# Bugle

SPRING 2026



AMERICA 250 KENTUCKY

## REVISITING KENTUCKY'S HISTORY

A PUBLICATION OF
The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels®

## *In this issue...*


**Colonels Dan Blake & Judith Brochu-Blake** 3
Lifelong public servants, Dan and Judy exemplify generosity, leadership, and community impact through shared philanthropic commitment.

**America250** 6
This statewide initiative commemorates 250 years, connecting Kentucky history, identity, and civic engagement.

**The Louiville Leopard Percussionists** 11
One teacher's discovery launched a musical nonprofit 30 years ago. Her one enduring truth? "If you give kids the opportunity, they will amaze you."

**Colonel Donna Peak: My Year with the Colonels** 13
One Colonel's firsthand account of our Good Works Program grant review process.

**Impact Survey** 14
Survey reveals grants fund essential infrastructure, technology, transportation, and critical community services statewide.

**Lotus** 15
Lotus, backed by Kentucky Colonels, provides trauma-informed care.

**Colonel Chris Stapleton** 18
Acclaimed musician channels success into philanthropy, supporting disaster relief, education, and community well-being.




# From the Commanding General

## *Because a Colonel gave...*

The vetting process for the current cycle of Good Works Program grant applications is now underway, reflecting our steadfast commitment to thoughtful stewardship, transparency, and meaningful impact. Each application is carefully reviewed to ensure that the generosity of our members is directed to organizations making a true and lasting difference. In this issue, Colonel Donna Moser Peak shares an article detailing her year of involvement with the Good Works Program, offering insight into the care, diligence, and dedication that guide this important work.

As we turn the pages of this issue of *Bugle*, we are pleased to introduce you to Kentucky Colonels Dan Blake and Judith Brochu-Blake of Charlottesville, Virginia. Their dedication to civic engagement, philanthropy, and community service exemplifies the spirit of generosity and leadership that defines our membership and inspires all who share in the Colonel's mission.

We also shine a spotlight on two impactful nonprofit organizations whose work is transforming lives across Kentucky. The Louisville Leopard Percussionists serve more than 400 students each year through an extensive array of music education opportunities. Lotus, Kentucky's regional children's advocacy and sexual violence resource center for the Purchase Area, exists to support survivors, strengthen families, and empower communities to build a safer future for all.

Looking ahead, we mark a historic milestone: in 2026, the United States will celebrate its 250th birthday. The Kentucky Historical Society shares their plans for the commemoration.

This issue also celebrates iconic Kentucky Colonel and musician Chris Stapleton, whose extraordinary artistic achievements are matched by his enduring commitment to philanthropy. His generosity and compassion exemplify the powerful ways in which influence can be used to uplift communities and change lives.

As always, we extend our sincere gratitude to you. Your support, service, and generosity make this work possible. Because of you, young people are inspired, survivors are supported, families are strengthened, history is preserved, and communities across Kentucky continue to thrive. We look forward with pride and optimism to all that we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

*Nick Ising*

Nick Ising
Commanding General
HOKC




The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels

The Ralston Building
943 South First Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40203
502-266-6114
KyColonels.org

# Dan Blake & Judith Brochu-Blake

## Making Their Community a Better Place

Written by
Colonel Leslie Watkins,
Director of Major Gifts



For Dan Blake and Judith Brochu-Blake, service has always been a calling, sustained across decades, professions, and communities. Their individual journeys, rooted in public safety, civic leadership, and compassion for others, eventually converged into a shared life defined by stewardship, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to making their community a better place. This commitment is evident through their giving at the Platinum Eagle Society level of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels.

Dan Blake's path toward public service began early, shaped by family and a sense of responsibility to others. Born to parents who modeled dedication and hard work—his mother employed by General Electric and his father at the University of Virginia—Dan learned the value of contributing to something larger than himself. After graduating from Piedmont Virginia Community College in 1973 with an associate degree in political science, he felt a calling to help people, a calling that led him to a career in law enforcement.

In November 1976, Dan began his career with the Albemarle County Sheriff's Office as a dispatcher. From there, he moved into civil process and later became a road deputy. These early years placed him in daily contact with people from every walk of life, teaching him how to listen, de-escalate conflict, and understand the complexities of human behavior regardless of background, education, or circumstance.

In 1984, Dan became one of the original officers of the newly formed Albemarle County Police Department. Over his 30-year law enforcement career, he distinguished himself in numerous roles, including patrol officer, sergeant, supervisor, traffic unit leader, community policing specialist, and school resource officer. Notably,




he consistently chose patrol work, valuing its direct connection to the public, and concluded his career in this role, reflecting his commitment to on-the-ground service.

Dan's leadership was especially impactful during his 20 years as president of his local Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) lodge. He strengthened the organization in times of financial difficulty, expanded membership, and served as a key advocate for law enforcement. Dan regularly represented officers' interests before the Charlottesville City Council and Albemarle County Board of Supervisors.

In 2000, Dan was elected State President of the Virginia State Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police, a role he held until 2004. At the time, the organization encompassed 71 lodges, more than 10,000 members statewide, and an operating budget exceeding $500,000. In this role, Dan testified before the Virginia General Assembly on legislation affecting law enforcement, advocating for improved equipment, better benefits, and retirement reform. He also testified before the United States Congress, particularly in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, addressing national law enforcement issues and officer safety.




After officially retiring from county law enforcement in 2005—for two days, as he often jokes—Dan continued his service as a court security officer for the U.S. District Court in Charlottesville, a role he held until 2023. In the years following 9/11, he also assisted the Pentagon Police Department with complex workers' compensation and medical issues for officers injured in the line of duty, helping bring those cases to successful resolution.

Throughout his career, Dan demonstrated the qualities that define exemplary public service: calm under pressure, empathy, and moral clarity. Dan said one Christmas Eve call stands out among many—responding to a disturbance involving a woman under the influence and wielding a knife with children nearby. Through patience and composure, Dan talked her down, prevented harm, and ensured she received the help she needed. Moments like these underscore his belief that law enforcement is as much about compassion as it is about protection.

Dan's service has also been recognized beyond Virginia. In 1996, he was nominated by Ray Franklin of Louisville, Kentucky, a national FOP board member, and commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel by Governor Paul Patton. Dan believes the nomination reflected his leadership within the FOP and his commitment to public service. For nearly three decades, he has remained an active member of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, supporting its mission through stewardship, integrity, and a deep concern for the well-being of fellow citizens.

Judith Brochu-Blake's life of service developed along a parallel path—one equally grounded in community, compassion, and quiet leadership.

Born in Charlottesville, Virginia, Judy grew up in a family shaped by public service. Her father served in the police department, while her mother stayed home to raise Judy and her siblings.

When Judy was six, the family moved to the country to help her grandmother after her grandfather's death, assisting with both a farm and a local grocery and feed store. These early experiences instilled in her a strong sense of responsibility and care for others.

Judy attended Albemarle County public schools, where her interests spanned art, choir, drama, and math. After graduation, she attended Piedmont Virginia Community College, majoring in police science. She was later hired by the Charlottesville Police Department and attended the Weyers Cave Police Academy, graduating as the salutatorian of her class.

While serving as an officer, Judy joined the FOP and became actively involved in its community outreach efforts, particularly programs supporting underprivileged children. These early experiences solidified her belief in helping those less fortunate—a belief that would guide her life long after she left law enforcement.

Judy eventually transitioned to a career with the United States Postal Service, where she served first as a part-time clerk and later was promoted to Postmaster. Judy said her years in the post office were among the most rewarding of her life. Customers often shared information about neighbors in need, and Judy became a connector—linking people with churches, community groups, and resources for assistance with utilities, food, furniture, medical equipment, and elder care.

Alongside friends, Judy helped establish a grassroots community organization focused on food insecurity and providing Christmas gifts for children in need. She was also deeply involved in church outreach, ensuring that families facing hardship received practical support and dignity.

Her civic engagement extended further. Judy served as president of the Doe Club, affiliated with the Elks Lodge, leading fundraising efforts that provided turkey baskets and holiday meals to families in need. She became an accomplished archer and instructor, leading a women's archery group, mentoring newcomers, and competing successfully in regional events.

Judy is also a member of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, where she assisted with monthly naturalization ceremonies, welcoming new American citizens. Later, she completed the Virginia Tech Master Gardener program and now volunteers weekly in a community garden. As co-chairperson of the project, she helps oversee planning, soil health, planting, and harvesting. The produce supports local food pantries and seniors, extending her lifelong mission of service into yet another season of life. Because of her lifelong mission of service, Judy was commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel at the 2025 Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels' homecoming.



Though Dan and Judy attended school together, their lives took separate paths for many years. Remarkably, after more than three decades apart, they reconnected and are now married. Together, they enjoy traveling and spending time outdoors.

Guided by faith and the belief that people should be treated as they themselves wish to be treated, Dan and Judy exemplify leadership, stewardship, honesty, and integrity. Through their combined lives of service, they have made their community safer, stronger, and more compassionate, leaving a legacy measured not only in years served but in lives touched.



# AMERICA 250 KENTUCKY

Written by Ashley Spenneberg Perkins, Kentucky Historical Society
America250KY Commission Administrator

## WHAT IS AMERICA250KY?

This year, the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) is excited to work with communities around the Commonwealth to explore the 250 years of Kentucky history since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

The Kentucky Sestercentennial Commission, also known as America250KY, was established in 2021 by the Kentucky General Assembly to commemorate this anniversary. As the administrator of this commission, KHS is not just focusing on the Revolutionary Era but is taking inspiration from the principles that propelled the revolutionary generation: life, liberty, justice, and the pursuit of happiness.

Through educational programs, statewide events, and other activities, we are celebrating our history while considering what it means to be a Kentuckian. As the original western frontier, Kentucky has always been a crossroads. Our Commonwealth has continually provided influential leaders, social movements, and cultural touchstones for the nation. This commemoration will highlight our achievements while embracing our shared responsibilities and roles as US citizens.

By exploring state and local history during the 250 years, we can recognize how our past—especially the ideals of the American Revolution—can help us understand who we are today.

To guide us through 250 years of history, America250KY has five themes.





# THEMES OF AMERICA250KY



## 1.

## Revolutionary Experiment

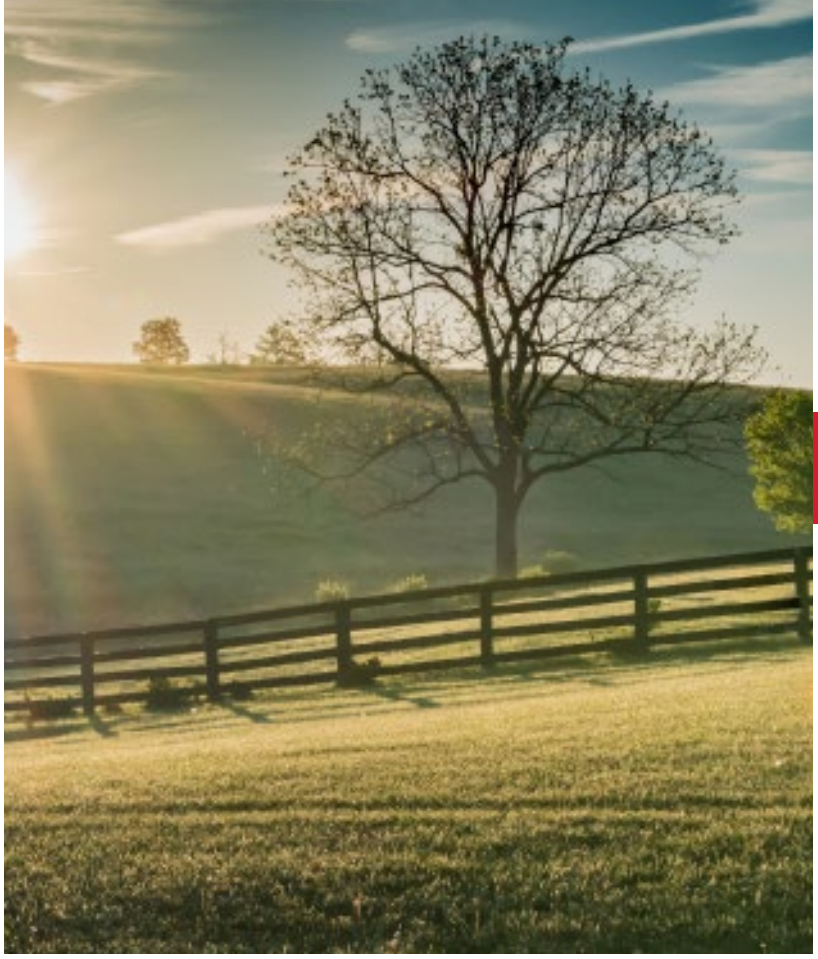
Our founding mothers and fathers did not have all the answers. They knew America was a revolutionary experiment, and they expected future generations to improve upon their work. The four versions of the Kentucky Constitution serve as a prime example of this experiment. This theme allows us to reflect on Kentucky and the nation's founding ideals, and it encourages discussions about our democracy and civic institutions.




## 2.

## We The People

Since the settlement of Kentucky lands by Native Americans, what it means to be a Kentuckian has changed. The definition and process of citizenship have also changed drastically over the past 250 years in both Kentucky and the United States. Today, there are many different people who call Kentucky home.



## 3.

## Power of Place

Our natural and built environments shape our identities. Over the past 250 years, our environment and those who reside in it have changed. Although our experiences and perspectives differ from region to region, we all share history. This history allows us to draw similarities between different places and better understand the past and present.



## 4.

## Crossroads in History

Since 1776, Kentucky has stood at the crossroads of multiple historic movements, including westward expansion, the Civil War, the Trail of Tears, the Underground Railroad, the Great Migration, and more. Moreover, Kentucky's political and cultural output has expanded far beyond the state, influencing our nation's history and broader social trends.

# 5.

## Making History




By exploring state and local history during the 250th, Kentuckians can use the past to better understand our roles and responsibilities within our communities. To accomplish this, Kentuckians can visit museums and historic sites and discuss why history is important today. By engaging with history, we become better-informed citizens who understand where America has been and where it's going.

Throughout 2026, there are many projects occurring across the Commonwealth. For example, Spencer County 250 is identifying Revolutionary War soldiers' gravesites across the county. The current count is seventy previously unidentified soldiers, but they are not stopping there. Spencer250's website, an America250KY grant-funded project, includes information on these revolutionary Spencer Countians.

As part of America250KY's Liberty Tree Project, a partnership with the Kentucky Daughters of the American Revolution and the Kentucky Division of Forestry, a tulip poplar tree will be planted in every Kentucky county. America250KY is also participating in several national initiatives such as Sharing the Spirit of America on July 8, when the Declaration of Independence will be read at the same time and day across every state and territory; the burial of a time capsule in Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia; Our American Story, in which an Airstream trailer will travel across the United States collecting oral histories; America's Potluck on July 5; and many more.



The Kentucky commemoration lasts until December 2026. December might seem like an odd choice, but if you know your Kentucky history, December 1776 marked when Kentucky became a territory of Virginia, one of the first steps toward statehood. Kentucky would separate from Virginia in 1792 to become the fifteenth state in the Union.



America250KY aims not only to celebrate and commemorate 250 years of American and Kentucky history, but to ensure the sustainability and future of Kentucky's museums and historic sites, many of which are supported by the Kentucky Colonels. Many local historical societies, museums, and other historical initiatives were founded during the United States Bicentennial in 1976, including KHS's Kentucky Oral History Commission.

Local museums and historic sites are places to reflect, learn, and grow. They empower Kentuckians to demonstrate the relevance of local and state history to our everyday lives. The 250 is a time for all Kentuckians to come together for a common cause, just as those of the Revolution did.

# THE LOUISVILLE LEOPARD PERCUSSIONISTS

Written by Diane Downs,
Founder & Director of The Louisville Leopard Percussionists




Thirty-three years ago, I was rummaging through storage closets at the elementary school in Louisville where I taught, searching for bulletin board paper. There was one small closet on the third floor I hadn't checked yet. I had no idea that opening that door would change my life. From floor to ceiling, the closet was stacked with small mallet instruments. I had been in band since fourth grade, but I'd never played percussion, only wind instruments. Still, I was never the kind of teacher who strictly played by the rules. I believed deeply in enriching my students' learning in any way I could.

So, I asked my class of 2nd and 3rd-graders if they wanted to put on a concert. They were all in. We learned a handful of songs and performed at a PTA meeting. Soon after, we played for someone's grandmother in a nursing home, then at the mall, and then things really took off. What started as a simple one-time classroom concert quickly became something much bigger.

Since 1993, the Leopards have performed concerts throughout the eastern United States, including New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, Kansas City, New Orleans, Orlando, and Washington, DC. Along the way, we've had the extraordinary honor of performing with some of the world's greatest musicians. Ndugu Chancler (the drummer for Weather Report), Santana, and Michael Jackson played with us. We performed "Take Five" with Joe Morello of the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Jazz legend Louie Bellson was so inspired after a shared concert that he wrote a piece especially for us. We had a couple of viral videos, including our medley of songs by Led Zeppelin, which was shared by the band's guitarist, Jimmy Page. We've performed for luminaries such as King Charles and Queen Camilla, Wynton Marsalis, and Coretta Scott King. We have an HBO documentary about us, "The Leopards Take Manhattan," about our journey to New York City, where we served as the warm-up band for the Chick Corea Trio. We were also featured on A&E's "Ozzy & Jack's World Detour," performing "Crazy Train" for Ozzy Osbourne and his family. Most recently, Leopard alum and current teacher Dani Markham and I appeared as guests on "The Kelly Clarkson Show."

How does something like this happen to a regular elementary school teacher? After ten years as The





Fabulous Leopard Percussionists based in a local school, we wanted to make the Leopard experience available to kids throughout our community. In 2003, we incorporated as a nonprofit organization and became The Louisville Leopard Percussionists. Today, we serve more than 400 students each year through summer camps, mallet ensembles, world drumming classes, steel pan ensembles, private lessons, drum set instruction, homeschool groups, and outreach programs at Americana Community Center and Cane Run Elementary School, all in the lower social economic areas of Louisville. We also participate in the Cultural Pass program through the Fund for the Arts. As anyone involved in nonprofit work knows, funding is one of the greatest challenges. We at Leopard aren't businesspeople or professional fundraisers. We're teachers, people who love sharing the power and joy of music with kids. Over time, we've learned to manage the many roles required to keep a nonprofit running, but our true gifts lie in how we connect with students through music. Throughout the years, we have been incredibly fortunate to receive generous support from the Kentucky Colonels. Contributions from the Colonels have provided essential equipment, including a steel pan, marimbas, a vibraphone, electronic instruments, a xylophone, much-needed repair supplies, and even an awesome leopard print wrap for our equipment trailer. Quite simply, the Leopards would not be running as



smoothly as we do today without the support of the Kentucky Colonels. That support lifts an enormous burden, allowing us to focus fully on our students.

With critical equipment needs met, we can direct more resources toward extraordinary experiences such as performance trips and, most importantly, scholarships. Many of our students receive financial assistance, ensuring that learning and performing music is accessible to all children, regardless of family finances. Through this, they learn to value one another, recognizing that each member brings unique strengths and gifts. In many ways, that lesson defines what a true community is.

We are deeply honored to be recognized by the Kentucky Colonels and profoundly grateful for your support, not only of the Leopards but of so many other non-profit organizations working to make life better in our community.

After more than 30 years of teaching the Leopards, I've learned one enduring truth: if you give kids the opportunity, they will amaze you. Thank you for giving us that opportunity and for helping us guide so many young people toward becoming extraordinary adults. The Louisville Leopard Percussionists: Ordinary kids transformed by an extraordinary musical experience since 1993.





# OTHER MUSIC GRANTEES



## The Central Kentucky Youth Orchestra

Portable mallet instrument, a keyboard, and additional percussion instruments and cases




## The Louisville Academy of Music

Composition stations, ergonomic chairs, and recording equipment



## Owensboro Symphony

Music stand light batteries, pearl concert tom set with stand, piano, marimba, trumpet, clarinet, congas and bongos with stands, and piano with bench



## Central Music Academy

Percussion instruments and accessories such as woodblocks, cowbells, claves, frog rasps, and triangles, violin repair, etude books, and metronomes



## Paducah Symphony

Music stands and stand carts, risers, and glockenspiel



## Louisville Folk School

Complete set-up of speakers, microphones, stands, cables, and mixing board

# MY YEAR with the COLONELS



Written by
Colonel Donna Peak

On January 2, 2025, my active participation in the Good Works program began with a positive response to an email from Eric Patterson. Eric is responsible for Grants Administration and Communications for the Colonels. Eric explained that they expected about 400 grant requests for the Good Works Program, and four dates had been established for volunteers to help review the applications. As a donor, I was curious about the review process. I volunteered for two sessions, January 31 and February 28. Before my first session, Eric provided several documents to help with the evaluation process.

When I arrived at the Kentucky Colonels Headquarters around 8 AM on January 31, I was happy to see and meet other Colonels who had arrived from around the state. There was a stack of grant applications for each of our places.Some of us worked on laptops, and others worked with paper. It took me longer to review the first grant application to familiarize myself and get comfortable with the grant application documents and scorecard. Although we worked independently, Eric was there to answer any questions. By midday, lunch orders were taken, and, by around 4:00, I had completed my stack of grant requests. I returned on February 28 and met additional Colonels who came from different locations across the state to evaluate additional grant requests. I was amazed by the variety and scope of the grant requests. There were requests for vehicles, computers, supplies, etc., to help each agency fulfill its mission to help those in need.

> **"I was amazed by the variety and scope of the grant requests."**

I learned later that 428 grant applications had been received, requesting about $5 million.

By spring, the Board of Trustees vetting process began. I received an email from Eric asking if I was interested in participating with a trustee in the vetting process. On May 9, I met Adjutant General Nick Ising for several in-person visits. These visits provided the opportunity to see the charity, meet their leadership, and ask questions raised during the grant review process. I learned that each grant request is reviewed four times before vetting.

By early summer, the hard decisions had been made, resulting in the number of approved grants and funding levels. Notification of awards was sent out, and six dates and locations were announced for the state-wide Grant Impact Week. I attended the one in Louisville, held on June 16 at the Louisville Central Community Center on Muhammad Ali Boulevard. The room was filled with grateful and happy recipients. Each agency was announced, and a representative came forward to receive their voucher and have a photo taken. I was able to speak with several recipients who shared their joy and relief that they would be able to continue or improve their mission in their community.

I learned later that vouchers for $2.5 million were distributed to 333 nonprofits across the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

With vouchers in hand, each applicant now had until the end of October to complete the purchase and turn in their receipts for reimbursement. This process assured that the approved request had actually been acquired.

As a donor, I felt honored to participate in the yearlong process, knowing that the Good Works Program informative webinar will be offered again, applications for next year will begin in December, and I will donate and volunteer again. Participating in this process confirmed my trust in the Good Works Program.

# Grantees Report Back on Impact



Written by Colonel Eric Patterson,
Grants Administration and Communication

At the end of 2025, we sent a survey to our 2025 Good Works Program grantees asking them a couple of questions to understand the impact our grants have had on their organization over the past five years. Within a couple of weeks, we received a tremendous response with 200 surveys completed out of the 333 organizations that received funding. Over the next couple of months, we will be sharing some of their responses and stories that show the impact your contributions have had on Kentuckians throughout the Commonwealth.

## QUESTION ASKED:

**Please list the funding your organization has received from the Kentucky Colonels over the past five years. Include a brief description of the items purchased or projects completed with those funds.**

### KEY TAKEAWAYS AND THEMES

**Infrastructure and Safety:** A significant portion of funding goes toward critical building maintenance, including HVAC systems, roof repairs, flooring, security cameras, and window replacements.

**Transportation:** Many grants funded the purchase of passenger vans, trucks for hauling, and specialty vehicles (e.g., UTVs for police foundations to increase public safety and golf carts for camps and large nonprofit campuses).

**Technology:** Grants frequently covered iPads, smartboards, computers/laptops, and software for specialized education and vocational training.

**Basic Needs and Medical:** Funding often purchased freezers/refrigerators for food banks, medical equipment (EKG machines, dental chairs), and clothing/hygiene items.

**Program-Specific Equipment:** Items ranged from musical instruments and theatrical stages to sensory tools for autism therapy and equestrian equipment.

### SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS

**Safe Harbor of Northeast Ky (Ashland):** A van to transport victims, generators, new beds, and security equipment.

**Union County Happy Pack (Morganfield):** Food for a weekend feeding program for children.

**Sphinx Academy (Lexington):** Specialized seating and tables for twice-exceptional students.

**Refuge Clinic (Lexington):** Dental chair, medical/dental supplies, and laboratory services to provide low/no-cost medical care.

**South Central Kentucky Kids on the Block (Bowling Green):** Puppets, video conference equipment, and an HVAC unit.

**River Discovery Center (Paducah):** Virtual Reality (VR) headsets and accessories for educational programming in the museum.












# Hope, Healing, & Growth

## HOW THE KENTUCKY COLONELS ARE TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH LOTUS

Written by Colonel Lori Wells Brown, Chief Executive Officer

For nearly four decades, Lotus has stood alongside some of western Kentucky's most vulnerable survivors, children, and families—offering safety, advocacy, and a path toward healing after child abuse and sexual violence. As Kentucky's regional children's advocacy and sexual violence resource center for the Purchase Area, Lotus exists to support survivors, strengthen families, and empower communities to build a safer future for all.

The generosity of the Honorable Order of the Kentucky Colonels has been instrumental in advancing this mission. Through your steadfast investment, Lotus has expanded access to trauma-informed services, strengthened communities after disaster, and created innovative healing spaces that empower survivors to restore safety, build resilience, and reclaim their lives after abuse. Your investment is not only changing individual lives—it is strengthening entire communities across Kentucky's Purchase Area.

Interpersonal violence is a critical public health issue, with child abuse and sexual violence carrying lifelong consequences for survivors and communities alike. Research consistently shows that early trauma is linked to increased risk of mental health challenges, chronic disease, substance use, justice system involvement, and reduced economic stability later in life. Without early intervention, these impacts can have a lasting and far-reaching effect, potentially affecting generations and communities.

Lotus responds to this need through a nationally recognized, multidisciplinary team model that brings together child protective services, law enforcement, medical professionals, prosecutors, advocates, and mental health providers. This coordinated approach minimizes the number of times survivors must recount their experiences, strengthens investigations, increases accountability for offenders, and improves safety,





healing, and justice outcomes. Each year, Lotus provides life-saving services at no cost to families—supporting more than 2,500 survivors of all ages and their supportive caregivers across eight counties in the Purchase Area.

When the devastating December 2021 tornado struck Mayfield and Graves County, the destruction extended far beyond physical damage. Homes, schools, and businesses were lost, but the emotional toll on families—particularly children—was equally profound. Research shows that natural disasters often increase stress, instability, and the risk for interpersonal violence, compounding existing vulnerabilities.

Recognizing this urgent need, Lotus made establishing a permanent Mayfield office a cornerstone of its tornado relief and long-term recovery efforts. With critical support from the Kentucky Colonels, Lotus was able to purchase a centrally located property in Mayfield, transforming it into a fully accessible, trauma-informed space designed to meet the safety, privacy, and healing needs of survivors.

This campus now provides the full continuum of Lotus services, including forensic interviews, forensic medical evaluations, family and legal advocacy, counseling and therapy, and community outreach and prevention education.

> During the first two years of operation, the Mayfield office delivered **12,143 specialized services** to **1,778 individuals**—children, adults, and family members seeking safety and healing close to home.

For survivors, simply knowing that help exists nearby can be profoundly life changing. As one adult client shared, "Knowing there is a place that supports individuals who have experienced sexual violence has helped validate that I do not stand alone. I feel understood for the first time."

Beyond direct services, Lotus is strengthening the community safety net in Graves County through expanded partnerships and prevention efforts. In 2024, Lotus launched an evidence-based Green Dot High School partnership at Graves County High School, engaging students in bystander intervention training proven to reduce sexual and dating violence. These efforts empower young people to intervene safely and help build a culture where violence is not tolerated.

One of Lotus's most visionary initiatives, made possible through partnership with the Kentucky Colonels, is the Nature + Play Project—an outdoor healing environment designed specifically for children and youth who have experienced trauma. As part of Lotus's broader Sanctuary initiative across the Paducah and Mayfield campuses, Nature + Play intentionally weaves together nature, play, movement, and creativity to promote healing, resilience, and overall well-being.

Thanks to a targeted investment by the Kentucky Colonels, the Nature + Play spaces now feature outdoor musical instruments and nature-themed playground and movement equipment that support healing through rhythm,



motion, and sensory engagement. Hands-on percussion instruments and chimes invite creative self-expression, while climbing, balancing, and body-based play elements help children release energy, build coordination, and regain a sense of calm. Research shows that combining nature, music, and sensory-motor movement supports brain development, emotional regulation, and trauma recovery—allowing children to explore, play, and heal at their own pace in a safe and empowering environment.

> "Knowing there is a place that supports individuals who have experienced sexual violence has helped validate that I do not stand alone. I feel understood for the first time."

Made possible through the Kentucky Colonels' commitment to innovative healing, these intentionally designed outdoor spaces foster safety, choice, and connection—helping children rebuild trust in their bodies, their environment, and themselves. By extending trauma-informed care beyond traditional therapy rooms, Lotus is creating opportunities for children and families to breathe, move, make music, and heal together—turning the Kentucky Colonels' generosity into lasting impact for generations to come.

Trauma is often held beyond words—especially for children. Many young survivors lack the language to articulate their experiences, emotions, or fears. Recognizing this, Lotus has expanded access to expressive arts therapies that allow survivors to process trauma in ways that feel safe, empowering, and developmentally appropriate.

The Expressive Arts Therapies Center integrates art, movement, music, and play into trauma-informed therapeutic practice. These approaches help survivors regulate emotions, rebuild a sense of control, and strengthen resilience. For children navigating the aftermath of abuse, expressive arts provide a powerful bridge to healing—supporting cognitive, emotional, and social development while reducing the risk of long-term harm.



For many survivors, these creative approaches open new pathways to healing when traditional talk therapy alone is not enough. Support from the Kentucky Colonels ensures that survivors have access to innovative, evidence-informed care regardless of their ability to pay.

At a time when victim service organizations nationwide are facing significant funding challenges, the leadership and generosity of the Kentucky Colonels have been a stabilizing and transformative force. Your generosity has helped Lotus maintain and expand specialized services, respond to community crises, and advance innovative approaches to healing.

Because of you, survivors have safe places to tell their stories, children have spaces designed for healing and play, and communities have stronger prevention and response systems. Together, we are helping those who have endured some of life's hardest moments find hope, healing, and growth.

On behalf of the children, survivors, and families we serve—thank you for standing alongside Lotus as a trusted partner in building safer, more compassionate communities across Kentucky, today and for generations to come.



# Chris Stapleton



Written by Colonel Leslie Watkins, Director of Major Gifts



Born in Lexington, Kentucky, Chris Stapleton grew up the son of a coal miner and public health worker. After graduating as valedictorian of his high school class in 1996, he briefly attended Vanderbilt University to study engineering, but music soon pulled him in a different direction. Leaving college, Stapleton began a career first as a songwriter and eventually as one of the most acclaimed performers in modern country music, earning multiple wMusic awards, and Billboard awards. He was commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel in 2015.

But beyond his musical success, Stapleton remains deeply tied to his roots—both personal and geographical—and this sense of origin has helped shape not only his music, but his sense of duty and giving back. From early in his career as a successful artist, Stapleton and his wife, singer-songwriter Morgane Stapleton, decided to channel their resources into helping others. In 2016, they established their Outlaw State of Kind Charitable Fund, named for his hit song, "Outlaw State of Mind."

Through the Outlaw State of Kind Hometown Fund, a sub-fund supporting Kentucky causes, the Stapletons have supported a wide range of causes that align with their values, particularly those centered on music education, disaster relief, healthcare, and community well-being. One of their most significant early gifts was a $250,000 donation to The Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation, helping provide musical instruments and access to music education for students who might otherwise go without. The fund has also provided support for the American Red Cross, the University of Kentucky Healthcare Kentucky Children's Hospital, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The Stapletons also support music-industry relief organizations, such as MusiCares.

Their commitment to Kentucky has been especially visible. In 2019, the Stapletons made a $10,000 donation to Lexington Habitat for Humanity, supporting affordable housing projects in their home region. That focus became even more pronounced in the aftermath of devastating tornadoes that swept through western Kentucky in

December 2021. As communities struggled to recover, the Stapletons responded with a $250,000 donation through their charitable fund to support recovery efforts, including contributions to the Community Foundation of Western Kentucky's Disaster Relief Fund. The gift helped provide immediate and long-term assistance to families whose lives had been upended, reinforcing the couple's deep sense of solidarity with Kentuckians in crisis.

In April 2022, Chris Stapleton took that commitment a step further by hosting "A Concert for Kentucky," a landmark event that raised more than $1 million for the Outlaw State of Kind Hometown Fund. The concert featured performances by Stapleton, Willie Nelson and Family, Sheryl Crow, and Madeline Edwards.

Of the evening, Stapleton said in a press release on chrissstapleton.com,

> "Every night we walk on a stage, we do our best to help people forget their troubles or celebrate or remember or hope or heal. Every night we play, a portion of those profits always goes to charity. As a musician, I can't think of a greater honor than reaching a point where we can play a show for 40,000 people and give all of the profits back to a community that has been so unfailingly loyal and supportive. It is a tremendously pure and rewarding moment to get to provide the medicine that is music in that space. I'm grateful to everyone who came to the show and to all of the musicians, managers, agents, and crew members who made this moment possible."

While Kentucky remains central to their charitable identity, the Stapletons have also responded to needs beyond the Commonwealth. In January 2025, they donated $1 million through their foundation to support wildfire relief efforts in California following devastating blazes. The funds were distributed to 20 national and local organizations, including the American Red Cross, Direct Relief, Project Hope, Save the Children, the California Community Foundation, the LAFD Foundation, food banks, and animal-welfare groups.

Chris and Morgane Stapleton's philanthropy reflects the values instilled during Chris' upbringing in Kentucky and recognizes the power of compassion to uplift lives and strengthen communities.





# Because a Colonel Gave...



…from Ashland to Paducah, 4 million Kentuckians benefit from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels' Good Works Program. Children, veterans, people with disabilities, the hungry, and the homeless all find help through the services of 333 nonprofits receiving grants from us this year.

A commission as a Kentucky Colonel is the highest civilian honor a Kentucky governor can bestow., and many Colonels consider annual or monthly contributions to the Honorable Order to be a continuation of the altruistic activity that earned them that commission.

If you are a Kentucky Colonel, please consider a contribution to the Good Works Program.

Call us or visit KyColonels.org, today.



## 2025

**$2.5** Million
**333** Grants

## SINCE 1951

**$70.5** Million
**9,156** Grants




The Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels®

KyColonels.org | 502-266-6114