



JOSEPH REY AU

Shelby Valley coach Jason Booher, left, gives state tournament MVP Elisha Justice a hug after the Wildcats defeated Ballard 73-61 at Rupp Arena in the 2010 finals.

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to find meaning from an event that led to such a senseless loss of life has galvanized Booher's path.

On Feb. 29, Booher, the Mercer County Schools superintendent, successfully ran the Tokyo Marathon.

By finishing the 26.2-mile race in Japan, Booher has completed all six of the world's major marathons — also including Berlin, Boston, Chicago, London and New York City.

"There were 27 (people) lost in the bus crash," Booher says. "When I realized a marathon is 26.2 miles, I thought, 'I can run a (race) segment for each (person lost) and turn that into something that, hopefully, inspires others and shares the message of the Carrollton bus crash.'"

A MARATHON MAN

Booher, 49, is familiar to basketball fans in Kentucky from his time as one

of the commonwealth's most-accomplished high school coaches.

In 2010, he directed Shelby Valley, led by star guard Elisha Justice, to the state championship.

Three years later, Booher coached Holmes, with star guard James "Beetle" Bolden, to the state quarterfinals, where the Bulldogs fell in overtime to eventual state champion Madison Central.

Once Booher's career transitioned from coaching into school administration, he sought a new outlet for his competitiveness.

In his coaching days, Booher says he would run two to three miles just to stay in shape.

While in high school, Harrison Booher, Jason's son, became an accomplished cross country runner. Inspired by his son's distance running, Booher decided he wanted to try a marathon.

For his second completed marathon, in Erie, Pennsylvania, Booher ran a time of 3:35. "I've been running Boston (Marathon) qualifying times



Photo provided

The shirt containing the names of all 27 people who died in the Carrollton bus crash that Jason Booher wears to run in marathons.

ever since," he says. "But it took me about five years to get there, where I could run fast for a long time."

To fit his training regimen into his work schedule, Booher rises to run while most are asleep. On Monday through Thursday, he gets up around 5 a.m. and runs eight to 10 miles daily.

He takes Fridays off, then on Saturdays he trains at distance, running between 13 and 20 miles.

Booher then takes Sundays off.

Having completed all six of the world's major marathons, Booher, a military child who was born in Germany, says his favorite was Berlin.

The most challenging was Boston. "It is by far the hardest because it is so hilly," Booher says.

CREATING POSITIVES AFTER TRAGEDY

The danger of drunk driving is the message Booher seeks to deliver through his marathon running.

When tested after the

wreck, the driver of the pickup truck who initiated the Carrollton bus crash, Larry Mahoney, had a blood alcohol level of 0.24 percent, well above the 0.10 drunk driving threshold that then existed in Kentucky.

Subsequently, Mahoney was found guilty of 27 counts of manslaughter.

Booher says he is reminded daily of the deadly crash he survived when he sees school buses.

In the initial aftermath of the crash, Booher said he struggled because he

could not see where the loss of so many lives had led to any positive change.

Now, when he sees school buses, the changes in safety requirements that the state of Kentucky mandated after Carrollton are apparent.

Among the many enhancements, there are now nine emergency exits — front and back doors; a side safety exit; four emergency windows; two roof exits — required on school buses in the commonwealth.

In another change, the blood alcohol level that constitutes drunk driving in Kentucky has been lowered. In 1988 was 0.10; it is now 0.08.

"And there are a couple of us survivors who go around (as public speakers) and spread the word about the consequences of drunk driving," Booher says. "So the education piece is a positive. That's three big positives that have come out of (the Carrollton bus crash) — I can say that now."

When he runs marathons, Booher dedicates each mile of the races to one of those who died in the Carrollton bus crash. He always runs the final segment of his races for Witt, his best friend from the first grade until the night of the crash.

Among those trapped in the aisle, Witt did not make it off the burning bus.

"When I look back now," Booher says, "I just try to look at all the positives, the good memories I had with all those friends I lost, especially Chad."

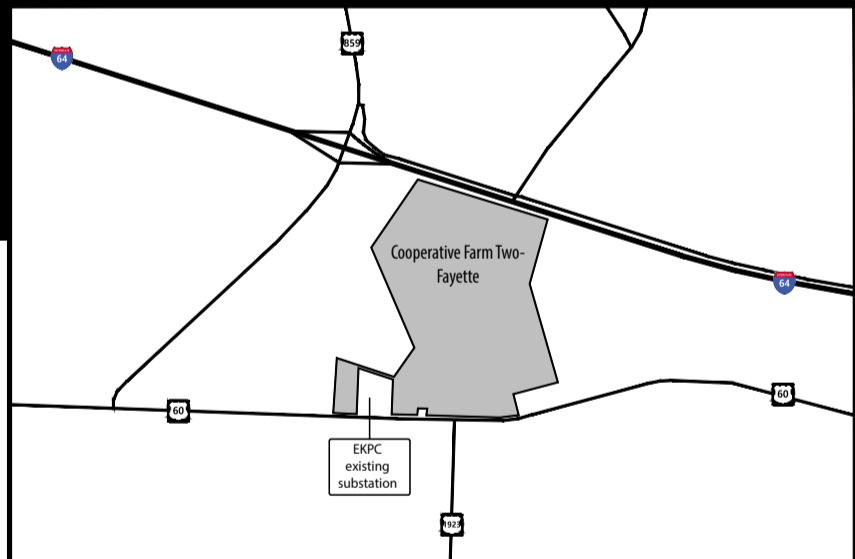
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to learn more about Cooperative Solar Farm Two – Fayette, a planned project to build a solar farm in eastern Fayette County, Ky, along Interstate 64. This 387-acre solar farm will generate 40 megawatts of electricity, enough to serve the annual electricity needs of 4,560 typical Kentucky homes.

A public open house meeting will be held Thursday, May 16, 2024, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the offices of East Kentucky Power Cooperative, 4775 Lexington Road, Winchester, Ky.

This project will help to diversify EKPC's fleet of electric-generating resources, providing a resource to meet growing demand for electricity, especially demand from industrial and commercial users seeking to lower their carbon footprint. This project will help EKPC comply with increasing government regulatory pressure to reduce the carbon intensity of its generation portfolio. This solar project will provide a cost-competitive resource to meet these goals.

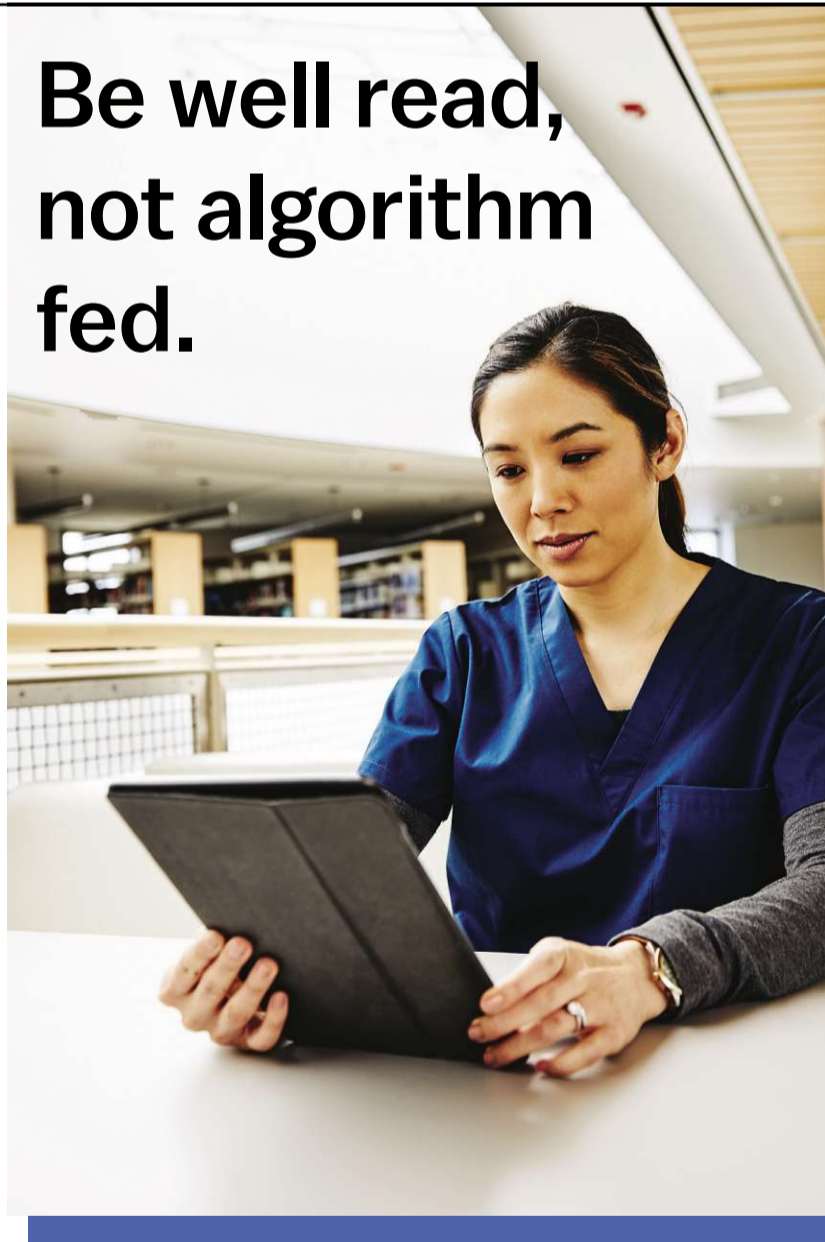
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