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The 36th annual Big Blue Crush – the yearly blood battle between Kentucky Blood Center and MEDIC Regional Blood Center (Tennessee) to ensure a health blood supply for Thanksgiving week – is underway. As a thank you for saving lives, all Big Blue Crush donors will receive a limited-edition Big Blue Crush T-shirt.

Big Blue Crush is Underway

The Somerset Donor Center is at 10 Stonegate Centre

BY ERIC LINDSEY
KY. BLOOD CENTER

LEXINGTON, Ky. – The 36th annual Big Blue Crush – the yearly blood battle between Kentucky Blood Center and MEDIC Regional Blood Center (Tennessee) to ensure a health blood supply for Thanksgiving week – is underway.

All KBC donor centers and mobiles drives are participating in the friendly blood drive, which began Monday and lasts through Friday. KBC’s eight donor centers, listed below, are open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. during Big Blue Crush. Available mobile drives can be found at bloodcenter.org/events/big-blue-crush-2023, which includes UK’s campus Monday through Friday.

Media interested in covering the competition (interview, B-roll, etc.) can contact Eric Lindsey, director of media and branding, or Mandy Brajuha, vice president of external relations. Please provide notice before appearing at a drive. Lindsey can be reached via email at eric.lindsey@ky-bloodcenter.org or by calling 859.619.0944. Brajuha is also available at mandy.brajuha@kybloodcenter.org and at 859.230.0246. Media

outside the Lexington area can be accommodated with advance notice. Digital assets are also available at bit.ly/KBC_Digital_Assets to assist with coverage.

Kentucky leads the series vs. Tennessee 20-14-1 and has won three of the last four events and 11 of the last 13, including last year.

As a thank you for saving lives, all Big Blue Crush donors will receive a limited-edition Big Blue Crush T-shirt.

Big Blue Crush was established between the two nonprofit community blood centers in 1988 to ensure blood is available for the Thanksgiving holiday week. The need for blood traditionally increases during holidays while donations are in short supply.

Donations with KBC go directly to saving local patients in Kentucky. KBC serves more than 70 hospitals in the Commonwealth and is the exclusive blood provider for UK Healthcare, Baptist Health System, Appalachian Regional Healthcare and many others.

A healthy blood supply is critical to treating patients with cancer, providing support for surgeries, giving premature babies the gift

SEE BLOOD CENTER, A8

SCC recently awarded the prestigious EPIIC grant

BY CHRISTEN GIBSON
KCTCS.EDU

Somerset Community College (SCC) was recently awarded the prestigious EPIIC (Enabling Partnerships and Increasing Innovation Capacity) grant from the National Science Foundation. This unique NSF grant opportunity is exclusively available to partnerships between universities and colleges that have not traditionally prioritized research. A collaborative partnership was formed between Somerset Community College, Rose State College in Oklahoma, and Benedict College in South Carolina. This partnership was selected as one of the inaugural EPIIC winners, and the awarded amount of \$1.2 million will be divided equally between the three institutions over a three year period.

SCC President Dr. Carey Castle is looking ahead to how this will impact SCC and the regions in Kentucky the

college serves.

“Just as the United States is being urged to innovate, develop and implement new ideas and methodologies into local state-side research, this grant will help SCC be a part of that. Alongside those involved most with industry, educational research and the government, SCC will work to make positive change happen,” Dr. Castle said.

The goal of NSF’s EPIIC program is to enable specific Institutions of Higher Education, whose efforts historically are not focused on research, to more actively engage with external partners, grant funding,

SEE SCC, A8



PHOTO BY NITA JOHNSON

Leaders from across the region gathered Monday morning for the announcement of \$30.7M funding for broadband services in southern and eastern Kentucky, many areas of which are currently unserved. From left are Judge-Executive J. Woods Adams III, Lincoln County; Mayor Todd DePriest of Jenkins; Judge-Executive Terry Adams, Letcher County; Judge-Executive Howell Holbrook Jr, Rockcastle County; State Rep. Tom O’Dell Smith; Cloyd Bumgardner, Pulaski County Judge/Administrative Assistant; Lonnie Lawson, President and CEO of The Center for Rural Development, Judge-Executive Harry Clark, Rowan County; Judge-Executive Mike Mitchell, Knox County; Brad Kilbey, CEO of Acelecom; State Sen. Robert Stivers; TJ Scott, Vice President of Operations, Broadlinc; Jeremy Holbrook, Boyd County Commissioner, and Judge-Executive Pat White Jr. of Whitley County.

Grant will provide broadband to rural areas of southeast Kentucky

BY NITA JOHNSON
CNHI STAFF WRITER

LONDON — A \$30.7 million grant will make southeast Kentucky a center of technology — and inevitably economic development — long lacking in the region.

U.S. Congressman Hal Rogers announced the expanded broadband services across the most rural regions of southeastern Kentucky in a special gathering of local officials on Monday morning at the London Community Center. Rogers touted the money as the information highway desperately needed to enhance educational, social and economic opportunities to the areas that are currently unserved.

Rogers has described this venture in Kentucky as comparative to Silicon Valley which is considered the hub-bub of technology for California.

“Broadband is our modern-day highway and we’re building Silicon Holler. Once complete, this project will encompass 124-miles of fiber, which I like to call the Super I-Way,” Congressman Rogers said. “We are part of an exciting time for our region, paving this new information highway that will benefit future generations.”

The counties benefiting from this new venture include Laurel, Pulaski, Whitley, Bell, Knox, Rockcastle, Boyd, Bath, Carter, Garrard, Letcher, Lincoln, Martin, Rowan, Russell and McCreary counties.

The project will provide broadband access to approximately 33,000 homes across 16 counties and 195 communities in



PHOTO BY NITA JOHNSON

State Representative Tom Odell Smith spoke to leaders regarding the expansion of broadband services in eastern and southern

Southern and Eastern Kentucky.

Lonnie Lawson, President and CEO of The Center for Rural Development in Somerset, said the project will place 15 more wireless towers in the 16-county area as well as 40 additional towers. Lawson said many of the services will operate from existing towers but construction of new towers will also be part of the project.

“We’d like to have all of it underground, but the topography of the area has mountains and rock that would increase the costs of up to \$100,000 a mile,” he said. “We need to have affordable — and I want to make that point of ‘affordable’ — to the unserved and the underserved people of southeastern Kentucky.”

Lawson said seeing broadband availability to south and eastern Kentucky has been a priority for the Center for Rural Development.

Kentucky Senate President Robert Stivers said broadband service would benefit the state economically, especially since the population loss after the coal industry slowed down.

“It’s a really big deal because it is some-

thing that could be a replacement,” Stivers said. “We can attract and keep jobs here and we need it. You look at different things going on in healthcare, education and business. It means a lot to have access to high speed Internet.”

Stivers added that Internet is harder to get in the mountainous areas as well as making it affordable to that population.

State Representative Tom Odell Smith said the importance of fiber in his district is for educational purposes.

“I think a lot of our kids are just now learning about computers, IT, and communication,” Smith said. “A lot of it came out during COVID. We had illustrations of kids coming out to Walmart so they could get Wi-Fi. That sounds discouraging but it’s encouraging that they wanted it.”

Smith said that legislators in Frankfort had been “challenged” on how to provide broadband services to the many areas in eastern and southern Kentucky that are not currently

being served.

“By utilizing the Center for Rural Development in Somerset, they actually understand our area,” he added. “When you go to Frankfort, it’s divided. They worry about the Golden Triangle — they worry about Louisville, Lexington, northern Kentucky. But when it comes down to the Center, when it comes down to Congressman Rogers — he understands the area. He knows what a holler is. He knows there’s families that need this.”

Lawson said the funding would build new fiber and build additional towers in remote areas, calling it “cabinets” where providers can hook into the service. He credited Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) for their assistance in the project, which is also funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“What we did was utilize a speed test and look at the really unserved areas, not underserved, but unserved areas.”

We looked at the 45 counties and these are the most unserved counties,” he explained.

During COVID, many people were required to work from home, adding even more emphasis on the need for broadband services in rural areas. That number decreased once the pandemic eased but the opportunity for more live streaming, Zoom and other technology based services continues to grow.

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