian Cossack hats and copper Moscow Mule cups to red T-shirts and koozies with the words "Just say nyet! to Moscow Mitch!" The merch pulled in more than \$500,000.

Louisville's — and perhaps America's — most powerful

politician has usually rolled with the punches, even seeming to welcome them at times. But Moscow Mitch and the caricatures of the bespectacled senate majority leader wearing an ushanka bearing a hammer and sickle went too far: He condemned the taunt, calling it a form of "modern-day McCarthyism."

"Other than money in politics, the one thing I think that Senator McConnell probably holds dear to his heart: He's a hawk who believes in the partnership between the U.S. and old Europe, who points to his record fighting against Russian influence throughout the years, throughout the decades," *Courier-Journal* political reporter Phillip Bailey told MSNBC in August. "So he's definitely taking this more personally."

N No More

AS TOLD TO JOSH MOSS
PHOTO BY DANNY ALEXANDER



ON SEPT. 6, 2018, LOUISVILLE NATIVE WHITNEY AUSTIN WAS SHOT 12 TIMES BY A 9MM SEMIAUTOMATIC HANDGUN WHILE HEADING INTO WORK AT THE FIFTH THIRD CENTER IN DOWNTOWN CINCINNATI. SHE SURVIVED AND, IN THE WAKE OF THE SHOOTING THAT KILLED THREE, STARTED THE NONPROFIT WHITNEY/STRONG.

A trauma surgeon removed this bullet jacket from Whitney Austin with tweezers. "Your body pushes that stuff out," her husband Waller says.

Last month, Whitney Austin was in Frankfort advocating for a bipartisan bill known as "red flag" that would allow court-approved extreme-risk-protection orders to temporarily remove guns from individuals who are a threat to others or themselves. As of press time, the bill was scheduled to be filed in time for the General Assembly session next month.

Austin, who is 38 and lives in Louisville, spoke to us about the Fifth Third shooting, and her goals for Whitney/Strong, which she's now focusing on full time.

“Our kitty cat's named for Al (Cincinnati Police Department officer Alphonzo Staples), who saved my life. It's funny

because he would not have chosen the cat; he would have preferred a Rottweiler. But our children wanted an animal, and we got Alphonzo the cat about a month after I was injured. If you have a mommy who's not fully functioning and my husband Waller is trying to take care of everybody, how are you going to get a puppy? Getting a cat was really helpful because my hands weren't working all that well after the shooting, so to pet a cat was good therapy.

"The first barrage of bullets pretty much got my right arm, and the second time it went all the way across to my left arm. I was so laser-focused on surviving that I don't even remember the sounds of it. I was in the revolving door, and I really thought I was dying. And then I saw Al. He couldn't immediately save me because they needed to take down the shooter. I can't tell you the specific timeline because I've never watched any of the videos; I know watching the video is not going to be helpful in my healing. But I know that it was a very short period of time. I think I was in there less than three minutes tops. I said, 'I have a five- and a seven-year-old. You need to save me. I need to be their mommy.' I was bleeding uncontrollably on the way to the hospital. The left arm had a tourniquet and nobody was putting a tourniquet on the right arm because it was so bad. The first of my surgeries was just to put it all back together.

"That first night I was strong enough to sit up in my hospital bed. My arms were all bandaged, but my face looked fine and had good color, so we FaceTimed with the kids. They knew that Mommy got shot by what we said was a

man with a bad brain, because how do you explain any of that to young minds? By the end of the call they said, 'Can we go back to watching our show now?'

"People sent care packages. I mean, we didn't cook meals for months and months because people would drop off so much food. I had a cousin who lived with us for a full month, helping with the kids. One group of moms brought me every cool thing Trader Joe's makes, but that I'd never allowed myself to buy. Cheese straws. Pair those with some red wine and you're good to go.

"Waller and I were in the hospital that first week in Cincinnati. I couldn't physically do anything. It took me a long time to even stand up. But my mind was racing: What are we going to do? The gun debate is so politicized — everybody's fighting all the time, nobody can agree on anything. We said: Why can't we come at this from the center? If I show a picture of me meeting with Mitch McConnell, then I'll follow it up with a picture of me meeting with John Yarmuth. Everything we take on has to be supported by the majority of citizens, with legit polling data, and there has to be good evidence to show it will work. Comprehensive background checks are certainly one of those things.

"Whitney/Strong is not just about mass shootings. The number of people impacted by mass shootings continues to increase, but that is just a very, very small piece of the pie. The biggest number comes from suicide, and not enough people are talking about that. My experience made me open my mind and eyes and heart to other types of gun violence. I think about

the moms and communities that are disproportionately impacted by gun violence and how scared they are to let their kids play in the backyard because you just don't know when something's going to happen. And I think about how privileged I am that all I have to worry about is some random situation in a public space, which is still very, very rare.

"Waller has rifles, some of them more than a hundred years old, that have been passed down for generations in his family. He also has a rifle that he bought in college because he liked to shoot skeet and clay pigeons. So nobody here in this household is anti-gun. As long as you are responsible, you're good with me. A lot of times people get laughed out of these conversations because they've never held a gun. I thought: Who am I to champion responsible gun ownership if I've never shot a gun?

"The firearm training that I have taken has all been through Knob Creek Gun Range in Bullitt County and one of their instructors, Cole (Daunhauer). They're closed Tuesdays, so he brought me in, let me shoot when nobody else was there. It's me, Waller, several other board members. I remember going through everything really robotically — putting in the magazine, pulling back the slider, putting my hand on the trigger, leaning forward into the proper position. And then I just pulled the trigger. I was probably a good 12 inches above the center of the target, but it was still right in the center. I remember grabbing Waller and hugging him and having watery eyes and thinking, oh, my God, that was the closest I'll ever feel to what the shooter felt like.

"I would absolutely talk to the shooter's family. I can't even imagine what it must be like to be in that situation. I don't have any hate in my heart toward him. I have a lot of questions. I wonder what must have happened in his life to get him to that point. What things got in his way of having a fruitful life? And how can we prevent other people from getting there?

"We've come to the realization that incremental progress is the way. One example is getting gun shops to display suicide-prevention materials. Knob Creek has partnered with us. For a gun-violence-prevention organization to partner with a gun shop on what common-sense things we can do together, that doesn't get the attention that it should.

"There are so many people who are devastated forever because of losing a loved one to guns. But my outcome is different, and I'm going to try and fight for them because I can do something about this. I don't deserve to feel anything other than motivated to change the world because I got what I wanted: my kids, my husband, my sister, my parents, my friends. How can you waste any time being upset with what happened to you when you got the most unbelievable outcome ever?

"The more people that continue to be affected by these shootings, we approach critical mass. And then we are that much harder to ignore in terms of change. Because the thing about us is: We'll never forget.

"I like that I have the scars. They help remind me of what I'm fighting for."

Ouch

WHAT'S UP WITH THE WEST LOUISVILLE PASSPORT HEADQUARTERS?

BY ANNE MARSHALL

In late 2018 and the early days of 2019, city leaders often rejoiced the \$1 billion in investment headed to west Louisville neighborhoods. Development on one of the most expensive projects, though — an \$82 million Passport Health Plan headquarters and “health campus” at 18th Street and Broadway — has stalled. It is now just a steel skeleton to behold. In May, Passport, a nonprofit Medicaid managed-care company, announced that Evolent Health, a for-profit health-management company, would buy a 70-percent stake in Passport. At the time there were assurances that the headquarters would possibly, maybe, conceivably proceed. Still, we wait.

The Evolent acquisition has not yet closed. And Passport is expecting an announcement this month from the state on Medicaid managed-care contracts for the next five years. (Under the Bevin administration, Passport worried that cuts to its Medicaid business could push them into bankruptcy, according to the *Courier-Journal*.) As for the headquarters, Ben Adkins, a Passport spokesperson, says, “We have made the decision to seek an outside partner to help develop and manage the site moving forward, allowing us to focus our people and resources on coordinating care for our health-plan members. Our developer search is underway.” Does this mean the site will remain a health campus of sorts? Or morph into something else? “It’s still too early in the process to speculate on the influence a developer would bring to the project,” Adkins says.

P Progress

BY ANNE MARSHALL

AN UPDATE ON THE LOUISVILLE URBAN LEAGUE TRACK-AND- FIELD COMPLEX.

With a \$5-million gift from Norton Healthcare in October, the Louisville Urban League's track officially became the Norton Sports Health Athletics & Learning Complex. LUL CEO Sadiqa Reynolds says the day Norton stepped up she was "over the moon." So far, she has raised nearly \$25 million for the

west Louisville project that will cost between \$35 and \$40 million. (She wants to build the complex debt-free.)

This year, LUL launched its "Run With Us" campaign, urging individuals to support the project with a \$5,000 pledge, earning each donor their name on one of the complex's 4,000 seats. Another milestone? Reynolds says she recently signed a deal with Kiefer USA to supply the track surfacing, the same one that athletes will run on in the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Plans call for the facility to act as more than just a host site for meets. It will be a learning hub, an entertainment venue and, hopefully, a magnet for retail and a hotel. Can the complex bring economic development to a neighborhood that's been neglected by public and private investment for decades? It's a massive undertaking, and Reynolds feels that.

In recent years there has been so much investment announced for west Louisville, one such project being the proposed Passport headquarters at 18th Street and Broadway that is now on hold. Does this put pressure on you, to show that commitment for the track is real? "As a black woman running an organization that primarily serves the black community — and of course we serve everybody who needs us — but the level of pressure has been real from the beginning. I mean, I'll tell you, there have really been days when I was just like, 'Wow, what am I doing?' Because people have ideas, people want to do great things, but to actually be in the middle of this and having my whole full-

time job of running the Urban League, being a mom, trying to have a little bit of a personal life — it's the pressure of everything about what happens in poor communities always seeming to fail. I have all of that on me."

Are you pleased with where you are in terms of fundraising? "It's been tremendous. I should be celebrating. But the challenge with celebration is I'm not done. So it's hard. I'm proud of our city, I'm proud of folks for stepping up. But I am — I have to tell you, I am disappointed in the number of corporations that have not come forward to help us out." (*Ed: In 2018, the James Graham Brown Foundation put \$3 million toward the project, and LG&E has pledged \$100,000 as the track's concession sponsor. Nineteen companies have committed a total of about \$1 million. Metro government has committed \$10 million in the form of a bond.*)

So you're hoping for more of the bigger companies in Louisville to pledge support? "Absolutely. And the ones that have foundations to step up and help. You know, if everybody does their part. Where we are really at this point: We need \$13 million more in philanthropy and we're done. But we do need \$4 million in this calendar year."

Why is that? "Because this project is in large part being driven by access to new market tax credits and we've got to have a certain amount of money pledged and committed and cash in hand to move it forward."

Do you have a definitive deadline on when this has to be built? "We're going to be done at the end of next year, come hell or high water. Done. The outdoor track will be done summer 2020. Then by the end of 2020, the entire project is complete, doors open. The next big part, you know, there's the hotel and the other bigger retail, but that's a separate thing. I'm hoping that when it's over, people will go, 'Man, this is better than I thought.'"

Q Queen



LOCAL DRAG QUEEN JADE JOLIE IS FRIENDS WITH TAYLOR SWIFT. #SQUADGOALS

BY SARA HAVENS



of the esteemed drag queen and drag king lineup known as the Play Mates at Play Dance Bar in Butchertown. “She has been a mentor to several local queens, many of which are up-and-coming,” Play owner Micah McGowan says, adding that she “continues to hone her craft.” During her time at Play, she has perfected the Taylor Swift look. She is always a crowd favorite when she commandeers the stage to perform “Blank Space,” “22” and, of course, “You Need to Calm Down,” which is the video Jolie appears in along with a handful of other notable drag queens from across the country. Not only is she right alongside Swift in the video, but Jolie has posted many behind-the-scenes moments with Swift from both the video shoot and the MTV Video Music Awards in August, the site of the infamous mistaken-identity moment. Onstage, a somewhat oblivious John Travolta presented the Video of the Year Award to Swift (and the drag performers) for “You Need to Calm Down.” Our girl Jolie was one of the first to take the stage, and Travolta appeared giddy in her presence and offered up the Moon Man trophy to her, presumably thinking she was Swift. The next day, “Jade Jolie” was abuzz on social media. “Jade is the No. 1 Taylor Swift impersonator in the world,” McGowan says.

It has been quite the year for Louisville drag queen Jade Jolie — from appearing in a Taylor Swift music video to being mistaken for said pop icon by a legendary movie star at an awards show.

Jolie, the drag persona of Joshua Green, came to Louisville shortly after finishing in eighth place on the reality show *RuPaul’s Drag Race* in 2013. She has since become part

R

Reckoning

HOW WILL RACING RESPOND TO THE GROWING OUTRAGE OVER HORSE DEATHS?

BY BRANDON QUICK

2019 got off to an unusually bad start at historic Santa Anita Park in California, with 10 horses suffering catastrophic injuries in January. That's about the time the mainstream media picked up the story, and, over the course of the year, horse deaths became the prevailing national racing story, including after Mongolian Groom took a bad step in the Breeders' Cup Classic Nov. 3.

Last month, a coalition of leadership representing all of the major tracks formed to address safety issues regarding medications, track surfaces and whip use. During a press conference at Keeneland, Churchill Downs president Kevin Flanery said, "These reforms are vitally important for our industry."

For many people outside the industry, the future of the sport has become a binary proposition: reform or abolish. I'm all for the former, but it helps to know the facts.

What do the numbers say? Statistics show that horse racing is safer than ever. In 2018, 1.68 Thoroughbreds per 1,000 starters were fatally injured on North American racetracks, according to an injury database maintained by the Jockey Club. The number has declined since 2009. As for Santa Anita, the breakdowns have exceeded the national average lately, ranging from 2.94 per 1,000 in 2011 to 2.04 in 2018. If anything is to be expected at Santa Anita, it's regression to the mean.

Why do horses break down? Horses are fragile, with tiny ankles supporting the thousand-pound beasts. According to a recent article written by former jockey and current NBC racing analyst Donna Barton Brothers, fracture is the "natural mechanism by which most horses' lives terminate." If a horse is in terrible pain or a bone is protruding, euthanasia is usually

a quick decision. A specialized splint can stabilize a limb injury temporarily, allowing a horse to bear weight long enough to be medically evaluated, and some less severe limb injuries do respond well to surgery. The real issue is that horses are poor patients because you can't immobilize them like you can a human. Horses spend the majority of their lives standing, and it's unnatural and uncomfortable for them when they can't bear weight. An injury also causes them to bear weight unevenly, which can lead to the often-fatal hoof disease laminitis.

Dr. Charles McCauley, director of veterinary clinical services at Louisiana State University, specializes in equine surgery and racing injuries and says, "Are the risks of racing excessive? I don't see it that way. I had a horse suffer a catastrophic fracture in a two-acre pasture."

Are track surfaces to blame? In general, dirt surfaces are more dangerous than turf or synthetic. In 2007, the California Horse Racing Board issued a mandate that all major tracks in the state abandon dirt racing and convert to synthetic surfaces. The change happened (at an estimated total cost of \$40 million), but by 2015 Santa Anita and Del Mar — the state's two largest and best-known tracks — had already converted back to dirt, citing maintenance problems and inconsistencies with the synthetic surfaces, even though the number of catastrophic injuries at both tracks had declined. Keeneland, too, converted to a synthetic track in 2006 before reverting to dirt in 2014. This was announced after a banner year of safety in 2013, when the track had just a single catastrophic breakdown on its synthetic surface.

Focusing on the science of engineering safer and more consistent dirt surfaces

is a trend the industry seems to be embracing in the aftermath of Santa Anita 2019. In a recent *Blood-Horse* article, Mick Peterson, a track-surface expert, University of Kentucky ag equine professor and the executive director of the Racing Surfaces Testing Laboratory, alluded to the potential of developing a "biomechanically appropriate synthetic" that would combine the best attributes of conventional dirt and synthetic racing surfaces.

Is horse racing cruel? Once breakdowns captured the attention of the general public, they predictably became political fodder. California Gov. Gavin Newsom mentioned the "incredible abuses" suffered by racehorses and the willingness of the sport "to literally spit these animals out and take their lives." In general, those making such claims have spent little time on the backside of a racetrack.

The reality is, the average racehorse has it pretty darn good. They have a personal groom, get regular massages. They receive chiropractic treatment. They are sheltered, well-fed, exercised, cared for when they are ill. Tending to a Thoroughbred athlete is a seven-day lifestyle that revolves around keeping the animal healthy and happy.

Of course, it's hard to come to grips with a horse dying on the track. Watching a befallen majestic creature is a profoundly emotional experience, and it's unequivocally the worst part of the sport. Trainer Ian Wilkes echoes these sentiments in the thoughtful way most insiders do when asked to contemplate the ever-present threat of death. "Things are gonna happen," Wilkes says, "but the thing I've always said about this game is that we never get used to it. The day I'm used to it, I'm done. That would mean I've lost feeling for the animal, and we feel for these animals in everything we do."



S

Score

SOCER'S WINNING YEAR.

Not that you could tell from the puffs of yellow and purple smoke, or the nonstop chants and horns, or the stadium's record crowds, but Slugger Field — charming as it is — isn't meant for soccer. So just imagine the energy in the stands during Louisville City FC's first game in the team's new stadium next spring. Throughout the year, we've seen the steel take shape along the highway in Butchertown. Adding to the excitement was the announcement of a pro women's team that will share the new home.

In late summer, workers rolled out the new turf. The 2020 grass is looking greener already.

Tee Time's Up

DO WE REALLY NEED CHEROKEE GOLF COURSE?

BY BRUCE ALLAR

One 2019 lowlight hit the city right in the pocketbook: the announcement by Mayor Greg Fischer in January that an additional several million dollars — precipitated by a rising pension bill from the state — would be needed in the 2019-2020 budget to be passed by July 1. Eventually, with Fischer's suggestion to increase the insurance-tax rate getting little support, and after some heated debates, \$25.5 million was shaved in a multitude of departments and programs.

A visible symptom of this budget fever has been the ongoing, temperature-rising debate over future operations of Louisville's 10 municipal golf courses. While the courses combined returned a profit of nearly \$35,000 to the city in fiscal year 2016, they've been operating below par since. They reportedly lost nearly \$770,000 in fiscal year 2018 and were, according to preliminary figures, more than \$1 million in the red for 2019. In response, earlier this year Fischer sought bids from outside contractors to run the courses and, potentially, close some of the underperformers. This prompted both golfer grievances and a Metro Council counterproposal that would keep the properties under Metro Parks control by raising greens fees. New contracts for course operations are due to be in place by Jan. 1, so expect to see more golf in the news.

It's easy to get lost in the weeds (or should I say the rough) of these deliberations. The current system, where a different PGA-certified professional controls operations at each course, was under scrutiny. So was the way those professionals report their expenses and revenues back to the city. As a golfer who plays these "muni" courses, I see the need to tighten operations. But keeping a teaching professional at each course really serves the public: These pros do so much to introduce and advance a lifelong sport to the non-country club crowd.

Apparently, Metro Council agrees. In October, it voted 22-1 to retain pros at each course and raise greens fees by \$5 to make up for revenue shortfalls. When I asked Metro Council member Brandon Coan about it, he said, "I think Metro Council wanted to give Metro Parks and golf courses an opportunity to keep things the way they were if it could be financially sustainable. And I thought it was worth that chance."

Coan's district includes Cherokee Golf Course, which runs alongside Grinstead Drive and Cherokee Parkway and, obviously, the adjacent Cherokee Park, a gem in the local parks system designed by the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted. Coan's wife, Summer Auerbach, is on the board of the Olmsted Parks Conservancy, which has gone public with an offer to repurpose the course's land, turning it back into park space with walking trails, a pond for boating and fishing and other amenities, and transforming the clubhouse into a restaurant with a patio. Despite the potential conflict of interest, Coan called it "a very visionary plan," and said that, in the event the golf course continues to lose money, "At very least there is a Plan B, where Olmsted will come in and pay to maintain it and pay to do a master plan."

As a golfer and a parks advocate, I ask: "Why wait?" Let's say goodbye to the Cherokee links. Yes, it's the oldest public golf course in Louisville, dating to 1895. And no, while costing the city more than \$100,000 in fiscal year 2019, Cherokee is not the biggest loss leader. That double bogey goes to Sun Valley, in Valley Station, which lost more than \$260,000.

But here's the thing: Cherokee has long been outdated as a place to play the game. When clubs had hickory shafts and balls would hardly fly 200 yards, Cherokee's nine holes might have been considered a test of a golfer's total game. Today, it's short yardages and the trick shots required to navigate slopes fit for a ski run make it more of an arcade game.

And here's the other thing: Contrary to the opinion of many, golf is not just an elitist pastime for executives and politicians hopping on private jets to exclusive clubs. The game is accessible for players of more modest means, as well. Equipment is costly, but it lasts several years. And golf can be played well into retirement at almost any skill level. It is enjoyed by more Louisvillians than you might think, many of them on fixed incomes. Keep the South and West End courses, including Sun Valley, available for players in those areas.

Highlands residents still have highly profitable Seneca Golf Course, and most in that neighborhood can afford the higher fees at non-municipal public or private courses. I'm sure Cherokee would be missed, but not by many, and not by me.



BY BRANDON QUICK
PHOTO BY JOEY HARRISON

Upset

ABOUT THAT DERBY FINISH...

To understand the controversial result of the 2019 Kentucky Derby, it helps if you were at Churchill Downs some five months earlier — the day after Thanksgiving, to be exact.

As darkness cloaked the Downs for the 12th and final race of that chilly and sparsely attended Black Friday card, an interesting story was unfolding in the aftermath of an otherwise common maiden race (horses who have never won). Presidential Tweet and New Colossus crossed the wire in first and second place respectively that evening, with another length or so back to Laser Loop in third. To the naked eye, there was nothing unusual about the race, though it was closely contested, and not all the runners maintained a perfectly straight path, which again is to say that it was completely normal.

In the ensuing moments, the “stewards’ inquiry” sign was posted, and the three-headed monster consisting of Kentucky Horse Racing Commission stewards Barbara Borden and Brooks Becraft and track steward Tyler Picklesimer set about righting a perceived wrong. Their decision was as swift as it was baffling. The top two finishers were both disqualified for separate and, dare I say, inscrutable infractions with less than an eighth of a mile to run. Thus, Laser Loop, the third-place finisher, was declared the victor despite never having run better than third at any point in the race and never truly threatening the top two. I’ve seen tens of thousands of races, and it was the worst stewards’ decision I’ve ever witnessed. So bad, in fact, that Ian Wilkes, trainer of Presidential Tweet, recalls the events with stunning accuracy nearly a year later, right down to the jockeys involved, positions of the horses and why it was a bogus decision.

Keep in mind that Wilkes, an accomplished and respected trainer, had 515 starters in 2018, and 426 in 2019 as of mid-November,

according to Equibase stats. He had no idea why I was calling about Presidential Tweet, but within seconds was able to give a flawless description of the proceedings before a simple lament: “It was a bad call, and I didn’t agree. Most (disqualifications) are black and white.” Wilkes is right. Most racing DQs are fairly justifiable, even if they spark the ire of losing bettors and trainers.

Which brings us to Maximum Security in the 2019 Derby and the most controversial and historic disqualification of all time.

With chief steward Borden and underlings Becraft and Picklesimer again in position to take the road less traveled by stewards before them, there was little doubt in my mind that they would.

To be completely fair, there is almost universal acknowledgement that Maximum Security interfered with War of Will in the stretch, nearly causing a spill, and many respected trainers (including Wilkes) and pundits agreed with the Derby DQ. But as racing genius and former *Washington Post* columnist Andrew Beyer pointed out: “Stewards disqualify horses when a foul has clearly affected the outcome — or when it’s so egregious that it eliminates other horses from contention.”

Maximum Security’s transgression didn’t *clearly* affect the outcome, as it’s a matter of pure speculation whether or not War of Will’s eventual sixth-place effort would have been good enough to crack the top three if not for the interference. What’s worse, declared-winner Country House — much like Laser Loop — had no real claim to the victory. The stewards were willing to insert themselves into the action in ways few other racing officials would.

You can go to the track the rest of your life and probably not see another double disqualification or Kentucky Derby winner taken down.

Voltage

PHOTO BY MICKIE WINTERS

At music festivals over three consecutive weekends this fall, Louisville saw Marilyn Manson (pictured), Guns N' Roses, Little Big Town, Hall & Oates, Ice Cube, Luke Bryan, Slipknot, Robert Plant, Rob Zombie, Foo Fighters, Joan Jett, Staind, ZZ Top, Keith Urban, Disturbed, Leon Bridges, Edward Sharpe, Zac Brown Band, Alison Krauss, the Flaming Lips, Sum 41, Tim McGraw, Godsmack, Dwight Yoakam, John Fogerty, Bret Michaels...

Dude-heavy, but fun.



W Wait, what?

SO YOU HAVEN'T DONE YOUR HOMEWORK, AND YOU'RE TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK ABOUT THE 2019 HEADLINES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT. NO WORRIES, WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK. AND DON'T WORRY — WE'LL BE BRIEF.

BY ADAM K. RAYMOND

Budget cuts to the bone
How does a city make up a \$35-million budget shortfall? Depends whom you ask. Mayor Fischer wanted to raise Louisville's insurance-premium tax to cover the city's increased pension liability. Metro Council did not. After voting down Fischer's plan, city lawmakers took a scalpel, and in some cases a chainsaw, to portions of the city budget. When it passed over the summer, the final budget included cuts to libraries, emergency services and several public pools. Fischer didn't like the budget, but he signed it anyway. And we get to do it all over again next year.

The Oxmoor Open

The noise, the light, the drunk drivers, the drunks with drivers — all reasons why the proposed Topgolf at Oxmoor Center has been

a source of suburban strife for the past year and a half. The controversy over the proposed high-tech driving range looked to be over in November 2018 when the Metro Council gave its approval to replace the shuttered St. Matthews Sears with the 65,000-square-foot Topgolf. But a new lawsuit from the mall's neighbors last winter put the brakes on construction until June. That's when a judge gave what appeared to be the final thumbs-up to Topgolf. But as we prepare to enter the third calendar year of the Topgolf drama, balls are still not flying at Oxmoor.

U of L's big bet

Jewish Hospital was running on fumes this summer, weeks away from ending its heart-transplant program and not far from shuttering completely, when the University

of Louisville threw the beleaguered hospital a lifeline. "Jewish Hospital is just too important to this community for us not to act," U of L president Neeli Bendapudi said in August upon the announcement of a major deal to rescue Jewish and its affiliated facilities. It's not coming cheap. Along with tens of millions from private foundations, the state will give the university a \$50-million loan to complete the deal. That is, as long as lawmakers in Frankfort sign off.

Humana downsizes

Insurance giant Humana, one of the city's largest employers, announced plans in late October to cut 800 jobs from its nationwide workforce. The firm, whose CEO made 231 times the median employee in 2018, has said the layoffs are a part of ongoing cost-cutting

efforts that have depleted Humana's workforce. Once everyone is out the door at the end of 2019, Humana, which once employed 50,000 people nationwide, will have a staff of 41,000.

One Park, many complaints

Developer Kevin Cogan is trying to transform the lot at Grinstead Drive and Lexington Road into One Park, a mixed-use development that drew out the NIMBY cohort this year. Even after the rendering was revised downward, from three towers to one and from a maximum of 34 floors to 18, residents still stuck signs in their yards reading: "One Park. Too Big. Too Tall." The city sided with Cogan in October and approved the complex, which includes an 18-story tower, plans for a hotel and thousands of square feet of retail space.

Access

“OUR CHALLENGES WON’T FAIL.”

BY JOSH WOOD

In March, governor Matt Bevin signed a slew of anti-abortion bills into law that would have made abortion all but illegal in Kentucky if the American Civil Liberties Union hadn't stepped in with suits that resulted in two laws temporarily blocked. We spoke to Heather Gtnarek, staff attorney at the ACLU of Kentucky, about where things stand.

Where are those bills now? “We currently have a pending lawsuit that challenges two of the laws that were passed by the General Assembly this year. One would ban abortion after approximately six weeks of pregnancy, and then the other would ban abortion if the patient's reason for abortion was, in whole or in part, the race, sex, gender, color, national origin or disability status of the fetus or embryo.

“There are a few other bills that passed. One is something that we refer to as a ‘trigger ban.’ It's not in effect right now because what the law says is that if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade* in whole or in part and gives back to states the right to prohibit abortions, then abortions would immediately be outlawed in Kentucky.

“The general assembly also passed a law that claimed to make some changes to how the clinic reports abortions. That law is in effect.”

If the ACLU's challenges fail, what does that mean for Kentucky women? “Our challenges won't fail because those are sort of patently unconstitutional laws, and that's what every single court is finding. As each of these are being introduced and challenged in states across the country, that's what the courts are finding. These aren't close calls.

“But if you're asking me to imagine a world down the road where courts change their mind about that — if that were to happen, what it would mean is that patients would be prohibited from accessing abortion in a couple of different ways. The six-week ban would require that there be no abortions after a quote-unquote heartbeat is detected, but that is generally detected at approximately six weeks using ultrasounds, so patients would not be able to access abortion after six weeks — at all, nobody, for any reason.”

And most abortions happen after six weeks, right?
“Approximately 90 percent take place after six weeks.”

Now that Bevin lost his bid for re-election, does that change things for Kentucky regarding abortion? “I think that remains to be seen, to be honest with you. There weren't any changes to the General Assembly during this election cycle — and the general assembly have been the ones passing these unconstitutional laws.”



Y

Yum?

BY SARA HAVENS

**DID KFC REALLY RELEASE
A CHICKEN-SCENTED
COLOGNE? WE DON'T EVEN
KNOW, BUT IT WOULDN'T
SURPRISE US.**



For chief communications officer Staci Rawls and her small PR team at KFC, no idea proposed during a group meeting is too absurd. In fact, the more obscure and strange, the better. A Colonel Sanders PEZ dispenser? Sure, why not? How about a Colonel Sanders bearskin rug for Valentine's Day or a KFC-scented firelog for the holidays? Done and done. And don't forget about a Cheetos chicken sandwich, tickets that smelled like fried chicken for a partnership with StubHub, a Colonel dating game and even a Funko-made Colonel doll that sold out in 11 minutes. "I can say we've either wait-listed or turned down introducing CBD, making our own albums, integrating into game shows, working with specific influencers and celebrities," Rawls says. "I can't be too specific because you never know when we might go back to an idea that we previously wait-listed and bring it to life."

In just four years, Rawls has risen through the ranks at the Louisville-based, Yum! Brands-owned KFC headquarters, creating quirky ad campaigns that she and her team call "brand in culture activations." While she does not oversee the celebrity-driven TV commercials, her team does propose ideas for those from time to time, most recently the Colonel Rudy football-themed spot. "It's more difficult than ever to capture the limited attention of consumers," Rawls says. "We're always seeking out new ways to reach (customers) in unexpected ways. In the years since I started, this has taken on many forms: romance novels, dating simulators, virtual Colonels, 'Name Your Baby Harland' contests, Colonel pool floaties, chicken-scented sunscreen, Colonel Sanders cat climbers — and the list goes on.

"We're embracing the personality of the real Colonel Sanders, who was an over-the-top chicken salesman," she adds. "There's humor in that type of personality that allows us to have fun with it."

ZOO

BY DYLAN JONES
PHOTO BY CHRIS WITZKE

AWWWWW!

You've made it! 2019 is basically over. And much like Gray Magician, who came in last in this year's Derby, you've *just* gotten through a grueling, muddy, confusing gauntlet that, as everything seems to, ended up in the president's tweets. Congrats, you poor animal. Congrats to all us poor animals. And speaking of animals, how about some levity? This trunky little bundle is Fitz, an African elephant calf born at the Louisville Zoo in August. He thankfully managed to avoid being called "Rocket" or "Walt" after a public naming contest that helped the zoo raise \$6,000. (Though his name could have been worse than any of those. Boaty McBoatface, anyone?)

Fitz is busy being the cutest baby not on Disney+, blissfully unaware of all the schlock this country has schlepped through. And yes, we know "go gaga over the cute baby zoo animal" is a stereotypical fluff story. But give us a break, you cynics. God knows we all need one.





KEEP GOING FOR
EVEN MORE 2019.

Louisville's 2019

THIS YEAR'S BEST & WORST

BEST!

EVERY SCIENTIFIC RATING SCALE

WORST!



JAN | **FEB** | **MAR** | **APR** | **MAY**

