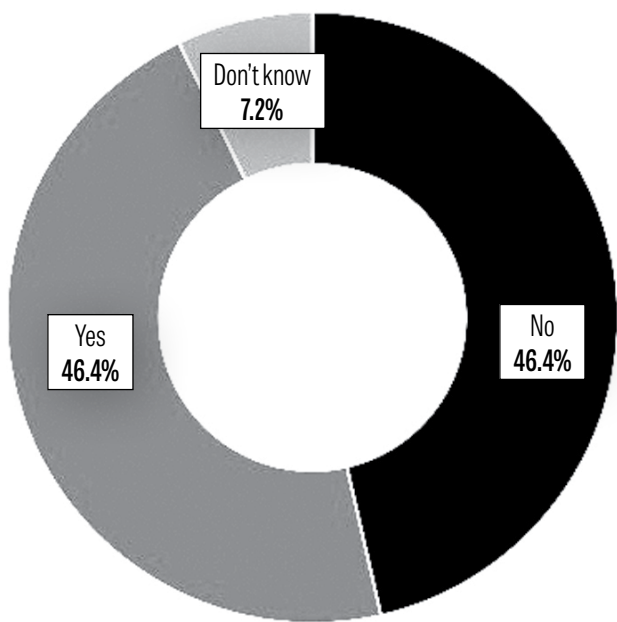


ONLINE POLL:

Kentucky State University and Ale-8-One released Pawpaw Ale-8 recently. Do you plan on trying it?



This poll reflects the opinions of 349 respondents. Visit www.state-journal.com to take part in today's poll.

EDITORIAL

Patience, safety are key during school commutes

It's official — both Frankfort Independent Schools and Franklin County Schools are back in session for the 2025-26 academic year. That means motorists should be extra cautious and practice patience during the morning and afternoon commute when students are traveling to and from school.

School buses are among the most reliable modes of transportation. In fact, students who ride the bus are 70 times more likely to get to school safely than car riders because school buses are designed to prevent crashes and injuries. Every year, roughly 450,000 public school buses transport the nation's 23.5 million students to and from school and other related activities, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports.

During the 2023-24 academic year, there were 1,057 traffic incidents involving school buses in the state, according to self-reporting by the districts to the Kentucky Department of Education. Of those incidents, there were 40 injuries and one fatality.

The NHTSA urges drivers to observe the following practices throughout the school year:

- ▶ Be alert.
- ▶ Watch for children walking or biking to school when backing out of a driveway.
- ▶ Slow down.
- ▶ Watch for children congregated at bus stops.
- ▶ Remember flashing yellow lights on a school bus indicate the bus is preparing to stop and you should too.
- ▶ Never pass a bus from behind — or from either direction if you're on an undivided road — if it is stopped to load or unload children.
- ▶ If the yellow or red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, traffic must stop.
- ▶ Parents should also discuss traffic safety with their children, especially proper school bus loading and unloading procedures.
- ▶ The area 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children; stop far enough back to allow them space to safely enter and exit the bus.
- ▶ Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop, the door opens and driver gives an OK before approaching the bus.
- ▶ When crossing in front of the bus, be sure to make eye contact with the driver before proceeding.

We all must do our part to put the safety of our children first as they embark on another school year.

Falling in love with baseball

In 1983, at six years old, I fell in love. That was when my Uncle Billy gave me a pack of Fleer baseball cards — my first.

At that point, I'd never watched a full baseball game. Maybe I'd caught bits and pieces when my dad or grandfather had one on, but that was it. Still, I devoured those cards as if I'd uncovered sacred texts. I studied every detail on the back, absorbing them like scripture.

That same year, I played t-ball for the first time. I remember my dad taking me to Heck's department store to buy a glove. Whether by choice or fate, I came home with a Rawlings bearing the signature of Ryne Sandberg.

The name leapt out—I knew it as one of the 15 cards I now cherished. I already knew the essentials: 6-foot-1, 190 pounds, from Spokane, Washington. High school football standout. Third baseman for the Chicago Cubs.

I couldn't have found Chicago on a map, and likely didn't even know what a Cub was. But I had a favorite player — and therefore, a team.

I'd love to say I played like Sandberg. However, in my undistinguished athletic career, baseball may have been my weakest link. By age 11, I had moved on from playing and wouldn't return until age 43. Still, my affection for the game endured. You don't need to play something well to love it deeply.

Back then, rural Kentucky offered little in the way of television — usually just three channels. But at some point, WGRB, a small UHF station out of Campbellsville, joined the Reds television network. This led to many of my friends being Reds fans. Others, who lived in town and

had cable, watched the Braves on TBS. And while I would sometimes tune in to WGRB on the black and white set in my room, my loyalty didn't wane. I stuck with the Cubs.

I admired plenty of players — Andre Dawson, Mark Grace, Shawn Dunston — but it was always about Sandberg.

In 1991, the world opened up more: my parents bought a satellite dish. For a kid raised on a metaphorical diet of beans and rice, it felt I had discovered a buffet. That summer, I discovered Welcome Back, Kotter, Short Attention Span Theater, and Canadian television. But most importantly, I found WGN — the home of the Chicago Cubs.

I loved everything about it: the ivy-covered walls of Wrigley Field, the fans atop buildings on Waveland Avenue, and the always-inebriated Harry Caray gleefully mangling the names of Hispanic players. But above all, I loved watching my guy, Ryne Sandberg, playing second base with quiet excellence.

The Cubs were rarely contenders. But Sandberg was always steady.

He wasn't flashy. He wasn't making SportsCenter's top plays. But he was dependable, precise, and dignified.

He once said, "In baseball, there's always the next day." It's a quote that speaks to the rhythm of the game — but also to life itself. Sandberg embodied that idea.

He didn't demand attention; he earned respect. Even when

the team faltered, he was unshaken.

On Sept. 21, 1997, two Cubs legends exited the stage. Sandberg retired, and Caray called his final game. Sandberg was 38 — old for a ballplayer, though now I know, still a young man. I've enjoyed plenty of baseball since, but I can't deny something within me dimmed that day.

Sandberg's career didn't end there. He managed in the minors for close to a decade. In 2010, when Lou Piniella stepped down, he was considered for the Cubs managerial job. I still think it was a mistake they passed him over. He later managed the Phillies for a few seasons, but it never seemed right seeing him in another uniform.

On July 28, the man who unknowingly led me — and many of my generation — into a lifelong love of baseball died at 65 after a battle with prostate cancer. Just like when he retired, that age doesn't feel far away anymore.

And just like in 1997, I feel like another small piece of me is gone.

Of course, Sandberg wasn't perfect — none of us are. But to me, he was something close. He represented stability, discipline, and grace in an era of flash. I'll always remember sitting on the floor as a six-year-old, flipping over that card, and being mesmerized.

Rest in peace, Ryno. Thank you — for the game, the joy, and the memory of what it felt like to fall in love with baseball.

Tommy Druen is a 10th-generation Kentuckian who resides in Scott County. He can be reached at tommydruen@gmail.com.



Tommy Druen
Guest columnist

LETTERS

PHYSICAL MEDIA WEATHERS, AGES AND LIVES

Dear editor,

In an age where nearly everything has gone digital — from how we shop to how we socialize — it's no surprise that books have followed suit. Ebooks are convenient. They travel light, live in your pocket, and can store a lifetime's worth of reading in a device thinner than a deck of cards. But for all their benefits, they lack something essential. A hard copy book, a real book, offers an experience that pixels simply can't replicate.

There is weight in a physical book — not just the heft of paper and ink, but a kind of quiet dignity. When you hold a book in your hands, you are holding a finished thought, a world made solid. You feel the texture of the pages, the slight give of the spine, the whisper of paper as you turn each leaf. A book engages your senses in a way no screen can. It becomes a companion, not just a file.

There's also the matter of attention. Ebooks live in devices that do a hundred other things — email, social media, notifications.

A paper book does only one thing, and it does it well: it lets you read. No pings. No pop-ups. Just you and the words.

And then there's permanence. A hard copy doesn't vanish when your battery dies. It doesn't require updates, or passwords, or Wi-Fi. It can be shared, gifted, annotated in the margins, and passed down through generations. It weathers, it ages, it lives.

Casey Roberts
Frankfort

FRANKFORT CEMETERY WORKING TO DIGITIZING PERMANENT RECORDS WITH HELP OF GRANT

Dear editor,

The Frankfort Cemetery is a community jewel with many historic celebrities buried there. It is a tourism site, which draws thousands of visitors from across the United States to research history and genealogy each year.

With graves of Daniel and Rebecca Boone and Paul Sawyier along with 25 documented suffragists who worked tirelessly for women's right to vote, DAR memorial area, state military mound for view, many guests are welcomed to the beautifully kept grounds each day.

A campaign to cover the cost of digitizing the permanent records was launched recently. The Blue Grass Community Foundation has provided a matching grant of \$2,500 to help cover the cost to preserve the cemetery records.

Interviews with three data software programs along with genealogy organizations have begun the process.

I would like to spread the word to the entire community and invite all to participate.

The address of the Frankfort Cemetery is 215 East Main St., Frankfort, KY 40601. Please designate "donation for digitizing" in the memo line of your check.

Thanks in advance for your support.

Mary Ann Burch
Volunteer Fundraiser Chair
Frankfort

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