We are saddened to report the first death due to COVID-19 in our area. The patient was a Meade County resident. Currently, 39 cases are on home isolation or have been released from monitoring. At press time, there is a total of 48 cases of COVID-19 in the Lincoln Trail District. Additional cases were confirmed in Hardin and Nelson Counties. The total number of cases per county is as follows: Hardin--22, LaRue--2, Marion--10, Meade--2, Nelson--9, and Washington--3.

COVID-19 has taken the lives of over 14,000 Americans and 73 Kentuckians as of April 8, 2020. This grim trend will only continue as Kentucky continues to see a rise in cases across the state. Although Kentucky’s number of COVID-19 cases is lower than neighboring states, we are experiencing a higher death rate. Currently, the state’s death rate is 5.4%, while the rate in surrounding states is 3.75% or below. A contributing factor may be that Kentucky is ranked as one of the top 10 unhealthiest states in the nation. A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control revealed that almost 80% of patients who are admitted to the Intensive Care Unit with COVID-19 have at least one underlying medical condition. Cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and stroke are very prevalent throughout Kentucky. These diseases are also identified by health experts as the populations who are at higher risk to suffer severe consequences from COVID-19. That is why it is so important that we continue to take every preventive measure to reduce the spread of this virus and protect those at highest risk. One simple and powerful tool that has been proven to work is social (or physical) distancing.

On the graph below, the lighter curve represents what happens when social distancing advice is ignored. More individuals become infected at a faster rate. The rise in cases overwhelms hospitals, emergency departments, urgent cares, and local health care provider offices. This results in not enough ventilators, hospital beds, and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks, and gowns to meet the demand. Patient survival rates are lower, because needed medical resources are not there. However, if physical distancing is practiced, transmission within the community is greatly reduced and medical resources are available to meet the demand. It is that simple. Be a difference maker--practice social distancing and stay home to keep yourself, your loved ones, and your community safe.