

October 21, 2021

TO: Chris Bentzel,  
Christian County Public Schools

FROM: Scott Jennings, Steve Bryant, Kaylee Price, and Kirk Hilbrecht  
RunSwitch Public Relations

RE: Strategic Communications Services for Christian County Public Schools

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Thank you for considering RunSwitch PR to be Christian County Public Schools' strategic communications partner. We are Kentucky's largest and most connected public relations firm; our team has decades of experience helping clients position ideas and deliver effective messages to core audiences. We're prepared to deliver results for you in two key areas: strong messaging and effective tactics, with an eye toward helping the school district be fully transparent about the coming merger. We are fully invested in your goal of properly positioning the new school with the public and branding it the way it deserves.

It is imperative for the district to effectively deliver accurate and informative public messages, ensure transparency, and provide regular communications with key audiences (taxpayers, parents, faculty, local political and civic structure, etc.) as the high school merger project continues. Our campaign strategy, which will be mapped out by identifying and calendarizing important touchstones in the project's development, will define and communicate your plans and progress to district stakeholders. We want to lead the local conversation about the new school—proactively framing the conversation—and never let others define what you are doing and why.

Fortunately, little creative framing is required. The high school merger project will ensure Christian County is home to Kentucky's premier, state-of-the-art high school, providing students with unparalleled academic and athletic opportunities for years to come. Simply put, this will be the best high school facility in Kentucky, and it should be presented to the community as such.

Our mission will be to help you effectively tell this story and share with the public the long-term benefits to Christian County. Additionally, there's a story to tell about the way the school administration plans to pay for the project which should communicate to local taxpayers a level of creativity that goes beyond anything the community has had before. No tax increases, just leadership when it counts.

To help support the district in the coming months, RunSwitch PR will provide the following services:

#### **Strategic Branding and Positioning of the New School**

It is important that everyone in school leadership – from administration to school board members – delivers a clear and consistent message about the merger. We will help you craft the new school brand and overall campaign message, explaining the reasons behind it while also laying out your vision for its future success. We will carefully craft talking points and communications materials (fact sheets, FAQ's, press releases, web copy, etc.) that can be used to answer questions on a range of topics, from academics, to sports, to facilities, to decisions about staffing and administration.

Throughout the project, we will serve as your strategic communications advisors to ensure effective, transparent, and timely delivery of information to the community. We believe in transparency, speed, and accuracy when dealing with the media and the public and advise our clients to adopt that mindset.

Key deliverables will include:

- Provide strategic communications guidance to district leadership throughout the merger process.
- Assist the district in developing a name for the new high school.
- Produce a one-pager and other marketing materials describing the project to be distributed in the community.
- Craft an elevator speech and talking points for district officials to use when discussing the merger.
- Generate editorial content to be shared via district and school newsletters, local media, direct mail, etc.
- Create regular social media content to engage and inform key audiences, and to combat misinformation.
- Potential Extra Fee-Based Services are available in-house via RunSwitch's state-of-the-art production studio.

Learn more here: [Bluegrass Media Lab](#)

- **Project Public Information Hub Web Page** that will encompass all information regarding the merger including new building renderings, project overview, frequently asked questions, third-party testimonials in support of the project, etc. (\$3,000- \$5,000 depending on functionality needs)
- **Video Overview** of the merger that provides an easy way to show off the exciting future of Christian County High School because of the ongoing merger. (\$3,000-\$5,000 to build such a video using new video imagery and digital graphics)

### **Media Engagement**

RunSwitch will help you properly position the project in the Christian County community. We will equip district officials with the materials and know-how to educate reporters and maintain regular communications with relevant press. We will provide third party advocates with opportunities to show support.

Key deliverables will include:

- Build a comprehensive messaging and marketing project timeline.
- Provide strategic guidance on press matters and assist district leadership in engaging with media.
- Media train key district officials who may interact with the press or present at public meetings.
- Highlight community support for the merger. Whether it's making social media posts, asking questions at school board meetings, submitting letters to the editor or even just chatter at the local basketball game, ensuring others in the community have the tools necessary to help tell your story is essential to the strategy. As you identify third party advocates (local businesses, parents, alumni, political leaders, etc.) we will arm them with the messaging and opportunities needed to spread your message.
- Should the need for a paid media campaign arise, we are ready to execute that as well with full in-house capabilities (could be highly targeted digital engagement or direct mail, for instance).

### **Crisis Communications Support**

RunSwitch will become an integral part of your leadership team as we respond to any crisis that may arise. Our "war room" mentality and rapid response protocols mean that unexpected curveballs will never sidetrack your merger project.

Key deliverables will include:

- Ongoing strategic communications counsel.
- Rapid fire "war room" response to quickly handle issues and problems.
- Draft statements as needed to respond to public concerns.
- Preparing district officials to engage with the community at school board meetings and in other public settings.

### **De Facto Communications Department**

RunSwitch PR welcomes the opportunity to serve the district as its de facto communications department. We understand the overriding issue is properly positioning the new high school, but we recognize that other issues may arise. We stand ready to advise the school's leadership on any communications matter. We are happy to handle media inquiries and develop strategic communications products and plans for the district as needed.

### **Budget**

RunSwitch is ready to engage immediately and support Christian County Public Schools. We recommend a monthly retainer of \$6,000 (October 25, 2021, through March 30, 2022) to provide the full level of support outlined above. Any additional expenditures, including website and video development and production, would require an additional expenditure. We look forward to helping you achieve the district's important communications objectives.

Please find additional information below about our firm and the team of public relations and public affairs professionals with the experience needed to help you succeed.



## OUR FIRM

RunSwitch is a full-service, strategic communications agency and the largest public relations firm in Kentucky. We serve well-known names in corporate America and many organizations across Kentucky and the nation who trust us to handle tough and sensitive issues. Our diverse team comes from politics, government, corporate communications, nonprofits, and media. RunSwitch is engaged in *more* conversations with *more* decision makers, *more* business and community leaders and *more* journalists than any firm in the state. We handle issues, frame messaging, stage events, drive media (traditional and social), create advertising campaigns and help clients solve problems. We are fast, accurate, have a bias to action and always *deliver results*.

## OUR WORK

The RunSwitch team has been an integral part of winning efforts on behalf of some of the highest profile issues in the state and region. We are writers, storytellers, and leaders for organizations who need top-level communications counsel. We have built expertise and credibility with key stakeholders and media outlets to ensure our clients' messages are heard. Clients like the **Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, North American Stainless, Kentucky Farm Bureau, Churchill Downs, Kentucky Electric Cooperatives, Century Aluminum, the Kentucky Retail Federation, Norwegian Cruise Lines, Certis, Unity Aluminum, and the Kentucky Beverage Association** trust our team to tell their story and navigate issues. Below are a few recent examples of our award-winning work:

- **Independent School District** – Recently, leadership at a well-respected independent school district in Kentucky came under fire for what was characterized as poor decision making by a small, but vocal, group of community members. RunSwitch, alongside the school board, created a crisis communications strategy that allowed the district to tell its own story, diminishing the impact of the half-baked poppycock being spread by others. We created messaging, wrote a speech, developed Q&A's, drafted social media, and prepared the leadership to effectively deliver the message. The district has moved on from this issue and continues to excel.
- **Topgolf Louisville** – Our firm is no stranger to advising clients with new (and sometimes controversial) issues. Our strategic communications work for Topgolf as they seek to open in Louisville provides an excellent recent example of how we've helped move an issue forward that had a small but vocal group of opposition. All legislative and court bodies have ruled in favor of this project.
- **Century Aluminum** – RunSwitch helped this major manufacturer in Hancock County manage sensitive labor relations issues while also keeping the community informed on the progress of closely-watched negotiations. We had previously worked with Century and other major west Kentucky manufacturers on matters related to proposed utility rate increases, major groundbreakings, and building community support to protect critical local jobs and investment.
- **Historical Horse Racing** – When the KY Supreme Court ruled in 2020 against historical horse racing in Kentucky, RunSwitch quickly activated to ensure our clients in the industry—including Churchill Downs which recently launched Oak Grove Racing & Gaming in Christian County—had a plan to make the Kentucky General Assembly act. Working alongside the lobby team, we utilized earned media, social media, advertising, grassroots coalition building, testimonials, and more to humanize the issue and make sure elected officials understood the jobs and livelihoods that were at stake. We delivered a victory for our clients and the legislation was signed into law.

## YOUR RUNSWITCH TEAM

### Kirk Hilbrecht – Vice-President (Project Manager)



Kirk has extensive experience working with public and parochial school mergers and is a trusted advisor to local schools in his community. He is the former Chief of Public Affairs for the Kentucky National Guard and a veteran of both the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force with more than 20 years' experience public relations and crisis communications. Kirk currently serves as Mayor of Crossgate, KY.

### Scott Jennings – Founding Partner (Project Senior Communications Strategist)



Scott Jennings, a native of Dawson Springs, KY, and a RunSwitch Founding Partner, is one of the best-known public relations and crisis communications operatives in the U.S. Scott provides strategic counsel at the state, national, and international levels, and is a top advisor to U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell, Cong. Brett Guthrie, KY Attorney General Daniel Cameron, and dozens of other officeholders who rely on his unique ability to frame messages and win policy debates. He is an adjunct professor at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. National media outlets and RunSwitch clients keep Scott on speed dial for his strategic insights and ability to craft core messages on a range of issues.

### Steve Bryant – Founding Partner



Steve Bryant has nearly two decades' experience in high-level PR agency work, specializing in heavily regulated industries like energy, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. He has strong media, government and business community relationships and is skilled at telling impactful client stories. BrightSpring, Pfizer, Waste Management, and Churchill Downs are just some of the recent clients on Steve's resume.

### Kaylee Price – Senior Vice-President



Kaylee Price offers clients expertise in strategic communications and public affairs. Her brass-tacks approach to grassroots advocacy, crisis communications and public relations makes her a sought-after consultant for clients looking to deliver a strong message. She serves as campaign manager for Cong. Brett Guthrie, a variety of local elected officials, and was named one of KY Gazette's Notable Women in Kentucky Politics and Government. She regularly consults on development projects throughout KY.

**Chris Nation – Vice-President, Digital**



Chris Nation has more than a decade of experience implementing advertising, brand development, public relations and digital campaigns for clients. Chris focuses on using digital strategy and emerging technologies to amplify public affairs and public relations efforts for clients. Recognized for his work in the digital space, he was invited to join the International Academy of the Visual Arts (IAVA), Interactive Media Council, and the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences (IADAS).

**Dixon Fletcher –Bluegrass Media Lab Director**



A former television producer and photojournalist, Dixon manages the video production arm of RunSwitch. Since joining RunSwitch and overseeing the firm's new Bluegrass Media Lab, Dixon has spearheaded a variety of video projects for clients including Churchill Downs, the Kentucky Beverage Association, political campaigns, and church and nonprofits. He will shoot and produce any video content needed for this project.