

# Young artists in Van Go's Benchmark program help families honor their lost loved ones



(Van Go artist Jess Ortega) really came up with the design ... And we all agreed that (it) looks great."

— County Commissioner Gene Dorsey, who commissioned a bench in memory of his son



... I've thought it would be a really cool way to memorialize her and honor her life ..."

— County Commissioner Shannon Reid, who commissioned a bench in memory of her mother



Josie Heimsoth/Journal-World Photo

A MEMORIAL BENCH HONORING DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMISSIONER GENE DORSEY'S SON.



Josie Heimsoth/Journal-World Photo

A MEMORIAL BENCH HONORING DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMISSIONER SHANNON REID'S MOTHER.

By Josie Heimsoth



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When Douglas County Commissioner Gene Dorsey saw the memorial bench created in honor of his late son, he said he was nearly brought to tears.

Todd Dorsey died two and a half years ago at 39 from heart failure tied to bipolar schizoaffective disorder. To honor his memory, Dorsey worked with youth artist Jess Ortega at Van Go, and he asked for two meaningful elements: a basketball and a lake from a summer camp.

"My son was a very good basketball player in high school and was recruited by a lot of Division II and III schools," Dorsey said. "... And then, when he was growing up, he went to a camp every summer, first as a camper and then as a counselor and a maintenance worker for like seven or eight years. And that camp is called Camp Deerwood, and we lived in New Jersey at the time."

➤ ARTISTS, 5A



Josie Heimsoth/Journal-World Photos

ABOVE: ARTISTS IN VAN GO'S JAMS PROGRAM WORK ON CREATING ART that will be sold at the nonprofit's holiday art sale later this year. BELOW: SOME OF THE BENCHES created by the youth artists.



## Library for Lecompton and Perry asks voters to make it official

Its board is trying to get a referendum for a library district on the November ballot

By Bremen Keasey

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Behind the district office for Perry-Lecompton schools, you can open the door to an unassuming hallway and suddenly be surrounded by thousands of books.

This is the Perry-Lecompton Community Library, at 203 W. Bridge St. in Perry. It has over 12,000 books, 600 DVDs and 250 puzzles that patrons can choose from — if the library is open.

We'll be able to provide more services down the road for our patrons."

— Library board member Alma Heckler

"Right now we're only open 15 hours a week," said Mary Guffey, the president of the Perry-Lecompton Community Library's board and, like all of the library's staffers, a volunteer.

The library is only open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon and 3 to 6 p.m., and on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon. But even with those limited hours, it's become a key meeting place for the two small communities, and Guffey and fellow board member Alma Heckler want to expand its services by getting it officially recognized under state law.

➤ LIBRARY, 7A

## Turbo turtles at the fair



Mike Yoder/Special to the Journal-World

Grace Laird, 4, and her brother Grant, 6, won first and third in the turtle race Saturday, Aug. 2, at the 2025 Douglas County Fair. Grace finished first with her fast turtle Pink Pony Girl, and Grant placed with Dr. Otis the Turtle.

See more photos from the final day of the Douglas County Fair inside, page 9A.

