



Mac Crider finishes pouring a drink at John Brown’s Underground on Tuesday.

SYLAS MAY/Journal-World Photo

Take a walk on the Cocktail Trail

Cast your vote for creative concoctions at ‘boozy farmers market’

By SYLAS MAY
smay@ljworld.com

What will take home the Lawrence Cocktail Trail’s trophy this year? A corn and tomato margarita, an “entry-level” bitter drink with a fruity twist, a pistachio and pisco concoction, or something even wilder?

It might be up to you. These three and about a dozen others will be facing off from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. today in a people’s choice contest, kicking off a week of local cocktail specials and raising money for Lawrence hospitality workers.

Cocktail Trail, a celebration of Lawrence bartending, has been going on for a few years, but this is just the second year for its people’s choice competition. Laura Klein, president of the Lawrence Restaurant Association and owner of Mass. Street Fish House, said it works kind of like “a boozy farmers market.”

The participating bars and restaurants will set up tables in the parking lot of Culinaria, 512 E. Ninth St., and they’ll be pouring 1- to 2-ounce samples for guests to try. Then, the guests vote on their favorites – and, if you really like a drink and want it to win, you can buy extra votes with extra donations to the Lawrence Hospitality Workers Relief Fund.

The relief fund, which began during COVID, has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in assistance to workers in the local hospitality industry,



Bartenders Leah Shinkle, left, and Elliot Yochim are pictured at 715 on Tuesday.

SYLAS MAY/Journal-World Photo

helping them pay for health care, child care, rent assistance and more. A \$20 donation to the fund gets you admission, all the cocktail samples, some appetizers and 10 voting tickets, Klein said.

Expect “a really relaxed, fun, friendly competition sort of environment,” she said, “which I feel kind of really reflects Lawrence. It’s like a laid-back vibe.”

If you can’t make it, you can still support the hospitality fund and try some unique drinks. Cocktail Trail lasts through Sept. 20, and \$1 from each drink special at participating restaurants and bars goes

to the fund. Klein said it’s kind of like the Lawrence Restaurant Week that happens each winter, but just for drinks.

You can find the full list of contestants on Lawrence Restaurant Week’s social media pages. To get a preview of the creative ideas that will be on display, the Journal-World asked cocktail creators from a few of the establishments what their approaches are: Leah Shinkle and Elliot Yochim from 715, Dante Colombo and Mac Crider from John Brown’s Underground, and Gracie Brush and Kal Tarm from Limestone:

THE COCKTAIL PHILOSOPHY IN A NUTSHELL:

715 There’s an “ethos of simplicity” at 715, Yochim said, and they like to pay respect to the classics.

For example, the restaurant has its own martini variation, and Shinkle loves tweaking the formula for it. It’s still a true martini – built around gin and a fortified wine, not like a lemon drop or other sweet drink served in a martini glass. But every element is a little bit different than the normal London dry gin.

See COCKTAIL, A7

Topeka man charged with murder in downtown stabbing

By KIM CALLAHAN
kcallahan@ljworld.com

The suspect in a fatal stabbing in downtown Lawrence last week has now been charged with murder.

Keisonn Smith Jr., 25, was arrested Aug. 30 in connection with the death of 20-year-old McMillin Tutu, of Kansas

City, Missouri, and - after some delay - was charged Tuesday with second-degree murder and intimidation of a witness or victim. The Douglas County District Attorney’s Office released no further details Wednesday beyond noting that Smith would make his first

court appearance that afternoon.

At Wednesday’s hearing, defense attorney Angelo Panas-Cabrera requested an own-recognizance bond for Smith. He said that Smith was born in Topeka and has lived there with his grandmother since 2022, and that he worked in construction for the past 11 months and was planning to attend tech school in January to become an electrician.

However, Judge Amy Hanley denied the request for an OR bond.

See STABBING, A7

Health center focuses on turnover as demand for psychiatric care grows

By JOSIE HEIMSOOTH
jheimsooth@ljworld.com

Demand for psychiatric care at Heartland Community Health Center is growing – especially among children – as the clinic works to address gaps in staffing while keeping the people it already has.

Since 2022, Heartland’s staff has fluctuated with hiring additional staff and losing other providers, according to a presentation shared with Douglas County commissioners on Wednesday. In 2025 and 2026, the organization has been focusing on stabilizing its workforce and hiring staff for adults and patients receiving medication-assisted treatment and substance use disorder services.

“We want to increase meaningful access to care for the community while ensuring patients can receive the appropriate level and frequency of services they need to meet their goals, improve their health outcomes, and prevent acute and crisis events,” Rachel Hartford, chief operating officer at Heartland, said.

See CARE, A7

