

# Todd County Standard

## POVERTY IN TODD

Part of a year-long series examining the growing number of poor in our county



### 40 percent of babies born to mothers without high school diplomas

BY TONYA S. GRACE  
TODD COUNTY STANDARD

With 39.6 percent of its babies in 2007 to 2009 born to mothers without a high school diploma, Todd County did indeed trail only Hart County in south central Kentucky in a list of high school drop-out moms included in the just-released 2012 Kentucky Kids Count County Data Book.

There's more to the story, however.

In individual lists for those same

three years, the local community topped the lists for 2008 and 2009, with 42 percent and 40 percent of the babies born during those years being born to mothers who did not have either a high school diploma or a graduate equivalency diploma, familiarly known as a GED.

In 2007, the county had a lower percentage of babies born to drop-out moms, with only 37 percent.

The study also revealed that high percentages like those in

Todd County are scattered throughout the commonwealth, encompassing counties, not only in the west, but in northern and south central portions of the state and a "significant number" in eastern Kentucky, according to Amy Swann of the Kentucky Youth Advocates organization that compiles the data.

Swann said the percentage for Todd County is high, even considering that part of the local population includes Amish and Mennonite residents whose educa-

tion continues only through eighth grade.

"Having well over one in three babies born to Todd County mothers with no high school degree is quite high," Swann said of the 39.6 percent average, or 218 live births, for the years from 2007 to 2009.

She said those numbers should serve as a call to action spurring the community to make improvements, considering, for example, what more the Todd County

SEE BIRTHS, PAGE 5

## A big bite:

### School district wants to end laptop lease with Apple

BY MELONY SEMBERGER, ED.D.  
TODD COUNTY STANDARD

On a Saturday in January 2009, nearly 600 students at Todd County Central High School received new MacBook laptop computers as part of a rather unprecedented effort through the popular Apple computer company.

Four years later, school officials have found that the laptop initiative for schools, called Apple 1-to-1, was not exactly the answer they had hoped for in increasing student achievement.

"I don't think we had staff who was prepared for the technology," Todd County Board of Education Chairman Matt Perry said.

During the school board's monthly work session Monday night, Superintendent Wayne Benningfield introduced a plan that would allow the school system to pay off its \$1.2 million lease with Apple, trade in some of the computers, and purchase outright new iPad tablets and other equipment for the schools in time for the 2013-14 school year.

SEE APPLE, PAGE 2



## 61 percent of Todd County students get free school meals

BY MELONY SEMBERGER, ED.D.  
TODD COUNTY STANDARD

In the last five years, the number of children receiving lunch at reduced prices in Todd County Schools has dropped, from 269 students during the 2007-08 school year to the current 159.

Sounds like promising news, especially when families in the county – along with the rest of the nation – faced financial pressures from job losses and increased living expenses.

The little hint of good news disappears, however, when the reason for the decline is observed.

The number of reduced-price meal recipients dropped because more of these students qualified for free meals in the last five years. During the 2007-08 school year, 1,046 students did not have to pay for their meals. This school year, the number is 1,208 – more than half of the school district's pupil enrollment.

"It could be that those on reduced are now making less and qualify for free now instead of reduced," said Melissa Weathers, director of food services for Todd County Schools.

The figures come from the school system's annual report cards found online and current data obtained from an open records request.

The numbers also help to support statistics published last week in the 2012 Kids Count Data Book, an annual publication that provides state and county data to measure and improve child well-being. The Kentucky Youth Advocates partners with the Kentucky State Data Center at the University

SEE FREE, PAGE 2



### School system reduced meals down, but free meals are up

	Free Meals	Reduced Meals	Paid Meals
2007-08:	1,046	269	885
2008-09:	1,100	230	868
2009-10:	1,164	216	912
2010-11:	1,228	137	859
2012-13:	1,208	159	838

Source: District annual report card and current central office data

### LTRWC raises water rate; Todd district to pass on to customers

BY TONYA S. GRACE  
TODD COUNTY STANDARD

The Logan Todd Regional Water Commission is raising the rates for its 12 member entities beginning in March, yet all but one of the Todd County entities affected by the rate increase do not plan to pass that increase along to their customers.

District Superintendent John Haley of the Todd County Water District said his agency has already decided to raise its rates and is in the process of submitting its rate increase to the Kentucky Public Service Commission, the agency that regulates the rates for the water district.

He said the district's increase will be published in the newspaper once it is set.

"If we did not increase our rates, the water district could not ever regain the cost of water (for that particular increase) ever again," he said, explaining the reason for the decision. "Most water districts in my situation, they go ahead and pass that increase along. If they don't recoup that loss now, they don't ever get it back."

Officials with both the City of Elkton and the City of Trenton said they don't plan to pass the rate increase along, and neither is the City of Guthrie.

SEE WATER, PAGE 2