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Restaurant will anchor resurgent Coke Plant

BY GENEVIEVE POSTLETHWAIT

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Just three years ago, Paducah's historic Coke Plant sat empty and void of life. But these days at the midtown building you can find your center at True North Yoga, satisfy your caffeine cravings at Piper's Tea and Coffee and de-stress with a cold craft beer at Dry Ground, all under the Coke Plant roof.

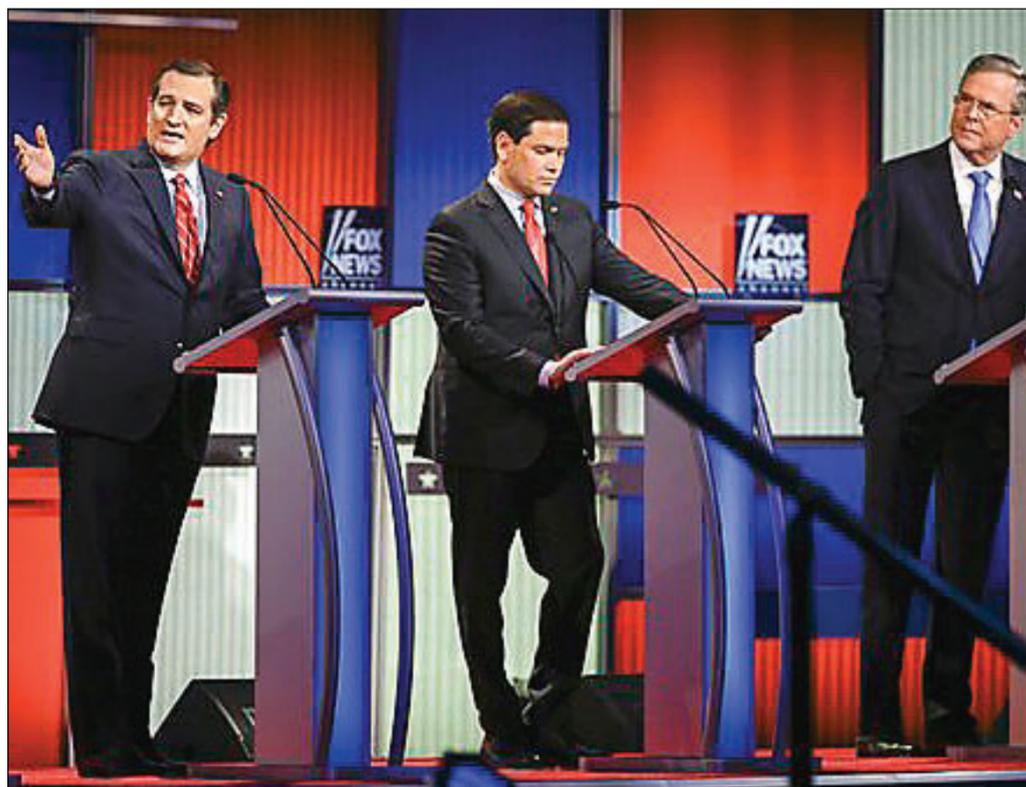
And later this year, you'll also be able to feast on gourmet pizza from Mellow Mushroom. "Mellow loves this building, and they love Paducah," said Ed Musselman, who purchased the Coke Plant with his wife and business partner Meagan in 2013. The Musselmans will be co-owners of Paducah's Mellow Mushroom along with Brandon and Jessica Streng of the

Paducah Coffee Company. "They saw what we're trying to accomplish in this space, and they thought their philosophy and their organization aligned completely with it, which is the reason we reached out to them in the first place," Musselman said. "They saw that, they harness that, and they're super excited for the project." Musselman stressed that while Mellow Mushroom is an

Atlanta-based company with restaurants all over the South and Midwest, Paducah's Mellow will be locally owned and unique to Paducah. No two of their restaurants are the same. They embrace the buildings and communities they're in. Then of course, there's the food. "It's great, really, really great," Musselman said of Mellow's pizza. "The menu

stands on its own, it's very high-quality. They have gluten-free and healthy options. They're going to allow us to source a lot of fresh produce locally. They're encouraging us to get unique local offerings on the menu. We feel like it's the perfect fit." Mellow will take up the bulk of the 9,000-square-foot, terrazzo-floored space on the

Please see **MUSHROOM** | 5A



Sen. Ted Cruz (left) answers a question as Sen. Marco Rubio (center) listens and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush listens during a Republican presidential primary debate Thursday night in Des Moines, Iowa.

Trump's rivals make the most of his absence

BY JULIE PACE AND JILL COLVIN
Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Absent Donald Trump, the Republican presidential candidates strained to take advantage of a rare opportunity to step out of the front-runner's shadow in Thursday night's debate — a staid, policy-heavy contest that offered a glimpse of what the GOP contest might have been without the unpredictable businessman. Still, the candidates couldn't resist mocking Trump, who boycotted the final debate before Iowa kicks off voting in the 2016 campaign on Monday. "I'm a maniac and everyone on this stage is stupid, fat and ugly," said Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who is competing with Trump for the lead in Iowa. Cruz then thanked his fellow candidates for showing Iowa voters respect by showing up. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, a frequent target of Trump, said with a wry smile, "I kind of miss Donald Trump; he was a teddy bear to me."

Please see **GOP** | 10A

'Pay-as-you-go' option approved by Paducah Power

BY DAVID ZOELLER
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Residential customers of Paducah Power System will soon be able to "pay-as-you-go" in managing electricity costs under a program approved this week. The PPS board agreed Monday to contract with U.S. Payments, an Oklahoma-based payment processing company, to operate three kiosks. They will give customers expanded payment access, eliminate the need for a deposit, provide text and e-mail alerts regarding their account balance, and streamline the process for restoring service after a disconnection. "This is a pay-before-consumption or pre-pay program," said Dave Carroll, PPS director of finance and administration. "It is an alternative to the traditional monthly bill, and it gives the customers a little bit more flexibility and control over their usage and how they pay." The pre-pay program is strictly optional, and open only to residential customers, new or existing. The residential rates customers pay do not change. Because the program does not require a deposit, existing customers can choose to have their deposit converted into the new program. Under the program, the standard \$35 meter set fee for new customers still applies, and a minimum of \$50 is required to get started.

Please see **PPS** | 10A



3-month-old son Daniel Vieira, who was born with microcephaly, undergoes physical therapy at the Altino Ventura foundation in Recife, Brazil, Thursday.

Zika virus spreading through the Americas

GENEVA — The Zika virus is "spreading explosively" in the Americas, which could see up to 4 million cases over the next year, international health officials said Thursday, announcing a special meeting next week to decide if they should declare an international health emergency. The warning from the World Health Organization came

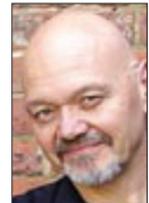
amid a call to arms by officials on both sides of the Atlantic over the mosquito-borne virus, which has been linked to a spike in a rare birth defect in Brazil. Brazil's president — noting there is no medical defense against the infection — called for a crusade against the mosquitoes spreading it.

Please see **VIRUS** | 6A

Arts community optimistic in face of funding cuts

BY KAYLAN THOMPSON
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To the relief of Paducah's arts and tourism community, Gov. Matt Bevin won't move to eliminate the Kentucky Arts Council from the state's budget as rumored before Tuesday's State of the Commonwealth Address. However, his proposed budget features a 9 percent cut over the next two years to what he terms "non-essentials." This includes the council's umbrella organization — the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet — an agency providing grants and other programs locally. It is undetermined whether cuts would be made across the board or in specified organizations, grants or programs. "I know cuts need to be made, but I think you need to have a good conversation about what we're doing in the community and what we're cutting," said Michael Cochran, executive director of the Market



Cochran



Hammond

Please see **CUTS** | 5A

LOCAL

WORK BEGINS ON NEW HOTEL

Work has started on a Homewood Suites by Hilton to be built near Interstate 24 in Paducah.

2A



KENTUCKY

CAPILOUTO REACTS TO BEVIN'S BUDGET

Gov. Matt Bevin's proposed two-year budget poses "significant challenges" to the University of Kentucky, according to UK President Eli Capilouto.

5A

Forecast

Today



Partly sunny.

10A

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Capilouto reacts to budget plan

BY LINDA BLACKFORD

Lexington Herald-Leader
LEXINGTON — Gov. Matt Bevin's proposed two-year state budget poses "significant challenges" to the University of Kentucky, UK President Eli Capilouto said in a campuswide email Wednesday.

Under the governor's plan, UK would have to cut \$12.6 million, or 4.5 percent, from its state appropriation in the ongoing fiscal year that ends June 30. On July 1, a new cut of 9 percent would mean UK gets \$25.2 million less next fiscal year than it was

supposed to get this year. "Certainly, the magnitude of reductions in the governor's budget proposal presents significant challenges to our university," Capilouto wrote.

It's not clear what impact the cuts might have at UK or other public universities. Neither Capilouto nor other state officials would say if tuition might increase more than expected next year, although big increases have occurred at most schools during years when the state made smaller cuts.

Bevin's proposed bud-

get for the second year of the biennium is even more mysterious. Under Bevin's proposal, UK would receive \$254 million in base funding from the state. But one-third — roughly \$84 million — would be taken back to start a new statewide fund that will be disbursed to universities according to certain performance criteria. By 2019, according to Bevin, all state funding to higher education will be based on their performance, but no one knows what the criteria will be.

The Council on Post-

secondary Education proposed a plan for awarding funding on criteria such as graduation and retention rates, but Bevin said Tuesday that wasn't adequate because it wasn't focused enough on workforce development.

"There will be more incentives to electrical engineers than French literature majors, there just will," he said Tuesday. "All the people in the world who want to study French literature can do so, they're just not going to be subsidized by the taxpayers like engineers will be, for example."

Mattel revamps Barbie doll's look

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Poor Barbie. She had plastic surgery to become more socially acceptable. But a lot of her critics still don't like her.

Barbie's manufacturer, Mattel, announced Thursday that the doll has three new body types — curvy, tall and petite. Barbie will also now come in seven skin tones, 22 eye colors and 24 hairstyles. Mattel spokeswoman Michelle Chidoni said the prod-

uct is evolving to "offer more choices" to make "the line more reflective of the world girls see around them."

But Kris Macomber, who teaches sociology at Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina, says she's "reluctant to celebrate Barbie's new strategy because it doesn't change the fact that Barbie dolls and other kinds of fashion dolls still over-emphasize female beauty. Sure, all body types should be valued.

CUTS

CONTINUED FROM 1A

House Theatre.

Four Paducah organizations annually receive a combined \$83,000 in grants from the Kentucky Arts Council: the Carson Center, the Yeiser Art Center, the Paducah Orchestra Symphony and the Market House Theatre. Even more count on other avenues of state funding.

"If they take that 9 percent, you think, 'OK, that's not too bad,'" Cochran said. "But every year funding shrinks, and every year there are more groups applying for these grants. On the one hand, it's a smaller part of our fundraising, but it's still an important part."

Market House received around \$13,000 in grants last year, he

added, though that funding has dipped by over 60 percent in the past 10 to 15 years. Despite the drop, the arts and tourism community has thrived and grown in the past decade.

"In the broader scope of things, the arts in Paducah are becoming a bigger part of the economy, and that can be a ripple effect," Cochran said.

Tourism extends that ripple effect by connecting all facets of the community, said Mary Hammond, executive director of the Paducah Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"Tourism and the arts are not non-essential," she said. "People say, 'Paducah is on my bucket list,' and that's not because we have a plant or an interstate. It's because of your culture,

the authenticity of your community, your identity. Tourism shows how we can pool all of our ingredients together until you have an identity you can sell."

Paducah's arts and culture community is responsible for putting \$39 million into the local economy, Cochran said, including 500 jobs.

"That's not just the jobs provided by the organizations themselves," he said. "That's the ripple effect throughout the community between restaurants and other businesses. There is a big multiplier for the arts that a lot of other businesses don't have."

In addition, for every \$1 of state funding received for local arts organizations and the tourism industry, the community sends back

\$5 in state tax revenue, Cochran said.

"The tax revenue we send to Frankfort each year stems in part from our arts community, so it makes sense that the some of the money we receive each year comes in the form of arts funding," he said. "We're not talking about much, but we are a tax revenue generator for the state."

Laura Oswald, marketing director for PCVB, added that Paducah's arts community is a magnetic force in driving tourism.

"Tourism brings an impact to Paducah, bringing in new, fresh dollars," she said. "We're using research, understanding trends and making really meaningful investments even as our budgets are stretched and belts are tightened, but these are things we've all seen before. Paducah is a creative place, but we have so many creative people

with creative strategies that have paid off in the past. I don't think it's going to stop now."

Tighter corners, Hammond added, makes for creative strategies.

"We're established here. We're not fly by night. We know how to get resourceful and move forward," she said. "Yes, it's nice to have the faith and support of your state, but we also want a stable state. To get to that point, everybody has to give, and when you get back on your feet, you'll be stronger."

Getting creative means finding ways to fill in the gaps, becoming even more self-sustaining through innovative fundraising and community outreach.

"Will we cut back 9 percent? No," Cochran said. "What we're going to have to do is find a way to come up with that revenue someplace else. If we were a business, we would just raise

our prices, but we know that part of our mission is that everybody in this community, regardless of income, can participate in what we do."

From here on out, it's a waiting game for arts communities across the state.

"[The budget] is a starting point," Oswald said. "We know we have great local legislators that represent us well. Now, it's up to them and for us to raise awareness of what we find to be important."

A basic tenet of Paducah's creativity is sustainability, a trait that has brought local arts through past funding droughts.

"In the long run, you have to look to the future," Hammond said. "You have to evolve and grow sustainably. You don't want something that you can't carry to the future, and, I'll tell you what, we're all pretty creative here."

MUSHROOM

CONTINUED FROM 1A

building's ground level, leaving 2,177 square feet in the southeast corner for another business. Tentatively, Mellowgoers will enter through an entrance on the Coke Plant's LaBelle Avenue side and walk into an open-air patio that will be built into the space's interior. The building's exterior will remain largely intact to preserve its historical integrity.

Musselman said they're working with Mellow Mushroom to develop a plan for buffering the noise in the space. They have to get creative, Musselman said, because they want to preserve the original terrazzo floors and subway-tiled walls, which bounce sound rather than absorbing it. Right now the plan includes strategically placed artwork and dropping the ceiling in some areas of the restaurant.

It will be a Paducah-designed and decorated restaurant, Musselman said. Local contractors Ray Black & Son will handle the construction work, which will be substantial. As Musselman put it, even though they have solid walls, ceilings and floors, there's a lot of building to be done. They have to de-

sign and build a kitchen, as well as a dividing wall between Mellow and the yet-to-be-claimed 2,177 square-foot space, among other things.

For the Musselmans, securing Mellow Mushroom is an accomplishment that has taken nearly two years of work behind the scenes. It's the anchor business the Coke Plant needs to keep moving its development forward.

Musselman said a large number of people have expressed interest in locating businesses in the Coke Plant but didn't want to commit until they knew what the anchor restaurant would be. Now they know.

"This is the big piece. It's been a work in progress," Musselman said. "It's not been as easy. There have been bumps in the road and tight times. To finally get to this point really feels good."

Musselman said he's not ready to give an opening date yet with so much planning, designing and construction to do. He did say that people can count on enjoying Mellow Mushroom pizza sometime in 2016.

Contact Genevieve Postlethwait, a Paducah Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8651.

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