



kasfaa

fall 2016 | vol. 19 | no. 1



A message from our President

Greetings, KASFAA Colleagues!

I hope you had a wonderful summer and have made it through the start of the fall semester. It has been an exciting few months. I've had the pleasure of representing KASFAA at the state, regional and national level, and it has been a privilege to work alongside a dedicated group of individuals in our state — the 2016–2017 executive board, committee chairs, and many volunteers — who are committed to serving the membership of KASFAA and our communities. You can find a listing of KASFAA's current [executive board](#) and [committee chairs](#) at kasfaa.com.

The leadership of KASFAA hit the ground running at the transition meeting in Carrollton in late June and began preparing for the 2016-2017 year with a specific emphasis on the implementation of KASFAA's updated long range plan. In late July, we held our first board meeting and the fall program planning meeting, which were both productive. We are excited to offer a strong program to meet the needs of KASFAA

membership at the fall conference October 12–14 at the Crowne Plaza Louisville Airport.

I hope you are planning to *Fall Back, Spring Forward*, with us! The fall program committee has worked tirelessly to finalize a program that will provide relevant session topics and training. Our goal is to ensure attendees are informed and equipped to maintain excellent service in support of students aspiring to achieve their educational goals. With training from our favorite federal trainer, David Bartnicki, credentialing opportunities and course offerings through [NASFAA U](#), excellent session topics and presenters, and updates shared by SASFAA President, Marian Dill, you won't want to miss this conference! More information is available at KASFAA's [conference page](#).

It is a busy summer and fall season for KASFAA! Panelists and phone bank volunteers recently served to inform Kentuckians about the new October 1 FASFA filing date and shared other important financial aid information utilizing Kentucky Educational Television (KET) as an outlet.

next up:

Oct. 12–14, 2016

KASFAA Fall Conference
Crowne Plaza Louisville Airport
Louisville, KY

Nov. 18, 2016

NASFAA Annual Training
Frankfort, KY

Nov. 29–Dec 2, 2016

FSA Trainig Conference
Georgia World Congress
Center
Atlanta, GA

Feb. 12–17, 2017

SASFAA Annual Conference
Biloxi, MS

The College Goal Kentucky initiative is underway. The program shares important information and supports the excellent work of our members and leaders across the state as FAFSA workshops are taking place throughout the fall. Additionally, high school counselor workshops are scheduled at sites throughout the Commonwealth this fall.

The NASFAA Fall Training workshop will be held on November 18 at KHEAA in Frankfort. Janet Jones of the University of Kentucky will present on the topic of “Satisfactory Academic Progress: From Policy to Application” for the benefit of KASFAA members.

I'm thrilled to share that KASFAA's fall charity is Vanover Veterans Village, an organization committed to serving veterans who have selflessly served our country. While many of our activities to support the charity will be held during the fall KASFAA conference, I hope all KASFAA members, even those that cannot attend the fall conference, will mobilize to support this worthy organization which has roots in our Kentucky community of Somerset. Check out the details at KASFAA's [charity page](#).

The KASFAA calendar of events has been expanded for the benefit of KASFAA membership! Be sure to check the calendar frequently to keep up with upcoming state, regional and national trainings and activities for financial aid professionals. In addition to adding more events, we look forward to implementing online calendar functionality soon! Keep watch at the [calendar page](#).

As we enter our 50th year, we have an opportunity to look back to celebrate our history, to look in front of us to appreciate what we've become, and to look ahead to the future. We'll set the course and further the vision and mission of our association while building up those within it. The most wonderful part is that we get to do this while recognizing that an attitude of service by dedicated people led us to where we are today and will propel us into the future.

Approaching everything with an attitude of service has an amazing way of making us better, both personally and professionally. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Everyone can be great because everyone can serve.” Thank you for letting me serve and share this year with you, KASFAA!

If you have any questions, ideas, needs or concerns, please contact me at a.black@louisville.edu or 502-852-3870.

Sincerely,
Angie

Angela Black
KASFAA President, 2016–2017

FROM EDITOR Meredith Geraci

We encourage letters to the editor, original articles, photographs, announcements and reports. Items of interest are gladly accepted and can be given to any member of the newsletter committee.

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The KASFAA Newsletter is published three times a year.
Graphic and web design provided by KHEAA and KHESLC.

Welcome New KASFAA Members

Angela Beverly,
University of Louisville

Kristen Gast,
University of Pikeville

Nathaniel Gauthier-Goulet,
University of Louisville

Joyua Jacobs,
Kentucky State University

Lei'Andra Lee,
Kentucky State University

Patrick Mayer,
Somerset Community College

Jordan Nischan,
CampusLogic

Adelle Semrow,
Kentucky Mountain Bible College

Kathryn Sills,
Northern Kentucky University

Vilcise Tima,
Kentucky State University

Linda Wickline,
American National University

Jimmy Wright,
Big Sandy Community & Technical
College

Lisa Wright,
Spalding University

Spotlight on New Members

Kristen Gast

Director of Financial Aid

University of Pikeville

Length of Service:

3 weeks at University of Pikeville,

12 years in Financial Aid

I have spent most of my financial aid career working in the community college system. After two and a half years at Northern Wyoming Community College District, I was ready to move to the University side. University of Pikeville attracted me because of it's absolutely gorgeous campus, the small size, the Kentucky College of Optometry and Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine medical schools and of course the amazing financial aid staff!

I am the current president of Wyoming Association of Financial Aid Administrators (WYASFAA) until 2017. By being involved in the state organization, I saw how important being involved and building relationships are. I hope to have the same experience through KASFAA and to get UPIKE involved very heavily within KASFAA.

I am a mother to two little boys, ages 3 and 5. I am also the mom of two smooth collie fur babies.

Linda W. Wickline

Director of University Financial Planning

American National University

Length of Service: 13 years

I was a banker for 28 years so transferring to the student financial aid arena complimented my position with ANU. I started at the campus level and moved to our campus support



Wickline

center to help develop policy, train staff and develop central teams to assist our students with financial aid. Every day is different and opens new challenges which keeps me young!

KASFAA provides excellent information to their members and assists them with staying current on any changes in financial aid. Being able to network with other members is invaluable.

My husband and I run a 600 acre dairy farm with many crops including 30 acres of sunflowers. We recently had our first Sunflower Festival which attracted 1,600 people and provided us the opportunity to educate the public on farming.

Lisa Wright

Financial Aid Counselor

Spalding University

Length of Service: 1 month

The Financial Aid Counselor position was a perfect fit for me because of my previous experience as an auditor and also as an employee of a college. I feel at home here at Spalding University and am looking forward to the challenges and rewards that my position will bring me.

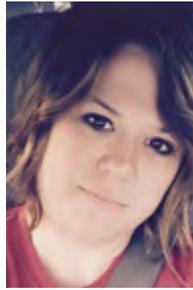
I am very excited to attend my first KASFAA conference October 12–14. My membership is providing me the opportunity to network with experienced colleagues and to stay abreast of the ever-changing rules and regulations.

I have two beautiful, talented teen daughters, ages 18 and 19. I also have a soft spot in my heart for rescued animals; presently, I have two dogs and four cats.



Wright

Angela Beverly
Financial Aid Advisor
University of Louisville
Length of Service:
15 years at University of Louisville,
6 years in Financial Aid



Beverly

I worked in financial aid for six years from 2001-2007, then took a job outside of UofL. When I returned to UofL in 2009, I worked in the Law School for eight years. I wanted to come back to the office I know and love. I enjoy helping students and working with the same people as when I started at UofL.

I want to learn all that has changed in financial aid while I was gone. I hope to gain a better understanding of policies and look forward to building connections with other financial aid administrators by being a member of KASFAA.

I enjoy crafts, like to paint canvases, make wreaths and any other crafty thing I can find.

Lei'Andra Lee, MPAHRM
Financial Aid Specialist
Kentucky State University
Length of Service: 4 months



Lee

I started in the financial aid office because of my love for my alma mater.

By being a member of KASFAA, I hope to gain experience and knowledge that will enhance my current skill sets.

I love to cook and like to use what I have in my cupboards and refrigerator to create great tasting dishes!

KASFAA Fall Conference

Here's the full agenda of the KASFAA Fall Conference in Louisville:

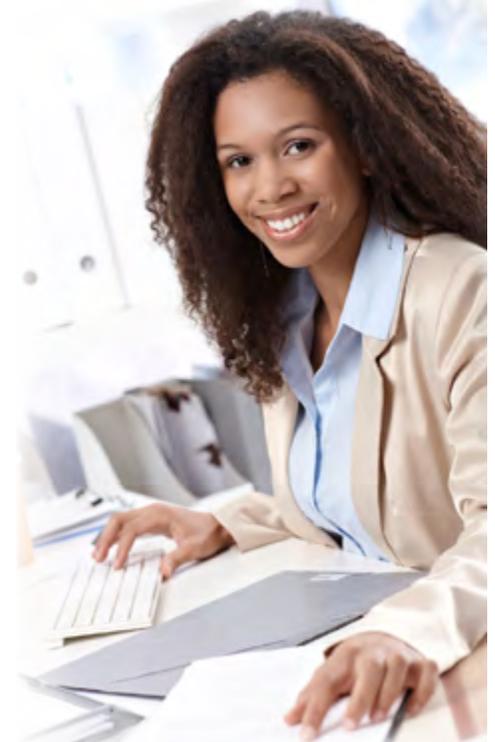
www.kasfaa.com/conf/2016fall/agenda.html

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Budgeting Basics Can Help You Save and Spend Smartly

By Dave Bowman, Regional Director
Great Lakes Educational Loan Services, Inc.

Budgeting is an important part of achieving healthy finances, and can assist your students in getting, and staying, on track of their money. In addition, it's easier than students think to implement and maintain. Whether they're just starting higher education or already on the path of repayment, learning how to properly track and budget expenses is an invaluable skill for your students' future financial success. The following are some tips you can offer them.

Why Budget?

A budget can help plan for all expenses, from paying monthly bills to bigger life changes like buying a house. Tracking anticipated income over the next few months, or even years, as well as how much of that income gets used for payments and savings, ensures you'll always know when to cut back on spending, when to loosen the reins, and how long it will take to save for major goals.

- ★ **Make long and short term plans for your financial future**
- ★ **Predict and avoid financial crises**
- ★ **Live comfortably within your means**

How do I Budget?

It's easiest to create a budget on a computer, either in a spreadsheet or using software. Financial Student Aid (FSA) offers a [budgeting information](#) on their [website](#). Spreadsheets allow for easy calculation of budgets in numerous ways (e.g., monthly or yearly totals).

Budgeting applications (apps) could also be a consideration; they are available to download on tablets and smartphones, providing quicker access to maintain a budget. Once you've decided how to create a budget, you can get started.

Start with your income

Track the amount of money coming in every month, from jobs, work study, scholarships, grants, or money given to you. When tracking income from a job, it's easiest to use the amount you take home after taxes. This is the pool of money available for the budget, so get it as accurate as possible.

Track all expenses—even the small things. Think of every expense for the month; use receipts or bank statements to ensure everything is accounted for.

Plan for all types of expenses, including savings. Don't just track obvious expenses like rent and student loans; make sure to include variable expenses like utilities, gasoline, and pet care. Also, plan for the expenses that only come up a couple of times a year like gifts, car insurance, and doctor visits, and leave some room to set aside savings; a general rule of thumb is to save 10 percent of your income. By planning for these expenses, they can be worked into monthly payments or be covered by money set aside ahead of time.

Use accurate descriptions. Track everything by what it is rather than where it was purchased

to track later how much is spent in certain categories. Just knowing where items came from doesn't help keep track of the details of what you actually spent money on.

Update your budget daily.

The easiest way to stay on track is to keep your budget as updated as possible, as often as possible. Tracking expenses takes minimal time if done daily, and reduces the risk of forgetting something. Using a budgeting app might be a great fit to help with daily budgeting for the convenience of mobile devices like tablets and smartphones.

Budget monthly, not by the paycheck. This forces you to think long-term without feeling a budget is impossible to handle.

Budgeting Tips

There are a lot of ways to get derailed from a budget, but it's easy to avoid by planning as thoroughly and as realistically as possible. Here are some additional tips:

Set realistic goals and allow for flexibility. It'll be easier to stay motivated to stick to a budget with clear, realistic goals in mind. Also, allow some sort of reward for yourself for sticking to a budget; just ensure this gets worked into the budget right off the bat so you're not thrown off by extra spending. It's easier to work some rewards into a budget than to try to make up for excess money spent later on.

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Be honest with yourself.

When first starting a budget, if you're not honest about your expenses, it's going to be hard to properly track everything. Start with your current financial situation and make adjustments after assessing where you're at.

Pay when you can. You don't have to wait until payments are due to pay them; pay ahead instead. This applies to bills like utilities and phone bills, as well as loans. Any extra payment made on loans tackles the principal amount (i.e., not just covering the interest that accrued in the last month).

Paying early not only helps juggle payments, it's also great for your credit to never miss a payment.

Plan all aspects of spending.

Don't only look at purchases; consider how you're making the purchases. Try to plan errands that don't require making unnecessary trips and make lists for the grocery store to avoid forgetting something you'll have to pick up later.

Organizing as much as possible in your life can prove to be beneficial in many ways.

Budgeting is an easy way to stay on top of your finances for small things like never missing a

payment to much larger decisions, such as going on vacation or buying a house. No matter your income or expenses, budgeting can help you save money and spend smartly.

Dave Bowman is a Regional Director with Great Lakes, serving schools in Kentucky, Tennessee and Southern Ohio. You can reach Dave at (888)685-1604, or by email at dbowman@glhec.org.

Additional information about Great Lakes can be found online at schools.mygreatlakes.org.

NASFAA Fall Workshop



Nov. 18, 2016
9 a.m.–4 p.m. EST
KHEAA Building, Frankfort, KY

Topic:
Satisfactory Academic Progress:
From Policy to Application

Presenter:
Janet Jones, University of Kentucky

You Must Register to Attend

Watch Your Email For Details Coming Soon!

REGISTRATION IS FREE for KASFAA members, with a paid 2016-2017 KASFAA membership.

[Check your account status.](#)

Your Cohort Default Rate

By Tricia Crowe, Director of Guarantee Operations,
KHEAA

The 2013 Official Cohort Default Rate (CDR) reports from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) were recently released. The rates are for students who entered repayment between Oct. 1, 2012 and Sept. 30, 2013, and include students who may have defaulted by Sept. 30, 2015. This is called the cohort default period.

As the CDR is historical, the rate for a school may include students who attended that school five or six years ago. This is especially true for two-year colleges if students continued to a four-year school. It may also be true for students who may have gone on to graduate or professional school.

Loans included in calculating the CDR

The CDR is a straightforward percentage: the number of borrowers who default during the cohort default period (numerator) is divided by the number of borrowers who entered repayment during the cohort fiscal year (denominator). If 12 borrowers defaulted out of 165 in repayment, the default rate will be:

$$12 \div 165 = 7.3\% \text{ CDR}$$

Only Federal Stafford Loans are included in the CDR. A Federal Consolidation Loan may affect the rate if the loan defaults during the cohort default period that applies to the underlying loans.

The denominator includes borrowers based on the date their loans entered repayment. For Consolidation Loans, the date the underlying loans entered repayment determines whether they are used. In most cases, repayment begins six months after borrowers graduate, leave school or drop below half-time enrollment.

For FFELP Stafford Loans, the date the claim was paid determines whether the loan is included in the cohort default period and used in the numerator. Direct Stafford and FFELP Stafford loans purchased by ED are considered in default after 360 days of delinquency.

FFELP Stafford Loans not purchased by ED are considered to be in default after 270 days of delinquency, based on the date the claim was paid by the guarantor.

Rehabilitation of a defaulted loan can reduce a school's CDR if the loan rehabilitated before the end of the cohort default period.

A borrower can rehabilitate a defaulted loan by making nine payments, each within 20 days of the due date, within 10 months. A loan rehabilitated before the end of the cohort default period is not used in calculating the CDR.

Important things to remember about the CDR

The CDR is based on the number of borrowers who enter repayment, not on the number of loans those borrowers have.

Federal Consolidation Loans are not directly included in the CDR calculation but may affect the rate if they go into default.

Benefits of a low CDR

Schools with an official CDR of less than 15% during each of the three most recent fiscal years, including eligible home institutions and foreign institutions, may:

- Disburse in a single installment loan for semester, trimester, quarter or four-month period.
- Choose not to delay the first disbursement of a loan for 30 days for first-time, first-year undergraduate borrowers.

Penalties of a high CDR

Schools with high official CDRs may face sanctions.

- If a school has an official CDR of 40% or greater, it will lose Direct Loan and Federal Pell Grant eligibility.
- When a school first receives a CDR above 30%, it must establish a Default Prevention Task Force and submit a Default Prevention Plan to ED.
- If the school has a CDR above 30% for a second consecutive year, it must revise its Default Prevention Plan and submit the plan to ED for review.
- If the school has a CDR above 30% for a third consecutive year, it will lose Direct Loan and Federal Pell Grant eligibility.

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- Loss of eligibility will be for the remainder of the fiscal year in which the school is notified of its sanction and for the following two fiscal years. Schools should refer to the [CDR guide](#) for more details about sanctions.

Adjustments and appeals

These sanctions may be avoided if a school files a successful adjustment or appeal during the draft period.

Schools should review the Loan Record Detail Report (LRDR) provided by ED with the release of the draft CDR to make sure it is accurate. The data will be used to calculate the official CDR unless the school challenges the data.

After the *draft* CDR is released, schools can take these actions:

Incorrect data challenges (IDC):

During the school's review of the draft LRDR, it is determined to contain incorrect data. This challenge lets a school correct data before the official CDR is released. If a school does not submit an IDC, the school cannot challenge the accuracy of the data once the official rate is released.

Participation rate index

challenges: A school can show a low borrower participation rate to avoid a sanction.

After the *official* CDR is released, schools may request:

Uncorrected data adjustments: If a school and ED agreed to correct a data error during the draft process as part of an IDC, it can challenge having that data included in the official CDR.

New data adjustments: A school not subject to sanction can contest data in the official CDR that was not included in the draft CDR, data that is no longer reflected in the official but was originally in the draft CDR, or data that is different from the data in the draft CDR.

Erroneous data appeals: A school subject to sanction can contest official CDR data that was not included in the draft CDR and/or contest the data manager's decision.

Loan servicing appeals: A school can contest the servicing of a borrower's account.

Economically disadvantaged appeals: Schools subject to sanction can appeal if they have a high percentage of low-income students and a placement rate of 44% or higher (non-degree granting schools) or completion rate of 70% or higher (degree-granting schools).

Participation rate index appeals: Schools subject to sanction can show a low borrower participation rate.

Average rates appeals: Schools subject to sanction can show a low number of borrowers.

Thirty or fewer borrowers' appeals: Schools subject to sanction can show a low number of borrowers.

Consequences if sanctions aren't avoided

If a school submits adjustments and appeals but doesn't avoid sanctions, it may have to pay certain costs associated with any Direct Loans it originated and disbursed during the adjustment

and appeals process. Schools may avoid this potential penalty by not originating loans during the process.

Loans that were disbursed more than 45 calendar days after submission of the school's adjustment or appeal are not subject to the penalty.

After an adjustment or appeal

What happens after an adjustment or appeal was filed depends on:

- [When it was filed.](#)
- [Whether it was successful.](#)
- [Whether the school was already under sanctions.](#)

If the adjustment or appeal was not filed in a timely manner, a school not under sanction will lose its eligibility 30 calendar days after it received notice that it was subject to losing its eligibility. A school already under sanction will receive an additional sanction.

If the adjustment or appeal was filed in a timely manner but was unsuccessful, a school not under sanction will lose its eligibility on the date it receives ED's final decision. ED will extend the period of ineligibility for a school already under sanction.

If the adjustment or appeal was filed in a timely manner and was successful, a school not under sanction will not lose its eligibility. A school already under sanction will remain ineligible under the original sanction but won't be subject to further loss of eligibility.

A school that loses its eligibility may be able to honor its unpaid loan commitments and make certain second disbursements. To do so, it must meet certain criteria under [34 CFR 668.26\(d\)](#).

Three tips for your student financial wellness program

By Angela Henry,
USA Funds

There's a lot you could do proactively to connect your students to money management education, but nobody can do it all. Here are a few high-level best practices for developing and maintaining a financial wellness program.

1. Educate students and their families consistently, with the right info at the right time.

Research conducted by Dr. Kim Brown of the University of Des Moines found that, for the population of students she studied, it took repeated exposure to financial literacy topics over time to bring about positive changes in behavior.

It's important to consider what information would be useful to your students and when that education would be most relevant.

I'll use entrance and exit counseling as an example: Students complete these processes when they have a lot of things on their minds.

- For entrance counseling, they are thinking about classes, getting their books, finding their classes and navigating all of the other things that come along with starting school.
- With exit counseling, their minds are on graduation, employment and what the next phase of life is going to involve.

Overcome this information overload by providing students and their families with small educational snippets that are easily consumable and available to them when they need it.

2. Involve students in the process.

Remember to treat your students as stakeholders in what you are doing. A stakeholder can be defined as: "A person who has an interest in or investment in something, and who is impacted by and cares about how it turns out." Even if they don't care initially, the goal is to get them to care.

One great way to discover what students need to know and how they would like to receive information is to conduct a survey. The students will already feel engaged and invested in the program because they were involved in its creation. The results of your survey can also help you identify what topics are relevant to your students – giving you insight that allows you to develop the program from their perspective. For example:

- Let's assume you conducted a survey of your students, and "budgeting income and expenses" was at the top of the list of topics of interest.
- You would want to focus your initial efforts around that topic by incorporating activities such as a social media campaign with money saving tips and workshops on managing money.

You can also involve students in the actual implementation of your program. Many students prefer to discuss finances with a peer, so many schools have started peer mentoring programs. To develop such a program, train a group of students to lead workshops, spearhead the movement to promote your financial literacy program on

campus and, in some cases, even take one-on-one appointments.

3. Measure your effectiveness.

Early on, there wasn't really a need to measure the results of financial literacy programs because everyone just assumed that, if it was educating students, the program was a success. We knew that students who understood how to manage their time and money were more likely to finish school on time and less likely to default on their student loan(s). Schools passed along the information to students and everyone seemed fine with this.

Within the last few years, however, a bigger question has emerged: How do we know financial education has an impact on student behavior? If your school is going to invest time and money into implementing financial education programs, you need to be able to say with some level of certainty that the efforts are worth the expense. You need to be able to show that the actions you are taking ultimately are going to help you achieve your goals. And you need to be able to identify areas that need improvement if you are not achieving your desired results.

Proving a financial literacy program that makes a difference comes with challenges. It is impossible to attribute changes in human behavior to a single point of intervention. You can, however, look for leading indicators — knowledge, attitudes and self-reported changes in behavior — that can show that training contributed to a positive change in behavior.



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Fall 2016 Update

Scholarship helps high school students take dual credit courses

The new Dual Credit Scholarship program lets students at Kentucky public high schools earn up to nine credit hours in dual credit courses from participating colleges. Students may take up to two classes per year.

Kentucky public high schools will apply for scholarships on behalf of students by reporting data to KHEAA at the beginning of each semester. Students will still have to complete any admissions process a college requires. Additional information regarding the high school reporting requirements will be sent by the Kentucky Department of Education this fall.

Students who receive the scholarship must also complete a 30-minute college success counseling session at a time and place set up by their high school. KHEAA and KDE have developed video and PowerPoint materials for the session. The session materials were sent to high schools in early August. KHEAA also sent copies of our Surviving College booklet to high schools to give to dual credit students.

The state appropriated \$15 million for dual credit during the next biennium. KHEAA has allocated a portion of that amount to each public high school in the state based on the number of seniors each high school had enrolled during the 2015-16 school year. Half of the allocation is available each semester.

KHEAA will estimate the potential scholarship payment for students at each high school and will disburse up to 80% of the funds to the school district about halfway through each semester. The remaining payment will be disbursed at the end of the semester after KHEAA receives course completion information from colleges. For the purposes of the program, successful completion of a dual credit course is considered a grade of D- or higher. KHEAA will not issue payment for failed courses or withdrawals. School districts and colleges are encouraged to negotiate whether the district or the college is responsible for paying for failed courses or withdrawals. Students may not be charged for scholarship courses.

2016 grads named Sen. Jeff Green Scholars

More than 1,700 students who graduated from Kentucky high schools in 2016 were designated Jeff Green Scholars.

To earn this honor, a student must have a 4.0 grade point average each year of high school and at least a 28 composite score on the ACT. They must also attend a high school whose students are eligible to earn Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) awards.

These students have earned \$2,500 a year in KEES funds to help pay for college. If they keep their grades up in college, they will have \$10,000 to use toward a four-year degree.

Press releases were sent to local newspapers announcing the recipients. The designation honors the late state Sen. Jeff Green of Mayfield, who served in the Kentucky General Assembly from 1992 to 1997.

College coaches receive service awards

Two Kentucky college coaches were among the 21 individuals and groups who were recognized during the 2016 Governor's Service Awards ceremony August 12.

Leah Cann and Lori Shea Fuson received National Service Awards for volunteerism. The two were nominated by Summer Gortney of KHEAA, Program Advisor, and Megan Morris of Kentucky Campus Connect, Program Coordinator.

The college coaches program mentors high school students who might not see themselves going to college. Coaches serve high schools identified as needing assistance based on their low college attendance rate or high poverty rate or for being underserved by other community-based services. Coaches must mentor about 60 core students throughout their 10-month service period. Cann served at Holmes High School in Covington and Fuson served at Whitley County High School.

Get Out And Vote!

*by Erin Klarer, Vice President
KHEAA/KHESLC*

Election Day. November 8.
It can't come soon enough.

I have a very different perspective on Election Day. Yes, I'm keenly interested in the results for work purposes, but for the day I take off my KHEAA/KHESLC hat and put on a sheriff one. You see, for the past twelve years I have been working as an election officer in Jefferson County, and this upcoming November 8 I will again serve as one of Precinct V126's two sheriffs. Just kidding about the hat.

The first election I worked was the 2004 presidential election, and boy was that an experience. The people watching was fantastic, and nearly every single person wanted to explain why they came out in the torrential rain to vote for their candidate.

I won't lie — I first started doing it because it was extra cash. Cash that I now put into my children's Kentucky Education Savings Plan Trust 529 college savings plan. But then I got hooked.

You get to know your neighbors when they come in to vote. When I was pregnant, I perused the voter registration logs for interesting names. The other election officers I work with are like family. And recently (I don't know why it took us so long...), we started making our long day less painful by making it a potluck. Oh, and you're preserving the foundation of democracy by ensuring fair and accurate voting.

No pressure.

So what's it like? First you have to sign up. Jefferson County folks can do that [here](#). Residents of other counties can search for more info at their county clerk's office website. You can't have changed your voter registration within so many days of working, so if you don't even know how you're registered, you can again contact your county clerk's office.

If you're selected to work, then you have to go to election officer training a few weeks before the election. Training includes learning how the machines work, what to do in special circumstances, how to account for every single ballot and ensure voter privacy. You also have to swear that you have not fought a duel. It's about as enjoyable as traffic school but with constitutional responsibilities.

If you are assigned as the precinct clerk, you have to pick up some voting materials the weekend before Election Day.

Then there's Election Day. I don't work near my home because when I started I still lived with mom and dad and I was assigned to a different precinct (you can indicate if you are willing to work outside your home precinct). So I make it an excuse to leave the kids with the husband and camp out at the parent's for the evening. Why? Because I have to get up at 4 a.m. Election officers have to be on site no later than 5:15 a.m., and the polls must open at 6 a.m. Trust me, this election will have people lined up at the door waiting for us to let them in.

For the next 12 hours you issue ballots to voters and provide any needed assistance.

One time the power went out, so that was fun. Luckily those ballot machines have battery back-ups. During the 2010 primary election we ran out of ballots, but fortunately the handicapped-enabled AccuTouch machines that are at every polling location were available to fill in the gap. The most common issue we address during a general election is when voters move and don't update their registration. Again, contact the county clerk's office if you are unsure of your polling location.

So then 6 p.m. hits, and as sheriff I get in line behind the last voter and announce the polls are closed. I do not have sympathy for anyone who arrives at 6:01 p.m. Seriously, people. You had 12 hours. And it's super easy to vote early or via absentee ballot if you know you're going to be busy or out of town. Maybe they should give me a hat.

In the past, the governor has allowed state workers to not have to use personal time to work the polls, but that is subject to renewal for every election. Jefferson County especially needs registered Republicans and Independents to work the polls. Have I convinced you to work? Probably not. But at the very least, be kind to yourself, and your election workers, and go vote.

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