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New life for Pike County trail project?

Fiscal court discusses proposals for ATV, river and horse trail systems, as well as dwindling funding already in place

By RUSS CASSADY
EDITOR

For years, members of the Pike County Fiscal Court have discussed the need for ATV trails, similar to those already established in West Virginia, to wind their way through Pike County, attracting visitors and

giving locals a legal place to ride. During Tuesday's regular court meeting, that discussion was renewed, with county officials saying that, while much of the existing funding for the project is running low and needs to be expended soon, the proposal is gaining traction.

Taylor Justice, with Wide Open Outdoors, came to the meeting with

members of the Fishtrap Recreation Club, an ATV enthusiast organization, to express support for the establishment of a legal ATV trail in the county and also ask about funding which was allocated in the past for the project.

"I think it's going to bring a lot of people to our area," he said. "I think we all know we need some-

thing like that around here ... Bringing people here to keep money funneling in here is going to be in our best interest, I think. And this is a great way to be able to do that with something that we already have, something that's been proven to work already in another state."

See **TRAIL**, Page 3A

Two injured in Pikeville crash



News-Express photo by Chris Anderson

Pikeville Police Officer Tommy Fouts walks past a damaged Lexus SUV on Hambley Boulevard following a crash Thursday. PPD Officer Billy Ratliff said the Lexus SUV, driven by Donna Ratliff, collided with the rear end of a Toyota Sequoia SUV, driven by Christopher McNamee, and the collision pushed McNamee's vehicle into the rear end of a Toyota Prius driven by Donnie Gillespie. The officer said both Donna Ratliff and McNamee were transported to Pikeville Medical Center due to injuries from the crash. No charges were expected to be filed, Officer Ratliff said. Pikeville Fire/EMS also responded to the crash.

Two indicted in pharmacy robbery case

Prosecutor says drugs used in manufacture of methamphetamine were target of suspects

By RUSS CASSADY
EDITOR

Two Pike men are facing felony robbery and methamphetamine-related charges after a Pike grand jury indicted them this week in connection with the robbery of a pharmacy at Robinson Creek on March 29.

According to court documents, Joshua Johnson, 29, of Blaze Branch, Jenkins, and Dana Bowling, 40, of Ky. 611, Pikeville, were indicted Wednesday on charges of second-degree robbery

See **INDICTED**, Page 7A

McConnell blasts Obama in Pike stop

By CHRIS ANDERSON
NEWS EDITOR

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell made his first trip back to Pikeville this week after emerging victorious in the November general election and used the opportunity to blast President Barack Obama on several issues, including coal.

During a luncheon for the Southeast Kentucky Chamber of Commerce at

the East Kentucky Expo Center on Wednesday, McConnell told chamber members, as well as other guests present at the event, that Obama's six years in office so far have been "tough years for Americans." He focused several times on the hardships of many in Central Appalachia who have suffered through the downturn in the coal industry, hardships which McConnell

See **STOP**, Page 11A



Deputy Jailer Dee Hampton, left, and Jailer Freddie Lewis pose for a photo with Copper, the jail's newest officer. Lewis told the News-Express on Thursday that Copper had already made his first "bust," finding marijuana, which led to charges against an inmate.

News-Express photo by Julia Roberts

K-9 officer joins Pike Co. jail staff

By JULIA ROBERTS
STAFF WRITER

Pike County Jailer Freddie Lewis said the latest weapon his office has taken up in his war on drugs in the jail, Copper, a K-9 officer, hit the ground running, making a bust on his first day on duty.

Copper began at the Pike County Detention Center on Wednesday, Lewis said, and by the end of the day had helped in the arrest

of Laurie Miller, 50, of Pikeville, on a charge of promoting contraband.

Lewis told the News-Express jail personnel had received a tip that three female inmates had been smoking marijuana the night before. Copper was taken to the pod where the marijuana was suspected to be, and sat on the beds of three inmates, indicating the presence of marijuana on the person of those inmates who slept in the beds.

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STOP
Continued From Page 1A

said are due to government regulation on the coal industry. He said those in the coalfields should not "give up."

"I know how grim it is in Eastern Kentucky, but I'm here today to say, 'Let's don't give up,' because coal is going to have a future and it's our job to try to see that it has a future in the United States of America," McConnell said.

During Wednesday's visit to Pikeville, McConnell's differed little from comments he made on topics which were hot-button issues in the Republican senator's successful campaign last year against his Democratic challenger, Kentucky Secretary of State Allison Lundergan Grimes. With the focus on Obama taking up the majority of his time speaking during the event, he hammered the president on issues such as Obamacare, foreign relations and the use of the military, in addition to coal.

McConnell said in his

new position as Senate majority leader, the biggest obstacle for progress is "the occupant of the White House." He said that now that he is the majority leader, progress can be made in the battles against Obama's policies. He used a basketball analogy to make his point about the difference in being the majority leader, as opposed to being the minority leader.

"People ask me, 'What difference does it make?'" McConnell said. "I said, 'Well, think of it this way: I used to be the defensive coordinator. You can score occasionally on defense, but if you're the offensive coordinator, you get to call the plays, you have a better chance of putting points on the board.'"

On the issue of the "war on coal," McConnell acknowledged the uncertainty in the coal industry in Eastern Kentucky and questioned the future of coal in the U.S. as other countries ramp up coal production and imports.

"Coal will have a future; the question is, will it have a future here?" McConnell said. "That's the

question: 'Will coal have a future here?'"

McConnell said he will continue to fight Obama in the "war on coal," all the way to Obama's last day in office in 2017. He said there needs to be a change in the White House.

"We're trying to take the country in a different direction," McConnell said of the new Senate majority. "To fully succeed in trying to take the country in a different direction, obviously, it's going to take a different president, and we'll have on in January of 2017."

McConnell also spoke in support of Senate colleague Rand Paul, who filed this week to seek the Republican nomination for president in the 2016 race. He stopped short of endorsing Paul, however, saying that he now has four colleagues seeking the presidency.

He blasted perceived democratic front-runner Hilary Clinton, saying that she is tied too closely to the Obama presidency to be trusted as president.

"You may recall my opponent last year said a



News-Express photo by Chris Anderson

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell speaks during a Southeast Kentucky Chamber of Commerce luncheon Wednesday at the East Kentucky Expo Center. The Kentucky Republican blasted President Barack Obama on several issues during the event, which was McConnell's first visit to Pikeville since winning re-election in November.

'Clinton Democrat' was somehow different," McConnell said. "There's not a dime's worth of difference between a 'Clinton Democrat' and an 'Obama

Democrat.' So, I don't think that she will be able to separate herself from the record of this administration. I believe the record of this administration

will be the principle issue in the campaign."

McConnell said he is "proud of" Rand Paul and he wishes him well in the race.

White Lightning Zipline opens Thursday

A NEWS-EXPRESS
STAFF REPORT

The City of Pikeville's White Lightning Zipline attraction will officially open to the public Thursday, just in time for Hillbilly Days.

According to information provided by the City of Pikeville, the attraction, which includes eight ziplines at Bob Amos Park, will official open for its first tour at 2 p.m., Thursday, April 16. And, of-

ficials said, the attraction, as well as the city's other two attractions — Dreamz Stables horse trails and Hatfield-McCoy River Trails — will open this year with a special grand opening rate.

Normally, the three attractions together, known as the city's Zip, Paddle and Saddle promotion, will cost \$99 for adults and \$85 for children. However, under the special rates, visitors can take advantage of the three offerings for

\$69 for adults and \$65 for children.

The individual attractions will be priced as follows:

- White Lightning Zipline course — normal rates, \$45 for adults and \$31 for children; special grand opening rates, \$29 for adults and \$25 for children.

- Hatfield-McCoy River Trails — normal rates, \$27 for adults and children; special grand opening rates, \$20 for adults and children.

- Dreamz Stables — normal rates, \$27 for adults and children; special grand opening rates, \$20 for adults and children.

The child rates are for ages 8 to 14.

The grand opening rates will be in effect for 30 days after the attractions open, but those wishing to plan ahead can book their trips online at the City of Pikeville's tourism website, www.visitpikeville.com.

The White Lightning Zipline course will be open for tours at 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Mondays, 2 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. Thursdays, and 8:30 a.m., 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 2 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Each tour lasts approximately two hours. Each tour can accommodate up to 10 people.



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