

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD FINALISTS

Kelsey Hargis

Community Enrichment Officer, Independence Bank

Biography

Kelsey Hargis is a native of Henderson, Kentucky, and a dedicated public servant, banker, and entrepreneur committed to fostering community and growth. She currently holds the position of Community Enrichment Officer at Independence Bank, where she works with nonprofits, local businesses, and civic organizations.



Kelsey also serves Henderson as a City Commissioner. Earning the most votes, she holds the title of Mayor Pro Tempore and is the only woman serving on the commission. Through this leadership, she emphasizes collaboration, strategic planning, and preservation of Henderson's character. Kelsey's civic engagement also includes her involvement in signature community events like Bluegrass in the Park, one of the Southeast's "Top 20 Signature Events," celebrated for its showcase of bluegrass heritage and folklife.

In recognition of her impact and leadership, Kelsey was honored as a "20 Under 40" recipient in Henderson, joining a distinguished group of young professionals making a difference in the region.

Beyond her public and civic roles, Kelsey helps with the family bourbon business. Her husband Zeb and brother-in-law Zach co-founded Silk Velvet Whiskey, a revival of the historic Henderson bourbon originally crafted in 1880. Their work pays tribute to the region's bourbon legacy while infusing new energy into Henderson's entrepreneurial landscape.

A graduate of the University of Southern Indiana, Kelsey remains deeply committed to guiding Henderson into its next chapter, one that honors the past, invests in the present, and embraces bold ideas for the future.

Why Should This Nominee Be Recognized as Kentucky's Young Professional of the Year?

Kelsey Hargis embodies what it means to be an outstanding young professional: she leads with purpose, serves with consistency, and uses every role she holds to strengthen the community around her.

A Henderson native, Kelsey has built an impressive record of leadership spanning the public, private, nonprofit, and civic sectors. Professionally, she serves as Community Enrichment Officer at Independence Bank, working alongside nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations to foster meaningful growth and connection. In public service, she serves as a Henderson City Commissioner and Mayor Pro Tem, bringing a collaborative and forward-thinking approach to decisions shaping her hometown's future.

Kelsey's commitment to service extends far beyond her professional responsibilities. She currently serves as Board Chair of the Henderson Chamber of Commerce, Treasurer for Bluegrass in the Park, a Rotary member, and a longtime Bank On instructor. Her previous service includes leadership with Henderson Tourism, Habitat for Humanity, Henderson Vision, GRADD's Feed Seniors Now program, and other community initiatives. Through these efforts, she has helped secure funding for local organizations, advance beautification projects, provide financial education, support seniors in need, and strengthen some of Henderson's most treasured community traditions.

Her leadership has earned recognition as the Henderson Chamber's Ambassador of the Year, a 20 Under 40 recipient, and the 2025 HCHS Outstanding Young Alumnus.

What distinguishes Kelsey, however, is not the number of titles she holds but the impact behind them. She represents a generation of Kentucky leaders who understand that professional success and community service can, and should, go hand in hand. Kelsey is helping shape a stronger Henderson and, in doing so, exemplifies the leadership, initiative, and commitment worthy of Kentucky's Young Professional of the Year.