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The Woodford Sun
Versailles, Kentucky October 29, 2026

A new path, a shared future

The Woodford Sun's transition to nonprofit status puts its future in the hands of the community it serves.

By Ben Chandler
Woodford Sun Publisher

It's a new path for the *Sun*.

Since 1869, *The Woodford Sun* has served Woodford County with news, features and photographs covering our community's residents, schools, farms, businesses, churches, sports and local government. And since 1957, the Chandler family has owned and operated the newspaper.

That chapter has come to an end, and a new one has begun. This year, *The Woodford Sun* transitioned from a privately owned business to a nonprofit organization named *The Woodford Sun* Community Newspaper.

On paper, the change involves a new governance structure, funding model and tax status. But in the way that matters most, nothing will change at all. In fact, it'll get better.

The Chandler family legally owned *The Woodford Sun* for nearly seven decades, but it has always belonged to this community. With our move to nonprofit status, the newspaper's structure now reflects that longstanding relationship. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the newspaper now has no private owners and no shareholders. It is governed by a local board whose members—your neighbors—are charged with advancing a vital mission: to provide independent, fact-based information in service to Woodford County.

Becoming a nonprofit organization frees us from a business model that no longer works the way it did. Advertising patterns have shifted. Reader habits have changed. News delivery is increasingly digital.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Sun* lost a significant amount of advertising revenue, and despite the broader recovery, those ad dollars did not return. Over the past two years, I have used personal funds—tens of thousands of dollars—to keep the presses rolling. That path is not sustainable.

We need to look only down the road to see more evidence of the threat to local journalism. In September, McClatchy, the large corporation that owns the Lexington Herald-Leader, gutted that paper's newsroom, laying off the majority of its journalists. For McClatchy, it was easier to cut its Kentucky-based reporters than to retool the local operation.

Why I chose not to sell

I also had an easy way out.

Several times in the past few years, I was approached with offers to purchase *The Woodford Sun*, ranging from $300,000 to $1.2 million. I had to consider those offers because of the many thousands of dollars I had personally pumped into the business to keep our newspaper a part of Woodford County life. A sale would have meant immediate financial relief for my family, but at the cost of hollowed-out local coverage for the community.

You see, every offer came from a newspaper conglomerate. In communities across Kentucky and across America, we've seen what that means: reduced local staff, cookie-cutter content and a significant erosion of the local reporting that keeps neighbors informed and connected.

I could not let that happen here.

Instead, we chose a more challenging path, but one that protects local governance and accountability. Sharing the stories of Woodford County and our people must be done from the inside out.

To transform *The Woodford Sun* into a nonprofit organization, the Chandler family gifted the newspaper to the community with no compensation. My daughter, Lucie, remains a paid employee, but the transition is not financially beneficial to me. In fact, I will be a significant donor to the nonprofit organization to help ensure its success.

New opportunities for local journalism

This nonprofit model allows us now to pursue grants that support hometown journalism—and we have succeeded. We have already received a grant from Press Forward that has provided the funds and technical support to create a fully modernized, reader-friendly website. It's a website that will open doors for us, allowing the *Sun* to expand its local coverage. Printing and mailing costs are significant, but an upgraded website can house additional stories—deeper dives into the topics that matter most to Woodford countians—at a minimal cost.

For example, members of our advisory board have made great strides in adding extensive coverage on the equine industry in Woodford County—Thoroughbreds and racing, yes, but also insights into the many other breeds and activities that power the horse business on local farms. We're pursuing funds, securing leadership and finding new voices to write those stories.

Horses and horse people are just one area we're examining for expanded coverage. We'll be finding more topics to explore—and more writers to tell the stories.

Speaking of writers, we also received a grant for the *Sun*'s Scott White to participate in a joint Press Forward/Report for America pilot project. Scott worked as an attorney for decades but is new to journalism, and as the community liaison for the *Sun*, he is undergoing an intense, two-year program that will help him hone his reporting skills, elevating his service to our community through solid journalism and important storytelling.

Grants alone will not secure the future of *The Woodford Sun* Community Newspaper, and we are getting support from local advertisers and readers who value the paper as a connection to the community. I have been overwhelmed and enormously encouraged by the response we have received. While our new path won't be easy, we're not traveling it alone.

We'll also take another key step toward stability. We expect to reach the point soon where business revenue and philanthropic support surpass operating costs, and we will start directing income into an endowed fund that will generate even more income. Many supporters have already told me that a gift to the endowment will be their preferred target of support. The endowment we establish will help protect *The Woodford Sun* from the pressures that have silenced so many hometown newspapers.

Why the *Sun* matters

And why is it important to preserve our local newspaper? Because decisions and events that shape our daily lives happen right here in Woodford County. *The Woodford Sun* reports on government and school board meetings, explains proposed zoning changes and local ordinances, and helps readers understand road projects and other developments that affect their neighborhoods. We cover elections so voters can learn about the candidates, their positions and the results. We follow our local teams, celebrate the people who achieve remarkable things or overcome difficult circumstances, and bring readers the sights and stories of our festivals, events and community gatherings.

That reporting does more than keep you informed. It gives you a basis for taking part in community decisions, connects you with neighbors you might otherwise know little about, and preserves a record of Woodford County life. Years from now, people looking back at our schools, businesses, celebrations, challenges and milestones will find much of that history in the pages of *The Woodford Sun*. A local newspaper helps a community understand what is happening today—and helps us remember how we got here.

The Woodford Sun serves different needs for different readers.

New residents turn to it to discover local businesses, churches, activities, volunteer opportunities and the people and traditions that give Woodford County its character.

Parents and grandparents follow school decisions, youth programs and the accomplishments of their children and grandchildren, while young people enjoy seeing themselves and their friends in print—and discover opportunities and issues that affect their futures.

Business owners and nonprofit organizations use the *Sun* to reach customers and supporters, promote their work and stay connected to the community they serve.

And for those who have moved away, the newspaper remains a link to home, keeping them in touch with familiar faces, changing neighborhoods, local traditions and the lives of people they remember.

To help *The Woodford Sun* thrive, we are building a sustainable model that blends print and digital delivery with philanthropic support. The *Sun* will be powered by people who understand that a local newspaper is not just a business, but also a public good.

I refused to sell the *Sun* because I believe Woodford County deserves a locally governed, independent newspaper, one that's accountable to its readers, not to a distant conglomerate. The newspaper's structure now reflects that longstanding relationship.

I started by saying the *Sun* is on a new path. But in so many ways, we are continuing the work that began in 1869. The transition is about more than legal paperwork and a new tax status. It's about preserving a trusted resource, continuing to tell local stories and strengthening the connections that make Woodford County a community.

I enter this new chapter with excitement for the days ahead, and I welcome you to join me on the journey. *The Woodford Sun* has always been a valuable community resource, and now, its future belongs to the community it serves.



BEN AND LUCIE CHANDLER are pictured in front of the remodeled *Woodford Sun* building at 184 South Main Street. Lucie is the fourth-generation member of the Chandler family to run the paper, having replaced Scott White, who is now the paper's community liaison, as editor in March 2026. Ben remains involved as board chair for The Woodford Sun Community Newspaper, the nonprofit corporation that operates the *Sun*. (Photo by Bill Caine)



Real newspapers and real journalists matter to real journalism

By Mike Scoggins
Publisher and Editor of the Georgetown News-Graphic
President of the Kentucky Press Association

The news on Sept.10 that 13 skilled journalists in Lexington were laid off at the *Lexington Herald-Leader* was heartbreaking, but also frightening.

The suggestion that AI can replace reporters who are trained to observe, interpret and ask the tough questions is unrealistic. AI is a tool and a resource, but it cannot replace a human reporter.

The real danger here is the declining number of journalists in the field. It is not just newspapers. We have witnessed veteran broadcast journalists who have been sidelined as TV goes through its own shakeout.

So, what are we losing? What is the real value of journalism?

Journalism gives citizens the facts they need to make informed decisions. This information is about our schools, taxes, governments, businesses, medicine, and it is information that shapes our lives. A skilled journalist gathers the information, verifies it and presents it in in a way that can be understood.

Journalists hold government entities accountable. The most important responsibility of a journalist and media company is to ask the tough question — the questions an elected official may not want to answer. This skill takes courage and patience, as it has become common for officials to deflect attention by insulting or criticizing the reporter rather than answer the question.

Journalism is a historical record. Births, deaths, milestones, new businesses and tragedies are all part of a community's record. Much of the history we know of our past is because of the journalists who have gone before us.

Local journalists tell stories that would otherwise go untold. Find any local media, be it a newspaper or a TV station, and you'll find stories the national media are not covering.

Journalism and local media connect communities in a way no other entity can do.

We have more information at our fingertips than ever before. In the age of social media, blogs, rumors and artificial intelligence, the ability to separate misinformation has gotten more and more difficult. Local journalists are the filter who report the stories through verification, attribution and accountability.

Journalism gives people a voice. Their stories are not just about those holding elected office or the powerful. Stories of teachers, farmers, small-business owners, young people and veterans fill the pages of good community newspapers.

Journalism is part of the bedrock of democracy. People participate in their communities when they understand the issues. Coverage of public meetings, local debates and elections provides the information people find necessary for participation.

Journalists serve as witnesses. Major events are documented by journalists who provide information about what happened and how the community responded. This role is especially important during emergencies and disasters.

Journalists create accountability. Good journalists acknowledge mistakes, correct the record and explain how they obtain information. This transparency builds trust.

The value of a journalist is in their presence. Whether it is at a city council meeting, a sporting event or a community event, the actual presence of a journalist cannot be reproduced. Each time they attend such events, they build relationships and knowledge of the community they serve.

A good journalist is a good journalist because they know the community.

woodfordsun.com
A brand new, user-friendly, and up-to-date website

By Scott White
Woodford Sun Staff
Report for America corps member

Do me a favor.

Open your desktop, laptop, smartphone or tablet—whatever is handy.

Now, open your internet application. Type in woodfordsun.com.

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!

We have finally transported *The Woodford Sun's* website from its 2009 version, when it was first constructed, to a brand new 2026 version. I can tell you, for us here at the *Sun*, we are utterly gobsmacked by it.

The new website is our first tangible, public-facing benefit of moving to a nonprofit status. Last spring, the *Sun* won a grant to completely redesign and construct a new website. The grant partnered us with two experienced specialists: Michael Grant, owner of Get Current Studios and a web designer based in Sacramento, California, and Adam Leone, a website architect with Newspack, the *Sun's* new website platform provider.

We have reviewed dozens of other newspaper and digital newsroom websites to find things we like, things we want to avoid and to figure out how our site can provide our readers with a simple way to read the news of Woodford County.

Since mid-March, Lucie Chandler and I (mainly Lucie) have been working with our contacts on a weekly basis to provide our readers with a fast, efficient, easy-to-use webpage.

We think you are going to really like it.

Some of the features include:

- An updated logo.
- Topic links like news, obituaries, sports, news of record, etc., which take you to the part of the paper you are most interested.
- An initial launch without a paywall to allow everyone the ability to experience the new website. However, the stories will eventually be paywalled, at which point you will get five free articles a month before a subscription is required. When the paywall goes up, non-subscribers will have access to the headlines and initial paragraph of the week's stories.
- A button to take you to the digital PDF copy of that week's paper.
- The ability to donate online by clicking on a button.
- Easy to subscribe or renew options, with the ability to purchase a 24-hour pass to ALL of the content.
- Bright, crisp photographs and videos.
- Access to the paper's archives.
- Contact information.
- Policies on letters to the editor, corrections and editorial standards.

We think you are going to find the *Sun's* new website is as good as, if not better than, any other newspaper/digital newsroom's site.

This new website is also built to incorporate digital advertising – the Sun plans to open this option in the near future to

See WEBSITE p. C5

History of newspapers

Giving readers what they want isn't always what they need

By Bob Vlach
Woodford Sun Staff

In most communities, including Versailles and Midway, and larger cities like Lexington and Louisville, there is only one newspaper – and a growing number have none.

The news media landscape was very different in the 1800s, according to newspaper historian Alex Wright.

He says the number of newspapers grew from 37 at the end of the Revolutionary War to 20,000 by 1900 (more than half of the newspapers being published in the world).

What Wright describes as "just crazy growth" was driven by a variety of factors, including newspapers being subsidized by the government (with very low postal rates for mailing a newspaper) "because they saw it as a public good for people to have access to news," he says.

Most people in the 1800s lived in small towns and remote areas of the country, so newspapers were their primary source for reading material, he says.

Poems, jokes and recipes were printed on the front page, so newspapers didn't "look that much like what we think of as a newspaper today," he continues. "... The hard news would often appear on the very last page because it took a week to set the paper in type by hand, and so they would wait to the very end to put in the most recent stuff..."

Today, people get news as it happens on their smartphones, while most newspapers continue losing subscribers.

"Everybody wants to get the biggest audience they can get," longtime journalist and University of Kentucky journalism Professor Emeritus Al Cross says. "They know in this fractionalized (news media) environment, they can't get the huge national audience ... but they can get enough to make their business successful. And the way to make money in the modern media environment is to give people what they want ... information that confirms what they already believe or that is entertaining. And we get too much sizzle and not enough steak, and sometimes the steak is cooked too hard on one side."

In the early 1800s, newspapers freely used material from other newspapers (there were no copyright laws), and were "very much like social media platforms of today because they were not just where people went to get political headlines or news. It was also about stuff that would pass the time...," Wright says.

"One of the interesting themes" that Wright says he explores in his recently published book, *Empire of Ink*, "is just how ... diverse, and often opinionated 19th-Century newspapers were, and how that really changed over the course of the century."

In the early 1800s, he says, "Newspapers were often highly partisan. They were often actually sponsored by the political parties."

As newspapers became less reliant on political patronage to pay operating expenses and more reliant on subscribers and selling advertising, he says, "You start to see the beginnings of more of what we think of as modern journalistic practice" by the end of the 19th Century.

Journalism was becoming a profession, and publishing a newspaper was no longer "a side hustle" for someone who owned a print shop, Wright says. By the 1880s and 1890s, he says newspaper publishers started embracing the principles of objectivity and neutrality.



Al Cross



Jamie Lucke

Milestones in newspaper history

Retired University of Kentucky journalism professor Al Cross shared these significant milestones in newspaper history.

- A standard of fairness and reliability for newspapers arose after the invention of the telegraph in 1844 and the creation of the Associated Press (originally the Western Associated Press) in 1846. According to an article published by AP in September 2026, five newspaper publishers in New York City agreed to pool resources in order to speed the delivery of news about the U.S. war with Mexico using a pony-express relay through Alabama to a telegraph office. The AP claims some 4 billion people, nearly half of the world's population, see news produced by the company on a typical day.
- The newspaper industry created The American Society of Newspaper Editors Code of Ethics in 1922, which was largely adopted by the Society of Professional Journalists in 1926. "And that basic code has remained the standard," Cross says, while being revised and modernized over the last 100 years.
- Widespread change also occurred among newspapers after World War II because there was so much negative reaction to President Woodrow Wilson administration's control of information during the war, according to Cross.

One way for newspapers to distinguish what they produce as journalism is by having a brand, which is commonly referred to as a motto or slogan.

"All the News That's Fit to Print" was adopted as a motto by *The New York Times* in 1896 because owner and publisher Adolph Ochs wanted to distinguish his newspaper from its competitors.

Founded in 1851 as the *New-York Daily Times*, *The New York Times* "aimed to distinguish itself from sensationalist press of the era through deep, serious-minded reporting," according to a History of *The New York Times*.

Other newspapers have also had mottos or slogans during their histories. The *Sun* had one after *The Midway Sun* and *Woodford Weekly* were consolidated in February 1877. "A Free Press Will Guard Liberties Of The People" was beneath the *Sun*'s banner on June 21, 1878.

Even though most newspapers do *not* have a motto or slogan, Cross says, "I like them because it gives (readers) a sense of a newspaper's philosophy and outlook and what it thinks is important."

"It's your brand. It's bumper sticker. It's your identity. And every news organization needs to have some type of identity. That's just good business," he adds.

In 2017, *The Washington Post* adopted "Democracy Dies in Darkness" as its first official slogan in its 140-year history. According to an Associated Press article on Feb. 24, 2017, "The Post reports that employees, including Editor Marty Baron, decided nearly a year ago to adopt a new slogan and 'Democracy Dies in Darkness' was one of the first ideas. They considered more 'positive-sounding' versions but ultimately went with the alliterative phrase." According to the AP story, *Washington Post* investigative reporter Bob Woodward used the phrase in reference to Richard Nixon for years. He says it came from a judicial opinion in a First Amendment case and "it's about the dangers of secrecy in government."

Closer to home, the *Kentucky Lantern,* based in Frankfort, also has a motto: We Shine Where It's Dark.

It started with the name we chose for our online news site, says Jamie Lucke, the founding editor-in-chief of the *Kentucky Lantern*.

"We had to come up with a name" because States Newsroom, the nonprofit that has created nonprofit news sites across the country, including the *Kentucky Lantern*, does not name the sites.

Lucke chose *Lantern*, which was suggested to her by reporter Sarah Ladd, because there were so many newspapers already named *Sun* in Kentucky, including *The Woodford Sun*.

"It's a metaphor that newspapers and journalism have used for a long time. That we bring light to areas of government and society and life that need to be illuminated," Lucke says.

"If you light a lantern in the middle of the day, it's not that big a deal," she adds, "but on a dark night, that's when it's really bright. And I think it's a metaphor that works because we're shining brightest, we're doing our best when we are exposing things that, maybe, powerful interests would rather not become public."

Cross says newspapers became more fair and objective after World War II when they consolidated, and television became the primary way of getting the news. So instead of a city like Lexington having both a Republican newspaper, *The Leader*, and a Democratic paper, *The Herald*, a consolidated *Herald-Leader* aimed to have more broad appeal, he says.

"The newspaper owners realized that it was good business for them to go down the middle – not ... left or right, but down the middle," says Cross.

That good business strategy prevailed, he adds, until the advent of the Internet and social media, which "fractionalized the news environment where everybody got hungry for audience, and more in the business of giving people what they wanted instead of what they needed..."

As a nonprofit, Lucke says the *Lantern* can focus on local and state stories that no one else is going to cover. Moreover, she says the *Lantern* is there to fill the gaps created by the loss of newsroom jobs across Kentucky because advertising revenue has migrated away from print and even digital news outlets.

However, working in a nonprofit newsroom is "profoundly different," says Lucke, "even though the fundamental job is exactly the same: to inform the public and abide by the ethics of journalism."

"In the glory days of newspapers," she continues, reporters did not have to focus on producing stories that would get a lot of *clicks*, which are often "not the most important stories to a functioning democracy." So instead of producing stories about local and state governments and our courts, stories are more entertainment-based, she adds.

Lucke, who retired in April after more than 50 years in journalism, beginning with *The Kentucky Colonel* while a student at the University of Kentucky and predominantly with the *Herald-Leader* (for over 30 years), says she is grateful to have ended her career as the first editor of the *Kentucky Lantern*.

People across the state, she continues, appreciate the journalism produced by the nonprofit news upstart, which relies on donations and not subscriptions or advertising to pay operational expenses. She says that is very different than the traditional business model for newspapers, when advertising in your hometown newspaper was the way to reach your customers.

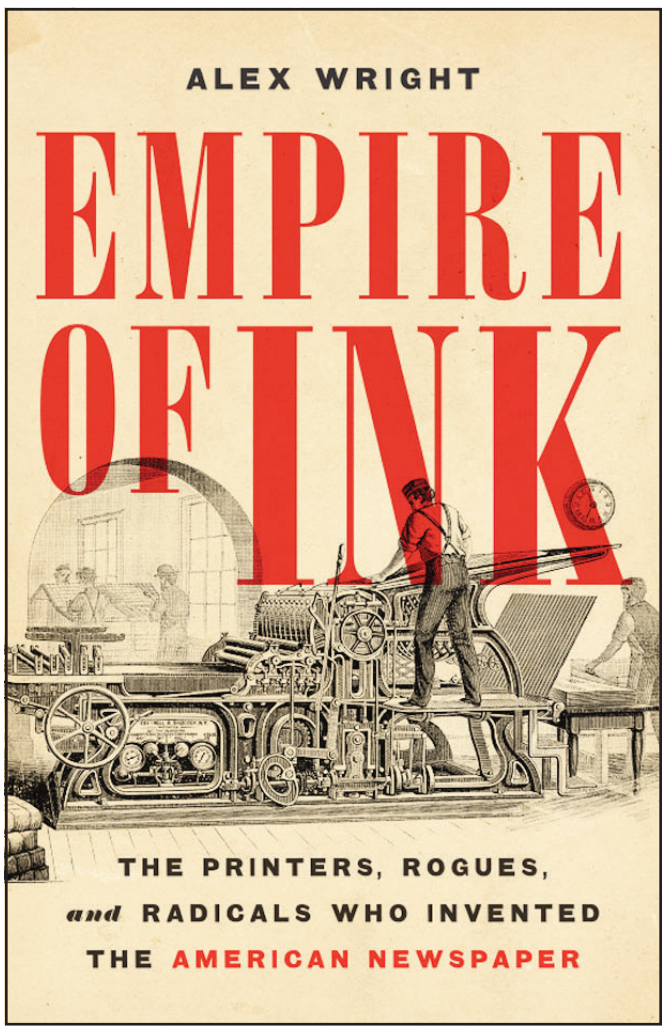
Because the *Lantern*, *Sun* and other newspapers say they are producing journalism, Cross says newspapers have "a certain responsibility not to be partisan." That is not the same as a newspaper having an ideology, which he says can lean liberal or conservative.

So newspapers, even those that are nonprofit like the *Sun,* can (and do) express their opinions on land use and other local issues on the editorial pages, he says.

"Most news outlets are either centrist or slightly liberal," he says, "but very few are as liberal as their critics like to say..."



Alex Wright
(Photo by Andres Hernandez)

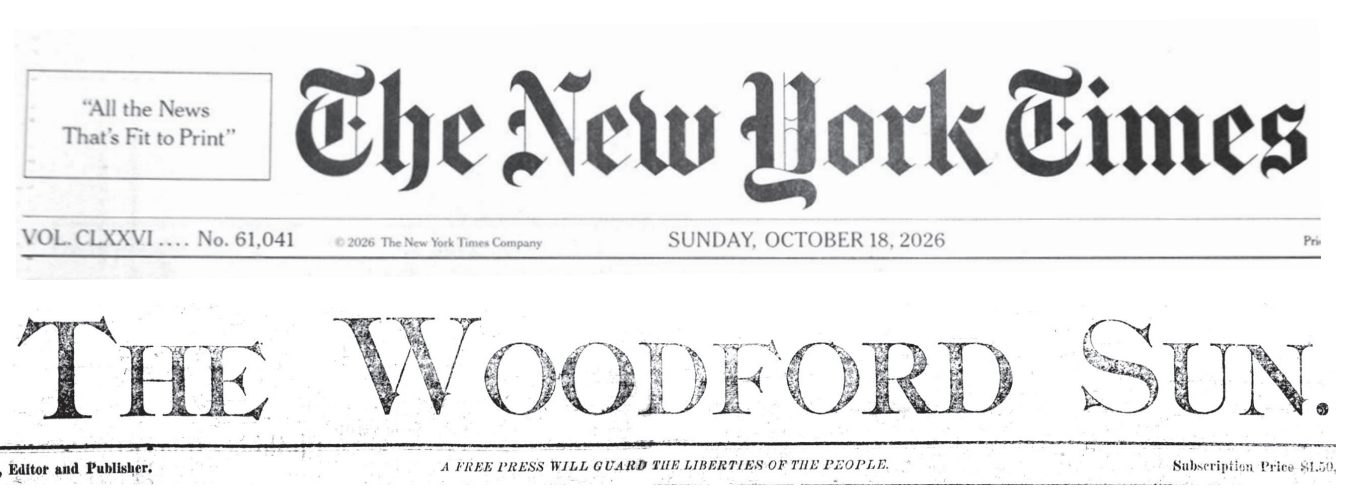


After the Revolutionary War, newspapers were viewed as instruments of political power and influence, Wright says, but by the 1840s more newspapers, including *The New York Sun*, were being published for the common working people. By appealing to the masses with sensational stories about crimes and scandals for only a penny, the *Sun* was profitable and "spawned a bunch of imitators," says Wright, who has a family history in the newspaper business.

Beginning in the 1800s, he says family members operated small-town newspapers in Georgia. No one in his family saved any of the family newspapers, which is why he got interested in newspaper history.

"As I started doing the research (15 years ago), it just kind of took on a life of its own," says Wright. "... There (are) so many interesting characters in this world," including well-known figures like Mark Twain and Benjamin Franklin and lesser-known people, including a young girl who started her own newspaper when she was 11 years old.

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The Woodford Sun's Advisory Committee is fundamental to its transition and success

By Scott White
Woodford Sun Staff
Report for America corps member

As Ben Chandler, Lucie Chandler and I began working on converting *The Woodford Sun* to a non-profit three years ago, in many ways, we were groping in the dark.

That's because there were very few examples of legacy community newspapers like the *Sun* that had made that leap. A legacy newspaper is one that began publishing before the internet era, or prior to 1980. However, there were a few for us to consult, and we received useful advice from longtime Kentucky journalist and academic Al Cross, Woodford County citizen Lori Garkovich, the Sun's attorney, Tad Myre, and publishers of both digital-only and print newspapers in Arkansas, Wyoming, Colorado and Vermont who had made the move to non-profit.

As we began this endeavor, an idea that struck a real chord to better position the paper's success, was to pull together a diverse group of folks who had been in Woodford County for a significant amount of time, were part of different aspects of the community, and were committed to the survival of the *Sun*.

We call it the "*Sun* Advisory Committee," and it has been working since mid-February 2026, meeting at least monthly, sometimes more often. The members have infused our thinking with new ideas, energy, and accountability.

The committee has developed and carried out an initial fundraising campaign; it has created a college internship pilot program focused on the county's equine industry, which we plan to replicate with other topics; and, it has advised Lucie and I in more ways than we can list here.

The committee has proven to be one of the fundamental pieces to positioning the *Sun* for success in our next chapter.

Every person we asked, you probably are not surprised, agreed to take part in the committee, and not just that, but immediately ask, "What can I do to help?" The members are: Lori Garkovich, Helen Rentch, Lynn Pruett, Bill Phelps, Joe Graviss, John Hutcherson, Nick Nash, Bob Rouse, Nancy Blackford and Tom Biederman.

The group is marked by folks deeply involved in the county's civic life.

They come from every part of the county, including Midway and Versailles. We have academics, former elected officials, real estate professionals, folks involved in the equine industry, farmers, nonprofit officials, writers, journalists and folks whose families have been here for generations or have themselves come here with no prior connection to Woodford County.

Are there some missing elements? Yes. But the plan is to add more Woodford Countians to better ensure all voices and groups have a voice at the *Sun*.

We asked members of the Advisory Committee to write about why they chose to be a part of this project. Here is what some of them said.

Nancy Blackford

The Woodford Sun is more than a company in the place where I live; it is part of a community I care deeply about and feel proud to be part of. *The Woodford Sun* has been woven into the life of this town for over 150 years, helping preserve our shared history while keeping neighbors informed about the people, families, organizations and news events that make *The Woodford Sun* special.

I have watched the newspaper grow and become more thoughtful and responsive in its coverage, including inclusion, especially in recognizing minority communities, their accomplishments, their concerns and the contributions they make to our town. That progress is meaningful to me because *The Woodford Sun* reflects who we are as a community. When diverse voices and experiences are included, it sends a powerful message that everyone belongs here, everyone's story matters, and every part of Woodford County deserves to be seen and valued.

I will forever be grateful for the way *The Woodford Sun* covered the Isaiah House Gala event that named a pharmacy after my son. The newspaper captured the very essence of a mother's love for her son and our family's dedication to keeping his memory alive by helping and serving others in this community. That story was deeply meaningful to me and showed how *The Woodford Sun* can honor not only an individual, but also the love, compassion and service that strengthen our entire community.

I want to serve on the Advisory Committee because I believe in *The Woodford Sun*'s future and want to help protect and strengthen its role as a trusted community resource as it becomes a nonprofit organization. I want to help identify ways to invite more minority residents to contribute stories, share events, report on community efforts and become active participants in shaping the newspaper's coverage. Let's keep *The Woodford Sun* sustainable in this small, uniquely family-oriented town.

Lori Garkovich

I believe healthy, engaged communities are the foundation of any society. When we who live in this place understand and accept that it takes everyone pulling together to reach shared desired outcomes, there is nothing that can stop us.

I believe a community newspaper is an essential part of the foundation of a strong community. A local newspaper informs, investigates, reveals, encourages, builds a sense of pride and belonging, and inspires change. A community newspaper shines a light on who we are and what we do. It highlights what connects us as well as what divides us. A community newspaper celebrates our successes, memorializes the work of those who have gone before and encourages us to recognize and pursue our possibilities. It explains and reveals how our local governments and agencies work.

I believe in the power of the stories of those who have gone before us and who challenge us to move toward a better tomorrow. Community newspapers impartially record, explain and give meaning to how our history and connections to each other are both a strength and a challenge in building a better community. Mark Twain was right, "A newspaper is not just for reporting the news as it is, but to make people mad enough to do something about it."

I walk the path of my beliefs, and I believe the gift of the Woodford Sun Community Newspaper is a transformational legacy. It will enable this special place to have a source of inquiry, information, insight and inspiration that is powered by residents. So, I have and will continue to share my talents and resources to honor this gift.

John Hutcherson

Having lived in Woodford County for most of my life, *The Woodford Sun* has always been at the center of our community. Knowing that the paper is on solid ground for years to come is very important to me, so when given the opportunity to help with transitioning it to a community nonprofit newspaper, I wanted to be involved.

It is our hope that the community will embrace the *Woodford Sun Community Newspaper* so that it continues for generations to come.

Your support means a lot to all those involved.

Nick Nash

Woodford County has always been more than the place I call home. It is part of who I am. At 30 years old, I've been fortunate to spend much of my adult life involved in this community, and I believe if you love a place, you have a responsibility to give something back to it. That is a lesson that started in my family long before I was born. My grandparents, J.C. and Barbara Moraja, loved Woodford County and believed deeply in giving back. I never had the opportunity to meet my grandmother, Barbara. She passed away in 1986, years before I was born. She was a teacher, and among the students whose lives she touched was Ben Chandler. So when Ben asked me to be part of this project, I couldn't help but feel there was something special about it, almost as if I was holding a seat that I know she would have occupied herself if she were still with us. I know her through stories and through the family she and my grandfather built. Those values live on in their children, my mother Linda, my Uncle Mike and my Aunt Dee, and through them, they were passed on to me. That is why participating in the *Woodford Sun Community Newspaper* project means so much to me. It is an opportunity to carry forward what J.C. and Barbara started and what Linda, Mike and Dee have continued: loving this community enough to invest in its future.

The Woodford Sun is more than a newspaper. It is a record of our community, the people who came before us and the stories worth preserving for those who come next. I'm proud to play a small role in making sure that continues for another generation.



THE *SUN'S* ADVISORY COMMITTEE has been, and continues to be, a key piece of the paper's successful transition to a nonprofit operation. From left, top row, Joe Graviss, John Hutcherson, Bill Phelps, Bob Rouse and Nick Nash; bottom row, from left, Helen Rentch, Lynn Pruett, Lori Garkovich and Nancy Blackford. Not pictured, Tom Biederman. (Photo by Lucie Chandler)

Bill Phelps

The Woodford Sun is more than a newspaper—it is an essential part of our community. By reporting on the decisions, achievements and events that shape daily life in Woodford County, it helps residents stay informed, connected and involved.

Local government accountability: Coverage of city council and fiscal court meetings helps residents understand how public officials are making decisions, spending taxpayer dollars and addressing local concerns.

School news and decisions: Reporting on school board meetings keeps families informed about policies, programs, budgets and other matters that affect students, educators and the community.

Community events: The newspaper promotes festivals, fundraisers, civic activities and other local gatherings, helping residents participate and support the organizations that make Woodford County a vibrant place to live.

Local sports: Coverage of school and community teams recognizes the hard work of local athletes, coaches and families while building community pride.

A shared community record: *The Woodford Sun* documents local milestones, accomplishments, challenges and changes that might otherwise go unnoticed or be forgotten.

Without a dependable local newspaper, many residents would be unaware of decisions and events that directly affect them and their families. Supporting *The Woodford Sun*—by subscribing, advertising, contributing news and encouraging others to read it—helps preserve a trusted source of local information and strengthens the entire community.

Lynn Pruett

I appreciate the chance to serve on the Advisory Board for *The Woodford Sun*. I join a group of people with a variety of experiences, from business people to farmers to journalists to non-profit leaders, educators, attorneys, longtime residents and native-born folks. All are committed to free speech and the integrity of journalism, but most importantly, to giving the people of Woodford County a voice and attention.

As *The Woodford Sun* grows in its new status as the community's paper, it's been exciting to add new subjects, such as covering the equine and ag industries in depth. The *Sun* provides a glimpse into the county's history, which is an unusual and popular feature. More importantly, it is news, not just opinion. Journalism is fact-based. We need to know facts today as social media overwhelms us all with unverified opinions and AI threatens the very concept of human expression.

With the demise of the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and its embrace of AI and elimination of most local reporting, *The Woodford Sun* will rise to the occasion and lead the way back to what our Founding Fathers envisioned: a country with a free press of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Helen Rentch

I have subscribed to *The Woodford Sun* for the last 30 years. For the 35 previous years, while away in college and raising my children in West Virginia, my parents subscribed for me. I have given it as gifts.

My earliest memory of the *Sun* is of a photo Jim Curtis took of my sister and myself... randomly ... 1965 or '67. I like it so much I sometimes think I may use it of my teenage self…for my obit mugshot!

Actually, I also remember Jim's pictures of our Midway Pony league team going to play in the tournament in Frankfort, with Coach Bill Clark and his goat, the team mascot, "Miss Midway."

I am now 80 and consider myself an engaged citizen who has always identified as a Midwegian and a Woodford County resident. And I believe it is because of *The Woodford Sun*, and all of its stories and columns, that I know who I am and I know where I "belong." It is extremely valuable to me.

I genuinely believe the community exists because of the *Sun*. It tells us about our neighbors, about our history, our political and economic issues, where the fires are, who sold their farm, who (besides me) got caught speeding. The content is rich and full of valuable information.

I have seen what happens to local papers that get bought up by corporations. They become advertising flyers with maybe the football schedule and a picture of the new business in town. Not worth picking up. I am very aware that could have, and yet could, happen to us.

So, I know what the *Sun* is talking about when wanting a new plan/model to become "sustainable." I was really surprised and really pleased when they asked me to be on the Advisory Committee to help figure it out. I hope many more will want to add their two cents… and add to the content.

This is one of the treasures of being a Woodford County resident that we can no longer take for granted.

Preservation, reincarnation. Please get on board!

Bob Rouse

What I did on my *Sun*-er vacation:

There are two things I like most about *The Woodford Sun*: what it has been and what it will be.

For my entire life, *The Woodford Sun* has given me a vital connection to my community. The big stories on the front page help me understand the issues our elected officials deal with and the decisions they're making. I'm just as interested, though, when I turn pages to learn about everything from local festivals and ball games to lawsuits and property sales.

I read *From Our Files* and *Clippings from the Past* sections to consider where our community has been. I read about the people in our schools and neighborhoods to glimpse where we're going. Every Thursday, I'm eager to read the *Sun*.

And I'm every bit as excited for the future of the paper. Sharing a table – and ideas and insights – with neighbors on the *Woodford Sun Community Newspaper* advisory board is a treat. We're talking about bringing more community voices into the paper, covering Woodford County more widely and deeply, and making all of it easier to access through an enhanced website.

I want *The Woodford Sun* to keep being what it has always been for me – a connection to my community – while finding new and better ways to make that connection even stronger.

KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL

The Versailles Kiwanis Club wishes The Woodford Sun luck in its newest chapter as a nonprofit serving the Woodford County community.

Advisory committee creates journalism internship program for the Sun – page C6.

Press Forward Blue Grass celebrates *The Woodford Sun's* journey into a sustainable future for local news

Melissa Newman, Ed.D.
Executive Director, Press Forward Bluegrass

The Woodford Sun's transition from a for-profit community newspaper to a nonprofit news organization represents more than a change in business structure. It shows what happens when a local newsroom, its community, philanthropy and journalism-support organizations work together to build a more sustainable future for local news.

Press Forward Blue Grass, an initiative of Blue Grass Community Foundation, has proudly worked alongside *The Woodford Sun* throughout that journey.

The Woodford Sun has engaged deeply with Press Forward Blue Grass across multiple areas of its work, from investing in reporting capacity and strengthening its digital presence to developing new fundraising opportunities and building connections with local, regional and national partners.

That engagement has made *The Woodford Sun* a strong example of the ecosystem Press Forward Blue Grass is working to build for local news organizations across Kentucky.

"The Woodford Sun has embraced what is possible when a local newsroom engages with the entire support ecosystem around local news," said Melissa Newman, Ed.D., executive director of Press Forward Blue Grass. "They have participated in programs focused on journalists, digital transformation, technical assistance and fundraising, while continuing to deepen their relationship with the community they serve. This is exactly what we mean when we talk about investing in sustainability rather than dependency."

Investing in local reporting through Report for America

One of the earliest opportunities for collaboration came through Press Forward Blue Grass's partnership with Report for America.

Through the Report for America pilot, *The Woodford Sun* helped strengthen local reporting capacity while creating pathways for journalists to build careers in the communities they serve.

The model goes beyond placing a journalist in a newsroom. Participating organizations receive support to build the fundraising and organizational capacity necessary to sustain reporting positions.

For Press Forward Blue Grass, that long-term approach is critical. The goal is not simply to add reporting capacity for a year or two, but to help local news organizations develop the resources and relationships needed to keep journalists working in their communities.

Strengthening The Woodford Sun's digital future

The Woodford Sun also received support through Press Forward Blue Grass's grantmaking program to strengthen and expand its digital news presence.

That investment includes technical assistance as the newspaper works to enhance how it reaches audiences online, distributes its journalism, develops digital products and strengthens revenue opportunities.

For a longstanding community newspaper such as *The Woodford Sun*, digital transformation does not mean leaving its history or identity behind. It means readers can still get the journalism they have relied upon for generations in the ways people consume information today. It also means creating new opportunities to support that journalism financially.

Press Forward Blue Grass
A NEW STORY FOR LOCAL NEWS

Turning local giving into greater investment

The next phase of *The Woodford Sun's* work demonstrates another important piece of the sustainability equation: giving the community an opportunity to directly invest in its local news.

The Woodford Sun is participating in Bluegrass Gives, Blue Grass Community Foundation's annual Giving Tuesday fundraiser on Dec. 1 at bggives.org. Through the campaign, the newspaper can earn up to $1,500 in matching funds from Press Forward Blue Grass. Blue Grass Community Foundation and its Bluegrass Gives co-investors add more matching dollars on top of that, helping donations to *The Woodford Sun* go further.

Local News Day gives *The Woodford Sun* another opportunity to build support on April 8. Gifts from individuals, businesses and community organizations can unlock up to $10,000 in matching funds for local journalism.

Together, the two campaigns demonstrate how philanthropic dollars can serve as a catalyst for local support, not a replacement for it.

"At Blue Grass Community Foundation, we believe people build strong, healthy communities when they invest together in the institutions that serve them. Trusted local news is one of those institutions," said Lisa Adkins, president and CEO of Blue Grass Community Foundation. "Woodford County's response shows what is possible when residents recognize that they have a role in ensuring reliable local information remains available for generations to come."

A model for the local news ecosystem

The Woodford Sun's experience demonstrates the potential of connecting a local newsroom to a larger network of support.

Through its engagement with Press Forward Blue Grass, the newspaper has connected with resources at multiple levels: national journalism organizations, regional philanthropy, local philanthropy, technical assistance, professional expertise and, increasingly, individual community supporters.

Each serves a different purpose.

National partnerships can bring expertise and investment into Kentucky. Regional organizations can help connect resources to the needs of local newsrooms. Philanthropy can provide the capital needed to experiment, modernize and build capacity. Technical assistance can help news organizations develop new skills and revenue strategies.

But ultimately, sustainable local news needs the support of the community it serves.

That is why the response of the Woodford County community to the *Sun's* nonprofit transition is particularly encouraging to both Press Forward Blue Grass and Blue Grass Community Foundation.

The future of local news includes the community

The future of local news will not be built by journalists alone.

Residents have always been part of the news process. They are readers, subscribers, sources, tipsters, business owners, community leaders and neighbors. They identify the questions their communities need answered and the stories that need to be told.

Increasingly, communities will also have an important role in financially supporting the trusted local news and information they want to preserve.

The Woodford Sun and Press Forward Blue Grass believe the future of local journalism depends on communities not simply consuming news but participating in the information ecosystem that sustains it.

Reliable local information helps people understand what is happening in their schools, local governments, businesses and neighborhoods. It provides accountability and explanation. It preserves community memory. It connects neighbors to one another and gives residents the information they need to participate in decisions affecting the places they call home.

Since 1869, *The Woodford Sun* has provided that service to Woodford County.

Now, *The Woodford Sun* is demonstrating how a longstanding local news organization can honor its history while building for the future. Its transition to nonprofit status and its willingness to engage with new approaches to reporting, technology, philanthropy and community support make that possible.

For Press Forward Blue Grass, *The Woodford Sun's* journey is also an example of the larger opportunity ahead: when local news organizations, communities, philanthropy and journalism partners work together, they can build something none of them could build alone.

About Press Forward Blue Grass

Press Forward Blue Grass, an initiative of Blue Grass Community Foundation, works to strengthen local news and information ecosystems through investment, convening and education. Serving communities throughout Central and Appalachia Kentucky, the organization supports local journalism, builds newsroom capacity, develops future journalists and advances community-centered approaches to ensuring all Kentuckians have access to reliable local information. Learn more about pressforwardbg.org.

About Blue Grass Community Foundation

Blue Grass Community Foundation puts philanthropy to work to grow more generous, vibrant, equitable and engaged communities across Central and Appalachia Kentucky. BGCF connects individuals, families and businesses with the causes they care about and leads on issues that matter to the region. We're in it for good. Learn more at bgcf.org.



Woodford County Historical Society

Thank you for the support the historical society has received from The Woodford Sun over the years. Wishing the Sun luck as it moves forward as a nonprofit.

Wishing The Woodford Sun continued success.



John Paul Coyle
Woodford County PVA

DEPUTIES:
Hope Elliott • Greg Richardson • Ann Wilson

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In historic shift, struggling Kentucky newspaper gets tax approval to become a nonprofit

By Jack Brammer

Reprinted with the permission of the Kentucky Lantern, where this story first appeared on July 2, 2026



Jack Brammer

Bob Rouse, 68, of Midway is a loyal reader of *The Woodford Sun*. The Versailles-based newspaper means a lot to him: With it, he has been able to keep up with hometown events like school board and other governmental actions, community activities, scores from games of the high school's Yellowjackets, church milestones and obituaries.

"I guess I have been reading it all my life. It's about my community. It's about people I know," said Rouse, a writer who recently retired as vice president of marketing for National Tour Association in Lexington that connects global travel professionals.

But Rouse, a strong supporter of community journalism, is worried because he knows firsthand of the financial struggles newspapers across the country have experienced as traditional advertising and print circulation revenues have fallen. He was a marketing writer for the *Lexington Herald-Leader* until the newspaper eliminated his job in a series of cost-cutting moves.

Now, Rouse serves on an advisory board that wants to make *The Woodford Sun* stronger and viable.

The Central Kentucky newspaper with about 2,700 subscriptions plans to roll out in September its status as the first legacy newspaper in Kentucky to become a nonprofit. A legacy newspaper is one that began publishing before the internet era.

The primary reason for the change: money. More specifically, the lack of money.

More and more newspapers, especially in big cities, are transitioning to a nonprofit model to try to survive declines in traditional advertising and subscription revenue.

The new tax structure allows them to implement new funding streams such as tax-deductible donations, foundation grants and memberships, while protecting editorial independence.

Memberships are offered to paid subscribers who want to donate more to the paper. Reporter and community liaison Scott White said there will be a minimal fee to become a member. The board is still working on that amount, he said.

"It has taken a great deal of work to get to all of this," he said.

A long journey

The Woodford Weekly started in 1869 and became *The Woodford Sun*, a weekly, in 1872. It has been operated by the Chandler family of Woodford County since Gov. Albert B. "Happy" Chandler bought it in 1942. Running it since 2022 is Ben Chandler, former state attorney general and member of Congress from Kentucky's 6th District from 2004 to 2013.

Chandler became publisher after his brother, Whit, died unexpectedly in January 2022 at the age of 57. Whit replaced his father, Albert Benjamin "Ben" Chandler Jr., who was the paper's publisher from 1959 to his death in 2016 at age 87.

Assisting Ben Chandler with operations of the paper today are his daughter, Lucie Chandler, who is the editor, and longtime friend, Scott White, a former attorney. The newspaper also has two other full-time staffers – business manager Bill Nave and reporter Bob Vlach. It has four part-time staffers – Brenda Stone in circulation, Tamara McSorley in layout and ad design, Melissa Patrick as copy editor/contributing writer, and sportswriter Bill Caine. Another childhood friend of Chandler and White, Bill Nave, is the business manager and has donated all of his time to make this work.

For the last eight years, the newspaper has been running with "an operational deficit," said White. "For the last three years, we have been able to cut that with stronger ad sales, but it is still operating in the deficit."

The newspaper, which runs about 12 to 14 pages a week, has had no layoffs, but two employees recently have retired and another one left. The paper filled two of the vacancies. "Everybody at the paper is doing their job and more," said White.

Chandler said he personally has given the newspaper $100,000 to keep it going. He has drawn no salary.

"I do this as a labor of love," he said. "Going nonprofit will keep us going with an improved product. It will keep the paper alive."

Chandler has been thinking about the nonprofit model since he took over four years ago. He started researching and talking to people in the community about the idea. He formed an eight-member advisory board on the subject in February 2026. It still exists with Chandler as board chairman.

Earlier this year, the IRS granted Chandler's nonprofit status for the publication. His for-profit paper became the nonprofit Woodford Sun Community Newspaper.

"We're in a period of transition now," Chandler said. "We have donated the paper to the community, and will try to improve it and keep it alive with the community's help."

As a nonprofit, he said, any net revenue as a nonprofit will be reinvested into news coverage.

The paywall on the website with ads will remain, White said. "Maybe later down the line, we can drop that," he said. (The Salt Lake Tribune in Utah, which went nonprofit in October 2019, officially removed its paywall this year and made all of its new content available for free, no subscription needed.)

Under the nonprofit status, donations to *The Woodford Sun* will be tax-deductible. White said the paper is making efforts to businesses in the area to support the paper. "We've had a positive response to our initial fundraising effort," he said, declining to offer amounts.

Lucie Chandler said the paper also will be in a better position to obtain grants.

Another advantage, said publisher Chandler, is that the new tax status will prevent predatory takeovers from private firms. "We've never had any interest in selling the paper," he said. "And from what I've seen of some newspaper takeovers, I wouldn't want to do that to this community."

The Woodford Sun never entertained any thoughts of seeking government funding, said White. "We would be diametrically opposed to that."

In one way or another, newspapers have always been subsidized by the government, from postal subsidies in the country's early history to public notices.

In 2022, the Nieman Lab, an online publication and research project at Harvard University dedicated to helping journalism figure out its future, reported on a proposal for indirect support from state governments such as tax credits for local news subscriptions or payroll taxes.

The idea has not caught on. No state currently provides a tax credit directly to consumers for purchasing local news subscriptions.

Another revenue-enhancing scheme being considered for newspapers involving the government calls for a federal trust fund.

Proposed earlier this year by the Democratic Policy Network in Washington, an interstate network that organizes policy support for state leaders, the U.S. Treasury Department would house $10 billion annually to distribute to local newspapers. Local citizen panels would be chosen – randomly like jury polls – to oversee the money.

That would be enough to fund 50,000 new local reporting jobs across the country, the network said.

The U.S. Congress has not given much consideration to the proposal.

According to the Washington-based Pew Research Center, only 10 percent of U.S. adults believe direct government funding should be a major revenue stream for news organizations.

"We did not want to go any route depending on the government," said White. "We wanted to avoid the appearance of giving the government any hint of editorial influence. We are single-minded in our need to be nonpartisan, fair and accurate, in reality and in perception."

Is White concerned about influence from large donors to *The Woodford Sun*?

"People are always trying to influence what's in the paper," he said. "We will keep our editorial independence. We, who manage the paper, will see to that. Our board will see to that."

As a nonprofit, the paper cannot be sold like a traditional business. If it dissolves, its remaining assets must go to another nonprofit.

A disadvantage of going nonprofit is losing the right to endorse specific political candidates or political parties.

"We have not endorsed in years," said publisher Chandler.

Are nonprofits the future?

"I think the answer is yes," said Al Cross, professor emeritus of journalism at the University of Kentucky. "The old business model is barely holding up.

"I also think going nonprofit, with community buy-in through donations, premium subscriptions and dialogue about content, can insulate local news outlets from suspicion that they have an agenda other than seeking the truth and reporting it.

"The big news outlets have largely lost that battle with most Americans, but I think there is still a reservoir of good will toward local journalists, especially those who are known to the audience."

Cross also said he favors revenue-producing measures like tax credits for subscriptions and a federal trust fund for local journalism. But he acknowledged those moves would not be acceptable in some communities.

The Kentucky journalist also voiced support for a state law "requiring a certain percentage of state and local government advertising (not public notice ads) to go to *bona fide* news organizations with proven circulation."

He said New York City has such a law and it has helped many neighborhood publications. Maryland is the only state with a statewide law requiring a specific percentage of government advertising to go to local news outlets, reports Rebuild Local News. It is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advances public policies to counter the collapse of local news.

"Of course, we need to preserve or even expand public-notice advertising, which has become an essential revenue source for local newspapers, much as it was in the first half-century of the republic," Cross added.

The Salt Lake Tribune in October 2019 was the first legacy newspaper in the United States to become a nonprofit. With the elimination of the website paywall, all of its news content is free.

NPR reported that the paper last year had a digital subscription revenue of about $2.6 million from 32,000 digital subscribers. It expects up to 75 percent of digital subscribers will continue as paying donors. It also received a $1 million pledge from a board member.

Other notable newspapers have gone the nonprofit route, including the *Chicago Sun-Times* in 2022, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in May and the *Maine Trust for Local News*, which owns five of Maine's six daily newspapers. *The Minnesota Star Tribune* is actively pursuing a transition to a nonprofit, foundation-owned model. *The St. Petersburg Times* that was renamed the *Tampa Bay Times* in 2012 is owned by the Poynter Institute – a nonprofit journalism school.

Though *The Woodford Sun* will become the first legacy newspaper in Kentucky to become a nonprofit, Kentucky has several nonprofit news organizations. They range from statewide digital startups to regional reporting centers.

They include the *Kentucky Lantern* in Frankfort, *Northern Kentucky Tribune* in Edgewood, *Louisville Public Media, Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting* housed under Louisville Public Media, Kentucky Educational Television in Lexington and the *Hoptown Chronicle* in Hopkinsville.

While the non-profit model has rescued many legacy and independent publications, non-profit status is not a guarantee of success. High-profile examples of non-profit news closures include major digital upstarts like *The Houston Landing* and smaller local publications like the *Pikes Peak Bulletin*, according to *Inside the News* in Colorado, a weekly newsletter about the news industry.

Newspapers nationally are declining, said Tim Timmons, executive director of the Kentucky Press Association.

"We have lost more than 3,000 papers in this country in the last couple of decades," he said. The United States today has about 938 printed daily newspapers and about 5,595 local news newspapers overall.

Kentucky has not lost as many as other states, Timmons said.

The two largest newspapers in the state – the *Courier Journal* in Louisville and *Lexington Herald-Leader* – have decreased publication dates. About a dozen or so papers have gone out of business in the last 10 years but none in the last couple of years, Timmons said. The state has about 140 newspapers, the majority being weeklies and about a dozen dailies.

As far as the future of newspapers, Timmons thinks "some papers will certainly go the route of non-profits. Others will stay in the for-profit model." Ben and Lucie Chandler are scheduled to share the *Sun's* experience at a panel on newspaper nonprofit conversions at the 2027 Kentucky Press Association's annual convention in January.

A problem in the industry, he said, "is that there are all sorts of models that can and do work well. It's like restaurants. There are many different types of restaurants, just like there are different types of newspapers.

"Trying to find a one-size-fits-all solution is incredibly dangerous. Our newspapers fare best when they are deeply entrenched in their communities and are great local partners — like so many good ones are."

Woodford County *Sun* subscriber Rouse hopes that is the case for his hometown newspaper. He is aware that the decline of local news exacerbates division in the community with partisan social media, often not true, filling much of the void.

"I think the newspaper going nonprofit will not only be good for it, it will be good for the entire county with more coverage of what's really going on," said Rouse.

Minor changes to subscription prices, a single price for all

By Scott White
Woodford Sun Staff
Report for America corps member

We last increased the price of a subscription to *The Woodford Sun* two years ago. It was a simple decision and, with our gratitude, we heard fewer than 10 complaints.

As we explained at the time, given the cost of postage from the U.S. Postal Service, it had gotten to the point where we lost money on every paper we mailed. This was particularly acute with senior subscriptions.

The last increase brought the local subscription rate to $50/year; the senior rate to $38/year; the Kentucky rate to $60/year; and the out-of-state rate to $65/year. The bulk of you stayed with us as we struggled to stay afloat and keep providing a non-biased, fair and comprehensive news source for Woodford County . . . and for that, we thank you.

We are tweaking our subscription rates again, but this is driven by more than increasing postage, increasing printing costs and ongoing tariffs—our new website launched last week on Tuesday, Oct. 20.

Given the integration of the pay system we are now using with the new website, and that we only have one employee managing that system, we are adopting a single, uniform subscription rate across the board.

This means we are simplifying our subscription rates into fewer tiers to allow us to add online-only subscriptions to our available offerings.

Our new rate will be $60/year for regular print subscribers; $60/year for regular digital subscribers; and $100/year for print and digital subscribers. Seniors will still be able to gain a print or digital subscription at a discounted rate of $40/year. Right now, you must call the office at 859-873-3211 to obtain this discounted rate.

If you are not an annual subscriber but see a story or photo you would like to access, then you can purchase a 24-hour pass to all of our content for $1.50, which will give you full access to that week's paper as well as prior editions, which you can save as a PDF or print out.

Unlike large newspapers like The New York Times, we are committed to still offering a print copy. We believe $60 a year is a reasonable price for receiving a comprehensive and reliable newspaper completely dedicated to Woodford County people, government, stories, industries and businesses, schools and school sports . . . plus much more. It is a small increase from our prior rate, which had not been raised since 2024.

Also, let me conclude with this: as a long-term goal, one of the things the board of The Woodford Sun Community Newspaper (the new nonprofit corporation that owns *The Woodford Sun* as its sole asset) wants to do is to publish the paper for free, or at least the digital format for free. As a long-range goal, we cannot predict when this will happen. It may be in just a few years, or it may be in several years. This depends primarily on fundraising, receiving grants and building a healthy endowment.

For now, we hope you understand the new pricing model. And, as always, I am just a phone call away if you want to talk about it. You can reach me at 859-873-3211 during regular business hours (Monday – Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.) or by email at scott@woodfordsun.com.

Thank you . . . with all of our hearts . . . for your continued support.

WEBSITE
Continued from p. C1

advertisers to allow them to promote their services, products and businesses.

As everyone becomes adept at using this new technology, the *Sun* will begin to offer more options, like breaking news articles, live streaming of community events, a weekly newsletter that you can go ahead and sign up for, and many other things we are excited about.

Bear in mind, this new service is a direct result of the decision to become a nonprofit. Before this grant, we were painfully aware we needed a new website, but we could not afford to do it. Now, this new tool will make it easier for the *Sun* to inform you and the community of all that is happening in Woodford County.

We hope you agree. And we hope this will motivate you to sign up for our newsletter, sign up for a subscription, or even click on the "donate" button to make a donation that will help to keep the *Sun* publishing for years to come. Any amount is appreciated!

Now Hiring!
Commission-based Sales Representative

This position is part-time and fully commission-based. You will be responsible for soliciting new advertising business for The Woodford Sun. You will earn a 25% commission rate on the sales generated (for new advertisers only).

The Woodford Sun is seeking a reliable, independent, self-motivated individual with strong verbal communication skills. Must have a reliable mode of transportation as this job will require cold-calling various local businesses.

Responsibilities include prospecting, building relationships with new advertisers, and selling advertisements.



If you are interested in this position and would like more details, please reach out to lucie@woodfordsun.com.

Find us on

The *Sun's* college journalism internships – something new and needed

By Lynn Pruett
Member, Woodford Sun Advisory Committee

This fall, *The Woodford Sun* instituted an internship program for college journalism students. A sub-committee of three of the *Sun's* Advisory Committee, Helen Rentch, Tom Biederman and I, chose the horse industry as the focus for the initial group.

This program will be the model for future internship programs at the *Sun*, not only to expand the paper's voice and topics, but also to help build a new generation of journalists interested in and committed to community journalism. We expect, though, that this equine internship program will continue along with any new ones.

Our first step was engaging Evan Hammonds, the former editor of *The BloodHorse,* as the primary mentor for the students. Hammonds lives in Versailles. Esteemed journalist Al Cross connected us to Jen Smith, an assistant professor in the University of Kentucky School of Communication and Information, who sent our application to likely students.

We chose three for the first year. Bella Sepahban and Delaney Foster are working with us this fall. Grace O'Halleran will join us in January.

Bella is a senior print journalism major with a minor in classics. She graduated from Danville Independent High School. Her first article was published in the *Sun* on Oct. 17. She said, "My knowledge of the equine industry was limited, so I immediately got to work researching the industry in Woodford County and the equine community's rich history. I went to Keeneland during the September Yearling Sale with my internship mentor, Evan Hammonds, who has limitless knowledge of everything equine-related."

Hammonds praised Bella for her research, which he said is crucial for preparing good questions for interviews. She also read copies of *The BloodHorse* and was quick to grasp the way the sales work at Keeneland.

"I had a wonderful time writing the article. I believe the only way to have a truly successful day is to learn something new. With this internship and this story, I was able to learn more than one new thing about the equine industry every day," she said.

Bella has written for a multitude of news publications, both local, national and student-led, including the Kentucky Lantern, American Songwriter, The Watchdog News and the Kentucky Kernel. She is the editor-in-chief of The Watchdog News, a student-founded and student-led newsroom based in Lexington, Kentucky.

"I also dearly love photojournalism and documentary film, and believe that multimedia journalism is vital to helping journalism thrive in today's day and age," she said. Her internship focus will be on the Thoroughbred industry.

Delaney Foster, an Equine Science and Management major with a minor in Agricultural Economics, rides for the UK Western Equestrian Team. She earned world and reserve titles at the Pinto World Championship Show in 2022. She competes in Level 2 Horsemanship and Ranch Riding, which tests both elegance in the saddle as well as effective riding, as riders must execute patterns in different styles.

As an FFA officer, Delaney competed on the Livestock Evaluation Team, Agricultural Sales Team and the Horse Evaluation Team in Denmark, Georgia. Her high school team won the State Championship in Horse Evaluation. She was the individual state runner-up.



Delaney Foster



Bella Sepahban

She says, "Through the internship, I am hoping to give a platform to equine industry professionals in the community, as well as gain hands-on experience and boost my writing and communication skills." Foster will cover the Midway University Western Riding Competition and the Midway Wild Horse Film Festival and will work with me, an ag journalist, as her mentor.

Grace O'Halleran will join the *Sun* in January. She brought her horse to UK, where she competes in eventing and is a double major in sports journalism and sports communication.

The college internship program complements the *Sun's* Woodford County High School program, where journalism students in Renee Boss' journalism class contribute articles throughout the year. By fostering young journalists who cover stories important to Woodford County, the *Sun* is showcasing a signature industry and offering professional training to the next generation of writers.

The *Sun* is depending on the generosity of its readers

By Scott White
Woodford Sun Staff
Report for America corps member

Since the spring, we have been trying to inform readers and the community that *The Woodford Sun's* new nonprofit status is the only viable vehicle for it to exist as a community newspaper.

You will read stories in this special section about the history of the *Sun,* why we chose the nonprofit route, the *Sun's* new Advisory Committee, which is made up of a group of Woodford Countians who have come together to advise and work on the transition from a family-owned paper to a nonprofit, and how we are now depending on two new critical streams of revenue to remain in business—grants and donations.

We have shared our financial information with the IRS, the Kentucky Department of Revenue and in various stories and columns over the last year. To put it bluntly – the paper has lost, on average, $60,000 a year since 2020.

The *Sun* was able to stay afloat via a federal COVID loan obtained prior to the untimely passing of the *Sun's* former publisher, Whit Chandler, and infusions of capital from former publisher Ben Chandler. In addition, the decision not to fill two vacancies also increased the paper's revenue. And now, under its nonprofit status and initial fundraising drive, the *Sun* is getting close to turning the corner.

The *Sun* has already succeeded in obtaining grants to fund its website and provide in-depth journalism training to me as a community reporter. It has also raised approximately $60,000 since March in a targeted, low-profile fundraising campaign that has been primarily handled by its Advisory Committee.

With this edition of the *Sun* and the unveiling of our new website, we are now expressly and actively asking you to consider making a donation, or regular donations, to keep our newspaper in operation.

Donating is simple and tax-deductible. And *any amount is welcome.*

You can send or drop off a check made payable to the "Woodford Sun Community Newspaper" at our office at 184 S. Main Street, Versailles, KY 40383, or click on the "Donate" button on the paper's new website, woodfordsun.com.

Again, any amount, no matter how small, will be welcomed with open arms, a bright smile and a hearty thank-you.

We are asking you to invest in our community. As Ben says in his front-page story this week, the paper now belongs to the entire community, *which means you*.

The Woodford Sun has been the "eyes, ears and mouth" of Woodford County since 1869. This county's story has been told for 157 years, and we want to keep telling it. We want to keep you informed of all parts of local government; we want to share the stories of our people, our community organizations and our community events; we want to make sure you know what is happening in our schools, from high school sports to the debates at school board meetings; and we want to be here with an independent, nonpartisan, unbiased and fair voice well into the future.

If you have any questions about the *Sun* or how it operates, or if you want to come down and meet in person and get a tour of our offices, email or call me. We would love to share our passion with you. You can reach me during office hours, Monday to Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at 859-873-3211 or email anytime at scott@woodfordsun.com.

The Chandler family has gifted the *Sun* to the community. The *Sun* needs the community to keep us going.

Please, please consider making a donation to keep your newspaper working for you and our community.

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and
stay informed.

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Midway City Council:
Kaye Nita Gallagher
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Logan Nance
Mary Raglin
Steve Simoff
Ian VanSteenbergh

Eyesore no more: *The Woodford Sun's* remodel helped kick off a new start

By Scott White
Woodford Sun Staff
Report for America corps member

"I'll tell you the biggest eyesore on Main Street," said former Versailles Mayor Brian Traugott at a city council meeting after the *Sun* criticized a proposed arch over Court Street three years ago. "It's *The Woodford Sun* building. My Lord, you all still haven't removed the painted 'WCHS' from the 2019 homecoming parade on your storefront window!"

Brian was right.

The Sun had become an eyesore, and it wasn't limited to just what could be seen from the outside. The inside was a mess and a *de facto* dump. The linoleum floors were stained beyond belief, the original press remained moored to the floor in the back, the second floor hadn't been used in well over a decade with papers and antique office supplies everywhere, the refrigerator was circa 1975, and the smells . . . lordy. We even had a piece of tin molding fall off the façade onto the sidewalk.

First opened to the public in 1891, the brand, spanking new *Woodford Sun* building was formerly the location of the stables for the Lexington-Versailles Stage Coach Company. The new building was a jewel of downtown Versailles; however, by 2024 it had indeed become an eyesore.

Thanks to the decision of then-owner and publisher Ben Chandler and the talents of his wife Jennifer, two-thirds of the *Woodford Sun's* building space was sold in order to preserve the remaining one-third now occupied by the *Sun*.

As a result, the newspaper now has a smaller, modern, efficient and, if we may say so, beautiful new space, with a very nice residential space above it.

However, it was quite a journey.

Beginning in August 2024, the *Sun* squeezed the entire operation of the paper into what is now The Good Bite space. It was a looong year. Steaming hot in the summer. Freezing in the winter. A 40-year-old carpet that was un-cleanable. Squirrels and raccoons making homes inside the walls and the earthen-floor basement. And lots of leaks, including a geyser that erupted when bathroom pipes froze, soon leading to mushrooms growing from the nearby carpet. Yuck!

That space is now gorgeous, thanks to Matthew Coyle, who, along with his brothers, purchased the building from Ben, and Russell Booker, the proprietor of The Good Bite.

So, now, Versailles has three new jewels on South Main Street: *The Woodford Sun*, The Good Bite and the sophisticated Enchanting Bridal store owned by Meleah Hysell, which went into the other half of the *Woodford Sun* building, after being sold to 100 Proof Properties out of Frankfort. It, too, has a nice apartment on the second floor.

The transformation of the space where the *Sun* is now housed is hard to appreciate had you not been in it before. The front quarter was used as office space and a conference room, with dusty blinds covering the street-front windows.

Now, there is a well-lit, open reception area with the last remnant of the original press and a printer's chest where typeset letters were stored. A framed photo of the block where the *Sun* was built, dating to 1887, hangs in the lobby, along with an original poster celebrating Woodford County's bicentennial that was painted by Toss Chandler, an accomplished local artist and mother of then publisher Ben Chandler.

The conference room is furnished with the conference table and chairs donated by retired local lawyer Whitney Dunlap. This is where the *Sun's* many awards are on display, along with a safe used by the *Sun* for decades, having been donated long ago by the president of the then United Bank. Making the conference room truly special, though, are several photographs taken by our sports editor and professional photographer Bill Caine.

The rest of the space is offices, a kitchen-break area, two restrooms and a space where decades of original *Suns* are archived.

I asked Jennifer to write about her experience of managing this major project. In addition to describing the conditions outlined above, this is what she told me.

"When Ben decided that, in order to save one building, he would need to sell the other two, we knew we would first have to clean all three buildings out. It was a nightmare! Thankfully, Winfrey Adkins, Bill Phelps and Roy Lancaster helped with this Herculean task. We couldn't have done it without them. Numerous file cabinets containing Jim Curtis' photos were hauled away by the Woodford County Historical Society, and the rest was sold or thrown out. Slowly, the buildings were emptied, and we were ready to begin the rehab."

The auction of Chandler and *Sun* ephemera brought about $4,000. On a side note, a terrific portrait of a young Albert B. "Happy" Chandler Sr., taken during his time in the U.S. Senate in the 1940s, was sold at auction and now hangs in the Amsden Bourbon Bar on Court Street.

"After just over one and a half years of intensive work, we now have a building to be proud of," said Jennifer. "It was a bit of a struggle to get here, but *The Woodford Sun* building once again provides our staff with office space they deserve, allowing them to continue to bring you the news you deserve."



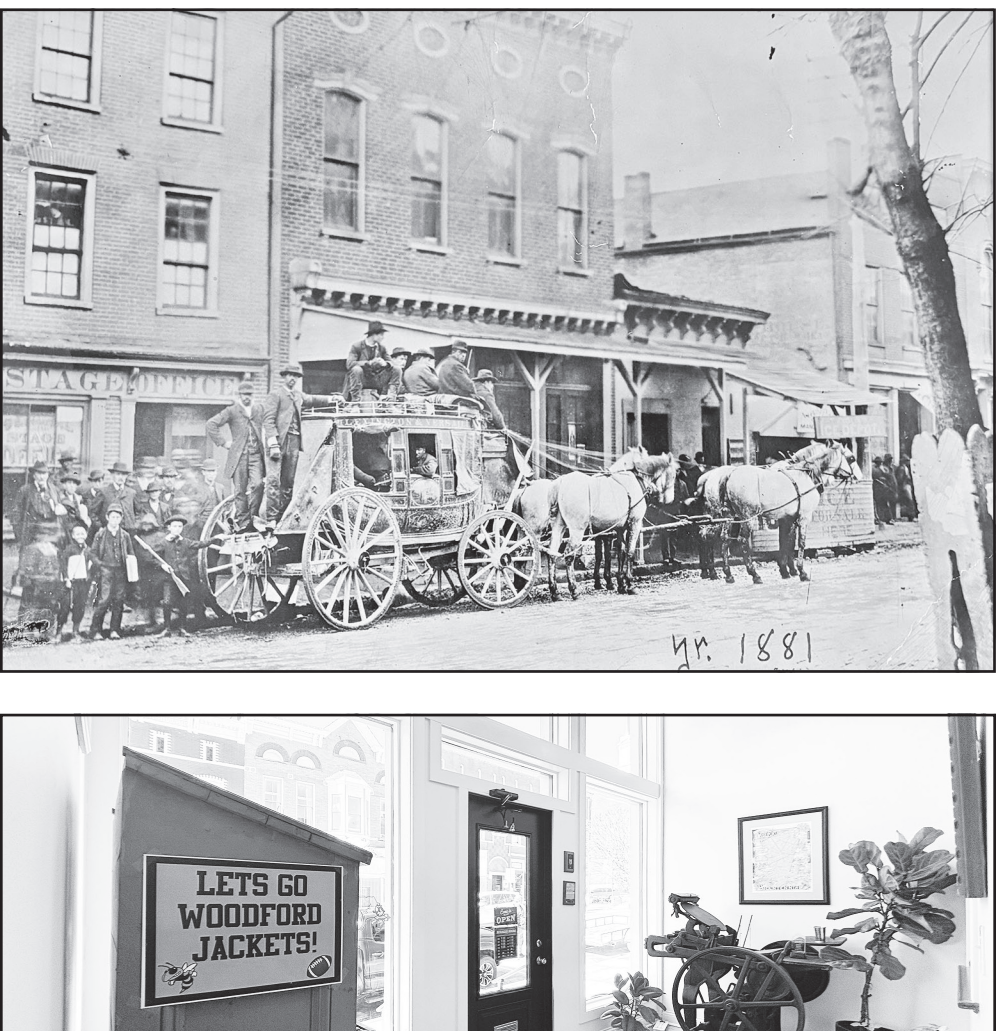
THE RIBBON CUTTING for the new *Woodford Sun* office took place in August 2025. From left, Midway Mayor Grayson Vandegrift, Woodford County Judge-Executive James Kay, Ben Chandler, Scott White and Versailles Mayor Laura Dake. (Photo by Jennifer Chandler)



"THE BIGGEST EYESORE" on South Main Street, according to former Versailles Mayor Brian Traugott… and he was right. This photo was taken of the old *Woodford Sun* building in August 2024, a few weeks before the work of cleaning the 135-year-old brick facade and painting the equally old woodwork began. (Photo by Jennifer Chandler)



BILL PHELPS, left, and WINFREY ADKINS, from the Woodford County Historical Society, peer into the abandoned elevator shaft in the old *Woodford Sun* space, which now houses the break room/kitchen, restrooms and three offices. (Photo by Jennifer Chandler)



THE LOT THE WOODFORD SUN now sits on was the stable for the Lexington-Versailles Stagecoach Company, a primary means of public transportation between the towns in the 19th Century. The coaches ran several times a day, and so stables were a necessity. Atchison and Daniel Bowmar purchased the lot and built the two-story *Woodford Sun* building, where the *Sun* has remained in continuous operation since. The adjacent two-story building is still here. The Good Bite occupies the right half and Poor Man's Paradise the left half. The *Sun* owned the Good Bite half from the 1960s until it was sold in 2026 to the Coyle brothers, (Woodford Sun archives)

A NEW RECEPTION AREA welcomes visitors to *The Woodford Sun's* new space. A part of the original 1891 press and a type chest are all that's left of the physical printing press and process from when the *Sun* started operations in the building in 1891. The hand-painted "The Woodford Sun" is the original design of Toss Chandler, which was able to be duplicated by the wife of the original sign painter. (Photo by Jennifer Chandler)



THE BACK ROOM of *The Woodford Sun*, which used to contain an abandoned elevator shaft and served as a storage space for several generations of the Chandler family, is pictured fully remodeled as a staff break room and kitchen. The *Sun's* archives, which contain papers dating back to 1870, were moved to the mezzanine, which is located above the new staff area. (Photo by Lucie Chandler)



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