

VIEWPOINT

WORTH REPEATING:

"All men who have achieved great things have been great dreamers." - Orison Swett Marden

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www.paul.senate.gov

Sen. Mitch McConnell, Republican
(202) 224-2541 e-mail: senator@mcconnell.senate.gov
www.mcconnell.senate.gov
N. Ky. office - 1885 Dixie Hwy., Suite 345
Ft. Wright, Ky 41011 (859) 578-0188

U.S. Representative - 4th District

Thomas Massie, Republican (202) 225-3465
http://massie.house.gov
N. Ky. office - 300 Buttermilk Pike, Suite 101
Ft. Mitchell, Ky 41017 (859) 426-0080

State Senator - 17th District

Damon Thayer, Republican (859) 621-6956
damon.thayer@lrc.ky.gov (502) 564-8100, ext. 644
Toll free message line 1-800-372-7181

State Representative - 61st District

Brian Linder, Republican (859) 816-7084
brian.linder@lrc.ky.gov (502) 564-8100
blinder1@hotmail.com
Toll free message line 1-800-372-7181

County, City Officials

County Judge Executive Steve Wood
Grant County Courthouse
Main Street, Williamstown, Ky 823-7561

Corinth Mayor Billy Hill
215 Thomas Lane
Corinth, Ky 41010 824-5922
cityofcorinth@wkybb.net

Crittenden Mayor James Livingood
104 N. Main
Crittenden, Ky 41030 428-2597

Dry Ridge Mayor Jim Wells
31 Broadway
Dry Ridge, Ky 41035 824-3335

Williamstown Mayor Rick Skinner
400 N. Main
Williamstown, Ky 41097 824-6351
rskinner@wtownky.org

Got a news tip, go to:

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- Fax it to: 859-824-5888
- Phone it to: 859-824-3343
- Mail it to: Grant County News, P.O. Box 247, Williamstown, Ky 41097

• What is an editorial?

An editorial is the newspaper's view on a particular issue. In developing editorials, employees of the newspaper consider what, in their collective view, is best for the community. Editorials are meant to suggest a course of action and to foster discussion on issues important to the community. They can also recognize or praise individuals and groups for community service and good works.

the Grant County News

serving Grant County since 1906

859-824-3343
FAX 859-824-5888

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GUEST COLUMNS

A year of tremendous blessings

Grant County, thank you!
The Grant County News has allowed me the opportunity to write about the tremendous success of the Ark Encounter now that it's been open one year.

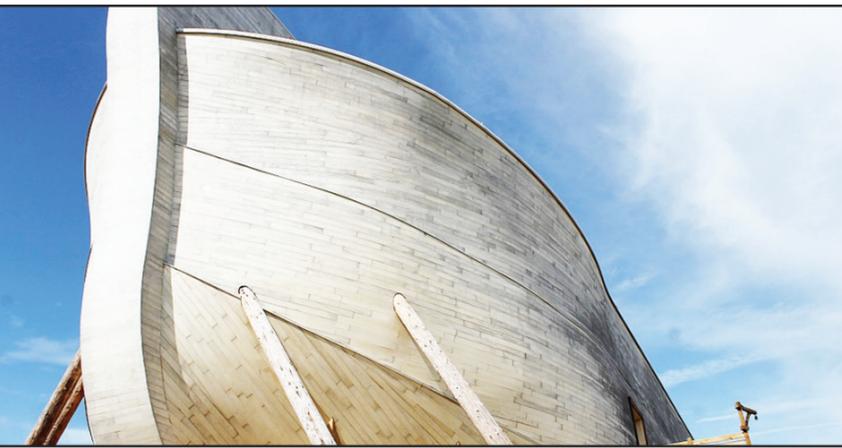
Media from all over the world have toured this massive ship, and we have appreciated all the extensive global coverage—including the fair and accurate reporting of this newspaper.

To be candid, Answers in Genesis, owner and operator of the Ark Encounter, has been waiting for some time to see more mainstream media give the full and correct account of the regional economic impact of the Ark and that of our sister attraction to the north, the Creation Museum. The huge number of guests visiting both attractions are flooding Kentucky with their tourist dollars. We estimate that 90–95 percent of visitors come from outside the tri-state area of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky and they are bringing new money into the state.

This next year, 2017-2018, with a full summer under our belt, the Ark will welcome even more guests. You see, with a July 7, 2016 opening, we didn't have the opportunity to experience a complete summer with the typically large crowds that visit a themed attraction at this time of year.

Over the past year, the popularity of our attractions has been extraordinary. Creation Museum attendance has tripled on many days compared to the previous year, and for 10 years the museum has had a significant economic impact on Northern Kentucky of over \$500 million.

With the Ark Encounter, we point out that it's unfortunate that some news reports, relying on comments from a citizen or two in Williamstown who may not have observed many tourists in their downtown, have suggested there hasn't been much tour-



KEN HAM

Guest Columnist

ist activity in the county.

Some reporters and bloggers have pounced on those comments and have used them to try to downplay the Ark's success, to the detriment of future development in the county.

Grant County residents should be quite bothered that efforts to spur the economy and create jobs are being undermined by false reporting and gossip. The consequences could be significant. For example, we are aware of a well-known builder in Northern Kentucky who is reluctant to construct hotels in the region because he has heard the false reports that the Ark is supposedly not successful. The Ark Encounter could accommodate more than 8,000 people a day (our record day)—and generate more revenue for the county and state—if not for the lack of hotels.

Tourism-related businesses are indeed booming throughout Grant County, such as in the city of Dry Ridge. Once Williamstown has developed more services that cater to tourists, it will see significant business growth, too.

The town is poised for growth. But that's a Williamstown issue, not an Ark one.

The economic impact from tourism rose dramatically last year in the two counties that host our two attractions. Grant County, the Ark's home, is seeing

about a 128 percent increase in tourism revenue due to the Ark. In Grant County, according to government-released figures, families now pay \$900 fewer taxes because of tourism, and the number of new jobs in the area has increased.

Even more encouraging, the economic impact for 2017 will be greater as even larger numbers of people will visit the Ark.

Of course, taxes collected at hotels, restaurants, and other businesses (sales tax and other taxes) also contribute to the county and city to improve government services for citizens.

Not surprisingly, then, the impact of both the Ark and Creation Museum in the region is why AiG recently received, for the second time, the Star of Tourism award from the Northern Kentucky Convention and Visitors Bureau.

In the past several

months, the Grant County News has covered new Ark exhibits and outdoor attractions, including enhancements outside so that when the crowds are largest on the busiest days this summer, they can be spread over a wider area.

Our zoo is also being expanded and we have just opened a West Village with artisans, retail outlets and a stage for music and animal programs.

Large outdoor concerts are also planned. Grammy Award-winning singer Steven Curtis Chapman will be live at the Ark and other well-known musicians are slated for concerts.

Also, construction has begun on a 2,500-seat auditorium as a part of the Walled City's expansion, which will be phase two at the attraction.

Grant County is now "on the map," and we want to thank the many community and business leaders, plus the general public, for offering us such a warm welcome.

In particular, we want to recognize the elected officials who represent Grant County in Frankfort, Sen. Damon Thayer and Rep. Brian Linder, for their Ark advocacy.

Again, thank you all!
(Ken Ham is the president and CEO of Answers in Genesis and the Ark Encounter. See www.ArkEncounter.com)

Celebrating Independence Day

Over 200 years ago, our founding fathers put their lives on the line to create a new country in which freedom reigned. These men had a vision of a nation unafraid to face its enemies and win. We, the people of the United States, have faced insurmountable odds since our young country's conception but continue to fight for our God-given rights unique to the United States of America.

The 4th of July was the day on which the Declaration of Independence was ratified. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent

of the governed..." This was the day that Americans stood up against tyranny to create a government controlled by the people, for the people.

We must keep those values at the forefront of our minds as we navigate today's political discourse.

It has become too easy to forget that people on the opposite sides of the political spectrum are human beings and deserves our respect, whether or not we agree. We are a nation that celebrates our differences. There is a time and a place for political rhetoric, but let us not forget the price we have paid to have the freedom for such discourse.

Innumerable brave men and women have given their lives so we can enjoy the freedoms and rights we too often take for granted. Still, people fight across the globe to bring similar freedoms and rights to the oppressed.



Damon THAYER

Senator

Let us celebrate the brave Americans who put their lives on the line every day so we may continue to celebrate our independence.

We are one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. I hope we, as proud Americans, continue to fight for the unity of our nation and people. I wish you and your family a safe

and happy Independence Day, and may God bless America.

If you have any questions or comments about these issues or any other public policy issue, please call me toll-free at 1-800-372-7181 or email me at Damon.Thayer@LRC.ky.gov. You can also review the Legislature's work online at www.lrc.ky.gov.

(Senator Damon Thayer (R-Georgetown) represents the 17th Senate District, which includes southern Kenton County, as well as all of Grant and Scott Counties. He is Senate Majority Floor Leader, as well as a member of the Agriculture Committee; the Committee on Committees; the Legislative Research Commission; the Licensing, Occupations and Administrative Regulations Committee; the Rules Committee; and the State and Local Government Committee.)

READER'S WRITE

Despite 'underwhelming' support from chamber, Fun Park thanks event attendees

The Williamstown Family Fun Park would like to extend our thanks to the Grant County Chamber businesses who attended our "Business After Hours" event on Tuesday, June 26.

It was a beautiful evening with temperatures in the 70s. We were excited to be able to showcase our family friendly activities to chamber members and their families, including mini golf, zipline tours, chutes and ladders (kids' adventures course) and our newest offering, archery tag.

We appreciate the chamber supporting us by sending out information about the event to every member and announcing it again at the chamber breakfast on June 19. With over 200 Grant County Chamber members invited and great weather, we were expecting a good size crowd.

Unfortunately, the support from our fellow chamber members was well, to say the least, underwhelming. Planning and logistics for such an event requires plenty of staff

to make it a great event.

However, many of our staff were underutilized as other chamber members did not take advantage of the opportunity to network, have fun and support a local business.

People are quick to complain that there is "nothing to do in Grant County." The next time that complaint is made, we ask if people take the opportunity to enjoy the activities that are here when invited. We strive, as do all of the other Grant County Chamber members, to make a positive

impact for Grant County residents and it's economy.

We believe a big part of that is to support our fellow businesses.

Once again, thanks to the following chamber businesses that came out see us and support our efforts to bring fun, family friendly activities to the county: Ark Encounter, Browning's County Ham and Chamber of Commerce director, Jamie Baker

Lori Noonan
Williamstown Family Fun Park