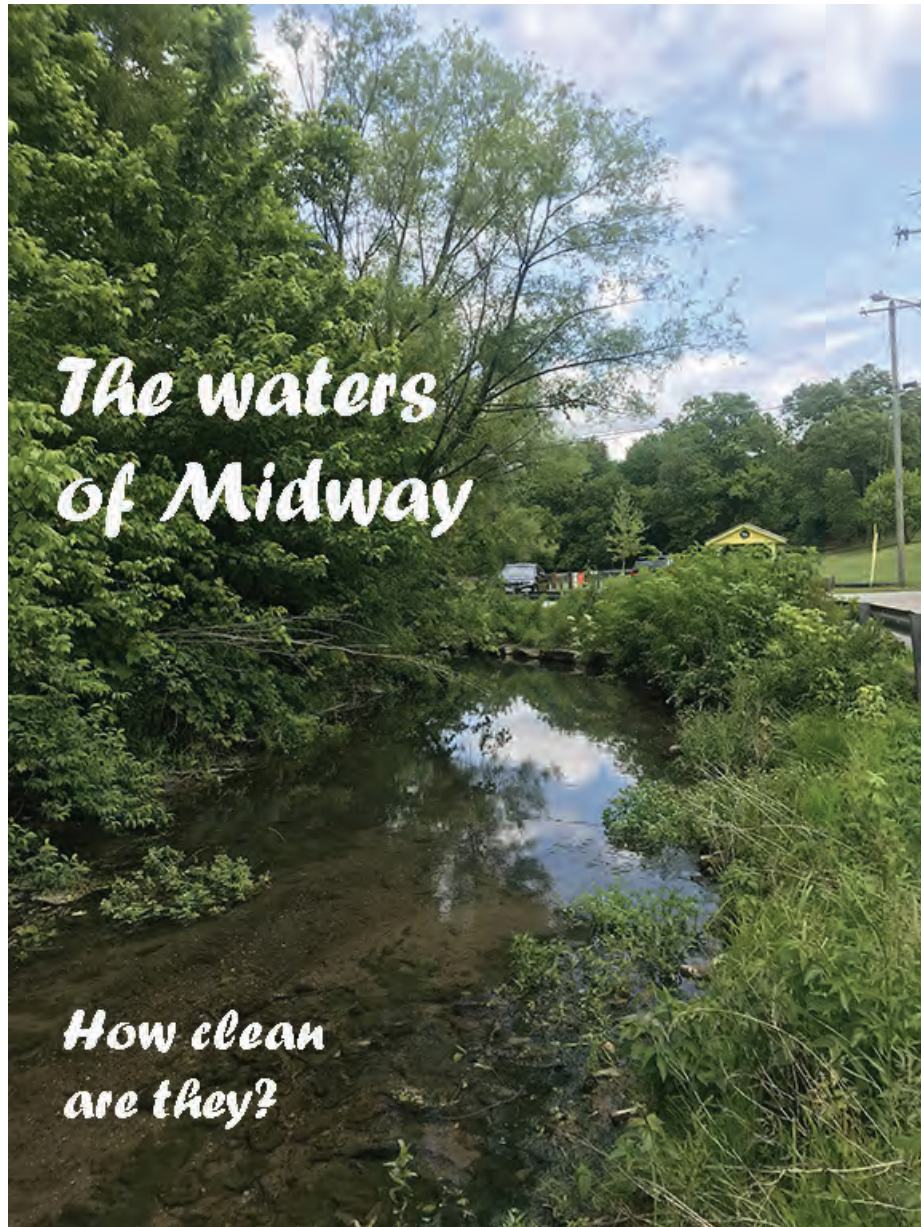
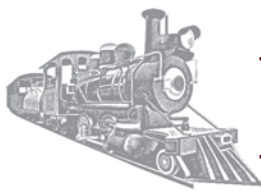


MIDWAY MESSENGER

Spring/Summer 2020

Free distribution



Lee Branch, shown above as it enters Walter Bradley Park, and South Elkhorn Creek are getting cleaner, but not quite clean enough for water recreation. See P. 6.

Mask project showed a selfless, giving Midway

By Emmanuel Flemister and Al Cross
University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

Some good citizens of Midway prepared a government-and-volunteer effort to make enough masks for everyone in town as the coronavirus pandemic was near its peak.

The idea began with Amy Bowman, owner of Midway Makers Market, when some of her vendors wanted to sell masks in her store. At first she worried whether mask wearing, which hadn't yet been officially recommended, would make people "run around and gather and be counterproductive."

Then she heard that an official recommendation for masks was coming, so she approached Mayor Grayson Vandegrift.

"I think I may have just jokingly said, 'Gee, I wish I could just give everybody, make a mask for everybody,' or something like that. . . . I said, 'You know, I feel like I could get some volunteers to help, and we could do this.' . . . I put out the word for volunteers and it absolutely just blew up."

Bowman said that told her that people in Midway "really care about their community. They're selfless, giving. . . . People are so wonderful and want to

help each other."

Bowman said more than 60 people volunteered to make masks or donate materials, including some from Georgetown, Paris and Lexington. Vandegrift announced the project, telling the City Council and the news media that the city would pay for the materials, "and Midway citizens can provide the skills and time to produce these masks."

The mayor said he expected that that the Federal Emergency Management Agency will reimburse 75 percent of the city's cost. "Fifteen hundred masks were made, with the expectation that some people already had some and some wouldn't want them," he said.

Kevin Cosgriff and Jenean O'Neal, both Midway residents, who own and operate Diamond Graphics, donated the printing of informational cards for the mask kits.

The effort was titled "Project Healthy Midway" and had three teams: preparation, construction team, and finishing team. The prep team, about 40 volunteers, cut the fabric and pressed the materials together. The construction team, with at least 22 volunteers, sewed

-- Continued to back page --

5 incumbents, 5 others seek 6 council seats; 2 run for school board

Five incumbents are among 10 candidates for six seats on the Midway City Council, and there's a contested race for the Midway area's seat on the Woodford County Board of Education.

Two more incumbents and two newcomers completed the council filings June 2, and Ian Horn filed against Amanda Glass for the school-board seat being given up by longtime member

Ambrose Wilson. The election is Nov. 3.

City Council Members Kaye Nita Gallagher and Bruce Southworth filed for re-election on the June 2 deadline.

Southworth earlier said he thought the current two-year term would be his last, but he said he had miscalculated the date of the 20-year review of the city's wastewater system and wanted to be on the council for that. He formerly

operated the system.

Candidates who filed earlier were incumbents Sara Hicks, Logan Nance and Stacy Thurman; and Adam Bailey of Old Towne Walk.

Bailey, 33, is director of marketing and community outreach for a long-term and sub-acute health-care firm in Lexington. He said he and his wife Amy grew up in Woodford County (his father

is county EMS Director Freeman Bailey) and they have lived in Midway for five years. He said he is running to give back to a community that has a neighborly culture.

The signers of Bailey's nominating petition were his wife and Mayor Grayson Vandegrift and his wife Katie.

-- Continued to back page --

Mayor and wife see 'two Midways' that need to talk

By Grayson and Katie Vandegrift

Even though we don't talk about it much, virtually everyone who lives in our community is aware of the notion of "Old Midway" and "New Midway." Perhaps not by coincidence, one could argue that Midway is at the same time getting both older and younger; in a word, it's changing. This can understandably lead to tension, which seems to bubble up to the surface in our public discourse from time to time.

Since its very beginning our city has seen great change, and the citizens who helped lead us through prior times deserve immense recognition and praise. Those who've known Midway most or all their lives have a sense of history so important and precious that it is rightfully being preserved in a Midway Branch Library recorded series, in a newly revitalized Museum project, and now on social media sites. Within the last few decades Midway has also welcomed more and more folks who've adopted this city as their own. Now it seems that participation from newer citizens in civic leadership and government are at an all-time high in our city and in many other cities across the country.

There are those who feel that they will never be truly welcomed by some because they came here, and there are others who feel that these newcomers, familiar and well-meaning as they are, can never be truly "of" Midway. As dismayed as we've sometimes been by certain comments, it's understandable



Katie and Grayson Vandegrift with their son Jackson

why some people who were born here feel that the town is now being run by those who were not.

In the world we live in, where information can be shared with a click, it's undoubtedly easier for it to feel like the spotlight shines on recent accomplishments while the foundations that got us here hide in shadow. It's no mystery why this could create resentment.

But it could be that there is a fundamental misunderstanding between these "two Midways," that somehow our interests are not aligned. Both "new" and

"old" Midway have at times felt aggrieved by the other, but out of communication comes understanding.

We all want the same things. We all want our city to thrive and prosper. We all want Midway to be a great place to raise our children, to take care of our parents, and to one day be taken care of ourselves. We all want Midway to continue being the greatest town anywhere. While we feel that our city is more united than most, and that we're working together better than most, it would be willfully ignorant to assume that there are not resentments that need

reconciliation.

Regardless of your beliefs or political affiliation, we all know this country is divided. The country is not going to heal itself from the top down, but from the ground up. We have to heal our communities, one by one, as a patchwork, to truly unite this nation once again. Midway has always been a leader. From its very inception as a city until the present day, history shows that Midway, Kentucky, has always been ahead of the curve.

Let's lead yet again. Let's talk about what does divide our community; let's not ignore it or pretend it isn't there. Let's heal wounds that have been left untreated.

We have so many mechanisms in place already to have good conversations: the post office, the corner grocery, city council meetings, monthly community dinners at Midway Christian Church, and the various other events and gatherings that occur throughout the year. We have to talk to each other face-to-face again, and the easiest way to do that is in our own communities. From there, who knows where the conversation goes, but it's a good way to be reminded that at the most basic level we're neighbors, and we agree much more often than not.

Grayson Vandegrift is the mayor of Midway; Katie Vandegrift is a marketing and administrative assistant at Commerce Lexington. This article was published online Feb. 11.

Midway Messenger



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Drone photo by Dalton Stokes of the UK School of Journalism and Media, looking downstream, shows the new bridge with clouds reflected in the water behind the mill dam.

State and local officials celebrate new Weisenberger Mill bridge and recount the decade-long story that led to it

The Weisenberger Mill bridge, a Midway landmark that reopened in late December after being closed for almost three and a half years, closed again for two hours Jan. 31, so state and local officials could celebrate a very unusual project: building a one-lane span nearly identical to the one built around 1935.

"It looks just like the old one," said Sally Weisenberger, a member of the family that owns the historic mill on South Elkhorn Creek, before the event.

The mill and its dam create a favorite scenic spot for locals and visitors, but the area's history and distinctiveness created challenges to replacing the span: years of debate and reviews historical and environmental, and months of negotiating with property owners for construction easements.

The biggest debate was about how

wide the bridge would be. Scott County Magistrate Chad Wallace told the crowd that people in the area, including the Zion Hill community at the county's southern tip, agreed at a 2013 meeting that it should be one lane, "at a time when one-lane bridges seemed foreign in the transportation world."

Neighbors feared a two-laner would attract more trucks seeking a shortcut, and cause more speeding and more wrecks, especially in the sharp curve on the Woodford County side. State engineers resisted, but finally relented.

Meanwhile, on July 1, 2016, they closed the bridge for safety reasons, adding to the pressure to get a new bridge.

A one-lane bridge "makes us be patient," Wallace said, alluding to the scenic surroundings. "You get to soak it in while you're waiting for a car to pass."

As the waters of the creek roared over the dam, Transportation Secretary Jim Gray told the crowd, "There's arguably not many projects in our state that convey a sense of history and culture as much as this project does. . . . It is picture-perfect, postcard-perfect."

The project required "minimizing impact to surrounding properties, making sure this bridge fit the context of the area and the nature of the original bridge," said Kelly Baker, the Highway Department's chief district engineer. "I think we met our goals ... to preserve that integrity. I see a structure we all can be proud of."

The state later added, on the Scott County side, graphic displays about the mill and the Zion Hill community.

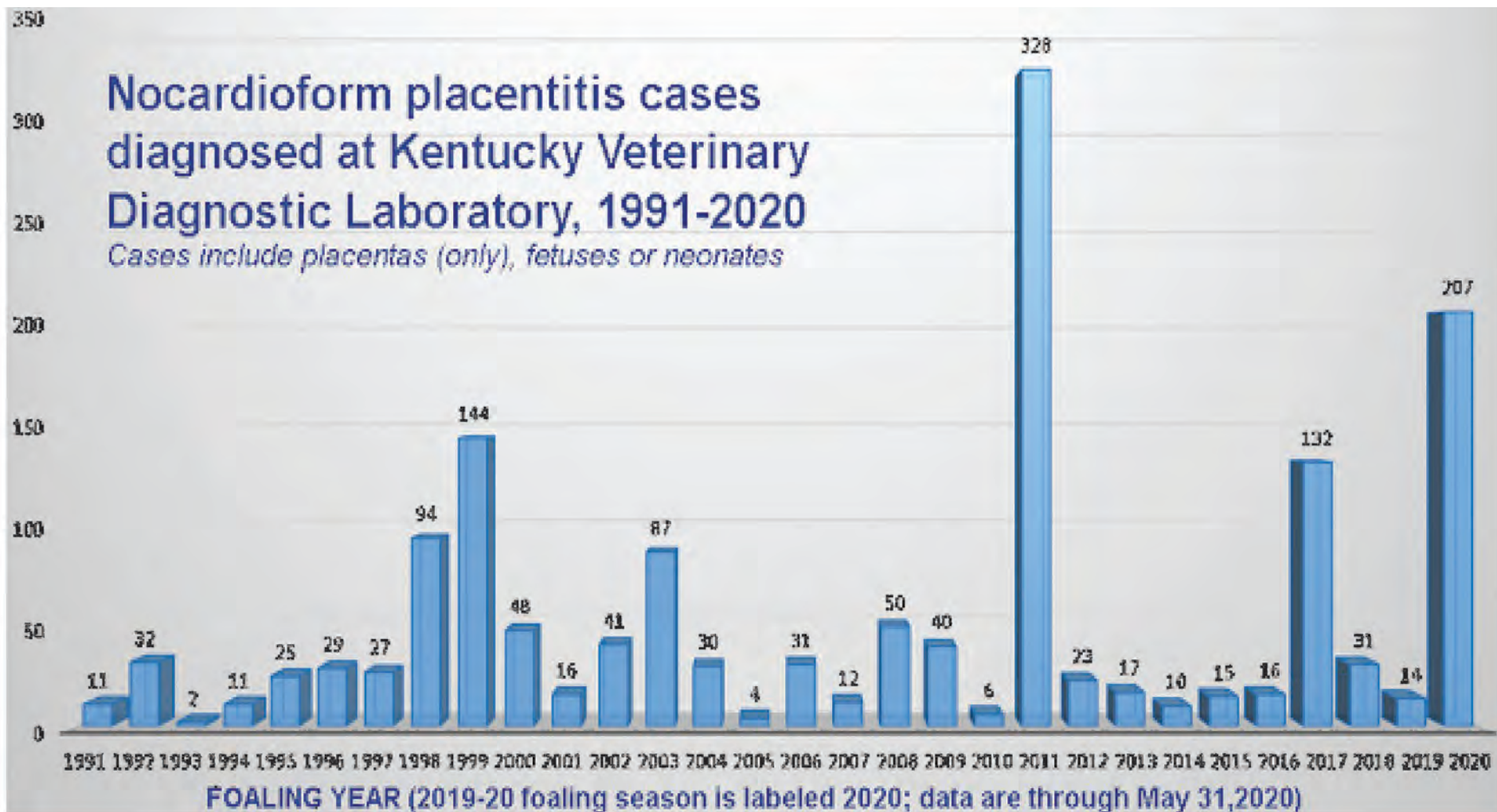
Louisville Paving and Construction Co., the contractor, completed the work

well before the May 1 contract date in its contract; the new span opened Dec. 23.

Baker told the Midway Messenger that the bridge would have no posted weight limit, because it can support 80,000 pounds, the regular weight limit on state roads. The bridge connects county roads, but the state agreed to take responsibility for replacing it around 2010, when then-Rep. Carl Rollins, D-Midway, got the first state funds appropriated for it.

The event was a bit intriguing to Phil Weisenberger, in the sixth generation of the family that started the mill in 1865. "I figured it's such a sore subject they'd just keep quiet about it," he said. "But it's nice to have it back open." He attended with his grandmother, Bett Weisenberger, 93.

The original version of this story, now updated, was published online Jan. 31.



University of Kentucky chart, with labels placed by Midway Messenger

In season just concluded, disease that kills foals appears to have been the second worst ever

By Hayley Burris

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

In the Thoroughbred foaling season that ended this spring, the infection that causes foals to be aborted, born dead or underdeveloped appears to have caused the second most documented number of cases ever.

Nocardioform placentitis can cause the placenta to detach, causing premature birth or stillbirth. Foals that live usually have a compromised lifespan due to being underdeveloped or undersized.

Every year, at least a few horses in Kentucky are affected by this infection, but this year the numbers set an apparent record, 207 cases through May. That was second only to the 328 cases in the 2010-11 season.

Woodford County had 21 cases this season. Fayette County has had 163 cases and Bourbon County has had 13. Cases in other counties were Scott, 5; Harrison, 2; Oldham, 2; and Shelby, 1.

The Midway Messenger was unable to identify

any particular Woodford County farms with cases. Research suggests it is likelier on larger farms.

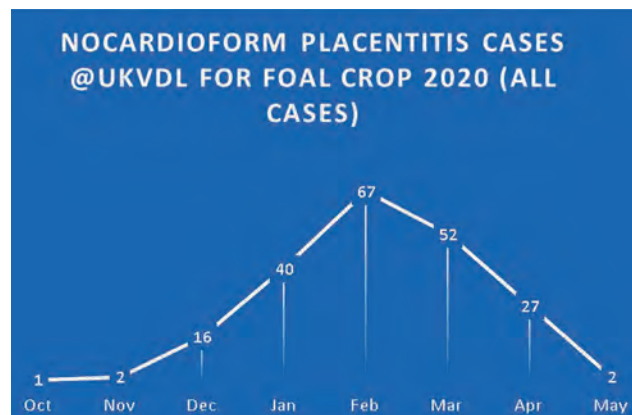
In a typical season, Kentucky has 20 to 50 cases, according to the Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center at the University of Kentucky. The cause of the infection remains unknown; so does why there have been so many this year.

The Gluck center is researching that through submitted placentas, mares, and foals, with the help of \$132,000 in emergency funding from the foundation that supports the center. The money comes from an endowment created to address such emergencies.

"We are very fortunate to have had the help of local practitioners and farm managers/owners to obtain samples of normal and affected placentae for research given the extremely difficult situation we all find ourselves in with the coronavirus pandemic," Emma Adam, an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment said in an

email. "Our vets and farms have been amazing in still submitting samples in spite of these challenges."

Kentucky tends to have more documented cases of nocardioform placentitis, because it produces about 40 percent of the nation's foals, but also because it does more research on horses, UK professors say.



University of Kentucky chart

Soper leaves EDA after 'incredible turnaround' at Midway Station

By Al Cross

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

The long, down-and-up story of Midway Station entered another chapter on June 26 as John Soper stepped down as chair of the Woodford County Economic Development Authority and was succeeded by Michael Michalsin of Midway.

Soper, a former banker, has overseen the revitalization of EDA's industrial and commercial park and led the agency into development of an adjacent area, both of which have turned it from the city's main liability into its key source of revenue.

"When I became mayor, Midway Station was pretty much empty," and the city and the county owed more than \$5 million on it, Mayor Grayson Vandegrift told the EDA board in its online meeting. "There was a lot of talk that Midway Station just needed to be sold at the courthouse steps," in foreclosure, which would have been "a disaster."

"Instead, through John's leadership" and the rest of the board, the park has reduced the debt to \$2 million, gained seven clients and 10 projects with more than 500 jobs, including the city's largest employer (Lakeshore Learning Materials, which is adding a second building and 100 more jobs) and The Journey, a church that will have a day-care center, which is "a huge get for us," Vandegrift said.

The city's occupational tax on wages and net profits has allowed the city to cut property taxes over 30 percent and reduce sewer rates 25 percent, the mayor noted. And the sale of lots in the park saved the city a \$40,000 interest payment this year.

"When John took over as chair, they couldn't pay a bill," Vandegrift said. "And now they're telling us we don't have to pay some of our bills ... because they're paying them for us, like the interest payment on Midway Station. It's an incredible turnaround."

The mayor said he was glad Michalsin is willing to be chair, and told Soper, "I think your legacy will be carried on."

Michalsin said he was willing to take the job on an interim basis, since the board's mission may evolve as it and the three governmental bodies decide how to move on from a paid chairman.

Arranging that role in late 2016 prompted a brief clash between Soper and Vandegrift at a City Council meeting, but the relationship between the pro-development Soper and Vandegrift, who has



Economic Development Authority Chair John Soper discussed Midway Station at a City Council meeting in October.

a large preservationist constituency, evolved into a partnership that worked.

Soper said Vandegrift played a key role in making Midway Station a success by agreeing to borrow \$450,000 for a larger natural-gas line to serve the property. He called that "one of the greatest decisions that's ever been made in Woodford County" because it ensured that Lakeshore would come. "That deal was going to evaporate that day if you did not make that decision."

Soper said he is proudest that "We never lost a big deal." He took one last opportunity to promote the Edgewood development in Versailles, which is tied up in court, but after Vandegrift complimented him, Soper said, "We don't have to look like Georgetown; we don't have to look like Jessamine County, and I've never wanted us to do that."

Among the actions the board also took at its June meeting were approval of a deed giving the city ownership of the lot where its only functioning water tower stands, and a deal in which the city will gain control of 38 acres along Interstate 64 to serve as greenspace, "which I think will help us control what the industrial park looks like," Vandegrift said.

The city would get the property in return for forgiving \$500,000 to \$750,000 of debt owed to it by the EDA, most of which is for the gas line but not all of which is considered collectible. Soper said the city would take over mowing the property next year.

Future development: Renewed interest in property at Midway Station could force the board and the city to decide to allow a larger development than would be allowed under the current property plat and streets.

Kyle Johnson of Lexington, one of the EDA's real-estate agents, said one prospect is looking for 30 to 40 acres for a 100-employee distribution facility, which would require "dealing with roads" and lots that are now zoned for retail business.

"Something big like that, we definitely would want to bring Grayson in," he said. Other prospects include one that may want 10 acres but would add only 10 to 15 jobs, and a meatpacker that is "probably a longshot."

The Messenger asked the agents about Creech Services, which bales horse-stall muck and ships it out of state. The Lexington firm is looking for a location closer to horse farms but wants assurances that it would be allowed in Midway Station under an anti-composting restriction placed on the property after Bluegrass Stockyards tried to relocate there 13 years ago. Senior real-estate agent Matt Stone said Creech was trying to work out a deal with Keeneland.

Planning and Zoning Director Pattie Wilson reported that White Dog Trading, which is building bourbon warehouses and an office building in Midway Station, will have a permanent pool of water in its necessarily large drainage-detention basin. "It's going to be an amenity," she said. Soper said the firm's office building "will be a compliment to Midway Station," and its four warehouses will produce much revenue, mainly for schools, from taxes on the aging whiskey.

Soper also complimented Wilson and her staff, saying "You guys move at the speed of business ... You treat everybody fairly who comes into that office ... Your all's agenda is just good planning."

This story was published online June 27.

Waters of Midway are cleaner, but not yet clean enough to play in

By Lauren McCally

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

South Elkhorn Creek is a popular fishing and kayaking stream, and a beautiful feature of the Midway area. But the creek and its tributary that runs through Midway, Lee Branch, still do not meet the standards for recreation involving contact with the water, despite continuing efforts to clean them up.

However, that does not mean fishing in the creek is unsafe, or that users of Walter Bradley Park should worry about an occasional splash from Lee Branch.

The latest public samples from the streams, taken last year, showed some improvement from 2016, but with fecal bacteria levels still above the threshold at which swimming becomes risky.

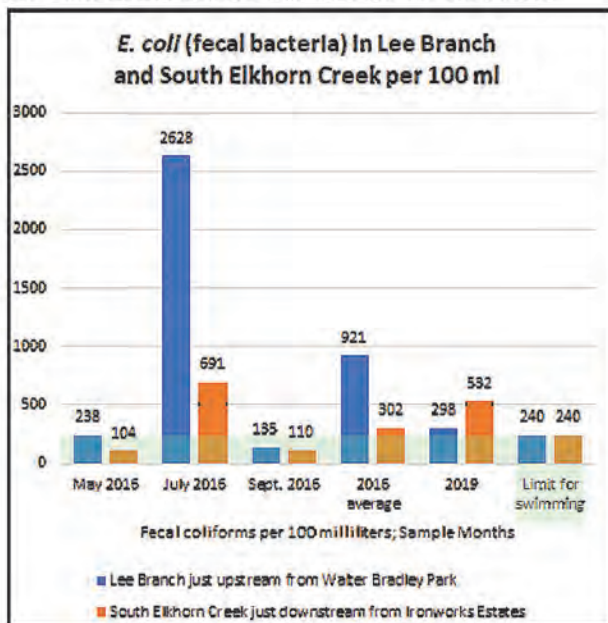
In 2013, the last time the Midway Messenger looked at Elkhorn Creek's pollution, Lindell Ormsbee, director of the Kentucky Water Resources Research Institute at the University of Kentucky, said, "I would not recommend swimming in that creek."

Seven years later, "The impairment status of the stream has not yet changed," Steven Evans, a researcher at the UK institute, said in an email.

Lee Branch has received more use and attention since the forested section of the park along the stream was improved four years ago. It also has bacterial pollution above the limit for swimming, but isn't deep enough to swim, and its latest sample showed a level lower than the one from South Elkhorn Creek.

Lee Branch's pollution can vary widely because it is small and subject to overflows from a faulty sewer on Smith Street. When a member of the Midway Musings group on Facebook noted the overflows, Mayor Grayson Vandegrift said the city's planned sewer-repair project would resolve that issue.

The Musings thread began when a member asked if the water in Lee Branch was "safe for our fur babies."



Vandegrift said a test for the city two years ago showed it "about twice as high as normal" for fecal bacteria, but "I don't think it's unsafe for dogs, though. Ours cool off in it on walks and even drink in it. No human should ever drink from it, though."

Vandegrift said even pets shouldn't be in Lee Branch when it floods. The state Division of Water advises against swimming or playing in streams immediately following a storm event due to the increased likelihood of bacteria and other pathogens.

For water to be considered swimmable, it must have 240 or fewer colony-forming units (CFUs) of *E. coli* bacteria per 100 milliliters of water, about one-fifth of a pint. In 2019, a sample taken from Lee Branch by a volunteer for Kentucky River Watershed Watch showed 298 CFUs. In 2016, KRRW samples showed 238 in May, 2,628 in July and 135 in September. That July was a very rainy month, and heavy rain causes sewers to overflow.

The samples were taken 150 yards downstream from Stephens Street, near the Midway University footbridge.

Another site, which KRRW labeled as Lee Branch "in front of Midway University," appears to be from the unnamed tributary of the branch that runs along Stephens Street and flows into the branch halfway between Stephens Street and the MU footbridge. That sample showed only 179 CFUs, indicating the sewer's influence on the main branch. In 2016 report, the tributary had much more bacteria, with an average score of 938.

South Elkhorn Creek: Samples taken last year just downstream from Ironworks Estates showed 532 CFUs, more than double the limit for swimming. That was more than the 302 average for 2016, when readings ranged from 104 in May to 691 in July.

An unnamed tributary running through Ironworks Estates showed only 47 FCUs, indicating that the subdivision is contributing little to the pollution.

Grading the streams: Conductivity is another key indicator of water quality. High conductivity signals more dissolved chemicals. It is measured in microsiemens per centimeter, with 500 the level posing risk to aquatic life. In 2019 Lee Branch had a conductivity score of 323, lower than its 2016 average of 389.

Overall in 2019, the UK research institute gave Lee Branch and South Elkhorn Creek a grade of C, or "fair," for bacteria. For conductivity, Lee Branch received a grade of B, or "good." The creek got a D, or "poor," and was listed as a "site of concern," perhaps also because of nitrogen and phosphorus levels, which are raised by runoff from fertilizers on farms.

South Elkhorn Creek runs from western Fayette County to Franklin County, and forms almost all the border of Woodford and Scott counties.

"It's not very clean, but it's a whole lot cleaner than it was 30 to 40 years ago," said Mac Weisenberger, fifth-generation owner of Weisenberger Mill, located on the Scott County bank of the creek near Midway since 1865.



Lee Branch, upstream from the footbridge in the park

"I see a lot of people come down here and go fishing," he said. "It has been on the increase."

Lexington's role: The creek runs through horse and cattle farms, which are sources of bacteria, but in recent decades it has also been polluted by leaky sewer pipes and stormwater overflow from Lexington. In recent years, the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government has completed several projects to mitigate the problem.

"Tremendous progress and investment has been made towards improving water quality in the Fayette County portion of the South Elkhorn watershed," Evans said in an email, "but there is still a long way to go."

In 2019, the Lexington government completed detailed analysis of the areas that required additional work due to high concentrations of bacteria, with the assistance of community volunteers.

"There been a lot of work to move things in a positive direction," Evans said. "The problems were not created in a day, and the solutions will not occur overnight."

Meanwhile, there is other good news. Robert Watts, president of Bluegrass Wild Water, said in an email, "One of my members found a huge, less than 12 inch (deceased), mudpuppy salamander out there last summer. Those are an indicator species for great water quality, because of the way their skin absorbs chemicals."

Owner of historic condemned building has until Oct. 31 to fix it up

By Emmanuel Flemister

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

The owner of the condemned building at 116 E. Main St. has until the end of October to fix up the rundown landmark or face the likelihood of the city tearing it down.

Woodford County planning and zoning officials had given Ness Alamdari of Lexington until March 30 to correct 10 issues with the building, as cited by Building Inspector Joshua Stevens on Feb. 10.

The deadline was extended to Oct. 31 after a consulting engineer for Alamdari submitted a letter, dated March 17, saying that the structure was stable. That headed off a possible order of demolition.

Mayor Grayson Vandegrift told the City Council and the news media March 24, "At the end of this extension, he must have the property approved by a certified engineer, who in turn would be taking liability for the structural integrity of the building." The property has become a "threat to public safety," Vandegrift said earlier.

If Alamdari fails to meet these requirements, the process becomes "very burdensome for him," said Vandegrift. "He would essentially have to start the process over with the Board of Architectural Review," which set conditions for renovation of the property soon after Alamdari bought it in 2016. "If he fails in these obligations, I will be pushing for condemnation."

Alamdari is still operating under a building permit issued in April 2018 that listed the costs at \$20,000.

The property has been a trouble

spot since at least 2006, according to Planning and Zoning Commission records. Vandegrift asked for the Feb. 10 inspection. "As a government, we were very patient with him for a long time," he said in March.

Alamdari told the Messenger Feb. 19 that Vandegrift wants to tear down the building to make it a parking lot for festivals. Vandegrift denied that.

"I think I took the diplomatic route and probably was erring on the side of patience, just trying to make sure we were working with him," the mayor said.

The building was erected in 1898 by the Pilgrim Lodge of the Odd Fellows, an African American men's organization. Local historian Bill Penn, a nearby store owner, said it was last occupied 15 to 20 years ago. It is a landmark in Midway's African American community, but is also one of the most prominent examples of blighted property in Midway, due to its downtown location and severe condition.

The mayor said he would take no pleasure in demolition of a historic structure, but "I have been inside the building, and like so many others have watched as time and weather continue to deteriorate it . . . I came to believe that condemnation is the only solution."

Vandegrift said that if the situation isn't resolved by Oct. 31, one last alternative to demolition could be putting the property the city's list of abandoned urban properties, which would be done by the city's new Code Enforcement Board. The list is due to the City Council for review by Jan 1, 2021. Properties on the list are taxed at a much higher rate.

"If this building didn't have such historical significance, I would likely



116 E. Main St. in January 2019; little has changed. (Photo by Al Cross)

disagree with this step," he said. "But if one last-ditch effort to save this structure is what it takes, then we'll proceed with a keen eye and a stern voice. We will continue to ensure that the citizens of

Midway will not be taken advantage of, but we will also willingly follow the letter of the law in both protecting the rights of owners and the safety of our residents and visitors."

Council OKs \$59-a-lot fee for 9-1-1 service, replacing fee on landlines

By Emmanuel Flemister

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

The citizens of Midway will be paying more for Woodford County's 9-1-1 dispatch center and related services. Especially if they have given up their landline telephones.

The dispatch service is now funded by a \$3.50 monthly fee on landlines, which are fading out. It will be replaced by a \$59

annual fee on residential lots and higher fees for businesses.

Representatives of the three governments in Woodford County agreed on the new approach, to start Jan. 1. The Midway City Council approved the fee in April.

"This is taking a step towards making sure 911 is funded going forward in an equitable way," Mayor Grayson Vandegrift told the council.

The fee will be added to the tax bill for each residential, commercial and industrial property. It will apply to each structure with a unique address and will pay for personnel, equipment, training and public education.

The decision to change funding of the dispatch center came after police and other first responders said they preferred the fee to the other finalist, a fee on water meters. Vandegrift said a water fee would

have needed to be higher, perhaps \$70, to cover the cost, due to the inefficiency of collecting the fee through the county's eight separate water suppliers.

About 80 percent of the dispatch service's calls come from wireless phones, Assistant Versailles Police Chief Mike Murray told the council. He said eight or nine Kentucky counties have shifted to such a fee to finance dispatch services.

Midway University and Midway have grown closer, but that hasn't quite extended to students

By Akhira Umar

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

Midway University has been around nearly as long as the town that it calls home. Despite their long-standing affiliation, the town and the university are not as intertwined as one might think.

Originally founded as the Kentucky Female Orphan School in 1847, Midway University came into existence shortly after the town's establishment in 1835 and soon after its incorporation in 1846. The town has kept much of its original charm with quiet neighborhoods and quaint shops but has seen many changes in its businesses, organizations and downtown streetscape.

The university has seen its fair share of change as well, the most notable being its decision to go co-ed in the fall of 2016 to "remain relevant" and "financially viable." In fall 2019, men made up 39 percent of daytime enrollment. The total enrollment of 1,702 also includes evening and online undergraduates, and graduate students.

Among the 643 daytime undergraduates, 373 lived on campus, said Ellen Gregory, the university's vice president of marketing and communications.

These daytime students also came from all walks of life, just like the tourists who stop in town. Kentucky natives account for about 70 percent of students, while about 15 percent come from other states and the rest from foreign countries.



City chart shows 31% of its occupational-tax revenue comes from the university or Northside Elementary.

the dynamics of Midway as a whole. But these two entities, the town and the university, long followed different orbits. More recently, they have learned to change for the better together.

Prior to Dr. John P. Marsden becoming the university's 10th president in 2013, the relationship between the town and school was rocky, according to some city officials. However, in the past six years, this relationship has more than turned itself around.

"I think with a new administration in there, Dr. Marsden's administration, we were really able to kinda form new bonds," Vandegrift said. "They were the ones that really began reaching out to us as a city."

Vandegrift was on the City Council when Marsden arrived, and was elected mayor the following year. "I think Dr. Marsden and his leadership team have taken on a lot of great initiatives and they've included us in all of them," he said. "They're also quick to include us and we're very happy to be included and to participate."

Some of these initiatives include a 15 percent tuition discount for Midway residents, a decision made in August 2018, and the \$30,000 in softball-field renovations that the city and school partnered for in 2017. The university has helped sponsor and participate in several local events like the Midway Fall Festival and Midsummer Nights in Midway.

One of the best ways the school strengthened connections with the town was bringing the Francisco's Farm Art Festival back to the campus in 2014. The festival, which began in 2003, is the largest event on which the town collaborates with the university. It is an award-winning, nationally recognized event, drawing thousands of

visitors.

When it moved to Equus Run Vineyards three miles east of town in 2011 and remained there for three years, the Midway community felt disconnected to one of its biggest events. When the festival returned to the university, a location many said was more fitting, the community was grateful.

Gregory said the open lines of communication between the leaderships of the town and the school have made for a great relationship. "We see a strong city as good for the university, and we think vice versa—a strong university is good for the city."

This community involvement has made some residents like librarian Stacy Thurman, who was elected to the City Council last year, even more hopeful about the city's future. Having moved to Midway 10 years ago, she said one of the things she liked about the town was that people knew each other and did things together, making for a good sense of community.

"It wasn't until recently that I felt like the university has had more of a presence in town," Thurman said. "I enjoy seeing the students out and about, but I don't think that has always been the case. I think for a long time, at least from my perspective, the university was its own little entity, then there was the town, and there wasn't a whole lot of action."

Although the university is more involved in community events, many in Midway still wish the students had a stronger presence in the town. The on-campus student population makes up about 20 percent of the university's enrollment and accounts for nearly 20 percent of Midway's residential population, yet some residents and business workers say students are rarely seen in town.

Isaac Hughes, a long-time resident of Zion Hill, a largely African American community southeast of Midway, spent much time at the school to watch games or go to parties in the 1960s, even with the racial divide and the school's population being all women. He continues to visit the university now for its affordable, tasty meals, and says the town and university seem to exist separately.

"It's almost like you got two separate entities, two separate towns. There's the university, then there's the Midway area," he said, adding that students may have "felt like there was no connection or we didn't really connect with you all as a community. So, I think there's a lot that can be gained by both if there's a connection."

Cortney Neikirk, president of the Midway Business Association, contrasted Midway and its university with Richmond and Eastern Kentucky University. Richmond's population is around 35,000 and ECU's enrollment last year was estimated at 16,612. Such a large school greatly affects traffic, business and everyday life during the school year, but Midway University's small size does not have that same effect on Midway, she said.

"We do not, as residents, notice the university being there ... It's actually super peaceful," Neikirk said. "The university does not, technically, affect us ... It's nice having them up there because we know we have a university, but it doesn't filter down into the residential areas. It would be sad not to have the university, but as a resident, I don't know that I would notice them being gone ... It's not like you have students everywhere."

Justin Werner, manager of the Goose and Gander restaurant, thinks the lack of student involvement in town comes from a lack of awareness. "A lot of times I don't think they even realize there's a town here," he said. In 2018, "We did an orientation welcoming ... and a lot of the students that we talked to said, 'I didn't even know there was a Main Street. Where's the restaurants? Where are these things?'" So, I think that



Sara Hicks, then the president of Midway Renaissance and Midway Univ. President John Marsden signed contract to move Renaissance's Francisco's Farm Arts Festival back to the campus. (2013 photo)

that's where we fall short is that we don't get out to the students enough to know what's going on and, you know, what's down here."

This is not to say that the students are completely detached from the town. Everyone interviewed for this story reported nothing but positive interactions with students -- if they had any interactions at all. The students do volunteer at places like Northside Elementary, The Homeplace at Midway and the Woodford County Library. They also visit businesses downtown, just not as often as some people may like or expect.

Gregory said students low profile in town stems from how busy they are with classes, work and sports. But many students, despite liking Midway as a town, said there aren't enough local options that appeal to them. Examples:

Junior Kwon Evans goes off campus three or four times a week, usually to Lexington, for food and entertainment. Senior Kaleb Britt leaves campus just about every day for his preferred fast food chains, like Raising Cane's and Taco Bell. Sophomore Jill Enix leaves campus two to five times a week for Frankfort or Georgetown for fast food, shopping and movie theaters. Junior Ally Callahan goes to Versailles or Georgetown just about every day for the same reasons.

All these students lived on campus when they were interviewed last spring, and all of them said they like Midway, the supportive university facility, and the town's friendly residents. However, if the town had more amenities tailored for them, like cheaper food and more entertainment, they might not leave as often.

"I love the fact that Midway is small, and it is very close to larger cities such as Lexington and Frankfort. I love the Kentucky scenery as well. The small downtown



Francisco's Farm is held in mid-May (though not this year).

The same reasons students living on campus leave town so often are the same reasons other students chose to live off campus. Sophomore Clayton Parks, who lives in Lexington, said Midway just can't compare to all the things Lexington can offer. Senior Monica Martinez said not only is there much more to do in Lexington, but it's also more affordable, something that senior Nathan Dodge agreed with.

Affordability is an issue many recognize in Midway. Some businesses like Goose and Gander try to combat this obstacle for students by offering them a 10 percent discount. Railroad Drug and Old Time Soda Fountain hosts a "Milkshake Mission" during finals where students can use vouchers for free milkshakes.

For students who want to live off-campus, Midway has few choices, let alone within a college-friendly budget. But as the university grows, so must housing options. The university recently converted Pinkerton Hall back into a dormitory to meet the student housing demand. While students may not mind commuting for food and entertainment, some like the convenience of living on campus when it comes to getting to classes, practices and games.

University freezes tuition for 2020-21

Midway University says it is freezing its tuition rates for the coming academic year "to help keep college affordable in these uncertain times."

"Families and students have so many stresses right now as a result of the coronavirus and the financial strains it is placing on everyone. We know there is a lot of anxiety about the year ahead. We hope our tuition freeze helps ease any financial barrier in the planning for their college education," university President John P. Marsden said in a news release. "We have always served a high need-based population of students and we want to continue to serve them to the best of our ability."

The university had already waived the ACT and SAT requirement for the Fall 2020 semester, and said it would honoring all current-year awards of merit aid, since "Some students might be making changes and transferring closer to home."

The university's campus is closed due to the covid-19 pandemic, but its financial-aid office can be reached at faid@midway.edu or 859-846-5410. Questions about admissions can be directed to admissions@midway.edu or 800-952-4122. Virtual appointments can be made by registering at www.midway.edu/experience.

Name of Starks family is resurrected on campus



Members of the Starks family and Midway University officials posed at the rededication.

By Taylor Savage

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

A building on Midway University's campus has a new name. And an old one.

University officials announced Feb. 27 that the building formerly known as the Learning Resource Center is now named after the Starks family and bear the name of The Starks Center.

The Learning Resource Center was built in 2010 and replaced Starks Hall, named by John Price Starks in honor of his father, James Madison Starks. The two served 45 years on the board of the Kentucky Female Orphan School, now the university.

James M. Starks settled near Midway in 1845, two years before the school began. He established a small school for local children on his grounds and hired teachers who graduated from the orphan school. He joined the board of the orphan school in 1851.

He and Susan Crutcher had six children, including John P. Starks, who was "integral to the period of the school's

most substantial and rapid expansion," President John P. Marsden said. He reshaped the school's program, introduced business rigor to the financial affairs of the school, and began a progressive building campaign.

Starks hired famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed New York's Central Park and Asheville's Biltmore Estate, "to survey the grounds for the best location of future buildings, and to beautify the campus," Marsden said. "The fingerprints of John Starks remain on the campus until this day."

The Starks name and family have been prominent for many years in Kentucky. Midway has a Starks street named after the family, and John P. Starks, built the Starks Building in Louisville.

City Council Member Sara Hicks, a great-granddaughter of Edna Starks, said James Starks of Midway gave each of his children a farm which are today Lantern Hill, Three Chimneys, and Stonewall farms.

This story was published online March 4.

Bradleys reflect with a writer friend on their 41 years at the local grocery, "the community 'hub' of Midway"

Story by Renee Head

To a small, historic town named Midway in the year 1979 came a strong, dedicated family: Chuck and Shirley Bradley and their three sons and two young daughters.

What brought this family from Los Angeles to a tight-knit community, wondering how they would be accepted? It was a desire for a safer place to raise their family and a need to help Chuck's mother care for his grandmother, who was nearing 100.

Chuck had left the Lexington area when he was a young man and hitchhiked his way to Los Angeles! He spent his life in the trucking business. He left his job as terminal manager of the Santa Fe Trucking Co., a subsidiary of the Santa Fe Railroad. Shirley was a hairdresser.

Their family has become a cornerstone in Midway! They owned and operated the Midway Corner Grocery for 41 years. Their quiet children worked behind the cash registers and in the deli, and grew up in the store.

They told them it couldn't be done

Chuck and Shirley have many stories to tell of how God was involved in their move. His guiding eye was directing and protecting their every step. The long drive across our country found them in a terrible snowstorm; it was 5 below and they got a foot of snow. They had to stop every 10 minutes to clean the windshield wipers and headlights. Their steering on the vehicle was not working properly. They managed to get their family of seven safely to Kentucky to live with his mother and grandmother until he could get a job.

The only job he could find wanted him to move to Texas! One day he saw a very small ad in the Lexington Herald-Leader: "Grocery store for sale," and a phone number. When he called, the Realtor turned out to be his Mom and Dad's Sunday-school teacher, Bob McCray. He went to look at the store and told McCray he could not afford



Chuck, Scott and Shirley Bradley posed in front of the Midway Corner Grocery after Scott sold it. (Photo provided)

it. McCray told him there were some creative ways to get a loan. So they did, at 23% interest! That was in 1979, just before a recession.

They had no experience in the grocery business, but they gave it their best. They were in the store day and night, seven days a week. They opened at 6 a.m. and closed at 10 p.m. They stocked the store to the ceilings and greeted every customer. The first thing they did was get rid of the unfavorable magazines. They received letters thanking them for doing that. That's right, for 41 years they have run a successful grocery store without a dime coming from the unfavorable magazines or beer!

The bankers told them it couldn't be done! You may wonder how they did it. Well, it was being there for their customers. They started charge accounts, and Chuck started delivering groceries to shut-ins. He would often do little repairs for the customers, especially the

widows, while he was there. He would start a pilot light on a hot water heater, fix a toilet and so on! Sometimes they would drive their customers home. They even gave their vehicle to a lady who didn't have a car. One customer didn't have any hot water and they got her a portable hot water heater so she could have a hot bath.

They heard the true appreciation from their customers, who would thank them and say they were going to pray for them that night. Yes, it was a heart for people that helped them succeed. Families would buy their entire week's groceries there. One family in Midway had three of their children work at the store. The lady comes in nearly every day. She thanked the Bradleys for teaching them how to work and to be responsible.

They were told they could not succeed without beer. But succeed they did. Their first year, the business more than doubled, and again the second year!

And so it goes. A lot of hard work and a caring heart were more valuable!

Part of the community

The Bradleys lived in Scott County, but became a part of the Midway community. He volunteered at the fire department and was invited to teach a class at the Midway Christian Church how to cook a country ham. Another man knew how to make beaten biscuits so they served it up! Chuck was also on the president's advisory board at Midway College. It was now home!

Their five kids grew up in the store. Each one learned the business. All the guys worked in the meat department and learned to be butchers. Lesley paid her tuition to Pensacola College working summers in the store. But Wendi was the bravest of all. She worked behind the cash registers and would chase down the shoplifters!

When you have been in business as long as they have, there are several stories to tell. Chuck would sometimes restrain the thief until the police came. He even had to stop one guy beating the police with the handcuffs.

If you ever met Chuck Bradley, you felt like you made a friend on the first encounter. They had small business promotions like midnight sales, 99 cents for a half gallon of ice cream, free coffee, chicken for 29 cents a pound, bacon for 99 cents a pound. One time they had an airplane fly over dropping handbills for free doughnuts or \$5 cash! They generated a lot of traffic over that. They had contests and gave away a bike at Christmas.

They would have Wildcat days and put blue food coloring in the mayo. Once they had a Wildcat jacket on display. A customer, Mike Perry, would come in. Every time he saw the jacket he would fall in the floor and say someone give me that jacket! This month Chuck had the great pleasure of taking that jacket and giving it to him! Mike was so thankful. It was a great memory!

But maybe the biggest thing is what

goes on behind the little screen door. It's the lunch line! They serve soup and sandwiches. They started with a little skillet that cooked three cheeseburgers, fresh chuck, never frozen! Then they got a griddle, then three. They finally got a commercial grill! They sell hundreds of fresh, juicy cheeseburgers every day. And you must get a country ham sandwich! It is worth the wait in line.

For decades they sold country hams for the holidays, and even sold home-made jam cakes. Now the specialty is deviled eggs with jalapenos! They make six dozen at a time.

They tried for five years to get permission to put in gas pumps, but were always denied. They kept fighting, and in the mid-1980s, the third judge, Circuit Judge Paul Isaacs said, "You guys have given Bradley enough headaches; leave him alone and let him put his gas station in."

The Bradleys are deep conservatives. Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream made fun of President George W. Bush, by pulling a statue they had made of him saying, "Liar, liar pants on fire." Chuck took all of his Ben and Jerry's ice cream

out of his store and set it on fire. Ice cream won't burn, so Chuck Jr. got the Herald-Leader papers to burn it! They thought they had used the proper material, a liberal newspaper. A friend of theirs called a Black Hawk helicopter pilot, who flew over and videoed them burning it. It was shown on CNN.

Moving on

In 2001 Chuck and Shirley sold their business to their son, Scott. At age 10 he had started working behind the cash register. That was hard for him because he was a very quiet kid. He never outgrew being quiet, but he learned the grocery business. Chuck and Shirley actually got to retire for two years, except for doing the country hams at Christmas, but came back and continued as bookkeepers.

Scott and the Bradleys have stepped down from the grocery business. After four decades, it was time to move on. The business was sold Feb. 4, and they wanted to take this time to take you back through the years with them.

Their family started with seven, has

grown to 31, and is expected to grow more. They have family in the professional world, military life, ministry, medical field and construction. "We are continuing to grow," Shirley and Chuck say as they end this journey. "We certainly appreciate all the time with friends, neighbors and customers. We want to extend our thanks to all the people of Woodford and Scott county. We appreciate the 41 years Midway has been friends to us!"

They added, "Scott wants to try something new after 41 years in the grocery business. It remains to be seen what road he takes now. He wants to thank all of his customers in Midway for being so kind to him all these years. We want to give our best wishes to the new owners. May they create the relationships, memories, and continue the community 'hub' of Midway, Kentucky. Scott, Chuck and Shirley say, "Thanks to all who entered our doors through the years."

This story was published online Feb. 28.

Renee Head of Lawrenceburg is a friend of the Bradleys, who submitted this story to the Messenger. We thank them for it, and invite other examples of journalism by citizens.

New owner of Midway Grocery says he wants to meet customers and find out what they want

By Al Cross

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

One of Midway's oldest and most prominent businesses has a new owner. Nikesh "Nik" Patel took over the Midway Grocery from Scott Bradley on Feb. 4. Bradley didn't respond to a phone call seeking an interview, but Patel spoke with the Messenger today and said he wants to meet Midwegians.

Patel said he has one other store, in Midville, Georgia, a town of 269 that was named for its site between Macon and Savannah. He said he was looking for another store to buy, saw the Midway Grocery advertised for sale, and "When I heard the name, I said, 'I like'."

"I like small towns," he said. "Everybody's helpful; everybody knows each other."

Patel said he formerly owned a store in Hodgenville, which he has leased, and is arranging to buy the lot where the Midway Grocery is located, at a focal point of the town. He said he did not think the Shell station and convenience store that opened near Interstate 64 a

little over seven years ago was a threat to his store because they have different clientele: "That store is on the highway. This is in town."

Because both stores are owned by Indian Americans, and the owners of the Shell store bought the smaller Gulf store across the road a few years ago, some in Midway jumped to the conclusion that they now owned all three stores.

Patel said he is not connected to the Shell station's owners.

Patel said he was born in the Indian province of Gujarat 35 years ago, moved with his family to southern New Jersey, and bought the Georgia store in 2008. He said his wife, a teacher, is still in Georgia but he has moved to Lexington with their two children, who are 6 and 4, because he couldn't find an apartment in Midway.

Asked what changes he has in mind for the grocery, Patel said he will extend its hours to 9 p.m., and then to 10 p.m. if business warrants. It now closes at 8 p.m. As for him, he says will be at the store from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m., and wants customers to introduce themselves: "I like to know the customers."



New Midway Grocery owner Nik Patel, right, posed with manager Pankil Shah in their produce department.

What about possible changes in the grocery's stock? "I'd like to know what customers need," he said. He said they can even call his cell phone, and

authorized the Messenger to publish his number: 609-670-2192.

This story was published online Feb. 6.

Secret Service took Danny Smith around world; he chose Midway

By Madison Dymant

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

In a town as small as Midway, it's easy for the phrase "everybody knows everybody" to roll off your tongue. But given a closer look, how well do we really know our neighbors? Many peoples' stories float around Midway, often not getting recognition they deserve. So, Midway, meet your neighbor since 1985, Danny Smith.

After coming from humble roots in Lebanon, Ky., Smith found a life path in the Secret Service.

"After Bobby Kennedy's assassination in 1968, President Lyndon Johnson ordered Secret Service protection for presidential candidates, which is kinda how I found out about it," said Smith. "I met some FBI and Secret Service agents through my brother, Jack Smith, who was a federal prosecutor, and they asked if I would be interested in it."

Smith went through rigorous study and was "off and running" in 1969, he said. His work had him stationed across the country through some defining moments.

He was stationed in Washington, D.C., during the anti-war demonstrations at the end of the Vietnam War, went through the resignation of President Nixon and Watergate, and personally served and protected every president from Richard Nixon to George H.W. Bush, who held the Oval Office in 1989-93.

With his history and political-science degrees from Western Kentucky University, a minor in German and two years as a history teacher, Smith found the position intriguing for someone with his interests.

"It was a very serious employment and, especially as someone who had an interest in history, political science and world affairs, it was an exciting career for me," he said. "It was just a very interesting period of history."

Smith said he was stationed in the White House in an "intelligence role" in 1971-74. "If people came up and were exhibiting irrational behavior, the White House Police would get ahold of them and the intelligence guys would come out and deal with the situation," he recalled.

Smith declined to comment on any personal opinions or stories about the presidents he served, but said he holds the utmost respect for them and others he protected. His basement is filled with photos and notes, including a photo of him and Bush in China, signed by Bush. A framed collage of Jimmy Carter hangs on the wall as a memory of his time with that president, who named his brother U.S. attorney for the Western District of Kentucky.

"I don't like to talk about their personalities or little stories," Smith said. "The protectee has to have utmost confidence that what they do will be kept private. You have to have respect for their privacy, official and personal."

Smith protected other interesting figures: Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, King Hussein of Jordan, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, Pope John Paul II and



Danny Smith holds an autographed photo of him and former President George H.W. Bush by a lake in Beijing. On the wall is a fanciful print of a gathering of presidents, some of whom he protected. (Photo by Madison Dymant)

Mikhail Gorbachev, the former general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

"To be able to meet and be around these people was just fascinating, to see and interact with these historic world leaders," he said.

Despite the close interaction, Smith said, he never allowed his experiences to sway his views or opinions.

"I'm proud of the agents from my era; we were pretty apolitical," he said. "It didn't make any difference if the protectee was a Democrat, Republican or foreign dignitary; we had a job to do, and we did it."

Smith credits the Secret Service for bringing him to Midway in 1985. When the service opened an office in Lexington, he jumped at the opportunity to return Kentucky. He had visited Midway and enjoyed the small-town feeling and proximity to Lexington.

In his new position, he worked on intelligence cases at the Federal Medical Center on Leestown Road, with prisoners such as Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme of the Charles Manson family when she was detained for trying to assassinate President Gerald Ford in 1975.

In 1989, Smith left the service and took up work with the Department of Justice as law-enforcement coordinator for the Lexington-based U.S. attorney for the Eastern District, who was a Republican. In that job, Smith brought together law enforcement officers from all levels to work on initiatives against terrorism, gun violence and drugs. He retired in 2006.

"I was very fortunate that I was able to have two great law enforcement careers in two different agencies that I enjoyed," said Smith.

Now, sitting on his front porch talking with his neighbors is just the level of excitement the 75-year-old Smith wants. Having raised his three daughters in Midway, he and his wife, Georgette, enjoy the small-town atmosphere and homey environment of the town.

"I've always known everybody on my street, Gayland Drive, and in my neighborhood, and I think that's fantastic; I really enjoy that," said Smith. "We would sit on our porches and talk with each other at night and that small-community feel of Midway is just lovely."

Smith promotes these neighborly values in his everyday life. Between going to breakfast every Saturday with neighbors and friends, to cherishing the opportunity to see people at the post office, and supporting local business, this world traveler has become a Midwegian through and through.

"Staying in contact with your neighbors is so important," he said.

You may wonder what the one big takeaway is for a man who has seen so much in a lifetime. To Smith, it's a simple mantra that he's repeated countless times: "Be prepared for opportunity when it knocks, because it will knock several times in your life and you need to be prepared for whatever comes to your door. I hope we don't lose that message in our future."

Freedman's Harness Saddlery has 2 homes: Toronto and Midway

By Madison Dymant

University of Kentucky School of Journalism and Media

While businesses have come and gone in Midway over the years, Freedman's Harness Saddlery has been a staple on Main Street since 2006. But unlike most Midway businesses, the company has a global reach, with a brand that is a staple in show arenas across the world.

Despite this wide range, the company only has two locations: Midway and Toronto, Ontario.

Over the years, the company gained a foothold in the carriage industry with its harnesses, saddles, and lifestyle items such as purses and belts. When those numbers began to fall, they felt it was time for a change.

"I started to think, to move the market and be able to grow, we should really have a U.S. retail presence," said David Freedman, the company's sixth-generation owner. "So, in 2006, we started looking around for locations and stumbled upon Midway."

Midway provided ample opportunities. Close to Interstates 64 and 75, it also offered easy access to Louisville, Lexington, Shelbyville, Simpsonville and Versailles, all places with numerous Freedman's clientele. It was a central location for their U.S. market and the small-town, yet eclectic atmosphere felt just like home, Freedman said.

"As a Canadian, I didn't really feel like I could fit in on Clay Street or downtown on Chevy Chase" in Lexington, he said. "Midway had a feeling for me of certain places in Toronto, with that old-school Kensington Market feel that was just quirky enough that we might just fit in."

Freedman's opened its doors on Main Street in November 2006. After about three years building itself in the already-established market, the company was off to the races and hasn't looked back.

Though the move into the U.S. may have seemed ambitious, Freedman credits his late father for fostering a fearless nature in him.

"My father was a real positive, motivating man in respects to just getting out and getting it done," said Freedman. "He would just say, 'Go find what you gotta find,' and that's the reason why I



Nicole and David Freedman in front of the family's only retail store. (Photo provided)

now can take a crazy idea and just run with it and think I can do it."

That heritage is key, Freedman said: "The lineage is what makes us unique. It's all been kept in the family and we have a history of high quality and performance in what is definitely a niche equestrian brand that is recognized in the arenas we're in."

Beginning in Poland with his great-grandfather, the company moved to Toronto with Freedman's grandfather, Isaac, in 1910.

"My grandfather mostly made harnesses for the streets when he came to Toronto, and my dad started working there in 1936 when he was 10," said Freedman.

After World War I, the popularity of trucks and automobiles put an end to the horse-and-buggy era and reduced the need for street harness. Freedman's father, Sam, took the business into the world of show horses, Saddlebreds and carriage horses and honed this craft.

"My dad attended the first Royal

Agricultural Winter Fair after the war and I don't think he ever looked back," said Freedman. "He started doing a lot of local work and impressed some American clients as well." The fair, in Toronto, says it is "the largest combined indoor agricultural fair and international equestrian competition in the world."

The growth of standardbred racing in Toronto in the 1950s grew the shop from around three employees to 25, with the company turning out 1,000 sets of standardbred harnesses per year until 1984. That's when David Freedman joined the business at the age of 18.

"I'd been fooling with the trade since I was 10," he recalled. "My dad taught me to stitch by hand and I'd work summers and holidays, so I had a taste of the horse business and I liked it."

While preserving tradition was a priority to Freedman, he also looked to new horizons for expanding the business. In the next two decades, he made 1,000 ladies' belts per month, and crafted handbags too. The company also

began doing private-label work for Ralph Lauren and extended its business to stores in New York City.

The company and family were dealt a blow in 1991, when "My dad died very suddenly at 65 when I was 27, and my mom and I ran the business for another 10 months until she passed away," said Freedman. "So here I am at 28 years old thinking, 'What am I going to do with this business?'"

The answer was to push farther and harder than he ever had before. Under Freedman, the company pushed into the global carriage-driving world, building an international reputation for quality carriage harness. This led to picking up Budweiser as a client for 10 years, until the Busch family of St. Louis sold the brewery and its Clydesdales in 2008.

Despite being Canadian-based, Freedman's and the family have come to feel that Midway is akin to a second home, particularly for Freedman's wife, Nicole, a Wisconsin native who lived on Weisenberger Mill Road for around nine years. They were introduced by Nicole's mother, equine artist Alexa King, after Freedman made some harnesses for them.

The Freedmans and their two children live in Toronto, where the manufacturing shop and warehouse are located, but stay frequently visit the Midway store and say they give what they can to the town.

"We contribute a historic company in a historic town," said Freedman. "We're now an anchor tenant in Midway and try to be involved in whatever we can."

Freedman's participates in local business events, passionately keeps its storefront clean and decorated throughout the seasons, and follows holiday and event hours in town.

"Midway is just a special place," said Freedman. "There's a ton of great operators there and I'd compare them to anyone in Toronto, which is a big statement."

What's next? David Freedman says he plans to keep up the pace.

"I just want to keep going, keep moving ahead, design and build more products and grow the name and the brand," he said. "I just turned 56, so I'm too young to talk about slowing down."



Midway Chalk Day advocates racial justice



Photo by Dan Roller

Dozens of adults and youth chalked anti-racism messages on Midway's sidewalks June 6 in a project organizers hoped would make the town part of a national movement and strengthen its race relations.

The project was the idea of MJ Farrell, 18, who told the Messenger that she wanted to give an outlet for expression by people who want to join the national protest movement but don't want to attend events "due to fears of covid or fears of danger."

"I knew there was a lot a support throughout Midway and I just didn't know how to gather that support," she said. Her first idea was "a small, silent protest" downtown, but decided against that because of the pandemic.

She said she thought a Saturday chalking project "would be a very covid-friendly means for people to show their support," and one that would last longer than a silent protest. (Rain was forecast for Tuesday.) "It's a way to show each other we're a very supporting and we're a very strong community."

She publicized the Midway Chalk Day for Racial Justice on the Midway Musings page on Facebook, and with the help of Jenny Gregory, Jack Rock and Sophie Hill put flyers about it "on almost every doorstep in town."

Farrell said at least 50 people participated in chalking Saturday, led by a group of 15 young adults who did the downtown sidewalks. She said other sidewalks were done primarily by adults and their children.

"A lot of people of color participated in the project, which I was really happy about," said Farrell, who identifies as white; her father, Herman Farrell, identifies as African American, and her grandfather was from Jamaica.

Milan Bush, an African American who lives in Lexington but spent part of her childhood in Midway and still has family here, joined the effort. "I thought it was an awesome idea," said Bush, 36. She said she brought her sister and her son, 16, and her daughter, 11, who have been involved in protests in Lexington.

Bush is a teacher. She said that when she saw a piece of chalk art in a hopscotch pattern, reminding her of the children she has worked with, she got emotional, and that's when she encountered Farrell, whom she remembered as a student.

Farrell recalled, "She was sort of in tears and said 'I didn't think I was going to get so overwhelmed about this.' It showed that we are all making change in people's lives and affecting people."

Bush said the project "evoked some feeling" about a town where she was the only black girl in her kindergarten. "We're making progress," she said. "It goes back to reaching out and relating and knowing your neighbors and that what's Midway has always represented."

Midway's population is 11 percent African American. Farrell said relations between the races in Midway are good, but could be deeper and broader.

She said that as she rode her bicycle in a predominantly black neighborhood, "I realized I never really come over here very much."

She added, "I really hope people can learn from this and people can come together."

Breonna Taylor, killed by police in Louisville on a no-knock warrant, was remembered.

Photos are by Herman Daniel Farrell III, originally posted on the Midway Musings page of Facebook, unless noted.

Photo below is by Dan Roller.



A time for racial reckoning

As the nation moves, Midway vows to confront racism, chawks its feelings and makes a new holiday

By Aaron Gershon and Al Cross
University of Kentucky School of
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As the state and nation saw a historic month of protests for racial justice in June, the movement echoed in Midway. Here's a chronology:

June 1: The City Council committed to confronting racial issues and "taking an equitable approach to all decision-making" amid the nationwide protests of police brutality and racial injustice.

The all-white council unanimously passed a resolution saying Midway will examine "the racial biases embedded in our city" and "the racial impacts of city policies," encourage people of color to participate in government and try to "improve the quality of life for all residents of Midway by asking these questions: Who benefits? Who is burdened? Who is missing? How do we know?"

The resolution's author, Council Member Stacy Thurman, said "I felt it was good to acknowledge what's going on in the world right now and know that Midway can always do better . . . and maybe lead to a list of action items."

Mayor Grayson Vandegrift said he had already begun the process by reaching out to African American pastors. Noting the annual observance of the Rev. Martin Luther King's birthday, he said he had long asked "how we have a discussion beyond a day in January every year . . . It's almost like the country doesn't have the appetite to tackle this problem," which he said began when the Constitution included compromises on slavery.

"The founding fathers were well aware of the hypocrisy," he said. "They created a great country with a terrible flaw to it." He said solving it "starts with the heart, and it starts in the home, and it branches out from there."

Council Member John Holloway, who first asked how the resolution would be implemented, shared a personal story to illustrate the divide that needs bridging.

He said one of his Black neighbors reportedly said "one of the most awful things I ever heard" before the last election: that he was not going to vote



St. Matthew AME suffered harassment that the mayor said had to be racially motivated.

"because voting's for white people."

"I was just crushed," Holloway said. "I'm not sure the relationship between the races in Midway is as rosy as what white people think it is."

Vandegrift agreed. "It's not enough to say you're doing better than other cities. That's a pretty low bar."

Council Member Logan Nance said the resolution was "a great first step," but "We need to make sure people in the community that are minorities feel they do have a voice and that they can be part of this. . . . We can use this resolution as a reminder for ourselves when doing projects to make sure everyone has an equal voice."

Nance said he has encouraged Blacks to run for office. The last Black council member was Aaron Hamilton, who did not seek re-election in 2014.

Holloway extended the encouragement to Latinos, saying he would vote for candidates of color and would pay the \$50 filing fee for any running for council.

Holloway, first elected in 2018, was the

only one of the six council incumbents not to file for re-election. One of the five non-incumbents to file, Mary Raglin, is an African American.

The council's resolution says "The City of Midway seeks to unify efforts aimed at reducing disparities and commit to intentionally and collectively advancing equity," and "is committed to hearing individuals who meaningfully engage in raising awareness of disparities and in actively engaging in suggesting and supporting methods by which they may be resolved."

June 6: MJ Farrell of Midway, a recent high-school graduate, organized the Midway Chalk Day for Racial Justice, which drew dozens of participants. *See photos and story on facing page.*

June 15: At a council meeting, Vandegrift said the St. Matthew African Methodist Episcopal Church wanted people in the city to know that it has put up surveillance cameras to catch someone who is "messing with them."

"There's just no way that I can't believe

its not racially motivated at this point," Vandegrift said. "I'm pretty sure we know who it is. That's not indicative of the people of Midway; it's just one jackass." Addressing the unnamed person, he said, "You should move, because you don't belong in Midway, in my opinion." Council Member Bruce Southworth agreed.

Vandegrift added, "I hope they catch him and we can say his name."

In a related matter, Vandegrift complimented Versailles police, who patrol the whole county, for joining a peaceful demonstration June 3 at their headquarters to honor George Floyd, the African American killed by a Minneapolis police officer.

In a similar vein, Holloway said he is mapping the recently renovated St. Rose Tabernacle cemetery with short biographies of the Blacks buried there, and would like to put up an informational history sign about it.

He said he would like to do the same for several sites, like the Black History Tour in Washington, D.C., and asked people with information to contact him.

June 18: Vandegrift made Friday, June 19, a city holiday to honor those who have fought for racial justice.

Many Blacks observe June 19 as "Juneteenth," the day a general occupying Texas announced that in keeping with Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, "All slaves are free."

Vandegrift said, "We have to keep finding ways to remind each other of the racial inequities that still exist. Slavery ended, but oppression and systematic racism did not," even after passage of 1960s civil-rights laws. "We're getting better, but we are still so far away, and to honor all those who have struggled in the fight . . . we have to do more."

When June 19 is on a weekend, the holiday will be the workday closest to it.

"While this is not an earth-shattering step," he said, "it's important that we remember that just 155 years ago, black Americans were literally held in chains for nothing more than the color of their skin."

Election filings

-- Continued from front page --

The mayor said he signs such papers for anyone who asks "so long as I think they have their heart in the right place." He also signed for Southworth and Nance. (Magistrate Liles Taylor and his wife Robin also signed for Nance.)

Other newcomers filing for the council Tuesday were Mary C. Raglin and Andrew B. Nelle.

Raglin, 69, of the 400 block of South Gratz Street, was appointed to the Midway seat on the Woodford County Human Rights Commission in 2016. She would have to resign from the commission if elected, Vandegrift said. She would be the first African American on the council since Aaron Hamilton didn't seek re-election in 2014; he signed her nominating petition.

Raglin said she is retired from the 911 branch of the Lexington police department. She said she is running because she wants to be a voice and a positive influence for Midway, and was asked to run by two people. She declined to say who they were, but said one is a public official. Vandegrift, asked if it was him, said it was. "I've known Mary for quite some time and seen her dedication on the HRC," he said, "and felt she could add new perspectives."

Nelle, 36, said he delivers for Amazon and is a part-time chaplain assistant and staff sergeant in the Air National Guard. He said he was in the Air Force from 2008 to 2016, leaving as a senior airman. He said he moved from Lexington to Midway in early November 2019, just in time to meet the one-year residency requirement. Vandegrift said Nelle has watched every council meeting since.

Nelle said he is running because he is familiar with the workings of government and his parents inspired

him to public service. "In service of others is the most noble of paths," he told the Messenger. Two of his four nominating-petition signers were merchants and fellow musicians Bill and Leslie Penn.

Only one incumbent, John Holloway, did not file for re-election. He was elected in 2018 and serves as the unpaid manager of Walter Bradley Park.

Two former incumbents, John McDaniel and Steve Simoff, filed for the council on Monday, June 1. They each served one term in 2017-18.

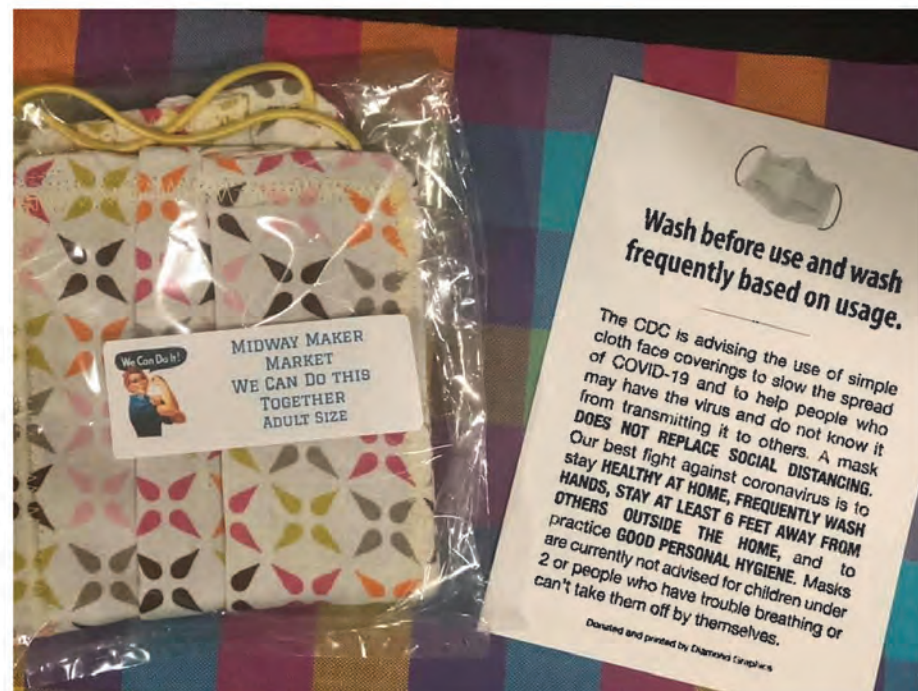
McDaniel finished a close seventh in an eight-way race for six seats in 2018, after running third in a three-way race for the Democratic nomination for Midway-area magistrate on Woodford County Fiscal Court. Simoff didn't seek re-election that year.

The 10-candidate field is the largest since 2012, when 10 people ran for the council and Southworth and Hicks were first elected. They are now the longest-tenured members. Mayors serve four-year terms; Vandegrift was elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2018.

School board: Amanda Glass filed for a four-year term in the District 1 school-board seat on May 21. She and her husband Ken own and operate Railroad Drug and Old Time Soda Fountain on East Main Street. The Vandegrifts and Thurman signed her petition.

Ian Horn filed for the seat an hour and a half before the deadline, County Clerk Sandy Jones said. He could not be reached immediately for comment, but his LinkedIn page says he is an information systems engineer for the state Division of Geographic Information.

This story originally appeared online June 2. Election coverage will continue online through the Nov. 3 election, and in the Messenger's next print edition, in late October.



Each mask packet included instructions and federal guidelines for use.

Mask project

-- Continued from front page --

the masks. The finishing team sanitized and sealed the masks, inserting a copy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

The masks were distributed in waves, through telephone appointments at City Hall. Woodford County Jail inmates joined Midway volunteers in mask production so residents of the rest of the county would have a chance to obtain them as well. At last count, Bowman said more than 5,000 were distributed, including a few were sent to people with Midway connections in other states who were having trouble finding masks.

After the supply was exhausted, volunteers continued to make masks to order. "Now that we're open, we have so many people who sell them" at Makers Market, Bowman said. "We're careful about keeping that separate.

... If somebody came to us and was in need, we would either make one or find someone who could help us."

At the start of the project, Vandegrift cautioned that masks are just an added layer of protection: "This is not your first line of defense. Nobody should think they have some kind of immunity suddenly because they have a mask on because they do not. This will not fully protect you from coronavirus; it will not fully keep someone else from getting coronavirus."

Health experts say masks serve more to protect other people than the wearers, who without a mask might unknowingly spread the virus. Research indicates that up to half of people who get the virus have no symptoms, but can still spread it.

During a virtual town hall May 20, as retail stores prepared to reopen, Vandegrift, Versailles Mayor Brian Traugott and Woodford County Judge-Executive James Kay all urged continued wearing of masks.

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