

Three Green County students selected for The Center for Rural Development's youth programs

The Center for Rural Development has selected three Green County students to participate in its summer leadership programs.

Rogers Scholars

Erin Whitman, a current sophomore at Green County High School, will join high school students from across Southern and Eastern Kentucky this summer for the 26th annual Rogers Scholars youth leadership program. Whitman is the daughter of Jason and Melissa Whitman of Summersville.

Rogers Scholars, The Center's flagship youth program, was established through the vision of U.S. Congressman Harold "Hal" Rogers (KY-05) that "no young person should

have to leave home to find his or her future."

The intensive one-week summer program provides valuable leadership skills and exclusive college scholarship opportunities for high school students in 45 Kentucky counties to build their skills as the region's next generation of business and entrepreneurial leaders.

"The Center's Youth Programs are unique opportunities for our young leaders to make an impact and explore what's next for them in education and through service to their communities," said Lonnie Lawson, President and CEO of The Center for Rural Development. "The programs give them the tools they need in order to thrive in their personal goals and how to make an

impact in Southern and Eastern Kentucky."

Each graduate of the Rogers Scholars Program earns potential access to exclusive scholarship opportunities from some of the state's top-ranked colleges and universities. To be eligible, students must complete a community service project in their hometown.

The 2023 Rogers Scholars Program will take place on June 4-9 on the campus of Morehead State University and June 25-30 on the campus of Lindsey Wilson College. There is no tuition charge to attend the program and lodging and food is provided at no cost to participants.

Rogers Explorers

Two 8th graders at Green County Middle

School, Miley Constant and Grace McCullough, were selected for the 18th annual Rogers Explorers Program. Constant is the daughter of Justin and Brenda Constant of Greensburg. McCullough is the daughter of Chelsea and Jeffery Coffey and Nathan and Dawn McCullough of Columbia.

Rogers Explorers is open to eighth-grade students in Southern and Eastern Kentucky who have a strong interest in developing their skills in leadership, team building, community service, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) fields of study.

Explorers is a three-day and two-night program on a leading Kentucky college campus where

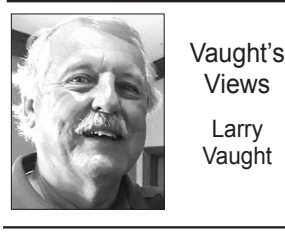
experts will guide them through hands-on assignments. The program is provided at no cost to eligible students within The Center's 45-county primary service area.

Rogers Explorers is presented by The Center for Rural Development in partnership with Lindsey Wilson College, Eastern Kentucky University, Morehead State University, University of the Cumberlands, and Union College.

For more information about The Center's youth programs, contact Amber Decker, community liaison and youth programs coordinator at The Center, at HYPERLINK "mailto:adecker@centertech.com" ad-ecker@centertech.com or call 606-677-6000.

Established in 1996 through the vision of U.S. Congressman Harold "Hal" Rogers, (KY-05), and other leaders, The Center for Rural Development is a nonprofit organization fueled by a mission to provide leadership that stimulates innovative and sustainable economic development solutions and a better way of life in Southern and Eastern Kentucky. In its 45-county primary service region, The Center provides innovative programs in leadership, public safety, technology, and arts and culture. The Center is committed to constantly expanding its capabilities in order to deliver a range of key services throughout Kentucky and the nation.

UK commit Cutter Boley special quarterback with unique skills on and off the field



Vaught's Views
Larry Vaught

Lexington Christian Academy junior Cutter Boley is a gifted quarterback, one of the best in the nation according to every recruiting service and the bevy of major college coaches that recruited him.

The 6-5, 205-pound Boley verbally committed to Kentucky last week over Tennessee, Michigan, Penn State and Florida State — the other schools in his final five.

However, what says a lot about Boley is who attended his commitment ceremony. Current Lincoln County coach Josh Jagers, a former UK offensive lineman, coached Boley during the 2020 and 2021 seasons at LaRue County. He was at LCA for the announcement.

"No way was I going to miss this," Jagers said. "He's a special player and young man."

Taylor County junior offensive lineman Hayes Johnson, the first UK commitment in the 2024 recruiting class, also made the drive to Lexington. He arrived just a few minutes before Boley made his decision public but stayed to visit with him after the ceremony.

"He's going to be special for our recruiting class. Everybody likes him," Johnson said.

Boley's sister, Erin, a three-time Kentucky Gatorade Player of the Year and 2016 Gatorade National Player of the Year, made the drive from Atlanta where she now lives to be there with her brother.

"It's important for me to be here," Erin, who played basketball at Notre Dame and Oregon, said. "No way was I going to miss this. I don't get to see all his games (in person) but I was not going to miss his big day."

LCA coach Doug Charles says Boley truly checks all the boxes for a special player on and off the field.



Quarterback Cutter Boley reacts after making his commitment to Kentucky. (Lisa Collins/LCA Photo)

of this kid. We had UAB (coaches) come in this morning to watch one of our kids and wanted to see him catch (passes)," Charles said. "Now this is a pretty big day for Cutter and he was out there at 7 o'clock this morning throwing balls for a kid trying to get a scholarship and then took his linemen out to breakfast this morning before this commitment."

"He is the real deal as a player and person. Not just on the field but off. We just tell him not to change and he will be awesome."

He would be the highest rated quarterback to sign with Kentucky since Tim Couch in 1996. Couch went on to be the No. 1 overall pick in the 1999 NFL draft.

Boley had contemplated using his COVID year to be a 2025 recruit to make sure he was prepared to be a big-time college quarterback. He decided to back into the 2024 class based on feedback he got from college coaches this spring.

"Some of the coaches at Penn State acted like they'd even take me as a 2023. A year ago today, I didn't know where my body would be physically and if I could play in college. But I feel I'm prepared to play at the collegiate level now," Boley said. "I just feel like I'm ready to go. I just want to get there as soon as I can (he plans to enroll at UK in January), start learning the offense, start learning the playbook."

Offensive coordinator Liam Coen obviously believes so. He started recruiting

Boley in 2021 when he was named UK's offensive coordinator, stayed in touch even when he rejoined the Los Angeles Rams for the 2022 season and made Boley a priority when he returned to UK in January.

"It was Coen coming back, building that relationship with him. They've got something special going on over there with the offense. I just wanted to be a part of it," Boley said about why he picked Kentucky. "I feel like I grew up a Kentucky fan. I've always bled blue since I was young. It's definitely just going to be nice to represent everyone out here that's supported me."

If Coen had not returned to lead the UK offense, Boley probably would be playing in the Southeastern Conference but not at Kentucky.

"Tennessee was ahead for a while," Boley admitted. "Michigan, all those top five schools, Florida State, they all really made a push for me and they all recruited me really hard."

Boley started working months ago to position himself to be an early graduate so he could enroll at UK in January. His father, Scott, said it was not always easy to graduate early at private schools.

"He got some online stuff to do this summer but he's almost a 4.0 (grade-point average) student. His idea was to find the perfect fight and if it was better to be a 2024 recruit, fine," Scott Boley said. "For Kentucky, he feels like being a 2024 guy



Pitcher Alex Degen was named to the SEC Community Service Team for a third time and has over 425 volunteer hours in his UK career. (UK Athletics Photo)

is the right move."

How does John Calipari view his future? That was a question asked by college basketball broadcaster/reporter John Fanta during a recent interview with the Kentucky coach.

Here is how Calipari answered: "I've got six years on a contract. Will I stay longer? I don't know. But I want to be here. It hasn't changed. The best players still want to come here. I don't blame those who don't want to come here, I don't make it personal," Calipari told Fanta.

"I'm at Kentucky, which is an unbelievable stage. Every year we are here, we have a shot to win a national title. I look at this run and say, 'Let's do some special things.' The families, my appreciation for them is they trust me with their child. If it was the rudger of this, I wouldn't be doing this. ...

"You've got to know every arena we go in is sold out. Why? Because they've got a chance to beat Kentucky today. My commitment to my team: 'Let's ruin their weekend.'" ***

Alex Afari played in

all 13 games for Kentucky last season with three starts. He had 21 tackles, three tackles for loss, one sack and one quarterback hurry. However, there's not been a lot of hype about the defensive back from Cincinnati going into his sophomore season.

Afari, a four-star recruit and top 225 player nationally in his recruiting class, is "just not being talked about enough" according to former UK all-SEC running back Anthony White who now has a podcast and a Sunday morning radio show in Lexington.

"Afari does a lot of things very well but there might be some things about playing in space and schematic things holding him back," White said. "It's very hard to find a guy who can play in the box and take on blocks and also cover in space. Those guys are rare."

"He's a very athletic guy but he has some work to do. However, he could be that hybrid player that does not have to cover a lot in space because he is kind of a tweeter right now."

White credits Kentucky defensive coordinator Brad White with being versatile enough to adapt to what players do best. "Brad White does not get nearly enough

credit. If a player has a weakness, he schemes around to get the best out of his guy," Anthony White said. "That's why he never really gets caught with his pants down because he schemes for what he has and puts guys in the best position to make plays."

Kentucky baseball goes into this week's SEC Tournament with a 36-17 record (16-14 SEC) and assured of a spot in the NCAA Tournament.

Pitcher Alex Degen recently was named to the SEC Community Service Team for the third time in his career. Degen has volunteered 175 hours of work with the Ronald McDonald House, more than 100 hours of work with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and more than 150 hours of work for other various outreaches. He is also a member of UK's prestigious Frank G. Ham Society of Character.

The UK baseball player was also one of two UK students to receive UK's highest honor for humanitarian efforts — the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award. The Sullivan Award recognizes those "who exhibit Sullivan's ideals of heart, mind, and conduct as evince a spirit of love for and helpfulness to other men and women."

The New Jersey native recently medically retired from baseball but stayed with the team as a student assistant coach. He finished his career with a 3-1 record, one save and 4.30 ERA in three seasons.

He graduated with a graduate certificate in nonprofit management from the Martin School of Public Policy and an undergraduate certificate in financial planning from the Gatton College of Business and Economics. He earned a BA degree in social work in 2021 from the College of Social Work and a BS in business administration in 2022 from the Gatton College of Business and Economics.