

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

# BUILDING A GROUNDSWELL FOR A BIG BOLD FUTURE





# WHO WE ARE

We believe in the power and promise of public education –early childhood through college -to ensure Kentuckians' economic and social well-being.

We are a citizen-led, bipartisan, solutions-focused nonprofit, established in 1983 with a singular mission of realizing a path to a larger life for Kentuckians with education at the core.

# WHAT WE DO

We study pressing education issues, help inform the public and policymakers of our findings, and engage communities to celebrate success and to design unique local solutions to our challenges.

We track national outcomes in education and quality of life. Our focus is to move Kentucky into the top rankings of all states in these areas.

# **OUR WORK**



# The Groundswell Initiative

We respond to the unique needs of students and families locally to improve outcomes in education. Groundswell members are the boots on the ground in a campaign to realize a Big Bold Future for Kentucky.



### Kentucky Collaborative for Families

We advocate for honest and inclusive conversations that promote culturally responsive polices, practices and imaginative investments to repair longstanding failures to deliver educational excellence for students who have been marginalized.



#### Prichard Committee Fellows

We are parents, students, and teachers who formally engage with the Committee as community researchers and journalists to launch strategic initiatives designed for local improvement.



# **Equity Coalition**

We advocate for honest and inclusive conversations that promote culturally responsive polices, practices and imaginative investments to repair longstanding failures to deliver educational excellence for students who have been marginalized.



We unite Kentucky's early childhood advocates through shared goals to strengthen early care and education for Kentucky children from birth through third grade and increase access to high quality early childhood opportunities.

# FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ARE BRIGHT SPOTS IN 2021



In 2021, we saw a near-return to normal and then an abrupt about face which found us all unsure about how to navigate work and learning. Even so, we found ways to come together and achieve impact.

Throughout the pandemic, one thing became clear COVID presents an opportunity to build a new foundation for education, one that is stronger and more resilient, and engaging families as critical partners in student success must be a priority.

For the Prichard Committee, family engagement and parent leadership are the cornerstone of how we approach school improvement. With a 20-year record of work under the nationally recognized Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL), we were awarded a 5-year United States Department of Education (USDOE) grant to establish a statewide family engagement center in 2018.

The USDOE Statewide Family Engagement Center grant provided the Prichard Committee with increased capacity and strengthened partnerships to be a key support to schools and communities through the pandemic. We are operating the center as a collaborative of state and local partners,

called the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools, with three community-based organizations as regional hubs: Learning Grove in northern Kentucky, the National Center for Families Learning in Louisville, and Partners for Rural Impact (formerly Berea Partners for Education) in Appalachia.

We are pleased to have New York University's Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools (NYU Metro) as our developmental evaluation research partner. We expect to have significant findings out of this work to add to the growing body of research on the importance of family engagement in education and family-school-community partnerships for better learning outcomes.

In addition to the federally funded work, through a partnership with the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro we launched our first place-based community mobilizing effort to realize greater education outcomes. This multi-year work is driven solely by a local community and grounded in family-school-community partnerships.

In the following pages, I hope you will take time to read about three projects that exemplify our efforts in 2021: the English Language Learning Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership in northern Kentucky, the Greater Owensboro Partnership for Early Development, and the Family Friendly School Learning Network.

The work we began in 2018 to get back to the Prichard Committee's roots of mobilizing communities is beginning to take root – and with great promise. As we continue to build a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future, I hope you will find inspiration to join us – with your time, talent, and treasure.

Brighte Blow



PARENTS IN NORTHERN KENTUCKY work together during a session of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. In 2021, the institute was tailored for Spanish-language speakers for the first time.

For three years, Ana Reid, who grew up in Honduras, had tried to catch on to routines at the schools her children attend in Kenton County. Fluent only in Spanish, she strived to understand school procedures, events and expectations. Despite consistent effort, she said, she always felt far behind.

This year provided a turning point. Focused training about the structure of Kentucky's education system and the basics of her local school system created a firm handle on how she can be involved with her children's education — and elevated possibilities she sees in her own life. Education for families in northern Kentucky began when Learning Grove implemented the National Center for Families Learning's Family Literacy Model. Families received instruction in engaging in their child's learning and a parent education component focused on English language classes. The need for understanding how the local and state education system works came from conversations during this parent education time.

"The relationship before was very disconnected about how to do things. I had no idea who could help," Reid said, describing her link to her children's education.

Over the past year, Reid joined a pilot group of Spanish-speaking parents in a first-ever bilingual adaptation of the Prichard Committee's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. Over more than two decades, the program has provided comprehensive free training for parents across the state to build understanding of fundamentals of Kentucky's education system — from state testing and academic standards to improvement planning and school decision making.

The 2021 institute selected a group of parents whose children are identified as English Language Learners. Reid said that the immersive experience, held in the winter and spring, delivered a huge step forward.

"Things that I felt were impossible for me, now they are part of my life and my lifestyle," Reid said in an interview. "Knowledge is power. Your learning experience gives you the power to take action, and it defines your opportunities as a mom and a part of your immediate community." Reid was among 12 parents to complete the pilot class and officially become CIPL Fellows. This fall, she stayed involved, helping with a Parent Camp for other family members eager to learn more about schools. She is assisting a new cohort at 2022 Commonwealth Institute sessions aimed at Spanish-speaking parents.

Organizers said the Spanish-language CIPL made a strong impact on the participants and provided a unique opportunity to see the power of the program's approach.

"It opened my eyes to all of the challenges that parents face," said Laura Beard, senior coordinator for family engagement at the Prichard who helps lead CIPL.

"A language barrier adds big challenges understanding schools' routines and how learning issues are addressed, from drop-off procedures to requirements attached to specialized programs."

Families from the 2021 ELL CIPL class focused their group project on clarifying background check policies at the state and local levels. Families met with Kentucky Education Commissioner Jason Glass to discuss the barriers ssociated with obtaining a background check. KDE released a

guidance document in response to families' questions.

Adriana Ortiz, who attended school in Mexico, said that her four children, ages 11 to 18, are doing well in school in Boone County.

"They are learning more of the language every day and adapting to their environment," she said through an interpreter. Still, CIPL gave her information and confidence to understand how she can help more and work more closely with teachers and school leaders.

"I'd like to support my children more," Ortiz added. "I needed to get closer to the schools and learn more about how the system is. ... I want to be involved in anything they allow me to that has to do with schools."



CIPL FELLOWS HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN PARENT CIRCLES. Ana Reid of Kenton County, far left above, and Adriana Ortiz of Boone County, far right, were speakers at the Ignite Institute at the Hispanic Parent Leadership Conference of Northern Kentucky in September. Photo courtesy of Learning Grove

Kathy Burkhardt, a former Northern Kentucky superintendent who observed this year's CIPL session for parents of ELL students, said that while every district tries to work with families where language barriers exist, the comprehensive approach of the Commonwealth Institute went beyond a typical orientation session. She said that working with ELL families often reveals strong parent interest in schools. Building deep partnerships, however, can be a challenge.

"The best way for us to figure out what's needed is to listen to our parents and our families, and we have lots of families who really want to help in positive ways in their children's education," said Burkhardt, who now works with Learning Grove, a Covington-based group involved in family engagement work and one partner in the CIPL ELL program.

Making families aware of who they can contact to ask questions is important. Burkhardt said that many parents

from other cultures or who don't speak English can be reluctant to seek help. "Sometimes they don't ask questions out of fear of being disrespectful in some way," she noted.

Reid of Kenton County, whose four children range from ages 2 to 9, said that all of the information that the Institute provided made a big difference for the parents involved.

"It is an inevitable growth," Reid said. "It made me want to learn the language more and get more involved in English classes and get a degree for my growth and to help my children."

She said that extra outreach from schools and education organizations, combined with interested parents, can help more students succeed in school and beyond.

"Both parties need to do their part for it to be successful," she said. "First, the parents need to recognize the needs of their children, get involved, and leave excuses behind. Second, we need to take advantage of all the tools that are given to us through programs" that help families navigate schools and education systems.

The 2022 CIPL program for ELL parents in Boone County was launched on Nov. 17. In addition, a separate Englishlanguage CIPL cohort recently began with participants from Rowan, Jefferson, Madison, Oldham, Laurel, Gallatin, Fayette, Franklin, and Floyd counties. Both sessions will continue through spring 2022.

CIPL is sponsored by St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Toyota, the LG&E and KU Foundation, the R.C. Durr Foundation, Inc., and the Charles and Ruth Seligman Family Foundation.



JASON GLASS, THE KENTUCKY EDUCATION COMMISSIONER, spoke with members of a Spanish-language Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership held earlier this year.



In a Daviess County elementary classroom outside of Owensboro, students are especially glued to a morning math lesson. What better way for a swarm of preschoolers to understand subtraction than tracking how many cookies remain as a plate empties. 5-3=2 is hitting home.

In the space of a half hour, the group of 11 three- and fouryear-olds at Burns Elementary covers important basics: In the math problem, veteran preschool teacher Nikki Knott takes extra time to single out and explain the minus sign and the equal sign in the math equation. The class transitions to a foundational literacy lesson on the letter K. Students discuss and practice the sounds the letter makes in different words.

The teacher shows how lines are combined to create the letter when it is written; and, shortly af-ter, each child pushes bars of construction paper together, then draws K's themselves. Even that prompts an important reminder — the best way to hold a pencil, pen or marker is grasping it be-tween the thumb and first two fingers. "Alligator pinch!" their teacher reminds them.



The preschool day is an active and playful journey through facts and routine that set a solid foun-dation for everyday action and knowledge. In this Kentucky community, expanding access and participation in high quality early childhood education will get a big boost in 2022 as an educa-tional and economic development priority.

In January, the Greater Owensboro Partnership for Early Development launched a new plan for building a stronger and more accessible early education system over the next four years. The emphasis has been building steam as a major focus of the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, which has committed \$4 million to the cause. In 2021, the group partnered with the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence to identify key issues and build the civic campaign.

"The research is clear — the path to opportunity for all begins with the start we provide to our youngest children," the Partnership stated in a January report outlining its goals. "Investments in high-quality early childhood education result in higher rates of educational attainment, a reduction in health costs, a reduction in the incidence of crime, less demand for social welfare services, and a more competitive local economy for Greater Owensboro. All in the community stand to gain from this work."

Over the next four years, the Greater Owensboro Partnership report calls for:

- A community awareness push to intensify support for expanded early learning;
- A coordinated effort to develop and retain a talented pool of early childhood workers;
- Expanded child care benefits for employees in local businesses including at small and mid-sized

- Greater awareness among eligible families of child care subsidies and free preschool;
- A campaign for private child care providers to earn ratings above three stars on the state's qual-ity scale;
- Expanded access to clear waiting lists for Head Start and other programs in the county; and
- Better availability of school readiness and quality data to encourage continuous improvement.

In the last half of 2021, more than 40 community representatives met to draft the strategy after the Prichard Committee pulled together an analysis of the current early childhood ecosystem in Daviess County, showing opportunities for significant improvement.

The research found that almost half of third graders in the county did not reach state reading pro-ficiency targets in 2019, with economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners facing even steeper proficiency gaps. At present, the analysis found, only about 20 percent of nearly 6,800 children under age five in the county had access to early childhood education services. Licensed providers had capacity to serve about 3,800 children, but enrollments lagged that number.

# COORDINATED RESPONSE TO A PATCHWORK SYSTEM

Reshaping early childhood care, improving quality, and focusing on improved school readiness can be key factors in improving quality of life, adult success, and economic conditions, members of the Greater Owensboro Partnership's organizing group agreed.

"Ultimately, I'm looking forward to the day when we move the needle on kindergarten readiness and third-grade reading," said David Boeyink, whose involvement with the Public Life Foundation over the past 25 years helped lead to the creation of the new Partnership. "But that will only hap-pen when we get programs on the ground. That means increased availability of quality, affordable childcare for low-income families."

Those who work in early childhood programs said that a coordinated, community approach may be the best way to address an area like early childhood that spreads across many agencies, in-cluding school districts, specialized programs like Head Start, public and home-based providers. The system also involves employers, social workers, specialized assistance aimed at first-time parents and newborns, churches, and requires attention to services offered before, during, and after typical work hours.

Chris Westerfield, preschool coordinator for the Daviess County Public Schools, said he is eager for more parents and community members to see the kind of preparation happening in schools across the county like Burns Elementary.

"It lays the foundation for everything else we do," he said. Practicing basic skills and gaining ex-perience with other children and adults is a big advantage for children moving into elementary school years, he said. "I hope the communication piece is going to push more people to see the value."

Boeyink, a former journalist with the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer, said that this community provides fertile ground for deeper work in early childhood improvements. Both local school dis-tricts have built strong preschool programs and other groups have eagerly embraced school read-iness. Local pediatricians, he said, offer a literacy program that provides free books and information to families on reading and brain development.

"Community collaboration isn't just talk; it's a daily reality," he said. "In the midst of a pandemic, we've been working with a large, diverse group of people who come to monthly in-person meet-ings ready to push this project forward."



This article continues on the next page

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN BOOSTS PARENTS, COMMUNITY

At the Audubon Area Head Start program on the east side of Owensboro, a group of three- and four-year-olds move around a busy classroom offering games, puzzles, and areas where teach-ers have created stations. This day, students play with ice cubes to discuss how they melt into liquid when children handle them. Nearby, another adult is guiding children through a similar activity with a tall, clear container of water. Children take turns choosing items to drop in the con-tainer to see what will float, what will sink, and discuss why.



Outside, a group of younger children in the center's Early Head Start program, run across a play area, trading dress-up vests made to look like the uniform of a chef, police officer, mail carrier, and more. They stop to tinker at play areas or to chat with their teachers.

Amanda Huff, who has worked with local Head Start efforts over the past 15 years from part-time teacher to local-area manager, said that planners here understand that challenges and opportuni-ties extend beyond stronger early learning benefits for the children enrolled.

She said that the Partnership's goals will also improve the abilities of parents. In many cases, Huff said, the lack of options for affordable child care keep able and talented young parents out of the workforce. "We are missing out on talent in the community because of what we can't provide for people," she said.

In addition, leaders of the Greater Owensboro Partnership have recognized the chance to examine their work and share their experiences.

Bruce Hager, chair of the Public Life Foundation, said the Prichard Committee's involvement not only strengthens efforts locally but will allow lessons to spread in other Kentucky communities. Part of the Prichard Committee's role is disseminating best practices.

"We are thrilled to support them in work that will have roots in Owensboro but will expand throughout the state to benefit early learners from Pikeville to Paducah," Hager said last year in announcing the foundation's long-term emphasis on quality early childhood programs.

Huff is optimistic about what can happen in Owensboro. Her involvement in developing the Part-nership's four-year plan, plus long experience working with a variety of partners, make her look forward to the wider community response.

"This community always comes through — anytime there is a need, you put it out there someone will pick it up," Huff said. "Children really are put first here, and that's huge."



# 58 Kentucky Schools Selected for Learning Network to Build Capacity for Family Engagement

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, through its Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools, has selected 58 Kentucky schools to participate in a peer learning group to increase family engagement as a primary strategy

to improve student outcomes in learning.

"Kentucky schools must once again start feeling like a community hub – where students, parents, educators, and caregivers are all engaged in supporting student learning," said Prichard Committee President & CEO Brigitte Blom. "The Family Friendly Schools Learning Network will build the capacity of school leadership to understand and implement more effective family engagement best practices."



Governor Andy Beshear greets Brigitte Blom at Family Engagement in Education proclamation signing.

#### PARTICIPATING FAMILY FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

#### COVINGTON

Altamont Early Learning (Learning Grove) River Center Early Learning (Learning Grove)

#### **BEREA COLLEGE**

B&G Fowler Child Development Laboratory

#### **BEREA INDEPENDENT**

Berea Community Elementary

#### CAMPBELL COUNTY

Jones Middle
Campbell County High
Campbell County Middle
Campbell Ridge Elementary
Crossroads Elementary
Donald E. Cline Elementary
Grant's Lick Elementary
Reiley Elementary

#### **DAVIESS COUNTY**

Deer Park Elementary Southern Oaks Elementary Whitesville Elementary Audubon Elementary Burns Elementary Burns Middle

Country Heights Elementary East View Elementary

Heritage Park High Highland Elementary Meadow Lands Elementary

Sorgho Elementary
West Louisville Elementary

# Dayton Elementary DAYTON INDEPENDENT

Dayton High Dayton Middle

#### **ERLANGER**

Erlanger Early Learning (Learning Grove)

#### **FAYETTE COUNTY**

Arlington Elementary Lafayette High Leestown Middle

#### **FLOYD COUNTY**

Duff Allen Elementary Floyd Central High

#### **FORT THOMAS**

Ruth Moyer Elementary

#### **GALLATIN COUNTY**

Gallatin County Upper Elementary

#### **HARLAN INDEPENDENT**

Harlan Elementary Harlan High

#### **JEFFERSON COUNTY**

Carrithers Middle Grace James Academy Kenwood Elementary Shelby Elementary Portland Elementary

#### **JENKINS INDEPENDENT**

Jenkins Independent

#### **LUDLOW INDEPENDENT**

Mary A. Goetz Elementary

**MENIFEE COUNTY** 

Menifee Central

#### **PADUCAH INDEPENDENT**

McNabb Elementary

#### **POWELL COUNTY**

Bowen Elementary

#### **PULASKI COUNTY**

Pulaski County High

#### **ROWAN COUNTY**

Rodburn Elementary Rowan County High Rowan County Middle

#### **WASHINGTON COUNTY**

North Washington Elementary Washington County Elementary Washington County High Washington County Middle

#### WILLIAMSBURG INDEPENDENT

Williamsburg City

Jay Brewer, superintendent of Dayton Independent Schools, expressed excitement that all three schools in his district will be participating in the network.

"To grow students we have to know students, and no one knows our students better than their families," he said.

Administrators from the schools will participate in this experience from Fall 2021 through May 2023. Schools have a menu of training and services to choose from and will participate in surveys each spring for continuous improvement. The learning experience is a combination of group learning sessions, small group coaching sessions, and increased awareness and access to resources and services that increase family engagement.

In addition to the Prichard Committee's work, these schools are also supported by staff from Berea Partners for Education, Daviess County Schools, the Kentucky Department of Education, Learning Grove, and the National Center for Families Learning.

"We are already hearing success stories from the participating schools," said Brooke Gill, director of family engagement for the Prichard Committee. "They are finding creative ways to build trusting relationships with families in meaningful ways. Schools are already connecting with one another and building support teams around the work."

## **GROUNDSWELL ACTIONS**

**PADUCAH** - Heather Anderson, a mother of two, is working to organize and expand "parent cafes," a gathering where adult family members can learn about ways to strengthen families and help children be ready to learn.

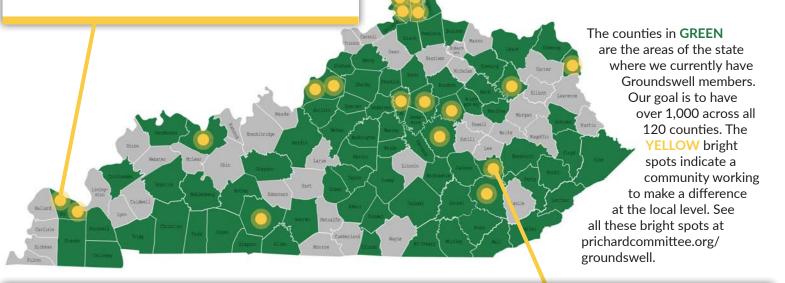
Providing a forum — and food — lets parents, grandparents and others pursue learning and discussions of issues like parent resilience, positive social connections and support networks. The sessions, which Anderson said took place in person before virus protocols forced a switch to videoconferencing, built new bonds and helped participants feel better equipped to work with educators and their children.

"Thoughtful interactions come out of this," said Anderson, who works as a student services administrator for the Paducah school district. "When you leave, you feel energized and inspired." She has also created similar "cafe" sessions for students that emphasize building stronger social-emotional skills and reflecting on personal development. She said that the student sessions naturally launched conversations about tapping leadership potential.

**COVINGTON** - When the COVID pandemic began, Learning Grove was able to expand its reach to more Hispanic families by creating literacy kits, which were distributed to 25 Hispanic families over the course of 4 months. A closed Facebook page where parents and caregivers could post pictures and videos of their completion of the activities and weekly Friday night Zoom meetings were used to boost and encourage engagement.

By August, Theresa Cruz of Learning Grove said they realized that the families needed training in the online platforms being used in their children's schools. In-person Google Classroom/SeeSaw trainings were set up and 23 families attended. Since then, a local Hispanic church allowed the group to use their space to do more trainings in-person, with necessary social distancing and other safety precautions in place. Currently 34 families participate!

"These parents are committed to learning, growing and doing everything necessary to ensure their child's success in school," said Cruz.



MANCHESTER - After a local Togetherness March that was sparked by the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor tragedies, two Groundswell members in Manchester asked themselves what they could do as an action step to impact racism in their town. Rhonda Phillips and Sara Szymkowiak decided to create an organization that would empower and nurture youth who may not have the same opportunities as others to gain the skills and resources needed to succeed in academics and as community leaders.

The Thompson Scholars Foundation, named for Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education President Dr. Aaron Thompson, a Clay County Native, currently serves disadvantaged students, including but not limited to racial minorities, those experiencing poverty, or first-generation college students.

The Thompson Scholars program focuses on building skills in social and emotional development, leadership development through civic engagement, self-advocacy and self-confidence, communication skills, STEM and Arts programming, college and career readiness, and assistance with the entire college or technical school enrollment process.

Scholars receive a college or technical school scholarship based on their attendance in the program. The board and team are committed to support scholars even throughout their post-secondary academic pursuits to minimize barriers to completion. Former Scholars who graduate from college or technical school will be designated as Thompson Fellows, who in turn, can give back to the organization through whatever means, be it giving of time or finances.

#### \$50,000+

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#### \$25.000+

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#### \$10,000+

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**ASSESTS** \$5,009,237

Liabilities\*: \$225,324 Equities\*: \$4,783,915

\*unaudited numbers as of 4/7/2022



**REVENUE** \$2,680,135

Other Revenue: \$351,382 Endowment Draw: \$196,937

Member & Individual donations: \$110.387

National Foundations: \$398.315 Government Grants: \$1,094,823 KY Foundations: \$445,691 KY Corporations: \$82,600



**EXPENSES** \$2,417,093

Programs: 1,990,292 Fundraising: \$120,855

Management & General: \$305,946

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Laurel Raimondo
Tony Raimondo
Maria Rigsby
Andy Schwentker
Joy Schwentker
Nancy Dorton Thoma
Lutricia Woods

In memory of Bob Sexton: Todd Holland Ruth Webb Kelly Shawn Lyons

In memory of Nancy Rebecca Swisher: Becky Sagan

In memory of Lynda Thomas: Beau & Susan Weston

In Honor of Chaka Cummings: Emily Duncan

In Honor of Cindy Heine: Harriette Seiler

**In Honor of Carrie E. Lasley:** Heather Crabbe

In Honor of Fannie Louis Maddux: Wynn & Linda Radford

**In Honor of Pam Shepherd:** Melody Brooks

**In Honor of Mayer Stulman:**Griffin Stulman and
Elizabeth Yates

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Margie Pope, Paducah Mollie Pope, Barbourville Hilma Prather, Somerset Louis Prichard, Lexington Wynn L. Radford, Hopkinsville \*\* DerrickRamsey, Lexington \*\* Aprile Redden, Foster Kathy Reed, Bardstown Al Rider, Upton Julia L. Roberts, Bowling Green \*\* Donald Ruberg, Edgewood Becky Sagan, Lexington Rvan Salzman, Bellevue Keith Sanders, Owensboro Edna Schack, Morehead Julie Schmidt, Prospect Ben Self, Lexington Jon L. Sights, Henderson Jason Slone, Morehead Hollie Spade, Louisville Delaney Stephens, Somerset David B. Tachau, Louisville Afi Tagnedji, Louisville Laney Taylor, Georgetown Julie Tennyson, Paducah \*\* Darcy Thompson, Louisville Don Trowell, Louisville James Votruba, Lakeside Park Emmanuel Washington, Lexington Rachel Watts Webb. Nicholasville Lois Weinberg, Hindman Mary Gwen Wheeler, Louisville Laura White-Brown, Morehead Gene Wilhoit, Lawrenceburg Harvie Wilkinson, Lexington Anisa Willis, Ft. Mitchell William H. Wilson, Lexington Elaine A. Wilson, Somerset \*\* Gwen Young, Lexington \*\*

\*\* Denotes board member status



Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

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Building a Groundswell for a Big Bold Future

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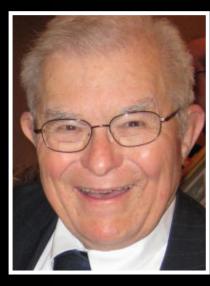








# In Memorian PRICHARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS LOST IN 2021



**AL SMITH** 





**BILL GARMER**