



**50 cents** • 18 pages • Vol. 119, No. 147 • www.kystandard.com

# The Rentucky Standard

Wednesday, December 25, 2019

"I don't think it was a coincidence that shortly after we finished the project we were named by USA Today and Rand McNally 'The Most Beautiful Small Town in America."

BARDSTOWN MAYOR DICK HEATON



DENIS HOUSE/The Kentucky Standard

Customers walk down one side of North Third Street in Bardstown. It has been 10 years since the Streetscape Project started to revitalize the downtown area.

# Ten years later, Streetscape has revived downtown

dhouse@kystandard.com

There have been many accolades bestowed upon Bardstown in recent years.

It's been called "The Most

Beautiful Small Town in America," "One of the top 50 Christmas destinations," "One of the Best Small Towns in Kentucky and America," "Best Place in the South to Raise a Family," and "Top 10 for economic development." Bardstown has received praise from USA Today, Rand McNally, Town and Country Magazine and Site Selection Magazine. While several things helped contribute to these distinctions, one major factor is celebrating its 10-year anniversary: The Streetscape Improvement Project.

In 2009, then-governor Steve Beshear presented a check for \$1.9 million from the Transporta-

tion Enhancement award to help fund improvements in downtown and around the courthouse, which included one block east and west and two blocks north. Work started in 2010, and the official ribbon cutting ceremony was held on June 3, 2011.

"I don't think it was a coincidence that shortly after we finished the project we were named by USA Today and Rand Mc-Nally 'The Most Beautiful Small Town in America' (in 2012)," Mayor Dick Heaton said. "The paint was hardly dry (on the new

"We could never afford to pay for the free PR and press we have received recently from all the special accolades including 'Top 10 Coolest Town in the U.S.' and 'Best Small Town in Kentucky'," said Kim Huston, president of the Nelson Coun-

See **STREET**, page A16

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library inspires student-created book

**KACIE GOODE** 

kgoode@kystandard.com

Dolly is going on an adventure around Nelson County. At least, that is the idea behind a student-created book set to publish this month.

In August, Nelson County Schools launched a project for students in kindergarten through third grade to collaborate on the creation of a book about Nelson County. Working closely with literacy specialists at each elementary school, classes created the storyline and illustrated the scenes of a 34-page hardcover publication.

"There are 932 authors and illustrators for this book, and they are all recognized on the last three pages," said Brooke Whit-

low, executive director of the Nelson County Schools Community Support Foundation, which is behind the project.

The book, called "Dolly's BIG Journey," features a little girl named Dolly who loves to learn and goes on an adventure discovering different parts of the county. The goal is for young readers to learn about where they live from other youngsters who live here and to support early literacy across Nelson

"This whole project has been so exciting," Whitlow said.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library, a program that mails one age-appropriate book to each registered child every month from infancy to the time they start school, in"Dolly's Big Journey" will feature the character exploring areas of Nelson

spired the creation of the book. In the spring, the Foundation announced plans to provide an opportunity for every age-eligible child living in Nelson County, regardless of the school district

See IMAGINATION, page A13

## Designing Dolly: Teen's passion for art celebrated as lead illustrator for book

kgoode@kystandard.com

From the time he could hold a pencil, Cameron Mason has had an affinity for art, but a recent school project has validated his passion as a potential career. Mason, a junior at Thomas Nelson High School, was invited to collaborate with local elementary schools to produce a student-created book about Nelson

The "Dolly's BIG Journey" book, inspired by the district's participation in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, brought together more than 900 local students in kindergarten through third-grade to write and illustrate the publication about a little girl discovering her love of learning across the community. While the unique scenes featured throughout the book are the work of elementary students, the district wanted design con-



KACIE GOODE/The Kentucky Standard

Cameron Mason poses with a sketch of Dolly, the main character in a book written and illustrated by local students. His art will be added to scenes created by elementary school kids.

sistency when it came to the main character.

"Dolly is really the character that brings each of the pages to life as she travels through our community," said Brooke Whitlow, executive director of the Nelson County Schools Community Support Foundation, which launched the project.

See MASON, page A13

## **County expanding dumpster business**

RANDY PATRICK

rpatrick@kystandard.com

The county's solid waste collection program is expanding its footprint in serving businesses with large roll-off "construction dumpsters.'

The Nelson County Fiscal Court will spend more than a quarter-million dollars in the new year to provide the service to more businesses that are requesting it.

"We've got the demand, and we need to beef up our supply," John Greenwell, the county's landfill engineer and solid waste coordinator, said last week. "We're getting all kinds of phone calls" from business owners and managers who want to lease bins from the county, but the county doesn't have enough of them to fill the need.

"We've doubled our runs in the last 10 years," Greenwell

Twenty years ago, he said, the county had about 25 of the receptacles, and now it has about 50, but soon there will be more.

The Nelson County Fiscal Court, at its last meeting, made the decision to buy 15 of the new boxes, most of them 30yard models, for about \$4,000 apiece, as well as a new rolloff truck to move them, which will cost an estimated \$143,000. It will also hire another fulltime employee who, depending on fringe benefits and overtime, could cost the county about

\$70,000 to \$80,000 a year. But Greenwell, County

See **DUMPSTERS**, page A13

#### >> INSIDE

Bardstown Rotary Club set to celebrate 40 years of service » NEWS,

**A4** 









>> www.kystandard.com

#### >>INSIDF

Comm Notes	A3
Opinion	A6
Religion	A9
Comics	A10
Crossword	A10
Nelson Scene	A11
Sports	A12
Classifieds	A14







#### >>Street

From Page A1

ty Economic Development Agency and Bardstown Industrial Development Corporation. "People do take note of these lists as future towns they may want to visit. I remember when we won the Most Beautiful Small Town in America that guests would come into the office with the article on Bardstown in their USA Today newspaper and say that's why they were here. You just can't put a price on this type of recognition."

#### Taking a cue from neighboring cities

Heaton was in his first term as mayor of Bardstown when the city received the funding, but worked on the initial project while he was on the Main Street Committee.

"We felt like we needed something more permanent and visible for our downtown," Heaton said. "We wanted to improve the viability of downtown." So it was decided to start the Streetscape Improvement Plan, taking a cue from nearby towns that had recently revitalized their downtowns with renovations.

"Springfield, Lebanon and Hodgenville had all done renovations to their downtowns," Heaton said. "We felt like it was time to be more aggressive."

#### Economy tanks, help arrives with stimulus plan

The city applied for funds and was approved and from a budget standpoint was looking at phasing the plan in over a 3-5 year period. Then the bottom fell out of the economy with the Great Reces-

When it looked like the project might be put on hold, the Obama Administration enacted its federal stimulus plan, The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which brought the project back to life.

"We had a shovel-ready project, which helped us obtain the funds," Heaton said. "Myself and Dean Watts went to the transportation cabinet and requested the funding. It was very unlucky that the economy

collapsed, but we were very lucky to have a shovel-ready project. That was one of the things the state

was looking for." Congressman Brett Guthrie also helped the city secure \$100,000. The city put up the remaining \$800,000, which went to rebuilding the downtown water distribution lines

in the four-block quarter.



November marked 10 years since Bardstown secured the grant for its streetscape, which officials and business owners say has inspired a renaissance downtown. Pictured in November 2009, former Gov. Steve Beshear spoke on Court Square when delivering more than \$2 million in grants for the project

Historic Places, a lot of private investment in the rules and regulations had to be adhered to before the project could be com-

#### **Public meetings** proved beneficial

Heaton said several productive meetings were held with the community to receive feedback on the project, both positive and critical. The city also took a study conducted by (former resident) Rick Hill on how to improve downtown, and a lot of the final details were derived from his study.

"A lot of local people saw what could be the final results and they started investing simultaneously with the project," Heaton

The wheels were in motion, and within a year the project was completed. While downtown Bardstown wasn't suffering to the extent that some small cities were (with businesses leaving), Heaton said they really did need to upgrade what they had to offer potential cli-

#### Downtown revitalized

The public-funded project inspired a sort of synergy, officials and business owners said, encouraging

"Bardstown has experi-

enced a real renaissance since the streetscape completion in 2011," Huston said. "The downtown was re-energized due to the rehab of the sidewalks, street lights, benches and a rebuild of the Courthouse Square. It sparked new interest from property owners to do their own 'facelifts' on their buildings and eventually enticed the addition of many new businesses."

Heaton feels like the project was one of the best things the city could have

'Now we have many more restaurants, profitable businesses and residents downtown," Heaton said. "The property values also escalated and the demand for downtown space were very strong." Heaton also noted that a lot of this happened at the same time when the Kentucky Bourbon Trail tourism really started picking up steam.

Huston said streetscape acted as a sort of down payment, and it is still paying off.

"There has been significant investment in downtown post-streetscape by many local residents including Joe and Jenny Buckman and the Kreso family," Huston said. "In addition to the new businesses that have opened on the street level, many

103 S Salem Dr • Bardstown

502-348-2532

www.www.joehills.com



Making Good Scentz. The business opened five years ago on Third Street.

second floor spaces were renovated to become accommodations for residents and overnight guests. We consider our downtown historic district to be one of our largest attractions in Bardstown as people enjoy visiting for various reasons including the history, the architecture, the shops and the bars and restaurants. Many guests may just be driving through Bardstown on their way to another destination and will stop because of its quaint and inviting personality."

#### Businesses thrive

When Steve Stivers decided to open his business, Making Good Scentz, five years ago, he was impressed with the way downtown had been revitalized.

'This is one of the cleanest downtowns I've seen," Stivers said. "The way they redid this area, I love the way it looks. It's made it a lot easier for customers to come and go." Making Good Scentz offers a variety of handmade soaps, lotions, scrubs and candles, to name just a few items.

Catherine Clements opened Peacock on Third in 2009, a high-end affordable clothing store that originally sold just women's clothes, but has expanded to include men's fashions. She outgrew her original location (on Third Street) and when the opportunity came to purchase the building across the street, she jumped at it because she wanted to own her own building. She said the Streetscape Project made a difference.

"It has been very beneficial and very positive," Clements said. "It has helped us keep the most beautiful downtown title. The city is always doing something every year to make it better. Mayor Heaton and his administration have done an excellent job in keeping the area clean and always coming up with new enhancements."

The renovations to downtown increased the number of visitors and residents to the area, which means Bardstown must tackle another issue: park-

"We hope to start a study in early 2020 that will be completed by the end of the year to tackle parking issues," Heaton said. "We have a major need for more parking downtown, for residents, visitors and businesses."

And new businesses continue to locate here, including several gift shops, taverns and coming soon, a burger and milk shake restaurant.

#### Bloomfield also reaped benefit of funds

Bardstown wasn't the only Nelson County town to receive state funds 10 years ago. Beshear also gave Bloomfield \$230,500 to be used for sidewalk improvements along portions of U.S. 62, Faith Avenue and Arnold Lane, as part of the Safe Route to School program, to allow students to safely get to class and improve their health by walking to school. Safe Routes to School projects are designed to encourage students in kindergarten through eighth grade to walk or ride bicycles to school, which gives them exercise and reduces motor vehicle traffic at the same





LOCAL BUSINESS FEEDS:

Follow your favorite local businesses on social media and on KyStandard.com

INCLUDING:







For details about adding your business social feed to our website, contact your advertising rep today, 502-348-9003

Look for SOCIALFEEDS on kystandard.com

