AARP Lobby Day Begins with Volunteers

Scott Wegenast

The day begins before sunrise for volunteers in Frankfort. Lobby Day at the Capitol is an annual event bringing grassroots volunteers from across the state to talk with their lawmakers during Kentucky’s General Assembly. For AARP Kentucky Executive Council members, Lobby Day began even earlier.

Before the grassroots activists and volunteers arrived, Executive Council members and State Director Ron Bridges met face-to-face with newly elected Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear.

Council Members, including the Kentucky Retired Teachers Association (KRTA) Liaison, had a candid conversation and shared AARP Kentucky’s 2020 legislative priorities with Governor Beshear. State Director Ron Bridges offered to share resources and learnings from other states working to become more age friendly. Council Member Charles Williams spoke on the “statewide traction” from earlier collaborations with the AARP Fraud Watch Network. The Governor told council members, “Just because I’ve switched jobs doesn’t mean I’ve switched causes,” referencing his years as Attorney General. The discussion focused on AARP’s long sought additional support and investment of state budget for community-based programs helping Kentuckians age in their own homes.

Council Member Pat Gibson and state president Charlotte Whittaker shared Kentucky family caregivers’ stories. Governor Beshear related and shared his first-hand experiences with family caregiving, “I’ve lived that through my family, too.” Council members made clear that older Kentuckians are “desperate” for relief from the skyrocketing prescription drug costs.

At the core of AARP’s advocacy strength is its mission, research, grassroots volunteers and local Chapter members from across the state who make the trip to the General Assembly. For some, it was their first experience. For others, they are on a first-name basis with their lawmakers. The Lobby Day is an important way to share AARP’s priorities, but also to build relationships across issues and party lines.

AARP Kentucky values and appreciates every mile driven and every hour of support by its Executive Council members, Chapters, and grassroots activists. According to Associate State Director for Advocacy Eric Evans, “To all our volunteers ‘Thank You’. We’ve heard nothing but compliments from our legislators.”

The 60-day General Assembly is nearing the half-way mark and there is still work ahead in Frankfort (especially, House Bill 12 and state budget debates) and “back home” in lawmakers’ legislative districts. Stay connected with AARP Kentucky online: aarp.org/ky; Facebook/Twitter, and watch for legislative alerts from AARP Kentucky. Download the 2020 AARP Kentucky Legislative Agenda, here.
Meet the 2020 AARP Black Achiever’s Scholarship Winner

The Louisville Community Team (LCT) would like to introduce our 2020 AARP Black Achiever’s Scholarship Winner, Miss Chesslyn Bohler. Chesslyn will graduate in May from J. Graham Brown School with a GPA of 3.96. She plans to attend Northern Kentucky University in the fall.

AARP Kentucky’s LCT offers a $500 one-time scholarship to a deserving high school student who is being raised by their grandparents. According to 2010 statistics, in Kentucky 86,788 children under age 18 lived with grandparents who are the head of the household. Because of these statistics, AARP selected the following criteria. The student must:

- Have a 2.5 cumulative GPA;
- Be raised by or living with a grandparent and
- Submit a 300 to 400 word essay on financial security of older adults.

This is one of two scholarships the Louisville Community Team gives each year and Chesslyn is the 3rd recipient of this award.

AARP Kentucky and The Graduate! Network Pilot

Kentucky AARP volunteers are spreading the word about a pilot program to help Kentuckians return to school and further their education. We call these students “Kentucky Comebackers.”

Some just want a path to a better job, or to a higher paycheck. Maybe they would like to finally finish high school. Others may have had a dream career, but couldn’t find the road to get there, due to complications of job, time, marriage, children, technology, or money. Then there are the seniors, the experienced Kentuckians, who would like to earn a degree for an encore career, to set a good example for the younger generations, or even just for fun.

AARP’s founder, Ethel Percy Andrus, initially developed programs that included jobs for older, experienced workers. This Kentucky Lifelong Learning pilot is a good fit with her goals for AARP and all who would become “Kentucky Comebackers.”

AARP volunteers, called Lifelong Learning Ambassadors, are working with The Graduate! Network to introduce “Lifelong Learning” solutions to Kentuckians across the state, to help them achieve their own individual education and career goals.

There are four paths to take to get a “Kentucky Comebacker” to Lifelong Learning:

- **KENTUCKY SKILLS U**: Go this direction to earn a GED and possibly some college credit-free.
- **KENTUCKY WORK READY**: Take this path to earn a College Certificate or Associates Degree - up to 60 college credits tuition-free.
- **PROJECT GRADUATE**: Step this way if you have some college credits, but no degree, and want to finish the degree.
- **DONOVAN FELLOWSHIP**: Here you go, seniors, this is your expressway to a different future that includes Lifelong Learning, fun, hobbies, or even a new career.

How do we tell potential Kentucky Lifelong Learners to get there? Direct them to [AARP.org/ComebackKY](http://AARP.org/ComebackKY).
AARP Kentucky Supports Passage of Prescription Insulin Bill

An estimated 508,321 people (one in eight) living in Kentucky are diagnosed with diabetes, and many of those are in eastern Kentucky, where some of the highest rates of diabetes can be found.

AARP Kentucky State President Charlotte Whittaker recently delivered testimony calling on the House Health and Family Services Committee to pass House Bill 12. She joined the bill’s primary sponsor, Representative Danny Bentley (R-08), and the American Diabetes Association calling for passage of “commonsense, bipartisan legislation” like Representative Danny Bentley’s House Bill 12 (supported by 80 House Co-sponsors).

In a state with growing high rates of diabetes, the Kentucky House overwhelmingly passed House Bill 12 to limit out-of-pocket costs paid by many thousands of Kentuckians relying on life-saving insulin. The bipartisan measure limits out-of-pocket costs at $100 per prescription for a 30-day insulin supply and applies to people in commercial health insurance plans.

The bill cleared the Health and Family Services Committee without opposition and later cleared the House on a 92-0 vote. House Bill 12 is now waiting for action in the Senate.

In the past 14 years, the price of insulin has surged by more than 550% when adjusted for inflation. Some people with diabetes can't afford insulin or ration supplies because of costs according to the bill's supporters. Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear said in a news release, "Health care is a human right, but tragically right now there are far too many Kentuckians who are at risk of losing their life or permanently damaging their health because they cannot afford their daily supply of insulin.” Governor Beshear urged lawmakers to send him the bill and he is ready to sign it into law.

In a statement released by AARP Kentucky, State President Whittaker added, “We thank every Member of Kentucky’s House and especially, Representative Danny Bentley, for taking a lifesaving leap forward. Kentuckians are paying too much for prescription drugs like insulin and fear one illness could bankrupt their lives. Prescription drugs don’t work if you can’t afford them. It’s time to Stop Rx Greed.”

Read AARP Kentucky’s statement on House Bill 12, here: https://states.aarp.org/kentucky/aarp-kentucky-applauds-house-vote-

Countdown to the 2020 Census

Aneshia Gray

The 2020 Census is rapidly approaching. Within the next 2 weeks, you’ll receive the first mailing from the Census Bureau encouraging you to complete the 2020 Census online, by phone, or by paper survey. If you receive an email from the Census Bureau with a link to a Census questionnaire, it’s a scam. All Census reminders will be mailed to your household with a return address of Jeffersonville, IN.

AARP Kentucky has been busy spreading awareness about Census scams and jobs, and worked with the Census Bureau to host a Job Fair in Louisville. At the January event, there were 55 attendees anxious to learn about Census jobs and how to avoid Census employment scams. The 2020 Census is still hiring for positions that pay anywhere from $14.95/hr at the National Processing Center in Jeffersonville, IN to $21.50/hr for Census Takers in Jefferson County (pay varies by county).

If you’re planning to complete your Census online and live in the Louisville area, you can stop by the AARP office to complete your questionnaire online with us on March 18, March 25, or April 1 (Census Day!) from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm.

Make sure you COUNT! Learn more about the 2020 Census here.
Louisville Brain Walk  
Tihisha Rawlins

Think all learning has to occur in a classroom setting? Think again. The Louisville Community Team is planning a “Brain Walk” to show our members and the 50+ population all about how to keep their brains sharp. Members will be invited to join morning mall walkers at the Mall St. Matthews for this interactive event.

There will be 5 stations around the mall, each representing one of the five pillars of brain health. The 5 Pillars of Brain Health are:

1. **Discover:** Learn new things.
2. **Connect:** Stay socially engaged.
3. **Move:** Exercise.
4. **Nourish:** Eat a brain-healthy diet.
5. **Relax:** Sleep better and reduce stress.

At each station, two AARP volunteers will talk about one of these pillars and then give examples. At the end, all walkers will be entered into a drawing for a gift from the mall.

This is just one way we’re helping to bring AARP resources to our community.

Kentucky Black Authors Expo  
Scott Wegenast

Reverend James Thurman is a long-time Lexington leader with an entrepreneurial spirit. In celebration of Black History Month, he launched the First Kentucky Black Authors Expo with the National Association for Black Veterans at the historic Lyric Theatre.

The free public event showcased the writings, poetry and stories of some of the nation’s and Kentucky’s best African-American authors. Thurman volunteers with AARP in Lexington, he says he launched the Expo because he wanted to bring these authors, art, and literature to new audiences, “Black history is America’s history.”

The Expo featured multidisciplinary artists and the former poet laureate of Kentucky (2013–2015), Frank X Walker, Rev. Herbert Owens, Vanessa Sanford, Ron Spriggs, Rev. Dr. James Thurman, Dr. Junior Greenlee, Rosetta Quisenberry, James “Chali” Jones, plus other published authors.

Reverend Thurman appreciated the support of AARP Kentucky and hopes to make the free public event an annual celebration in Lexington.

Portland Chapter  
Charles Frick

Our AARP Chapter located at the Neighborhood House in the Portland Neighborhood had a successful raffle for the month of February 2020 and contributed part of the funds to support the food pantry. We raised $455.00 due to the efforts of our members who donated items and sold raffle tickets. We had some other seniors visit our center who may be interested in joining our chapter. We are planning a candy sale for April to support another worthy cause.