

2019 Who We Are

Wells
County
INDIANA

A Special Publication of
The News-Banner



What parents like about the Northern Wells Community Schools

From preschool through high school...
parents know that
we equip students for success.

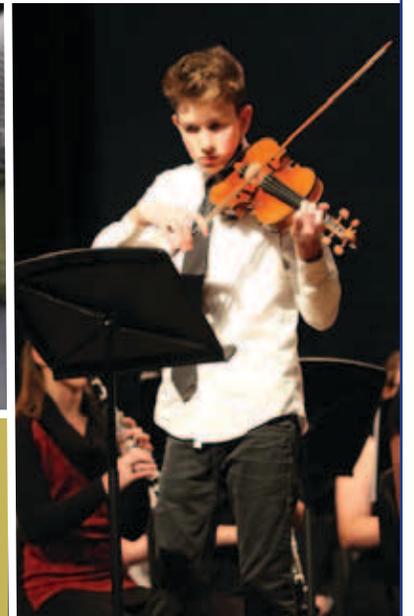
Parents like the passion of the staff, the personal attention students receive, and feeling that their child is safe at school.

Parents praise our...

- ◆ preschool programming
- ◆ challenging curriculum (including AP classes, career & technical training, and dual credit courses to earn college credit)
- ◆ up-to-date-technology
- ◆ fine arts programming
- ◆ athletic programs
- ◆ extra-curricular opportunities for students at all grade levels



NWCS



**We can equip
your child for
success.**

To get started,
all you have to do is
call us at
260-622-4125.

You can also visit
us at
www.nwcs.k12.in.us

CENTRAL OFFICE
312 N Jefferson
Ossian, IN 46777
260-622-4125

NORWELL HIGH SCHOOL
1100 E US 224
Ossian, IN 46777
260-543-2213

NORWELL MIDDLE SCHOOL
1100 E US 224
Ossian, IN 46777
260-543-2218

LANCASTER CENTRAL ELEMENTARY
275 E Jackson
Bluffton, IN 46714
260-565-3135

OSSIAN ELEMENTARY
213 S Jefferson Street
Ossian, IN 46777
260-622-4179

INTRODUCTION

Our collective stories tell us ...

There are many impressive people who live among us. This isn't news, we all know someone who fits that description. Some people have bigger than life personalities and *everyone* knows their story. Some people are introverts, happy to live in the background without the spotlight.

They have great stories as well but you have to work to drag them into the light of day.

I fully acknowledge that I am closer to the former than the latter.

What I am is a storyteller. Spend ten minutes conversing with me and I'm sure you'll hear one or two.

It's a gift. It's a curse. It all depends on who you ask. I've only recently come to accept this about myself. As a younger person, I had been one who wanted to be in



Doug Brown
President
and Publisher

the shadows. Unseen and unheard. That was a lifetime ago however.

I don't just love telling stories, I love stories. I don't care who tells them. Who We Are is full of them. This publication is full of big personalities and introverts. All of them have great stories that we're lucky to share.

I've been able to meet tons (literally and figuratively) of great people in the two and a half years since I showed up on the Wells County scene. I couldn't begin to guess just how many. Some of my new-old friends are in these pages but there are just as many brand new people that I can't wait to meet.

I'm really excited that we have this opportunity to share these stories.

From one story lover to another. I hope you enjoy the 2019 Who We Are publication. ♦

... to take time to celebrate!

I'm not Pollyanna. First, you understand, I'm the wrong gender. Second, I like to think I have a balanced outlook on the world. Pollyanna Whittier (I looked it up), the protagonist of the classic children's story from the early 20th century and the Disney movie that followed it several years later, had an unflinching and unflinching positive outlook on life.

Nevertheless, I think I'm a positive person. I enjoy what I do. I have fun with friends.

But more than four decades in the news business has left me cynical, often by necessity. Ask the extra question. Assume nothing. If you take anyone's word for something, make sure you quote them exactly right.

Too much of that can give you a Grinch complex — you know, where one's heart is "two sizes too small."



Dave Schultz
Editor

So here we are at our annual "Who We Are" compilation. For our reporting staff, this is hard work. It's also fun work. We have the space, and we carve out the time, to talk to people we find interesting. We write about what's being done in our community and who's helping make it a better place and why they're doing it.

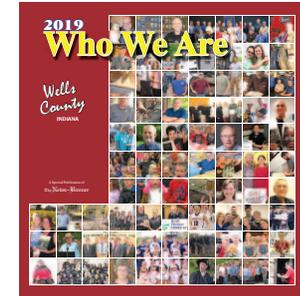
For me, this is a tonic. I'm involved with the process — my byline is on five stories — and I'm happy to contribute, even if it means a few sleepless nights and evenings away from home to get it done.

When I'm done with my writing, and my colleagues are done with theirs, I sit back a bit and relax. I read about the people I've heard about and read what some terrific writers — and we have several of them here — have put together.

It's time to celebrate. Join us. ♦

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Growth requires housing.....	3
Plaza nears completion.....	3
School upgrades progress	4
Centennial Celebrations!	
American Legion Post 111	6
Bluffton Rotary Club	8
Craigville Appliance.....	10
The BHS Comet	11
Pathways challenges.....	12
The e-learning curve	14



16-45 Who We Are
A collection of profiles, stories and photos paints a Wells County collage.

46-49 An Honor Roll
A glimpse at our area's commerce through the years.

Fifty years and counting.....	50
Archbold-Wilson Park progress.....	51
Revolutionary seed sampling.....	52
Library adding mobile hot spots	53
Grads' plans for the future.....	54

BY THE NUMBERS

28,206

Population of Wells County,

11,924

Housing Units

\$55,221

Median Household Income (ranking 32nd among the state's 92 counties, putting Wells County well above the state average.

\$40,476

Per capita Income (ranking 41st)

\$121,000

Median Value
Owner-Occupied Homes

\$662

Median rent, monthly

91.3%

Adults with H.S. education (10th)

18.6%

with B.A. degree or higher (35th)

4,996

School enrollment

Population of
Incorporated Communities
in Wells County:

Bluffton 10,110

Ossian..... 3,389

Markle 1,086
(455 in Wells County)

Zanesville 616
(485 in Wells Co.)

Uniondale 312

Poneto..... 172

Vera Cruz..... 86

A special publication of



News-Banner Publications, Inc.
125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton IN 46714
(260) 824-0224 • 1-800-579-7476

Newsroom

David R. Schultz, editor • daves@news-banner.com

Advertising

Jean Bordner, sales manager • jeanb@news-banner.com

www.News-Banner.com

email@news-banner.com

Source: Indiana Business Research Center and U.S. Census Bureau



THE H^oI DIFFERENCE

H^oI MANAGEMENT turns properties into thriving communities.

NOW LEASING!



10 Pine Grove Court, Bluffton, IN 46714
T. 260-565-4241 F. 260-565-3903
pinegrove@hi-mgmt.com
www.hi-pinegrove.com

718 North State Rd 9, Columbia City, IN 46725
T. 260-244-3666 F. 260-244-9665
northridge@hi-mgmt.com
www.hi-northridge.com



600 N. Colfax Street, Warsaw, IN 46580
T. 574-269-4334 F. 574-269-7764
ccolfax@hi-mgmt.com
www.hi-colfax.com



PAH Partnership for Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing. Priceless Communities.

Wells County is growing economically. What's needed is housing.

By DAVE SCHULTZ

Chad Kline's busy. Very busy.

"I am probably the most opposite of bored right now that I can be," says Kline, Wells County's economic development director.

What's keeping him so busy?

"It's the continuation of growth that's taking place at 20/20," he said, referring to the expansion of the 20/20 Custom Molded Plastics facility in the Decker Industrial Park. "It's the continuation of potential development that's coming about from other companies within the community. It's the opportunity of adding additional space that's coming from the Midland (LLC warehouse) project, adding 200,000 square feet there. It's doing everything to make sure that our companies are remaining successful and they're getting all the resources and needs to maintain that success here in Wells County."



Chad Kline is the economic development director for Wells County.

Indiana generally is given high ratings for business opportunity, and one of the significant reasons for that is the low cost of living. It doesn't cost a lot to set up shop in Indiana.

That creates a challenge for Kline.

"When we put together incentive packages, I always like to talk through (them)



A scene that local government and business leaders would like to see more often in the county: a new home under construction. A recent report by an outside consulting firm identifies a housing shortage particularly for mid-range-priced homes, such as this nearly finished new home on Farmington Drive. (News-Banner photo)

because our incentive packages, on paper, don't always look like the most," he said. "Because our taxes are so low, when you're giving someone an abatement on something that they don't have to pay in the first place, it doesn't look like they're getting as much. But they also don't pay as much. We try to tell the true story, that our total package of savings is *this*, but you will only have to pay *this* during the same period."

Kline has been Wells County's economic devel-

opment director for three years, and he's seen the emphasis change. It's no longer just jobs. It's getting people to live here.

When asked what is the foremost challenge he faces, he has a quick response.

"Housing," he said. "And housing. And if I were going to round out my top three, it's housing."

It's particularly vexing to him in terms of economic development because it is something he has

(Continued on Page 4)

Parlor City Plaza will soon be a reality

By MARK MILLER

It's part of the plan. To grow Wells County, "quality of life" is a critical component. The results of three years of work on a project to directly address that goal — meetings, surveys, dreaming, concepts, drawings and then fundraising — is all coming together during the summer of 2019. "Parlor City Plaza" has been chosen as the official name of the park area that will occupy what had been the courthouse plaza and the old JC Penney building in downtown Bluffton.

The plaza has been the centerpiece of the Bluffton NOW! revitalization group, which was first organized five years ago. The group raised \$1.1 million for the plaza. Bluffton NOW! leader Mike Lautzenheiser says the plaza will be ready for this year's Bluffton Free Street Fair in September.

Meanwhile, the group has had other accomplishments in their short life span to date, and is looking beyond the plaza's completion.

- They continue to promote the downtown area and lend any possible assistance to businesses that want to open or move into a downtown building. Earlier this year, they reported that the occupancy rate had increased from about 70 to 81 percent. Lautzenheiser believes that number will continue to go up.

- The \$100,000 in matching funds for downtown improvements — the Community Reinvestment Program — has all been commit-

(Continued on Page 4)



The state of "Parlor City Plaza" was piles of rubble and a basement waiting to be filled in when Bluffton NOW! leader Mike Lautzenheiser checked on the site in late May. The centerpiece project of the revitalization group's efforts will be ready for use during the 2019 Bluffton Free Street Fair in September. (Photo by Mark Miller)

Almost \$15 million being invested in school facilities

Norwell projects include two buildings and football field; Southern Wells' wastewater plant to be finished by August

By DEVAN FILCHAK

Two school districts are now undergoing major renovations.

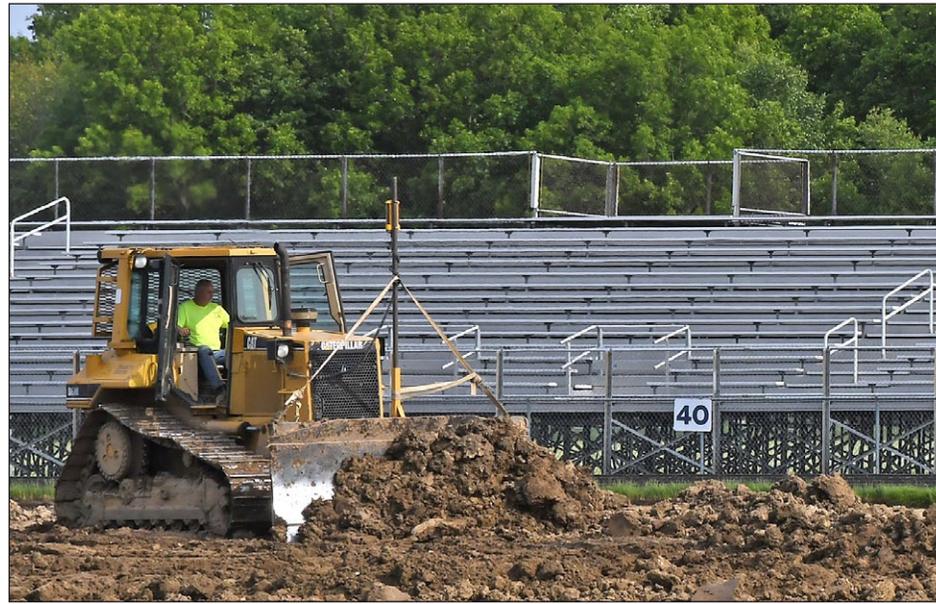
Northern Wells Community Schools has approved two major projects. The first project was initially projected at \$5,141,039 for improvements made at Ossian Elementary, which includes the HVAC system, the roof, the electrical service and distribution panels in place of those that are worn out and undersized, the lights and controls with more efficient fixtures, the branch circuits, and the ceiling grid and tiles.

At the high school, the projected \$5,111,650 project includes replacing the roofs over the gymnasium and auditorium, the HVAC system in the D-wing, the HVAC system at the gym and auditorium, the basketball court, which is worn down to the nail heads, and 11 doors in the D-wing.

Additionally, the school board decided to replace the grass on the football field with artificial turf, which will be done by Sprinturf of Daniel Island, S.C., at a price of \$947,027. It includes the dual-fiber turf for the multi-use football field, a 10-year warranty and a shock pad.

All of the projects have been bid, and the overall cost was even less than the school board had initially planned on. An important factor that Superintendent Scott Mills shared with the school board is to keep each of the two projects below the threshold of \$5,170,000, so neither project would legally qualify for a petition/remonstrance should opposition to either project arise.

The petition and remonstrance process



A bulldozer removes the west 40-yard line of the Norwell High School Courtyard June 3 as construction is underway at Norwell to replace the grass field with artificial turf. (Photo by Glen Werling)

would give taxpayers the opportunity to vote on the projects. If the projects were defeated in the vote, the school board would have to wait one full year to discuss or propose any of the projects again.

Work on the football field and the resurfacing of the tennis courts are already underway. Norwell High School Athletic Director Kelby Weybright said at a June board meeting that he is working on keeping people updated on the progress on the projects through Twitter.

The gym floor replacement at the high school is delayed because the HVAC

equipment has to be moved across the gym floor, so there's no point in replacing it until after that equipment arrives, Mills said. For that reason, he said the floor likely won't be started until mid-July, and volleyball games likely won't be able to be played at NHS until Labor Day.

The new door replacements in the D-wing may run into the school year, but Mills said that he doesn't think that will be an issue.

"We may run into the school year to finish some of these projects, but we don't really see that as a concern," Mills

said on June 4.

As far as the projects at Ossian Elementary, things will get started with the roof replacement. The roof replacement hadn't started yet as of June 4, but Mills said it is due to crews being unavailable. The roof replacement was expected to start on June 17.

He said the plan with the roof is to start on the end of the building where grades kindergarten through second are and then work in areas where students are not. Mills said they will not have crews working on areas where students are, so timing and planning are key.

It will likely be next summer before the heating and cooling are replaced and the ceiling and light work will start.

Southern Wells has a round of projects underway and a round of projects they are preparing to do.

As of early June, Superintendent Steve Darnell said the new wastewater treatment plant is about 75 percent complete and will likely be finished by Aug. 1.

The wastewater treatment plant has been an ongoing issue for some time, and it left the board deadlocked on a 2-2 vote on approving it in 2018. The treatment plant will allow Southern Wells to have complete control over the treatment.

There is a lot of work being done on the school campus over summer as well. Currently, the roof is being replaced, which means the ceilings are coming down and will be replaced as well.

There is also HVAC being installed in Buildings A and B, which covers the high school and the building with the cafeteria and stage. Previously, all of those class-

Housing needs

(Continued from Page 3)

no control over. "I have no control over the developer choosing the community," he said. "I have no control over the person selling the land. I have somewhat of a control on getting the utilities to them. That's the easiest part, the utilities.

"The hardest part is the other two — getting a developer convinced that this is a community worth building in."

The problem is that Wells County has lower-income subsidized housing, which is good for absolute entry-level jobs. As the individual works harder and gains more income, they lose the subsidy on their housing and have to move out.

Kline estimates that Wells County has a housing gap for people earning between \$35,000 a year and \$60,000 a year. It's tough for people to find and hold a job when they're priced out of the housing market.

There are options, but they are complicated and new — residential tax increment financing districts, for instance, which could do for housing what TIF districts have done for industrial and commercial concerns. There is a new tactic called "opportunity zones," which encourage investment from people who otherwise would have their money eaten up in capital gains taxes.

Over all of this, Wells County and the 10 other counties involved in the Northeast Indiana Regional Partner-

ship are trying to increase the area's population to 1 million people by 2030. Putting the economic development pieces together — jobs, investment, housing, and so forth — is the challenge for the time.

When it comes to housing, Kline paints a picture that shows Wells County in a classic Catch-22.

"It's the chicken-and-the egg problem," he said. "You hope to build a product so they'll come, but you would like to have them come so you can build the product, but they can't come because you don't have the product built."

It's a problem.

"We've got to get creative," he said. "We've got to think outside of the box." ♦

Parlor City Plaza

(Continued from Page 3)

ted for 2019. They are already fielding inquiries for 2020.

• Fundraising efforts, which double as community development opportunities, continue to expand. The first Olde 303 Music Festival was held June 1; next up is a block party preceding a concert at Kehoe Park in July, a car show in August and the second Chili Walk this fall.

What's next for Bluffton NOW!?

Lautzenheiser says the group is considering a community survey to help guide the next projects. Ideas at the moment focus on arts-related projects — perhaps a mural on the new east-facing wall of the plaza or in other downtown locations.

Originally, the group had also included the Interurban Trail extension in its plans, but that has been turned over to a newly formed group, Wells County Trails. ♦

rooms had their own individual units with a vent underneath the window, so the centralized upgrade will make a big difference, Darnell said.

Work is nearly complete on correcting the sewer line below the elementary school library. The sewer lines are all from the original building that was burnt down in 1992, Darnell said. When the building was rebuilt, they put a slab over the lines and continued to use the old sewer lines.

That has created an issue since there is a dip that gets clogged frequently. Darnell said water will flow much better once that work is complete.

The high school office is being remodeled as well, which will include a conference room and an office for the school resource office, Deputy James Agler of the Wells County Sheriff's Department.

The completion of these projects marks the time to nail down a new round of projects, Darnell said. Board members have been discussing a list of projects, which started at \$12 million.

By the May school board meeting, the list had been trimmed to \$5.8 million. That includes updating the agriculture building; exterior fascia on Buildings A, B, and C; resurfacing the tennis court area for bus parking; replacing bathroom fixtures and hand dryers in the elementary school; roof replacement at the elementary school; a new elementary HVAC system; a preschool room with a bathroom; painting the gym, corridors, door frames and restrooms at the elementary school; a cafeteria remodel that includes new cold and dry food storage space; HVAC in the Raiderdome; new Raiderdome entrances; a generator for power outages; replacement wooden floors in the Raiderdome; and volleyball standards at the elementary and high schools. The school board has been working to thin down the list, and the suggestions of a new agriculture building and auxiliary gym that were initially discussed appear to be put on hold.

Northern Wells worked to keep the



A 6-and-a-half-foot trench was dug into the floor of the Southern Wells Elementary library to redo the sewer lines to remove a dip in the existing line. Superintendent Steve Darnell said there were issues with the line clogging previously. (Photo provided)

projects low enough to avoid the petition and remonstrance process, and Southern Wells is in the same boat. However, the threshold for Southern Wells to stay below is \$4.3 million since the threshold is based on assessed value.

Darnell said he planned on asking the board for a final list during the June 18 meeting.

He said he knows there's a lot to do at Southern Wells, but it's worth it.

"We've got to invest in this facility, and it's clearly time," he said. ♦

*Kerry Gentis, Manager
Tom Gentis, Asst. Manager*

**A Trusted Member of the Community for
Over 57 Years!**

- Alignment
- Air Conditioning
- Alternators
- Belts & Hoses
- Brakes
- Clutch & Transmission

- Electrical
- Emission
- Exhaust
- Fuel Injection
- Mufflers
- Starters
- Tires
- Tune Up

**1308 S. Main
Bluffton**

260-824-0418

Hours: Mon.-Fri. 7:30-5:00; Sat. 7:30-12 Noon



Actively Involved in the Community for More than a Century

OSSIAN | (260) 622-4141
BLUFFTON | (260) 824-6630

www.ossianstatebank.com

Goodwin - Cale & Harnish

MEMORIAL CHAPEL

A Tradition of Caring Since 1922

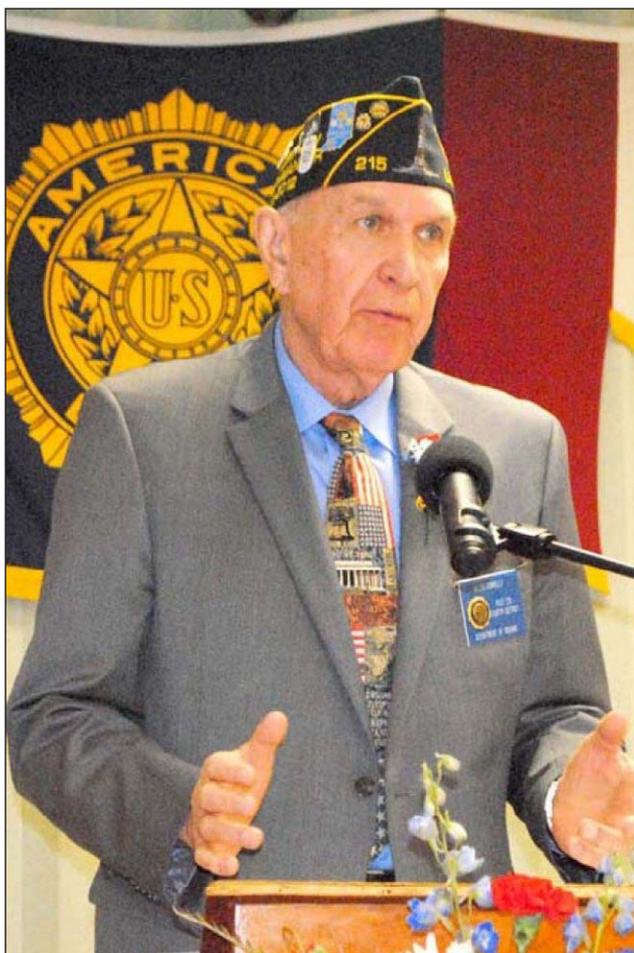
3220 East State Road 124 • Bluffton, IN 46714

Doug Cale • Mitch Harnish • Kaelin Brock

(260) 824-3852 | www.goodwincaleharnish.com

100 years in the making

American Legion Post 111
celebrates centennial



Allen Connelly speaks to a crowd at the American Legion Post 111 birthday dinner in the spring. He spoke on the history of the Legion, which celebrates 100 years this year.

By JESSICA BRICKER

A century ago, a group of World War I veterans gathered together in France in fellowship over a shared purpose: They had served the United States and defended her ideals.

Bluffton's Grover Sheets American Legion Post 111 was formed in the fall of 1919; its current home at 111 W. Washington St. was dedicated 75 years ago this summer.

At this year's Memorial Day service, Post Commander Ron Marshall said there were an estimated 500 to 600 members of the Post in 1949; today, only seven of those members remain.

And as Allen Connelly, leading candidate for the American Legion Department of Indiana commander, stated in his Legion birthday address this spring, the group's membership continues to decline — but the local post still tries to find ways to stay relevant in the community.

Connelly said he wished all posts were as active as the Bluffton post, citing Post 111's 100 percent membership during the spring count. On Memorial Day weekend, Post 111 celebrated the national organization's centennial with a car show and a family-friendly event featuring a patriotic band performance, a talk about World War I from County Historian Jim Sturgeon, face painting and food.

The event also featured "Remembering Our Fallen," a touring photo display that honors the state's military members who have died since Sept. 11, 2001. Marshall called it a sobering experience and estimated about 40 to 50 people signed the guest book.

Overall, Marshall is pleased with how the celebration went, even though the weather wasn't ideal and forced the awards inside. They sold out of hot dogs and had to

go buy more, and there were 65 entries in the car show. It's a celebration, he said, that only happens once in a lifetime.

Birthdays provide a chance for people to measure where they've been and where they're going, Connelly said in April.

He spoke on some highlights by the decade as he walked through the national organization's history and what it has accomplished since 1919.

For example, in the winter of 1943-1944, former National Commander Harry Colmery wrote on hotel stationary the first draft of what would become the GI Bill of Rights.

"This is still considered the Legion's single-greatest legislative achievement," Connelly said.

In the 1980s, the Legion donated \$1 million for the construction of the Vietnam memorial in Washington D.C. And in 2017, that summer's national convention led to the election of the Legion's first female national commander, Denise Rohan of Wisconsin.

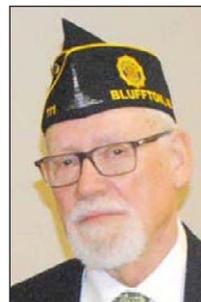
Connelly also said the Legion as a whole is faced with a challenge unlike any it has faced before.

"Our veteran population continues to decline," he said, "as does our membership."

Indiana's veteran population has dropped from 490,380 in 2013 to 409,836 in 2017, according to the latest figures provided to Connelly by Veterans Affairs. Wells County had 2,051 veterans in 2013, which dropped to 1,672 in 2017.

The projection Connelly's seen out to 2040 show a "straight decline."

Demographically, younger veterans aren't coming back to smaller communities after serving, he added,



Ron Marshall

What's in a name?

September 2018 marked 100 years since Pvt. Grover Sheets of Wells County died in World War I. He is often referred to as the county's first fatality of the war. Bluffton's American Legion Post 111 is named in his honor.

Sheets was born May 23, 1890, in Huntington, to Michael and Mary Sheets. They moved to Wells County when he was 6 months old and his family lived six miles west of Bluffton in Liberty Township.

He entered the Army March 29, 1918, in Bluffton. He was sent to Camp Taylor in Kentucky and arrived in France with Company M, 47th Infantry 4th Division in early June. His serial number was 2004981.

Sheets was killed in action in the Argonne Forest in September 1918. He was reportedly one of 11 from Wells County to die in the war and was one of 630 to serve.

A vote was taken Sept. 30, 1919, to affiliate a group of local WWI veterans with the American Legion and they "decided to name their post after the first Wells

County man killed in action."

On the front page of the Saturday, Nov. 23, 1918, Evening Banner and the Evening News, Sheets' death made headlines.

The Banner reported in that edition that Sheets' parents found out about their son's death the previous night. At age 28, he left behind an older brother Ozro and two younger brothers, Boyd and Homer.

The Evening News noted the cruel irony of the family's notification after the end of the war.

"The sad news of the death of their son came as a doubly severe blow and shock, in being thus received 11 days after the signing of the armistice and the cessation of hostilities, at a time when the parents were joining with the hundreds of thousands of parents throughout the land who have been rejoicing and returning



Grover Sheets

thanks over the end of the war and in the thought that their son would be permitted to return home to them," the newspaper said.

"The sympathy of the entire community, and particularly of others who have dear ones in France from who(m) they are anxiously awaiting word, is extended to the grief-stricken parents and other relatives."

Added the Banner: "The last word the family had from (Sheets) was a trench card written Sept. 24. They had a letter from him under the date of Sept. 22, and he stated that he had been in the trenches for two weeks and had been over the top (into battle) twice. He had also been in rest camp six weeks, after the strenuous work in the trenches."

The Banner also reported Sheets "was highly respected by all who knew him."

"He has been one of those boys who was doing his bit because he believed it to be his duty," the newspaper said. "The Banner has printed letters from him to his parents, and they have always held out hope of victory and of doing his duty, and glad to do it."

— Jessica Bricker

and the Legion has always lacked “market penetration” in urban areas. He also cited societal changes among the younger veterans.

“People communicate different; they socialize different. They don’t feel the need to join — (and) it’s not just the Legion, it’s all the veteran organizations, all the lodges. Everybody. Everybody’s membership has declined,” he said.

But he also said the Legion must focus on its mission to serve all veterans, adding he is confident they will find a solution to this challenge.

“As we celebrate 100 years of comradeship,” Connelly said, “let us look forward with courage and intelligence to the next 100. It is up to us and the time is now.”

Reflecting on the centennial, Marshall hopes that the Legion can keep going with strong leadership, starting at the local levels all the way up to the national level. He said most of the Legion’s dues go to the state and national departments to support lobbyists who work for veterans. The Legion’s aim is to improve the status of veterans through legislative efforts and other activities.

He hopes that when the time comes to pass the torch, younger veterans will be there to accept the responsibility. ♦



Cars line the Washington/Main Commons in Bluffton on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend as the American Legion Post 111 celebrated the national agency’s centennial.

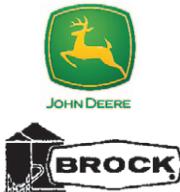


A band made up of performers from Southern Wells and Bluffton high schools perform patriotic music during American Legion Post 111’s centennial celebration May 25. (Photos by Jessica Bricker)

2018-2019 officers, American Legion Post 111

- Ron Marshall, commander
- Craig Mann, 1st vice commander
- Keith Krider, 2nd vice commander
- Dennis Morrison, 3rd vice commander
- Bob Buehl, adjutant
- Rodger Popplewell, finance officer
- Bryson “Gene” Bell, chaplain
- George Thomas, sergeant at arms
- James Dubach, assistant sergeant at arms
- Executive committee: Daniel Nickolson, Carl Pace Jr., Sam Aeschliman and Dan Courtney

SERVING THE NEEDS OF OUR CUSTOMERS WITH THE BEST POSSIBLE EQUIPMENT, PARTS AND SERVICE



SALES

- 16 Full Time Trained Salesmen

PARTS

- 11 Full Time Trained Parts Employees
- Very Large Stock of Common Parts
- Free Freight on Most 2 Day Special Orders
- Overnight Shipping Availability
- Genuine High Quality John Deere Parts

SERVICE

- 23 Factory Trained Service Technicians Specializing in Agricultural Equipment
- 5 Factory Trained Service Technicians Specializing in Commercial and Lawn & Garden Equipment
- A fleet of 23 Mobile Service Vehicles
- 7 Delivery Trucks
- Replacement Equipment Available When Yours is Down

FINANCING

- John Deere Financial



JOHN DEERE

TROXEL
EQUIPMENT
"Your Solutions Dealer"

E-mail:

troxel@troxelequipment.com www.troxelequipment.com

Website:

3 FULL SERVICE LOCATIONS

5068 E. 100N., BLUFFTON

1-800-876-9351

4777 W. 500 N., HUNTINGTON

1-888-876-9352

834 N. ST. RD. 13, WABASH

1-888-876-9353





This photo was taken at The Dutch Mill in June, 1965 at the installation of Howard Rich as president of the Bluffton Rotary Club. Front row, from left: Dr. Gil Huebner, Earl Dillon, Corvin Briner, John Micklitsch, Robert Cline, Howard Rich, Howard Ullman Jr., Dr. Richard Matzen, James Smith, Don Kaade, Richard Covault, Doyle Stern, James S. Jackson. Second Row: Fred Arend, Ray Renollet, Ware Baker, Dr. Truman Caylor, George Lautzenheizer, Lawrence Templin, W.C. Ratliff, Don Harris, Rev. Paul Flowers, Francis McFarren, Larry Wittwer, Loren Lobsiger. Standing: David Thompson, Pete Raber, Lloyd Griffiths, Don Rosie, John Flannigan, Ron Hilton, Cliff Baumgartner, Compton Rider (Honorary), Dr. James McPheeters, John Bender, Ancil Cotton, Richard Thieme, Lawrence Schlagenhaut, John Metz, Ed Metz, Dr. Harry Walko, John Mugg, Dale Myers, Max Markley, Roy Nowakowski, William Cline, Dr. Bruce Kephart, Herman Zepps, James D. Jackson, D. Neal Beaty. (Photo from Rotary archives)

Rotary Club celebrates a 'Century of Service'

By MARK MILLER

A century of service in Bluffton and Wells County was celebrated in early June, exactly 100 years after it had begun.

Paul Harris, an attorney, and three friends from different occupations founded Rotary in 1905 in Chicago. Their meetings were rotated from office to office, hence the name "Rotary." Their purpose was friendship and discussion of problems encountered in their separate businesses. They invited other members from different businesses and their club quickly grew.

The focus of those early meetings quickly turned to issues they identified in their community in which they could either improve or initiate new solutions, thus inventing the "service club."

The concept of Rotary was so popular that the 100th club was formed in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1914, and the 1,000th club was founded in York, England, in 1921.

In 1915, the Fort Wayne Rotary Club began working with smaller communities to encourage the expansion of Rotary. Wesley Puckett was assigned the Bluffton area. With the assistance of George Arnold and Will Gutilius, they met with numerous Bluffton community leaders, culminating in the formation of the Bluffton Rotary Club.

The club received a charter as the 516th Rotary Club in the world on June 6, 1919, with 25 members. The banquet was held at the Bliss Hotel where the club would hold its weekly meetings until 1961 when the hotel was closed.

Those charter members included a number of notable local business leaders, educators and attorneys. For example, the club's first president, William A. Patton, came to Bluffton to manage the iconic W.B. Brown Manufacturing firm and would later purchase the firm in partnership with fellow Rotarian

Morris McCray.

George Morris started a "five-and-dime store" that would eventually expand to 72 stores and merge with the G.C. Murphy Co.; Dr. Charles Caylor founded the Caylor-Nickel Clinic; J. Edwin Reynolds operated The Progress Store which would evolve into Progressive Card & Gift; John W. Carnall began a title company — these two businesses became closely identified with the city.

Rotary International, the umbrella organization under which all local clubs are chartered, was proactive in 1987 in opening the service organization's membership to women. Diane (Hickert) Witwer was the first female, accepted into the club that same year. Bette Erxleben became the club's first female president.

Exactly 100 years from that first meeting, the club held a celebration luncheon at the Arts, Commerce and Visitors Centre, hosting more than 100 people including current and former members along with spouses and guests including local business, school and community

There's More!

• Profiles of two long-time Bluffton Rotary Club's members are included in this edition: Howard Rich, page 30; Bette Erxleben, page 32.



Bluffton Mayor Ted Ellis, right, presents Bluffton Rotary Club President Andy Ault with a proclamation marking June 6, 2019 as "Bluffton Rotary Day" in the city to commemorate the service club's 100th anniversary. Ellis made the presentation as part of the special luncheon held June 6 at the Arts, Commerce and Visitors Centre. (Photo by Matt Day)



A number of former presidents of the Bluffton Rotary Club attended the Centennial Celebration June 6 at the Arts, Commerce & Visitors Centre. Seated, from left, Phil Swain, John McDonald, Steve Higgins, Bette Erxleben, Tess Dillman, Everett Goshorn, Bruce Miller and current president Andy Ault. Standing: Lee VonGuntzen, Mark Miller, Rich Beaver, Don Skinner, John Whicker, Mark Settlemyre, Howard Rich, Gary Boone, Jim Jackson, Michael Towne, Derek Myers, Jerry Reynolds, Jim Almdale and Alan Gunkel. Doyle Stern also attended the luncheon but was not available for the picture. (Photo by Matt Day)

Bluffton Rotary Club Officers

June 6, 1919

- William Patton, president
- William Kunkel, Sr., vice-president
- John Cottingham, secretary
- Ralph Todd, treasurer

June 6, 1969

- Ronald Adams, president
- Dr. Richard Matzen, vice-president
- Ray Renollet, secretary
- Clifton Baumgartner, treasurer

June 6, 2019

- Andy Ault, president
- Sid Schwartz, president-elect
- Doug Brown, vice-president
- Tim Babcock, secretary
- Phil Swain, treasurer

leaders.

Bluffton Mayor Ted Ellis declared June 6, 2019 “Bluffton Rotary Day,” noting that the club’s service has “permeated the whole community.”

Ellis, in reviewing the list of the 100 men and women who have served as the club president includes a number of remarkable community leaders, and the club has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to community projects and scholarships.

Two major projects in recent years include the stage at Kehoe Park and the stage at the new Parlor City Plaza.

The Kehoe Park project was completed in 2005 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of Rotary in Chicago. More than \$145,000 was raised by the club.

More recently, to commemorate the local club’s centennial, more than \$100,000 was raised to sponsor the stage at the new downtown plaza. ♦

Printing Mailing

- Carbonless Forms
- Business Cards
- Laser Checks
- Newsletters
- Envelopes
- Direct Mail
- Booklets
- Notepads
- Labels
- Brochures
- Stationery



Our Business is **PRINTING** for Your Business!

print 
source

260-824-3911 • eprintery.com
213 E. Perry St. • Bluffton, IN

BUSINESS OR PERSONAL INVEST FOR THE FUTURE

401(k)s | Asset Management | Banking Services | Bonds | College Planning | UITs
Financial Planning | Insurance & Annuities | IRAs | Stocks | Personalized Goal Planning
Mutual Funds | Pension & Profit Sharing Plans | Research | Retirement Planning

Take your business and your personal life to the next level with total investment and retirement plans. As a Raymond James Financial Advisor, I will listen closely to your needs and provide personalized answers for which you’re looking — for both your business and your personal life. For more information about investment strategies and how I can serve your financial needs, call me today.

RAYMOND JAMES
Raymond James Financial Services, Inc.
Member FINRA/SIPC

Kim Gentis - Financial Advisor
Financial Advisor Wealth Management Specialist

(260)824-8070 • kim.gentis@raymondjames.com

1245 N. Main St., Bluffton, IN 46714

Investment Advisory Services are offered through Raymond James Financial Services Advisors, Inc.



“Developing Clients to Their Potential”



Toll Free **866-829-2177**
Office **260-827-0261**



Tim Hartigan
Owner

www.wellsbusinessdevelopment.com

'Change' defines how Craigville Appliance reached its century mark

By MARK MILLER

Any business that has survived 100 years has seen change. Change is a necessity, which has not changed.

"Change is constant in retail," said Josh Hunt, general manager of Craigville Appliance. "If you don't change, you're gone."

The building at 2382 N. Main St. in Craigville — and what goes on there — has certainly seen its share of change since brothers Ed and Elmer Moser first opened the doors there in 1919 as the Craigville Garage. It was purely an automotive shop at first, complete with gas pumps out front. They soon added farm

implement repair, which then took Elmer Moser into Bluffton to open Moser Oliver Sales. That business eventually became Moser Implement Sales and would have a long run on South Main Street before closing several years ago.

Meanwhile, back in Craigville, the business was eventually taken over by Ed Moser's son Harold, who began selling appliances sometime after World War II.

"He and his wife Betty also added a gift shop," Hunt said. "She even had a bridal registry for awhile."

A fire destroyed the original building some time in the 1950s; the Moser family rebuilt.



A vintage Standard Oil sign still stands in front of Craigville Appliance, marking the days when the business pumped gasoline in the small Wells County village. Josh Hunt, who is the general manager of the family-owned business, keeps the sign and what other reminders he has of the store's history as it celebrates its centennial this year.

Hunt's father Daniel worked for Harold as a repairman. When the Mosers sold the business to Don Haddix in the mid-1980s, Dan Hunt struck out on his own, creating Hunt's Appliance Repair and worked out of the building across the street. Then, when Haddix decided to sell in 1991, it was Daniel who took the reins from there.

Haddix had changed the business' name to Craigville Hardware, and Dan Hunt changed it to Craigville Appliance.

"It was a natural thing for dad to do," Josh Hunt said. "He was fixing appliances and people often decided to buy new rather than repair."

Josh Hunt grew up in the store, "sweeping floors and taking out the trash, stuff like that," he said. In high school he began delivering and working with cus-

tomers. After graduating from Norwell High School in 1999, he earned a business degree at Indiana Purdue Fort Wayne while "pretty much working full time," he recalled. He became the business' general manager after graduating in 2005 while his father focused — and continues to focus — his full time attention to the repair business.

Craigville Appliance also sells mowers and lawn and garden equipment and employs 10 people full time, with part time workers varying from two to four more, depending on the season. Now the only independent appliance dealer in either Wells and Adams counties, he has focused on competing with the big box stores.

Being part of a buying group enables

(Continued on Page 56)

Have any 'C-A' history? Josh Hunt would like to talk to you

For a business that is 100 years old, Josh Hunt is, unfortunately, short on history — historical artifacts, that is.

"Some of it was surely lost in the fire," said Hunt, who is general manager of the Hunt family-owned store, "and Bob Haddix may have taken some things with him."

He was referring to a fire in the 1950s that destroyed the original building at 2382 N. Main St. that now houses Craigville Appliance, and to the person from whom his father, Daniel, purchased the business in 1991. Hence, he is seeking help from their customers and the public: If you have any old clippings, receipts, photos, or just some memories — anything pertaining to the business' history — he'd like to hear from you as they celebrate the centennial of the store.

The family and employees have retained as much as they can, including the Standard Oil sign that still stands in front and a vintage gas pump that may have (but most likely did not) once been used there. The walls and shelves of the appliance showrooms contain other historical pieces.

The old Craigville School building is now part of the business' history as well, having been purchased eight-to-10 years ago to be used as a warehouse. It dates to 1903.



Tucked back in a corner of one of the Craigville Appliance showrooms is an antique gas pump. General manager Josh Hunt does not believe this particular pump had ever been used at the business, but it is similar to those once used when the business also sold gasoline.

He encouraged people to stop by the store or call.

"We appreciate what we do have, it's part of our history," Hunt said. "But we'd sure like to hear people's stories or find some more old pictures and stuff." ♦

A portion of the staff at Craigville Appliance: seated, from left, are Arlene Loker and Taylor Graham; standing: Josh Hunt, Paul Dietrich, Spencer Harris and Joe Eisenhut. (Photos by Mark Miller)



100 years of student journalism at BHS

By JUSTIN PEEPER

While some student newspapers and yearbooks around the country have either disappeared or turned into extracurricular activities, just the opposite is happening at Bluffton High School.

The Comet, the school's student newspaper, turned 100 years old during the 2018-2019 school year. The Retrospect, the student yearbook, will turn 100 during the 2019-2020 school year.

"Bluffton honors its history and its traditions," said Steve Baker, Bluffton High School principal. "Student journalism is one of those areas that we value and we respect. We want to give our students a voice."

After perusing the first four issues of The Comet from 1918, this year's BHS student journalists decided to honor the 100th anniversary of the paper by reproducing its design. Staff members used the same font, type and columns during 2018-2019 as they mirrored the first issues of The Comet from 1918-1919 to create a retro style.

"We kept that layout throughout the year to honor the 100 years," said Amanda

Burman, who advises the student newspaper and yearbook at Bluffton High School. "The kids thought it was really neat."

This year was Burman's first as newspaper and yearbook adviser. She worked with nine students in her publications class, which creates both The Comet and The Retrospect.

The students printed four issues of The Comet this year and also worked on increasing their social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Next year, Burman will have more students in her publications class. She wants to help students find additional ways to use social media to better deliver news in a timely manner while complementing the print product.

"We will try to get a blog that will match our layout of The Comet," Burman said.

Technology has been one constant change during the last 20 years as students have produced The Comet, said Erin Schantz, who advised the program for 18 years before Burman took over in 2018.

"When we first started (19 years ago,) we were still developing film," Schantz said. "We moved to digital pictures very quickly. We learned three or four different pagination programs. The students had a lot of technology under their belts."

During Schantz's first 16 years as publications adviser, students worked on the newspaper and yearbook in different classes. Students published The Comet every two weeks during that time.

"We prided ourselves on never missing a deadline," Schantz said. "We came out every other week without fail."



Old issues of The Comet are displayed with the first issue being on the right.

When the two classes merged into one, the student newspaper came out monthly. This year, the students published The Comet once each quarter and focused on a different grade level.

The celebration, however, isn't over yet for BHS publications students.

The student yearbook will turn 100 next year, and Burman and her students are already making plans to celebrate the centennial Retrospect.

"The Comet started 100 years ago because they wanted to be able to afford a yearbook," Burman said. "Our yearbook will turn 100 next year and we will shift that celebration right into the yearbook."

The Comet began 100 years ago thanks to Fred L. Ashbaucher and Dean Reynolds. Both were students at Bluffton High School 100 years ago and wanted to create a yearbook — or an "annual" as they called it back then.

To show they could do it, they created The Comet first.

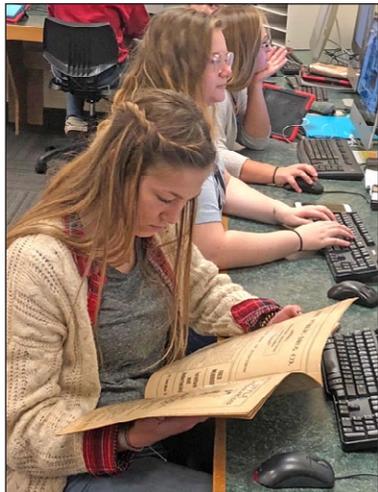
"The two boys pushed to have a school newspaper in order to really show themselves ready for a yearbook, and thus, The Comet, with a new tail each month, would be born," Burman wrote in an article about The Comet's history.

Ashbaucher and Reynolds earned

enough money from selling copies of The Comet to start a yearbook one year later.

One century later, The Comet continues to inform and entertain Bluffton High School students, a role that Baker says will continue.

"My plan is for (The Comet) to go another 100 years," he said. "My plan is to continue to offer it during the school day. I want to encourage students to take (publications) and to be a part of that experience and hopefully understand the value journalism has after they leave high school." ♦



Sophia King, a junior this past school year at Bluffton High School, reads the first issue published of The Comet, the student newspaper, from 1918. (News-Banner File Photos)

GOOD MORNINGS AT GREAT PRICES
THE MATTRESS + FURNITURE STORE

MF

catnapper MED-SOFT Lane THERAPEDIC

915 N. Main St., Ste. D • Bluffton • 260.353.1099 • themandstore.com

• Since 1974 •

FOUR STAR SERVICES, INC.

1764 S. Main, P.O. Box 463
Bluffton, Indiana 46714
www.fourstarservices.com
(260) 824-5384

Perce-Turf Agri-SC perk

Take Action on Soil Compaction

HUGH'S
BAKERY & COFFEEHOUSE LLC

119 S. Main St. • Bluffton
(260) 353-1477
T-F 6³⁰-5 • SAT 8-1
Closed Sun & Mon

• Baked Goods
• Full Espresso Bar
Breakfast • Brunch • Lunch

Coffee Shop • Bakery • Café

@ Hugh's Bakery & Coffeehouse

Follow us on Instagram at hughsbakery.coffeehouse

Graduation Pathways

County's high schools dealing with changes brought by new state-mandated program

By DEVAN FILCHAK

Graduation Pathways is changing the way some students are obtaining their high school diplomas already, even though schools aren't required to implement the new state requirements until the Class of 2023 gets into high school.

Graduation Pathways is a set of new graduation requirements that will have students choosing a pathway, whether it be academic or based on a trade. It requires students to hit three groups of graduation requirements: earn a high school diploma, learn and demonstrate employability skills, and achieve postsecondary-ready competencies.

For students who are graduating with an Academic Honors Diploma, not much will change.

"Every student does not have to become a concentrator," said Kati Todd, principal at Southern Wells Junior/ Senior High School.

Currently, however, students who fail the ISTEP their sophomore year of high school keep taking the ISTEP once a semester in an effort to pass to be eligible for graduation. For students who can't hit that mark, a waiver can be issued for graduation if the student can meet a list of requirements.

Each year, the Indiana Department of Education releases all of the schools' graduation rates — both with and without waivers. Wells County graduation rates with waivers were all above 90 percent. However, the graduation rates without waivers for Wells County schools were up to 11 percent less.

"The Statehouse and the State Board of Education keep an eye on that and want the waiver rate to be as low as it can be," Bluffton Principal Steve Baker said. "We believe (Graduation Pathways) will reduce waivers dramatically."

That's how some students have already graduated using a pathway. For students who have failed the ISTEP in the past, Baker has worked with them to look at their credits and see if they might qualify for a pathway route to graduation.

Baker said he has noticed some relief in students when they realize they can choose a pathway rather than taking the same standardized test over and over again. Many of those students have more interest in picking up a trade as well, Baker said.

The issue when it comes to CTE concentrators is that if students choose path-



Jalen Fiechter, a junior at Bluffton High School, works on a welding project. Welding is one concentrator students using Graduation Pathways requirements can use.

(Photo by Devan Filchak)

ways that they decide they don't like, it may be too late to switch to another pathway. Students will need to start a pathway their sophomore year to comfortably graduate on time as is.

Norwell Principal David Parker said in the fall that he had a student who said he didn't like his pathway or the commute to another school to take the class. It came down to if the student wanted to switch a pathway and graduate late or if the student would rather complete the pathway he was already on to graduate on time.

"We know some of those kids will get stuck," Parker said. "It's just the reality of what it is."

There have been some changes made since the initial Graduation Pathways plan was rolled out. Students choosing the CTE concentrator pathway will have to take two concentrator courses that are approved by the state.

Initially, students would have to complete six credit hours of courses toward a concentrator, which could be in a variety of skills ranging from welding to cosmetology to becoming a certified nursing assistant. That could be made up of up to six classes, but it would depend on how many credit hours each class was worth.

Instead, the state has decided to require

two courses students will take for each concentrator, which will each take a year (or less if the school is on a block schedule compared to periods) to complete. When compared to the six-credit hour track that was initially released, the two concentrator courses will be more advanced courses past the introductory courses for a concentrator.

Prior to 2023, students can fulfill the concentrator requirement by doing six credit hours or the two state-established classes. For the Class of 2023 and beyond, the second version of Graduation Pathways that dictates the two required classes will be the only option.

The challenge between now and when Graduation Pathways is required to be implemented is figuring out what concentrators to add to each school and how.

The issue with some of the required concentrator courses is that teachers have to have certain degrees or certifications to teach some of the courses.

"We were looking through our business offerings, and there's a few we are going to be able to offer. But then you look at — I think it was, marketing. None of our business people have the credentials to teach one of those two concentrator courses, and it's kind of a big ask

when it comes to making that change," Parker said.

Business and marketing are two concentrators that it seems like the community would benefit from, which is one thing schools are looking at while deciding what concentrators to add.

"We are exploring the needs of our community and the interests of our students in order to make any sort of real determinations on this," Todd said.

Parker and Baker said their schools are doing the same. One concentrator Bluffton will soon add is early childhood learning. Some others are marketing and entrepreneurship.

One of the challenges is that if four students want to do a pathway, it doesn't necessarily justify hiring a new teacher to teach a course, Parker said. Some fields he would like to see more concentrators in are agriculture, interactive media and accounting at Norwell. Eventually, Parker would like to have some biomedical technology courses.

The local principals agree that being part of the Area 18 Career and Technical Education Co-op is a huge benefit when it comes to offering a wide amount of concentrators.

"We don't have to try to do it all on our own," Parker said. "We are trying to increase our own offerings not just for our kids but other kids in our community."

Baker said there are more than 10 concentrators available at the schools included in the cooperative — Adams Central Community Schools, Blackford County Schools, Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District, Huntington County Community School Corporation, Jay School Corporation, North Adams Com-

(Continued on Page 56)

ALMCO **STEEL PRODUCTS CORPORATION**

73 Years of Serving Wells and Surrounding Communities

Stamping & Assemblies in Aluminum & Steel
Ag • Auto • Heavy Truck • Construction

59 North Oak St. Ex.
Bluffton, IN, 46714
260.824.1118
260.919.0229
www.almcosteel.com



The future workforce

Mason Huffman, a 2019 Southern Wells graduate, takes a break from operating the road broom this spring to pose for a photo near the Wells County Highway Department. Huffman is part of a decades-old partnership between the school's career training program (ICE) and the department. Several current highway employees are graduates of Southern Well's ICE program.

(Photo by Jessica Bricker)

SW students, county highway pair up

By **JESSICA BRICKER**

The Southern Wells High School senior stood in front of his classmates and talked about the last nine months of employment at the Wells County Highway Department.

Mason Huffman said he started working there in August — on his birthday — through the ICE program at his school. He described the workplace as one where tasks include repairing roads, plowing snow and helping maintain side ditches.

He talked about his responsibilities, from fixing potholes and running the road sweeper to replacing road signs. And he talked about what he learned, such as how the department's equipment works to techniques for repairing roads.

"These skills will be important for my future," he told the class, "because I plan on working here through summer jobs and full time."

Huffman — who also spoke on a Wells County Chamber of Commerce panel earlier this year, which was held to share

information about the county's ICE program and internships — is part of a long tradition between pairing Southern Wells students with the highway department.

The school and the department's partnership of sorts that has been quite effective for more than 30 years. When students enroll in the school's internship and career training program and join the department, it's likely they won't want to leave.

"It just kind of has a way of grabbing hold of you and keeping you here," Kim Bennett said.

Bennett, road foreman, is a former Southern Wells ICE student who joined the department in 1986. He is one of several current highway department employees who is a SWHS ICE graduate. They have been able to work their way up from laborers and have proven themselves leaders in the department.

In addition to Bennett, Chris Duncan,

(Continued on Page 55)

SUPERIOR PRODUCTS SERVICE SOLUTIONS

MOSEY & SON

Heating & Air Conditioning
824-0228



219 E. Perry St. Bluffton

260-824-0228 • www.moserandsonheatingandair.com

American Standard®

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

A New High Efficiency Air Conditioning Unit



LOWERS YOUR BILLS

99.98% CLEANER AIR

Clean air starts with better airflow. Ask us about installing AccuClean™, Humidifiers, Dehumidifiers, or UV (Ultra Violet) Lights.



ALL SEASON SERVICE NEEDS



86 YEARS OF SERVICE to Our Customers

e-Learning gets a workout from rough winter weather

By DEVAN FILCHAK

It isn't a totally new concept in Wells County, but schools put technology to the test with about two weeks worth of eLearning days used during this past school year.

eLearning is a way teachers can teach students through the use of online assignments that students can do on iPads or computers from home. Teachers are available throughout the day to answer students' questions through email.

When schools use an eLearning day, the day does not have to be made up like a typical cancelled school day since students are still learning and doing assignments.

Each public school district in the county handles their eLearning policies differently. In Southern Wells Community Schools, the most recent school district to adopt the policy, there is a limit of two consecutive eLearning days before administrators just cancel school instead.

"Having so many our first year of eLearning caused teachers to fully implement eLearning lessons to ensure student engagement and learning continued during the days at home," said Superintendent Steve Darnell in an email. "Students responded well with interaction with teachers while away from school and getting lessons completed."

At Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District, the school board voted in February to raise the limit from two consecutive days to three. The change came after administrators discussed that they think their staffs will be ready after some professional development to put together lesson plans that would work well for three consecutive days without simply assigning busy work.

"Our experience with eLearning has been very positive since first implementing the option in the 2015-2016 school year," Brad Yates, incoming superintendent, said in an email. "Each year, our teachers develop improved methods to employ eLearning which provides students greater opportunities to interact and learn on inclement weather days."

Northern Wells Community Schools went through multiple changes over this past school year. In January,

the school board approved two changes.

The first change was to be able to have eLearning days spontaneously. Previously, there had to be one day's notice so that teachers could prepare and students could take their iPads home, including kindergarten students.

During the January school board meeting, Superintendent Scott Mills said that this prevented eLearning days from being used when inclement weather would just pop up rather than being forecasted far in advance, which came up this past year.

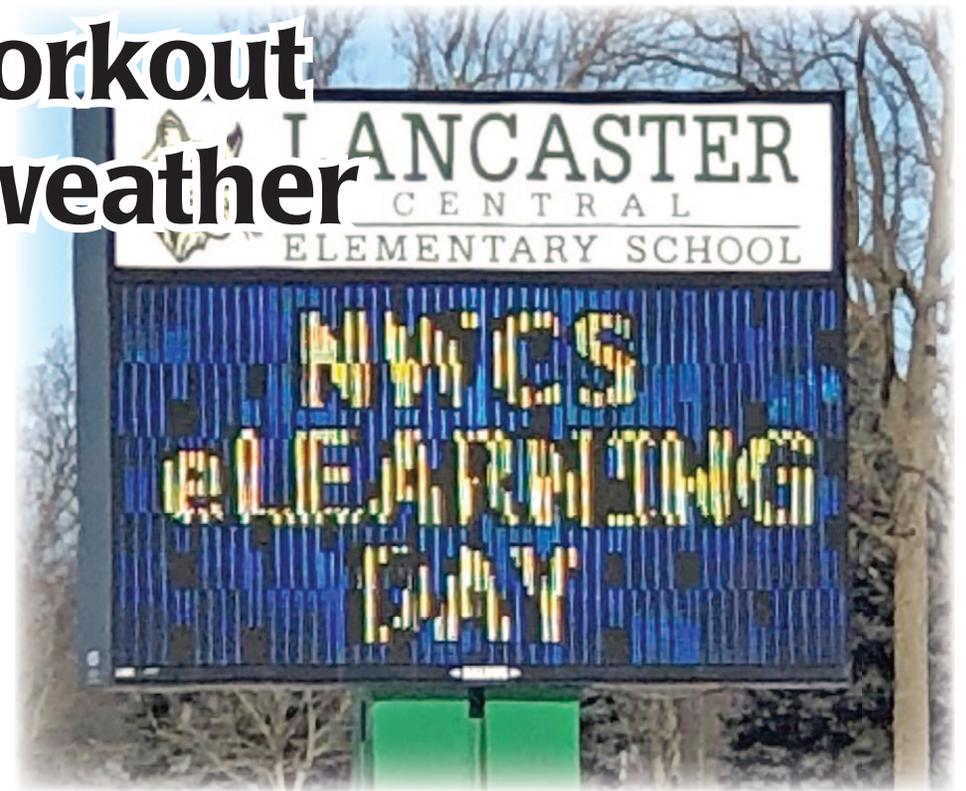
The same week of the school board meeting had a cancelled school day at NWCS due to widespread freezing fog. That same day, SWCS and BHMSD had an eLearning day so the day did not have to be made up.

Then, the school board approved extending the amount of eLearning days that could be used in a row from two to four. Mills said during the meeting that after talking with other school superintendents, he found out that four consecutive days seems to be the most days that can be accomplished without some deterioration in the learning process.

Less than a month after approving the new eLearning policies, NWCS used four consecutive eLearning days. That same week, BHMSD and SWCS had to cancel school since they each had already met their limits on eLearning days.

Mills said that four consecutive days caused a lot of stress for students, parents and staff.

"I would want to live through it a couple of more times before I would have a strong opinion (on the policy



change)," Mills said in an email. "Four days may be a stretch, but I can't say so with any degree of confidence."

Even when BHMSD extended its limit to three days, Wayne Barker, outgoing superintendent, said he did not expect the district to use a third consecutive eLearning day yet this school year unless administrators thought their staffs were ready. As it turned out, there was not a need for three consecutive eLearning days for Bluffton-Harrison schools after the policy was approved.

On Facebook, in particular on NWCS' page, parents showed criticism for eLearning days this past year. Mills said overall, he has seen more positive reactions than negative ones.

"When we survey parents, about 65 percent like eLearning and 35 percent do not like eLearning," he said. "We hope this year is not the norm. We used 15 eLearning days. Since the 2004-05 school year, we have only had one other year (2013-14) with 15 days school was closed for weather. We will work to continue to improve the eLearning process."

(Continued on Page 54)



START YOUR MORNINGS WITH US!

Our coffee is brewed every 30 minutes to insure you get the best cup possible.

TWO LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU

204 W. Wabash - 824-4794 & 904 S. Main - 824-1566

THANK YOU WELLS COUNTY FOR VOTING FOR US!



Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home

Serving the Families of Wells County for 166 years!



VOTED #1 BEST FUNERAL HOME
Bluffton News-Banner
& Fort Wayne Journal Gazette



308 W. Washington Street • Bluffton, IN • 260-824-3850

62 Years of Serving Families

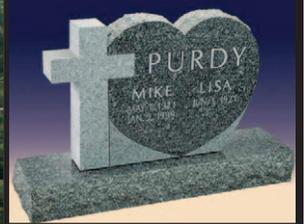
Custom Designs
Laser Etchings
Quality Granite Guaranteed Forever
Professional Service



2980 E. State Rd. 124, Bluffton
260-824-2832 | 877-241-7131



**Granite Direct
from the Quarry
No Middle Man —
You Receive the Savings!**



themonumentcenter.com

Who We Are

Pat Wall and Jarod Studabaker worked closely together to fully restore the log cabin at the Wells County 4-H Park. (Photo by Mark Miller)



Pair teams up to refurbish historic cabin at 4-H park

By MARK MILLER

Pat Wall had been working on raising funds to restore the log cabin at the 4-H Park for several years. The long-time 4-H volunteer and leader had been securing private donations and holding some fund raisers by opening the 4-H concession stand for different events.

"You know, \$300 here and \$500 there," she says now. "It eventually added up."

Although no longer having an official role with the 4-H or the park, she has continued to lead the effort.

"It needed re-done," she continues, "and I knew I was the one to do it."

When it came time to find a contractor to do the work, she knew exactly who she would call.

"I had some personal knowledge of Jarod's work," Wall says, referring to Jarod Studabaker and Studabaker Specialty Woodworks. "I knew he was knowledgeable about restoration and reclaiming wood."

To say she has been pleased with the

outcome is quite the understatement.

"Oh yes," she says enthusiastically. "We're very, very pleased. We've heard nothing but compliments since it's been finished."

The 1976 History of Wells County reports the cabin was built in 1855 and moved "from the Faile land south of Bluffton" in 1961. It was originally a two-story cabin and there was no chimney. That was added by the Bluffton Jaycees in 1964.

This project began in the summer of 2017. The idea was to restore as much of the original cabin as possible. However, the more Studabaker probed into the cabin's condition, the more problems he found.

"The way it was chinked," he describes, "it hid a lot of rotten wood."

He estimated that 60 percent of the beams were too rotten to salvage and the exterior siding was "flat-out bad."

"So we asked Pat: do you want an authentic log cabin or do you want something that looks authentic but has some modern features like insulation and is

sealed up tight from varmints?" he shares.

"We wanted it done right," Wall says, even though it would exceed their budget. "Its lifespan is much longer now," she adds.

Studabaker and his crew took the cabin completely down. "All that was left was the chimney," he says. A foundation was poured and then a cement slab floor, over which the wood flooring was placed. Jarod made the one-inch thick oak exterior sideboards from white oak purchased from an Ohio sawmill. He used rubberized chinking between the boards, which will last longer than the concrete-based chinking that had been used before.

"There's no ground hogs or chipmunks going underneath it anymore," Studabaker says, "It's sealed up and the exterior oak siding was all sealed. They wanted the siding to weather and naturally grey, and they have."

Work continued into the spring and early summer of 2018 with a goal of having the cabin ready for the 2018 fair. Two work days were organized when 4-H

volunteers came in to help Studabaker's crew.

"The original cabin had walnut doors, so we built new ones to match," he explains. The window panels were re-used, although new wood frames were needed.

"Two neat fun facts," Studabaker continues:

"We found a ridge beam in the rafters and there were names written on it of the



The log cabin as it appeared in the 1970s.



The interior of the cabin utilizes original wood for the ceiling, walls and floor. The furnishings have been added and adjusted over the years — another job Pat Wall has taken on to help preserve and maintain the cabin. (Photo by Mark Miller)

volunteers who had put a new shingle roof on sometime in the '90s." Those names included Bob Schwartz, who it turned out, was working for Studabaker on the project. "So Bob helped restore (the cabin) not once but twice."

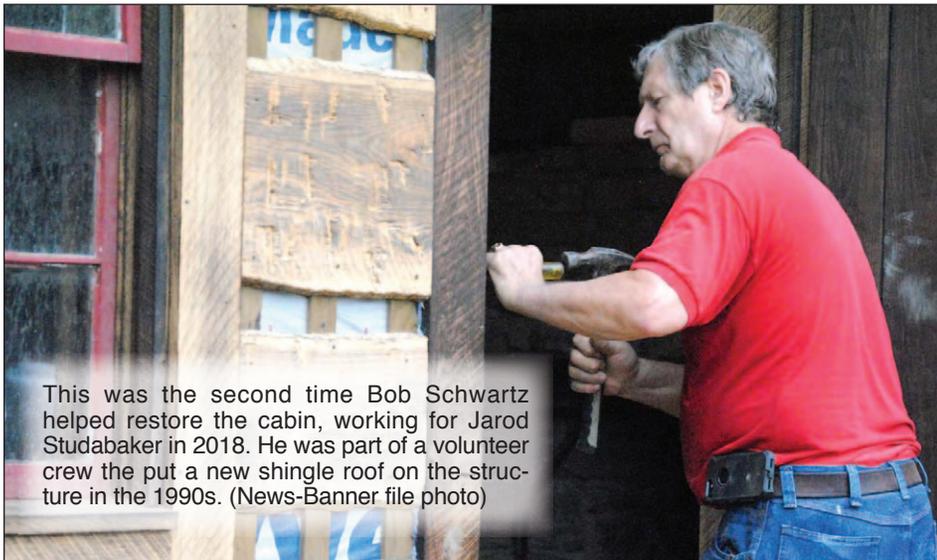
Also, "we reused all the old logs on the inside so the interior looks exactly like it did before. We made the wood floor out of what was left from those old logs and we were able to use the original ceiling."

The 360-square-foot cabin was formally dedicated during the 2018 fair with an Abe Lincoln impersonator on hand and

has been used for a number of events outside of the annual fair.

Wall, who continues to oversee the care and maintenance of the cabin, is looking forward to many more of those events, including a visit by a Daniel Boone impersonator this summer. She would like to see it utilized as much as possible and plans to make it available for family reunions and other gatherings.

"We're so proud of it," Wall says. "It's a wonderful community resource and we have Jarod to thank for such a wonderful job." ♦



This was the second time Bob Schwartz helped restore the cabin, working for Jarod Studabaker in 2018. He was part of a volunteer crew that put a new shingle roof on the structure in the 1990s. (News-Banner file photo)

SCHWARTZ PLUMBING, HEATING, & A/C INC.

- ⇒ Air Conditioners ⇒ Furnaces
 - ⇒ Geothermal
 - ⇒ Mitsubishi Ductless HVAC System
- BRYANT / GOODMAN / THERMO-PRIDE

Serving the Community since 1958

610 N. Main St., Bluffton, IN
260-824-1126 • 800-290-0865

Licensed, Bonded, Fully Insured #CP 19600004



For 62 years the Wells County Foundation has provided donors with flexible, efficient, and tax effective ways to ensure their charitable giving achieves the greatest possible impact.

Whatever your charitable intentions, there are ways to realize them through a gift to the Foundation.

The Wells County Foundation, Inc., 360 N. Main Street, Suite C
Bluffton, IN 46714 P. 260.824.8620
www.wellscountyfound.org



COMING SOON TO Archbold Wilson Park!



OSSIAN, INDIANA

Construction to begin the fall of 2019!



CURRENT ATTRACTIONS:

- 18 Hole Disc Golf
- 1.25mi Walking Trail
- Sledding Hill
- Fishing Pond
- The Bone Yard Dog Park

Like us on Facebook @OssianParks

Faithful supporters

Sonlight Wesleyan Church leaders, volunteers aim to bridge the church and addiction support in Wells County

By **JESSICA BRICKER**

After almost two years of work, the Bluffton chapter of A Better Life-Brianna's Hope is off the ground and meeting weekly.

The support group is for those struggling with addiction as well as their loved ones and supporters. The weekly attendance at Sonlight Wesleyan Church, located at 2350 S. Ind. 1 just south of Bluffton, is estimated at between 17 and 22. The meeting is preceded by a meal at 6 p.m. and the group session is from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

One of its leaders, Jade Glover, has been outspoken in the community about her struggles with addiction. At a recent chapter meeting, she welcomed those in attendance. She told them she was glad they were there.

She said she talked to some people over the prior week who felt like giving up and she put things in perspective for them.

"That's what we're here for," she said, standing in front of the group gathered in a conference room in the church. "We're here to encourage each other. We're here



Lyle and Pat Breeding of Sonlight Wesleyan have been working to bridge the gap between the church and addiction support in the Bluffton community. Here they are pictured at this spring's "Break the Cycle" bike-a-thon.

to build one another up. And when one of us reaches out to another, that's what we have to tell one another. And I'm thankful we can do that for each other."

During the "victory report" section of the meeting, one attendee celebrated sobriety after a stint in rehab and incarceration, and another person switched shifts at work so she could come.

Glover also spent some time at the meeting remembering the reason they were all there to begin with.

ABLBH was founded in 2014 in memory of Brianna DiBattiste a couple of months after her body was found in Jay County. DiBattiste had struggled with addiction leading up to her death. Now the group meets in more than 30 cities across Indiana and in Ohio.

The mission of the group is to bring together more than the addict; it brings community supporters together, Glover said.

"That's why I find the group meaningful," she said. "We've seen lives being changed. We've seen families come back together. We've seen people go away for a little bit and come back."

At this spring weekly meeting, Glover led a discussion about conducting personal inventories. It's hard, some decided, to look inward and admit their faults. It was scary but a weight was lifted, one said. They have to be able to forgive themselves for their past behaviors.

— — —
The support for ABLBH from Sonlight Wesleyan is evident.

Joy Deckard retired about a year ago and she knew she wanted to find something to do with her time. She said she tried a few things and when ABLBH began, she felt called to help out. After being raised in a home where there wasn't alcohol, she said she respects anyone who is struggling with drug addiction.

"I crave coming here and listening to their stories and their struggles," Deckard said one evening while preparing the session's meal in the kitchen. "I think it's what God wanted me to do."

She attends church at Sonlight and has helped with the chapter since the beginning. She lives in Ossian, so she did miss a few sessions in the winter — but she didn't want to.

She helps in the kitchen and donates food. They have a menu and a plan put together for who will bring what on which

Sonlight Wesleyan volunteers Yvette Runkle, left, and Joy Deckard serve up a meal this spring before a meeting of the support group, A Better Life-Brianna's Hope. (Photos by Jessica Bricker)



nights. It's taped to the refrigerator in the kitchen. They plan for 30 each week and keep track of the attendance.

In talking with the group, Glover said the meals are provided each week by people in the community or the church who just want them to be able to share the meal together. She called it a blessing, for both the recipient and the giver.

"They like to be able to do that," she said.

For the Breedings, this has become a mission for the church. Lyle is the senior pastor and Pat is the children's ministry director.

At Sonlight, Pat says they are trying to bridge the worlds of addiction and the church. There are some who don't want to hear about it, but most are very open.

Lyle recalled a few years ago his desire to find a plan or program to bring into the church. But it didn't work out — not until A Better Life-Brianna's Hope came around.

"That was a good fit," he said, adding they waited until the right opportunity came up.

In addition to Glover, the group's other leader is Lane Sander, also a pastor at the church. Lyle Breeding said the group is a continuation of what Glover was able to receive in order to get where she is and she's now able to pass that on through the church and community.

Pat Breeding says they have people at the church who will say they continue to fight addiction.

She remembers the days when children were used into church for services. A lot of those children had families who were into drugs and then the children would disappear because their parents would

move them elsewhere, or the church people would feed the children because they weren't getting fed at home.

They've always been aware of those issues. They want to stop that cycle because they've seen it happen in their church, as children get older and get into the drug scene, Pat said. They've seen it first hand.

Last year, she believes they lost eight children from their church to foster care due to parents being on drugs.

"Those beautiful little children," she said, "and then all the sudden they're gone."

"Brianna's Hope is good because they don't just get off the drugs but they get the Lord into their life and that gives them that fulfillment that they need instead of turning to drugs for it," she said.

A large outreach program this year for the church was the "Break the Cycle" bike-a-thon, after which \$2,150 was donated to the county's DARE programs and \$2,150 was donated to ABLBH.

Pat came up with the idea for the event.

"At that time, we didn't know where we wanted to put the money, I just knew we were supposed to do this and we were supposed to break that cycle ..." she said.

Lyle said he thought it was a great idea — one he never would have thought of.

"If it gets Brianna's Hope's name out there a little bit more so more people know about it and get in here and get the help they need," Pat said, "then we've accomplished something."

DARE was the original recipient for the bike-a-thon as it was aimed toward a family-friendly event to get the children there, and they would benefit from the programming in the schools.



The Bluffton chapter of A Better Life-Brianna's Hope was recognized with a Volunteer Leader award in May from Wells County Citizens Against Drug Abuse. Pictured are, from left, Joe Dunnuck, Joy Deckard, Joe Dickason, John Cole, Trudy Dickason, Joyce Gerber, Yvette Runkle, Penny Cole, Lane Sander and Jade Glover. The addiction support group started meeting weekly in January at Sonlight Wesleyan Church in Bluffton.

When ABLBH came to the church, they saw the other half of the work: The people who are already addicted.

Lyle Breeding said for a first-year event and perhaps the first of its kind, he was pleased and impressed with the community sponsors that came alongside them for the event. They were also told many of the sponsors have personal connections to people affected by addiction.

He has also been impressed by members of his church helping with ABLBH and who have opened their arms to the group, from helping with the weekly meals to watching the children during the group session.

Breeding is involved with Wells County Citizens Against Drug Abuse now. He said he felt it was one thing to talk about drug issues in the community; it's another to be involved to the point of action.

"I think that the churches have to have some sort of voice in this or I don't think it's going to be fixed," he said. "It's an uphill battle."

Glover and ABLBH were recognized during this spring's CADA awards luncheon.

The volunteers with ABLBH at Sonlight provide resources for those actively pursuing recovery, and they have funds specifically earmarked for sending Wells County residents to addiction detox and treatment programs.

"This dedicated group of volunteers from Sonlight Wesleyan provide food, childcare, mentorship, prayer, financial support, and everything it takes to offer A Better Life-Brianna's Hope weekly support meetings in Wells County," said CADA Secretary Deane Holderman, who introduced the honorees.

They also aim to educate others around the community.

Glover was recognized for her efforts in bringing a ABLBH chapter to Wells County starting last fall. It started meeting at Sonlight in January.

"Jade has a passion to help addicts through their journey and has been a blessing to the recovering community with her dedication to the cause," Holderman said.

At a meeting this spring, church member Doug Anderson participated in the discussions.

"We're all here because of you guys," he said. "And you guys are what makes it work. I'm talking about the addict and the people that are struggling. The people that are overcoming. You guys are what makes it work. You draw strength from each other."

They don't have people telling them how to work the program. Instead, people come together to share their stories and learn together. They are the heart and soul of the program.

"We just give you a place to do it," he said, "and love you and support you in the process." ♦

Safe & Secure Self Storage

A1 U-STOR

2 Convenient Locations

Many sizes to choose from
Locally owned & operated
Security lighting
Easy access

U-Lock, keep key
12 hr. access
Security video cameras
9' doors, easy access

Outside storage for RV's, trucks, cars, etc. available upon request

Clean out your closets or garage, make more room for yourself!

Office:
1180 N. Main St.
Bluffton, IN

Hwy. 124 & 27
on 100 W
Monroe, IN

260-824-1846 • 800-747-4925 • 260-273-9678

WWW.FAMILYFORDOFBLUFFTON.COM

Family of Bluffton

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

A prestigious award from the Ford Motor Company that only an elite group of Ford dealers earn each year.

260-824-2300

Mitchel Enterprises Corporation

Specialized Transportation & Transloading Equipment for Food & Feed Ingredients

Rail to Truck - Storage/Delivery

- Bulk feed ingredients & products
- Bagged products & flat storage

712 Lancaster St., Bluffton, IN • **800-525-4202**
www.mitchelenterprises.com

Committed to Serving You Better!

We Now Offer General Service & Repair ...

- Engines**
- Brakes**
- Steering & Suspension**
- Starting & Charging**
- Heating & Air Conditioning**
- Tune Ups**
- Computer Diagnostics**

- Transmissions & Drive Trains**
- Scheduled Maintenance**

And More!

Expert Transmission & Automotive
1979 - 2019

2883 S.R. 124 • BLUFFTON
260-824-4929

104 BELLMONT RD. • DECATUR
260-724-2434

'Her place in the world'

Robin Lane has been a volunteer firefighter for more than a quarter-century

By DEVAN FILCHAK

Robin Lane cannot imagine not being a firefighter.

She's been on the staff of the Poneto Volunteer Fire Department for 26 years. It all started with Robin and her husband Randy taking a course offered locally to become a volunteer first responder.

"It was fun. It's sort of funny because he only did it because I did it," she said, adding that he wasn't as interested as she was even though his father, Finley Lane, was the department's chief.

The first call they went on together was a man who allegedly had a heart attack, but he had to be held to the ground because he was agitated. He had to be disarmed when he grabbed for a knife. Randy Lane later found that a gun was almost just as close of a reach for the man.

"That didn't deter me any," Lane said of the field.

Robin Lane said she knew then that she had found her place in the world. It wasn't long before she was on the Poneto volunteer fire team.

"I've done a lot of things, but this is definitely the one that took my heart," she said.

By day, Lane does "a little bit of everything" in her job at Kroger. She's fortunate that she's able to break away from work if there is a serious incident that requires her help as a volunteer firefighter.

She carries her loud portable radio with scanner traffic with her when she's not at work, but all of the firefighters now have an app called I Am Responding on their smartphones that keep them in the loop at all times. The app also allows first responders to put themselves as unavailable in the system.

If something serious comes across her app as she's going to work or already at work, she's generally allowed to go.

"They're like, 'Just get here when you can. Be safe,'" Lane said. "That's usually what I hear."

Lane has seen a lot, she said. She's seen some big fires, including the infamous fires at Pretzels and Dutch Mill.

Shortly after she started her volunteer career, the fire that destroyed the Southern Wells school complex in December of 1992.

Firefighting is a male-dominant field with only 4 percent of U.S. firefight-

ers being female, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Being a woman in the field gives her some advantages.

"I get shoved into cars (at the scenes of accidents) all the time because I'm small and short so I can fit where the guys can't," she said.

It has also helped in cases where children are, such as during a Southern Wells school bus crash in April of 2018. Big firemen can be intimidating in an already scary situation for children, but Lane said her maternal touch tends to help.

She said she's seldom had incidents where she has been treated any differently because of the guys.

At one scene early in her fire career, some guys from another fire department weren't listening to her when she told them that she had orders that absolutely no one was allowed in an area with live wires. She called the fire chief who put the guys in their place, and she hasn't had issues since.

Lane said she has always been supported by fellow firefighters in Poneto. They are like a family.

"We're just that tight knit of a group," she said. "Something happens to one, we're all going to be there."

That was the case when Lane's husband died around three years ago. He had stopped working the volunteer fire department years before due to his ongoing health issues.

"As soon as the call went out, we had more people in my house than it's probably ever seen in its life," she said. "There was no reason some of those people had to come, but they came."

It was hard to be on the end receiving help in that situation rather than the calming presence Lane normally is. But it made her love her role with the fire department even more, she said.

Her role over the years has changed a little, especially after she injured her knee after slipping at work. She completely tore her medial condyle in her knee and damaged the lateral condyle. The doctor discovered that her ACL was completely gone. After having surgery, she still has some limits to her mobility.

Her most important duty as a firefighter now is to keep track of who is where at a fire scene.

"My promise to those people at home is they're coming back home safe," Lane said. "I know where they are, I know how many times they've been in the building or out of the building or had the (controlled breathing apparatus) on or eaten if we've

been at the scene a long time."

Since Poneto's department is on a volunteer basis, the staff don't have times where they have to be at the fire house. It is convenient, however, because Lane only lives about five houses away from the fire department, and some of the guys on the department also live right in town.

Lane even has a system with her daughter, who also lives in town. Each time Lane goes on a run, she honks the horn as she drives by her daughter's house and texts her to let her know when she's coming home.

But the job isn't just about fighting fires and being first responders to medical calls. It also includes tours and chili dinners.

One of the biggest perks of being a firefighter is being able to do it for the small town that Lane loves, she said. For that reason, she can't imagine being a full-time firefighter because it would require her to move away from Poneto.

Before she found her true calling, Lane wanted to be a teacher. Lane, who grew up in Clinton, wasn't sure what her role would be to help people, but she comes from a family of helpers, including teachers, doctors, lawyers and politicians.

Lane's parents were shocked once they found out she wanted to get involved with the fire department.

"(Dad) said, 'You're going to do what?' He said, 'Why would you want to do that?'" Lane recalled. "I said, 'Because I can and I think it's important.' He said, 'OK, I'll support you, but I think you're crazy.'"

Her mother, however, loves that she is a firefighter.

"She tells everybody, 'That's my daughter, the fire fighter,'" Lane said.

Whenever Lane is around children in her capacity as a firefighter, she always tries to lead by example that you can do whatever you want to do for a career, regardless of gender.

"We teach them that it's not about you have to be a girl or you have to be a boy," she said. "It's about, 'This is what I want to do.'"

Lane said opportunities vary from department to department, but there are many where people can job shadow and



Robin Lane of Poneto poses with her gear by a fire engine at the Poneto Volunteer Fire Department.
(Photo by Devan Filchak)

get a sense of what it is really like. "I would encourage girls, if they think they are interested, do it," she said. ♦

Valero
renewables
Bluffton



Valero is a premier ethanol producer with 14 plants across the Midwest. We are proud to become a member of the Bluffton community and look forward to forging a lasting partnership – serving your livestock-feeding needs and providing community support. Contact us today for more information on our distillers grain feed products.

1441 S. Adams St. • Bluffton, IN 46714
(260) 846-0011, main

Contact: Adam Zelt • (260) 353-1203
Distillers Grain Sales Representative

Lipsey is new director of Creative Arts Council

By DAVE SCHULTZ

When a new executive director was needed for the Wells County Creative Arts Council, it didn't take a long search to find one. She was sitting in the next desk over.

Janiece Lipsey is the CAC's new leader, having been chosen by the organization's board of directors to succeed Joel Harmeyer in the position. Lipsey had been the CAC's director of programming, working alongside Harmeyer.

It was actually Lipsey's second time at the job. When Maureen Butler resigned after 12 years as the CAC's director in 2011, Lipsey took over on an interim basis.

"She was asked if she wanted to apply for the job at that time, but she didn't," said Ted Smith, president of the Creative Arts Council's board of directors.

Lipsey agrees. She wasn't ready, she said. "I really didn't know anything then about business," she said.

That's changed.

Lipsey now has an MBA — a master's of business administration — from Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla. This time, she said, she's ready.

"For probably the last 18 months, Joel and Janiece were pretty much co-directors," Smith said. "Joel concentrated on the business aspects and Janiece worked in programming."

Now, both jobs are Lipsey's for the time being. While the CAC board decided that it didn't need to advertise for a new director, it will probably have to advertise for a new programming director.

"It was just a logical step to move Janiece into the executive director's role," Smith said. "When Joel resigned, we asked her, 'Do you want the job?'" Smith said. "Her response was, 'Yes, I'd love to



Janiece Lipsey is pictured on the patio of the Arts, Commerce, and Visitors Centre. The door to the east side of the building — marked as the entrance for the Creative Arts Council's office — is in the background. Lipsey was chosen as the CAC's new executive director in May. (Photo by Dave Schultz)

take it."

The CAC's financial situation has improved to the point where it can employ two full-time people, Smith said. Julie Cantrell continues with the organization, but she recently married and now lives in Illinois, doing contract work for the CAC.

Lipsey is a 2010 graduate of Huntington University with a degree in educational ministries. She began working with the CAC's dance program in 2009. She became the Creative Arts Council's director of operations and outreach before leaving for graduate school. She returned in August of 2016 as director of programming. ♦

**SOLID PLANNING
LOCAL SERVICE
PROFESSIONAL ADVICE**



STEFFEN
Financial Group



TIM STEFFEN
Financial Consultant

110 W. Cherry St., Bluffton, IN • 260.824.8175

Securities offered through Thurston Springer Financial (Member FINRA & SIPC).
Tim Steffen is a registered associate of Thurston Springer and is doing business as Steffen Financial Group. Steffen Financial Group is independent of Thurston Springer.

Collier's

COMFORT SERVICES INC.

PROVIDING

HEATING • AIR CONDITIONING

GEOHERMAL • SERVICE

DESIGN & INSTALLATION

260-622-6622

www.ColliersComfort.com

**Fiber
Powered By ...**

AdamsWells
INTERNET TELECOM TV

**GIG
SPEED**

260-565-3131

www.AdamsWells.com

The Kellams: On the road again

By MARK MILLER

When you're in the newspaper and writing business, you never know when a story might show up. Part of Jim Barberi's legacy is that he could walk over to the post office and come back with three front-page stories.

When my wife and I were asked by some friends to possibly go with them on a bus tour of New England last fall, we thought we'd give it a try. The tour was organized by a company in Fort Wayne. As we were leaving that city headed east on U.S. 24 late last September, the tour guide mentioned that his regular driver, who also farms, was in his fields harvesting and introduced his "frequent substitute" driver who would be taking us to Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine and back: Tom Kellam.

During the course of the trip with the many stops and overnight stays, you get an opportunity to meet new friends. Most of the other passengers were from Fort Wayne and the northern counties. During one break, as Tom was standing at the bus doorway helping people up the steps, I asked him where he's from.

"I live in Wells County," he said.

"Really?" I replied. "And just where in Liberty County?"

"Liberty Center."

Small world.

At some point during the trip, the tour guide shared that Tom is also a gospel singer and had recorded a number of CDs. "Would you like to hear one?" he asked the bus full of leaf-peepers. We were treated to some great music and were quite impressed with his talents.

"A traveling troubadour," I thought to myself. "That would make a good story."

— — —

Tom and Stacy Kellam first met in junior high school, were high school sweethearts and have now been married for 32 years. They feel that life has brought them to this time that would utilize their backgrounds and gifts towards establishing their own bus tour company. Thus, Kellam Road Trips was born in 2017.

"As we look back," Stacy says, "we feel like this is where God has been leading us."

Tom grew up a little differently than most children in the small town of Mt. Etna in Huntington County. He began singing with his family when he was 4 years old.

"Had to stand on a stool at first," he recalls.

The family — parents John and Janice



A promotional photo shows the Kellam family in 1974: Tom, front left, is 10 years old; sister Cindy is at front right with their parents and brother Rick behind them.



A publicity photo from the family's most recent work. The group included, from left, son Ryan's wife Suzanne, Ryan, Tom and Colton Kellam. Ryan is a pastor at the Church of God in Pendleton where he also owns a recording studio; the couple has three children. Colton is the office manager and media specialist at the Lighthouse Assembly of God near Marion.

and siblings Rick and Cindy — would travel throughout the midwest and into Canada to sing at churches and gospel music festivals.

After graduating from Huntington North, he began working for his future father-in-law, Dallas Heyde, who owned gas stations in and around Warren and built the Huggy Bear Motel at the I-69/Ind. 5 interchange. Tom began driving buses when he was 25, at first on weekends and then with increasing frequency.

Meanwhile, the family gospel group continued to perform together, and went into full time touring and singing from 1990 to 1994 when Tom was in his early 30s. He was involved in planning the tours.

"This was before the internet," he shares. "We'd get large phone books at the library and make a bunch of phone calls. Now, with the internet and GPS, I don't know how we did it."

The Kellams would record several CDs, and Tom had also teamed with

Shelbia DeaKyne of Warren to perform mostly secular music at festivals and record a few CDs. Additionally, after the Kellam family decided to quit touring, he and the couple's two sons, Ryan and Colton, formed a gospel group together, "Sweet Spirit."

"That's been my favorite time of all of Tom's singing," Stacy says without hesitation.

Tom has driven buses for Bill Gaither and the Gaither Vocal Band, and has worked for Excursions Trailways since 2013 doing more driving, admitting he certainly has a passion for that.

Meanwhile, Stacy had begun to work at her father's gas station in Warren at a young age.

"I pumped gas at a full service station and took care of customers," she says, which developed her passion for working with people — "customer service."

After high school and their marriage, Stacy worked in inventory control at Peyton's Northern for 10 years, after which she worked in management for 19 years at Markle Bank, iAB and then First Merchants as the bank went through those changes. When her position as Call Center Manager was being moved to Daville, she felt a hand guiding them for her and Tom to begin working together.

"It was time," she says. "The kids were older, Tom had been on the road a lot and I was at home. We just wanted to work together."

They feel their skill sets compliment each other.

"He loves to travel and I love serving people," Stacy says. "I like the business side, but don't ask me what direction I am facing. So we make a great team." Tom does the driving and Stacy is the tour manager. "You might say we've found a new road to travel together."

The first organized tour they did on their own was in April 2017, a day trip to the Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Ky. They had planned to launch a full season of trips in 2018 but a fire in their Liberty Center home "set us back a bit," Tom says.

"By the grace of God we did not lose our home," he adds, "but it was a difficult time."

Hence, their 2019 Motorcoach Trips is their first full season. It began with a day trip to Chicago and a two-day trip in mid-June to Holmes County, Ohio. Their other trips this year include a two-day trip to Cumberland, Ohio, with a safari at Jack Hanna's "The Wilds" and a riverboat cruise Aug. 15 and 16; a day trip to



Tom and Stacy Kellam of Liberty Center feel their separate skills acquired over the years have led them to start their own tour company, Kellam Road Trips. (Photos provided)

the Parke County Covered Bridge festival Oct. 17; a day trip to Brown County and Nashville, Ind. Nov. 2; and a five-day "Christmas in the Ozarks" trip to Branson, Mo., Nov. 11-16.

Meanwhile, Tom is continuing to drive for Excursions Trailways. "They're a top-notch company and they work around our trips," Tom says. And, Stacy adds with a chuckle, "at the ripe age of 55, I am a car hop at my brother and sister-in-law's BK Root Beer stand in Huntington. Putting my customer service skills to work."

Meanwhile, the singing has not stopped. Tom is part of the praise team at their church — Lighthouse Assembly of God in Gas City — and Stacy has sung in the church choir but is more involved in the church's children's ministries. Tom's sister and her husband continue to perform occasionally at churches and nursing homes, and their two daughters often join them.

"Our boys started out as youth worship leaders and now they've gone into ministry," Stacy adds. "We are very blessed. Who knows, the boys and Tom may sing

(Continued on Page 56)

New MPD office has space for agencies – and the marshal's patches

Markle town marshal collects police patches from around the world, and the new station gives him room to display some of them

By **JESSICA BRICKER**

Markle Town Marshal John Markley has used his career and hobby to connect with law enforcement agencies across the world.

For about the last 25 years, he's collected patches that officers wear on their uniforms. Hundreds are displayed in his office at the new Markle Police Department, but many more make up his total collection, which he said is more than 700.

"I like them all," he said. "Some of them are very colorful. I like those."

He first started collecting patches as an intern with the Huntington County Sheriff's Department. He swaps them while attending trainings, online through officers who trade them, or when he meets new officers.

He'll keep them in his vehicle in case he sees out-of-town officers driving through Markle. When he went to Indianapolis to pick up the MPD's new vehicle earlier this year, he swapped patches with an officer.

This year on vacation to the Outer Banks, he picked one up from North Carolina. And he's a Gator fan, so he also has a University of Florida police patch.

Markley's collection includes patches from South Africa, Iceland, Germany, and Australia.

"There's officers all over the world that trade patches," he said.

A bobby in Sussex, England, sent him some British patches. Markley said he still communicates with the man occasionally.

It's a hobby, Markley said of his collection, which also includes some lapel pins and badges. He gets to learn about other departments and see how things are different across the world.

Markley has used a website of an officer in Arizona to verify patches; due to security reasons and the risk of impersonation, officers only trade with current or former officers.

The Arizona officer has almost 72,000 police patches in his collection and his website provides a reference database for collectors.

Markley said patches are different all over. Local agencies use standard patches that don't change much. The Indiana



Markle Town Marshal John Markley stands in front of a portion of his police patch collection in his office in the new Markle Police Department on Morse Street. "I like them all," he says. (Photo by Jessica Bricker)

State Police, for example, has used the same "stock" patch for years. Markley does have different ISP patches, though, including one for the scuba team, motor carrier inspectors, and the emergency response team.

As departments change or merge — such as the Marion County Sheriff's Department and the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department — some patches just don't exist as much as they used to.

"Some of them are hard to come by," he said. "Some of them are hard to find."

He first started to display his patches when the MPD was in the former Town Hall building, which is the location of the town's new library, under a glass plate on his desk. With the new police station, he has an office for the first time and has filled three large boards hanging on the wall behind his desk.

It's been a year since the Markle Town Council approved the \$85,000 purchase agreement for the building. Last July, thousands of dollars in renovations began at 139 E. Morse St., the former Markle Insurance location, to fit the needs of the police department. Upgrades included new electronic equipment, flooring and paint.

The two windows that bookend the front door have printed on them "Markle Police Dept., Est. 1889." The front door has three phone numbers listed as well: the administrative line and the dispatch numbers for Wells and Huntington counties. Baller Signs of Bluffton did the signage work.

Not only does the new MPD provide space for Markle officers — and Markley's patch collection — but deputies of Huntington and Wells, troopers from the Indiana State Police, and Indiana Department

of Natural Resources conservation officers all use the space to work.

Over the winter, after many crashes on I-69, the MPD provided a place for troopers to get warm, Markley said.

"It gives us a lot more room to work and gives the guys a place to call home," Markley said. "It was very nice of the town to do this for us." ♦

20 Year Anniversary!

Northwood Computer

Serving the community since 1998
with quality tech work and service.

Specialize in the sales and service of all PC & Mac systems.

Onsite service & repair, virus spyware removal, networking and server installations.

We stock Printers, Ink & Toner and a large selection of PC accessories.



Laptops • Desktops • Servers

3016 E State Road 124

Bluffton

824.5652

800.699.4762

"The Building People"



**GARAGES • COMMERCIAL • WORKSHOPS
FARM • CHURCHES • MINI-STORAGE
SUBURBAN EQUESTRIAN**

Building with....
PERMA-COLUMN™

MEYER BUILDING

"A pre-cast concrete column for your new Meyer building."

Craigville, IN

toll free 800-742-2861

www.MeyerBuilding.com

Ryan Frauhiger turned a hobby into a career

(not to be confused with a 'job')

By GLEN WERLING

Anyone visiting Ryan Frauhiger's house will notice a bunch of old wood stacked up at the end of his driveway — a bunch of old wood, seemingly good for nothing but firewood.

That's not what Frauhiger sees. He sees potential.

Frauhiger is one of those few fortunate people who have turned their hobby into a vocation.

"In August it will be three years now," Frauhiger said.

A 1985 graduate of Norwell High School and a 1990 graduate of Taylor University in Upland, Frauhiger has been carving wood since his college days with chisel, mallet and Dremels. (A Dremel is a fine drilling and shaping tool).

"I've always been fascinated with shaping wood, whether it's in a slow fashion with a chisel and mallet or sped up with a gas-powered saw," he said.

He made his first carving — an eagle — as an art project for a class. He got an A on it.

"It was an 'A' for effort," he said. "I spent hours and hours on it. The professor saw how much time I spent on it and rewarded me for my effort."

He still has that eagle.

He earned his degree in art education with the goal of teaching. He taught at Warsaw High School for two years.

"I wasn't that good at it," he admitted with a laugh. "When you first start as a teacher, it's on a trial basis. You come back on an invitational basis," he said. After two years, his supervisors thought he was better suited for a different line of work.

Frauhiger has always loved working with his hands and has the ability to take something raw and turn it into a work of art. A great place to do that and make a living is a dental laboratory.

While he was employed in the laboratory, he continued to work on carving as a hobby.

"I was working one day

and I got this idea of potential — seeing the potential within a block of wood," Frauhiger said. It made him think about the potential each person has. "The thoughts developed into a speech."

He contacted his friend, Bob Roebuck, who was the principal at Fort Wayne Community Schools' Anthis Career Center. "I said to him that I have this idea I want to try."

The first day of school in 2008, Frauhiger had a chance to present his motivational speech on "potential" — and then to present the school with a soaring eagle carving. He used analogies to explain to the students the obstacles in their lives that could keep them from reaching their potential and explained to them ways to overcome those obstacles.

Maybe Frauhiger's former employers weren't sold on him as a teacher, but here he had the chance to teach again.

He had been making gifts for friends and family or to donate to a cause, but his hobby wasn't really a money-making venture. He dipped his toe into that water for a couple years with an entry in the Bluffton Free Street Fair Industrial Tent in 2003 and 2004.

"I wanted to have a chance to show people what I was doing as a hobby, but inside me I wanted to be able to do this full-time," he said.

It was the fear of the unknown that was holding him back. The idea of leaving a job with its guaranteed income and benefits for carving full-time. "What if I don't make as much money at it? Will I be able to support myself?" Frauhiger wondered. "Those questions keep us from taking that step."

Then one day in 2013 a stroke of fortune — good or bad, depending on how one wishes to look at it — struck Frauhiger.

He had high blood pressure but wasn't managing it well — or at all. That fateful day, it

decided to manage him.

"I had a stroke and my production at the dental lab went down 75 percent and so did my income," Frauhiger said.

It was a struggle to recover what he had lost, but over a three-year period, he managed to get back up to about 65 percent of his original productivity. Realizing he could make it on a lower income made him also realize that carving could become a full-time pursuit.

He lost dexterity in his left hand — and he's left-handed. "I just had to try things out in recovery. I could still draw. It was not as fast as it was — everything still works, just not at the rate it used to be," Frauhiger said.

A cousin who home-schools her children asked Frauhiger if he would be willing to teach her children drawing. She hired him to teach the children how to draw. He then started doing it for some other families as well.

"I started to realize that things weren't gone completely," Frauhiger said.

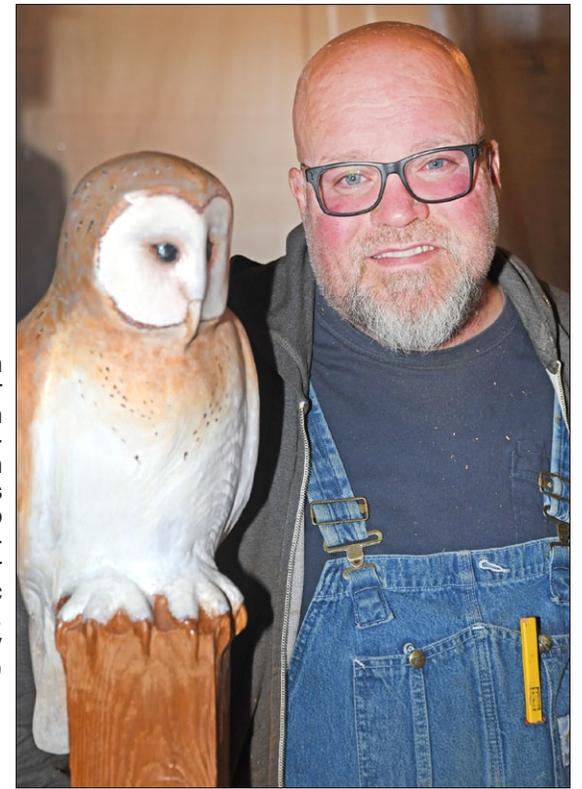
Remember the eagle for Anthis? That's when Frauhiger first picked up a chainsaw for a carving because the piece was so massive.

He was introduced to the chainsaw again in 2014. "I picked up a chainsaw and started carving with it," he recalled.

He had been referred to the Moose Lake Christian Craft Village near LaOtto. "One of my coworkers at the lab who was a jewelry maker referred me to it. My brother-in-law also told me I needed to check it out," Frauhiger said.

So he did. "I went up there and met with a man and he told me they were going to have a chainsaw carving event," Frauhiger said. He wanted to know if Frauhiger could carve with a chainsaw. "I told him no, I could carve with a chisel and a Dremel."

He saw what the chainsaw carvers were doing and he



Ryan Frauhiger poses with one of his creations: a barn owl. He takes great pains to make his carvings appear as realistic as possible. (Photo by Glen Werling)

thought to himself, "They've got such cool tools. I want to be able to work with those," Frauhiger said.

He didn't carve with the chainsaw the first time at Moose Lake. The next time, he did.

He had carved at the Street Fair, so next he carved at the Wells County 4-H Fair. In 2014, he carved a bench and a family saw it and wanted to know if he could carve a bench with goats on it.

"He wanted to buy it," Frauhiger said, if it had goats on it.

He had an additional idea. Why not trace each of the hands of the children and carve that into the bench? The family loved the idea. "It was highly personalized," Frauhiger said.

He was invited to the Whitley County 4-H Fair in 2016 to carve a tree on the property. They were going to pay him, but had no cash to do it, so they exchanged five years of vending at the fair in exchange for the carving.

Because of the size of the carving he had to set up scaffolding and that drew attention from those attending the fair.

He left the fair with six orders for tree carvings. Six legitimate jobs to do.

"My wife said, 'I don't see how you're going to get all of

those done if you have to go back to work,'" Frauhiger said.

His response?

"Really? So I guess I'll quit my job," he said.

His wife was from Warsaw and they had a sort of commuter marriage for awhile until her youngest son graduated from high school and left for college. Then she moved from Warsaw to rural Bluffton where Frauhiger had built a house in his bachelorhood 16 years earlier. He had been living at the house because his work was here and he didn't want to sell his house — and she didn't either. But he wanted her youngest to finish out the school life that he had been living in Warsaw.

Now, his wife had moved here and his work was in Columbia City and Warsaw.

"It was kind of a crazy jockeying of positions there," he laughed.

It was still a leap of faith. "I had six jobs lined up and I had to ask myself, 'What am I going to do when those six jobs are over?'" he said. But after that, he had more jobs lined up.

"The way this works, I found out, is that when you're working is when you get your most work, because people see it. They notice it," Frauhiger said.

(Continued on Page 54)

Lilly Scholar has a resume that sparkles

By **BOB CAYLOR**

She's the valedictorian of Norwell High School's Class of 2019, with a 4.0 grade-point average.

She earned the Girl Scouts' Rainbow Award for raising the funds needed to expand bleachers and concrete pads around the Dream Team diamond at Whicker Park. The Dream Team allows children with disabilities to play T-ball, and it's a cause that important to her, because she's been her brother Brandon's "base buddy" for years, helping guide him around the bases at the park.

"Everyone wants to see the kids do what they can and not feel like they're being judged," she said. No one keeps score, and the kids usually play two innings, with a break between them.

Schmidt also is this year's Wells County Lilly Scholar. That means the Lilly Endowment will pay her full tuition and fees, plus a stipend for books, at any Indiana college or university. She chose Manchester University, which is providing her with a scholarship to cover room and board.

But there's another achievement she thinks might be more important. This year, she was co-president of the Riley Dance Marathon at Norwell, which raised almost \$13,000 for Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis.

"That also connects with my brother, because they saved his life."

Brother Brandon, 16, has Down syndrome and was born with a heart defect that required several surgeries and hospitalizations at Riley.

"He's pretty healthy now. He gets his heart checked every year," she said.

"We always had a special connection," she recalled. "I could tell what he was feeling even if he couldn't say it."

As is common among people with Down Syndrome, her brother took a lon-

All her life, Elizabeth Schmidt has felt a special bond with her brother, Brandon. Elizabeth Schmidt is Wells County's Lilly Scholar this year, but that's only part of her accomplishments. (Courtesy photo)



ger time to learn the fine-motor coordination necessary to speak. He had things to say before he could speak, and he learned sign language as a toddler. Schmidt learned along with him. She remembers being able to understand what he meant, even when no one else could.

She intends to study accounting and finance at Manchester. She's adding finance to her educational plan because she thinks it would give her more flexibility to enter banking, for example, or to assume a leadership role in an organization.

She's had a taste of real-life accounting. This year, she was an intern at Emshwiller & Emshwiller Public Accounting in Bluffton where she surprised John Emshwiller, to say the least. Typically interns from high school do their work for class credit, and it often turns out to be more like job shadowing, with a lot of filing, photocopying and similar low-skilled tasks.

Eventually he entrusted her with simple payrolls, light bookkeeping and uncomplicated tax returns. Emshwiller said she's the best high school intern he's

ever had. "We actually started paying her. She was that good."

"She can pick things up remarkably quick. Her retention is incredible," he said.

He's also impressed by her devotion to family and to helping others.

That devotion was key in Schmidt's choice of Manchester to continue her education. There are many fine schools for accounting or business in Indiana —

where Lilly Scholarships must be used -- but she wants to be close to home.

"I plan to be home every weekend," Schmidt said. While she's home, she plans to work part-time caring for young people with disabilities, including her brother. She will provide personal care, recreation and respite care, which gives parents of disabled children a break to have some time to themselves.

"She's probably the most mature, level-headed high school student I've ever seen," Emshwiller said. ♦

MARIACHI LOCO Mexican Grill & Bar The Best Taste of Mexico

DAILY SPECIALS

FAST-FRIENDLY & FRESH

**Book your special gathering,
reception or event with us!**

1595 Harrison Plaza • Bluffton, IN • 827-0616



M-Th 11am-9pm



Fri 11am-10pm

Sat 11am-10pm

Sun 11am-9pm



Rethceif Packaging

www.rethceif.com

- » Horizontal Compression Baggers
- » Vertical Compression Baggers
- » Free Flow Baggers
- » Light Compression Baggers
- » Bale Shield Baggers
- » ConservaCube Sealers
- » Robot Palletizing System
- » Volumetric Feeder



We use the latest technology and innovation to help our customers meet current and future needs. Our designs set the standard in reliability, serviceability, cost of ownership, and performance. We are constantly developing new packaging models and patented technologies to heighten our customers' packaging experience and accomplish our mission of delivering a great customer experience through innovative design, quality craftsmanship and outstanding support.

420 Industrial Pkwy, Ossian • (260) 622-7200

Northeast Indiana's Premiere Grasshopper Dealer



**OUTDOOR
Concepts**

- Landscape & Equipment Center -

2275 N. Main St., Bluffton • 260-824-5189
7900 N. State Road 3, Muncie • 765-587-4841

www.ocilandscape.com



IT'S SO MUCH MOWER

Visit WWW.GRASSHOPPERMOWER.COM

New ★ Used ★ Service ★ Parts

'What God made' with his artistic talents

By DEVAN FILCHAK

David McConnehey is far more than a graphic designer and a father of five. When he was growing up, there were two things he loved more than anything — drawing and reading comic books.

"Everyone has that something special. I can't sing a lick," the Bluffton resident said. "My talent is drawing."

Now, he's the one who gets to see kids excitedly look through comic books he's illustrated when he goes to conventions with Kingdom Comics, a Christian comic book outreach ministry based out of Chicago.

"For me, it's like becoming a kid again," McConnehey said of watching children's faces light up as they pore their eyes over his illustrations.

McConnehey has done illustrating in many forms, but the majority of his comic book work has been with Kingdom Comics.

He said it's a good place for him since he has seen few clean, child-appropriate comic books out there.

"It's definitely a perk for me, since I have children of my own," he said.

The comics aren't so much direct interpretations of the Bible, but rather the themes and messages from the Bible are weaved throughout the stories. McConnehey said that is easy to do since many superhero stories involve difficult things in life and the moral issues they have to confront.

He wants to encourage his own children to be into comic books, and it makes it easier to know of a source for comics that aren't going to have inappropriate content hidden inside of them. He already has to spend time watching previews for shows and movies his kids want to watch.

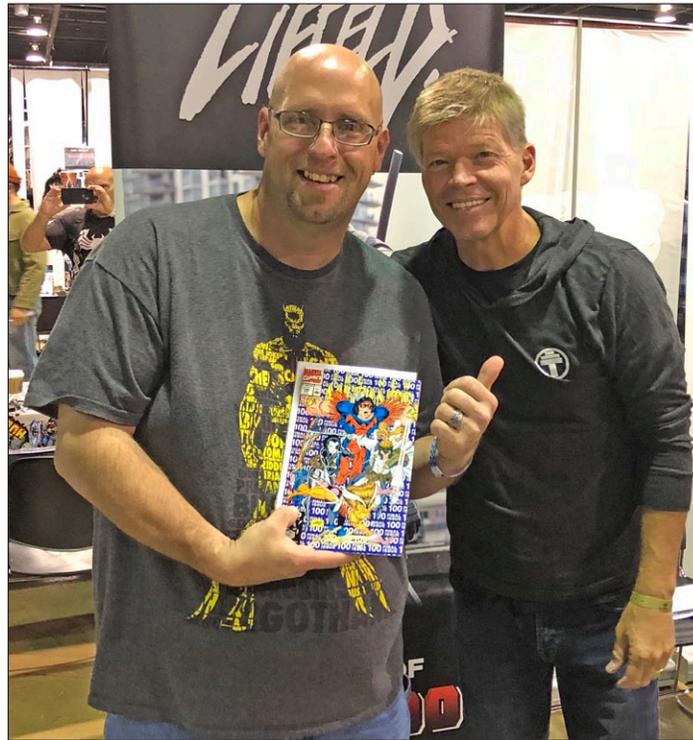
Even in the comic book world, McConnehey isn't just an illustrator. He has written his own comic books as well, but he prefers sticking to the imagery.

"Writers can be a dime a dozen," he said. "Comic books are a more visual medium, and artists get more attention."

His work with Kingdom Comics also takes him all over the country to attend different conventions. It's a lot of work, but it can also be a lot of fun.

Since being at the "comic cons" costs money, there is always a goal for sales. The busier the event, the better. At Chicago Comic and Entertainment Expo, known as C2E2, four of the Kingdom Comics books sold out. Three out of those four were either illustrated or written by McConnehey.

But when there is down time, it gives McConnehey a chance to look around



At left, Dave McConnehey poses with Deadpool creator and artist Rob Liefeld at a convention. Above, McConnehey and his daughter Joy, far left, talk to a family about the book he and his wife Janae wrote called "What God Made." The crayon Lego men that children can adopt are displayed in front of them at an event at the Wells County Public Library. (Photos provided)

and meet other people in the comic realm. After all, he started out as a fan.

Two of the biggest names McConnehey was excited to meet are Michael Rooker of "Guardians of the Galaxy" and "The Walking Dead" and Rob Liefeld, the creator and artist of "Deadpool." That just makes the whole experience all the more surreal, he said.

McConnehey's creative endeavors have expanded further than just the comic world though. He's done some work with children's books, including one that he wrote with his wife Janae and illustrated himself.

"What God Made" is a book that is near and dear to the couple's hearts. Janae McConnehey was one of nine adopted children in her family growing up. They have now adopted a child of their own.

"Fostering and adoption is a big part of our lives," he said.

The book tells the story of Jamaal, a black boy adopted by a white family. Through the book, he asks why they are a family even though he looks different than the family.

The mother comforts the boy by saying each of his features are features she loves because they are the features God made.

McConnehey said his wife is the one who came up with

the perfect ending. The book ends with the mother telling Jamaal, "Love is what makes us the same. We're the family that God made."

The McConneheys also made it into more than just a book. It's a gift for loved ones who may have children who are processing what it is to be in the foster system or to be adopted. The first page of the book has a form for book presentation that includes who it is given to and lines

for the person giving the gift to list the special reasons it is for that person.

Additionally, the McConneheys have a little activity they put on for the children they see at events. From broken crayons, they make little crayon Lego men. Children get to pick one out, name the figure, and "adopt it" as their own.

"I don't think it really hit us until we started talking with people about adoption at events," he said. "A lot of people have purchased the book, and they really enjoy it."

"What God Made" can be ordered on Amazon.

Another creative venture McConnehey is working on is writing his own book. He said it's untitled at this point, but it is with the popular theme of a post-apocalyptic world.

The projects don't seem to end with McConnehey, but he said he likes doing graphic design for a living and leaving his more creative endeavors for his off time.

McConnehey worked for the News-Banner for five years before recently leaving for a new position. He said he loved designing graphics and advertisements.

"It's thrilling when the client loves (the advertisement)," he said. "It's fun when it's published, and I get to see my work around me." ♦



The black-and-white drawings at left were turned into the cover Dave McConnehey designed for Quiver No. 10, which he also wrote.



Jarod and Carissa Studabaker in their rural Bluffton commercial woodworking shop. Their business is the culmination of almost 20 years of working in wood flooring with a specialty in what is called "endgrain flooring." (Photo by Mark Miller)

'Endgrain' flooring launches a Wells County business

By MARK MILLER

Technically, Studabaker Specialty Woodworks was born about five or six years ago, but it was conceived in Jarod Studabaker's mind long before that.

"This has been something I've been wanting for at least 19 years," Studabaker said.

His handiwork is in some out-of-state luxury homes and was part of a very recent expansion of the Kennedy Performing Arts Center in Washington D.C., but he'd rather talk about the work he does around Wells County.

After graduating from Bluffton High School in 1997, he headed for Purdue University to major in aviation.

"I was thinking air traffic control," he said, "but I pretty quickly discovered I didn't like school." He has always enjoyed working with his hands. He loves projects, and he enjoys seeing those projects finished.

Studabaker may have learned a few things about craftsmanship and creativity from his parents. Mom Carol discovered a painting talent later in life and dad Larry had a well-equipped woodworking shop.

"They made a lot of country crafts that they sold, so I always had a part-time job where I could make a little money," he recalled.

Jarod returned to Wells County from Purdue and worked for Ted Habegger at Country Cabinets, married Carissa Geisel in 2000, and they began to dream about a shop of their own, specializing in a pro-

cess he had come across.

With the internet in its early years, he discovered a man in Chicago who was doing a different kind of flooring that Jarod had heard of: endgrain block wood flooring. Rather than cut wood with the grain, "you take a barn beam or a new piece of wood and you slice it like bread," he explained. "You get these square or rectangular tiles that show the wood's growth rings."

Intrigued by the idea and the beauty of the end product, Studabaker traveled to Chicago and found Mr. Birger Juell.

"I had been working at it because I was fascinated by it," he recalled. "It is very difficult and very challenging to figure out. So I wanted to see what I could learn from him. I showed him some pictures of my work. He talked with me, kind of patted me on the back and thanked me for coming."

He continued to work on the process and was able to do some jobs. A couple years later when Jarod was attending a national wood flooring convention, he found Mr. Juell again.

"I went to these shows to learn as much as I could. I had some new pictures and some samples of my work," he continued, "and he invited me to have breakfast with him the next morning."

At that breakfast, Juell introduced him to one of his salesmen, "and after that they started buying blocks from us."

Thus began a period when he was

(Continued on Page 29)





SCHEDULE A VISIT TODAY!

Living Options for Every Stage of Life

SKILLED NURSING • THERAPY/REHAB

ASSISTED LIVING • INDEPENDENT LIVING

HOME DELIVERY MEALS

260-565-3000

720 E. DUSTMAN RD. • BLUFFTON, IN

WWW.CHRIStIANCARERC.ORG

Angelkeep

*... a refuge, a retreat,
and an inspiration*

By GLEN WERLING

On a gorgeously sunny May day, when the cottonwood fluff floats down like a warm weather snow shower, Alan Daugherty steps outside to take it all in at his little acre paradise.

Angelkeep is a pond named in homage of the angels, both seen and unseen, who have helped walk him through some of the roughest patches of life.

"A keep," he notes "is a summer home in Ireland."

His life started in Craigville, but then transitioned to the Daugherty Farm in the northwest corner of Lancaster Township near Uniondale.

"We had 40 acres. Dad didn't farm it, but my school bus driver, Irvin Elzey, did. He had the equipment, he tilled the fields and he and my dad split the crops," Daugherty recalled.

It was the same place where his father grew up. Across the road was a railroad bridge for the Erie Railroad that crossed over Meridian Road. When his father was a boy, he scratched his name on the steel of the viaduct's interior beams — one of hundreds of people who had over the years.

Daugherty is a 1966 Lancaster Central High School graduate.

"We were supposed to be the last class," he said, but because of legal issues and quarrels, it was delayed. "We graduated and went through a joint ceremony with the class from Ossian. It has both Northern Wells and Lancaster listed on the diploma," he said.

Straight out of high school he had a job working on transformers at the Fort Wayne General Electric plant. He worked at it a year, but he became convinced he needed a college degree.

He decided to seek that degree at Ball State, but was leaning toward architecture which, he observed, has an artistic aspect to it that appealed to him.

However, the counselors at Ball State

directed him away from architecture because they believed that was not the area in which he was truly proficient. They, instead, recommended he consider teaching art.

"So I agreed with them and never changed it. I got what was called an art-area major. I had no minor, so when I got out, art was all I could teach," he said.

"I've always enjoyed art. It's been a passion for me since I was little," he said.

He recalled how his parents would take him to town on Saturdays and give him a quarter to spend. He could either buy a bag of roasted nuts from the bulk counter at the Murphy's five and dime or he could buy a pad of paper for his drawings.

"Half the time I'd buy a big thick pad of paper and spend all week or longer drawing house plans," he said.

"When I graduated from Ball State, I was the only one that summer who had a job. I had a job lined up at Southern Wells," he recalled.

He wanted a job within a 50-mile radius of Muncie so he could commute to Ball State to work on his master's degree and still be able to teach.

"Southern Wells suddenly needed a driver's training instructor that summer and an art teacher starting in the fall, so I fit the bill for both of them. They were within that 50-mile radius that I asked to be considered for," he said.

He moved back to Bluffton and has been in Bluffton ever since.

He stuck with teaching for awhile, but when his driver's education position was given to an incoming

teacher who was also a coach, Daugherty found himself with no summer income. He decided to take up construction.

"A teacher's salary really isn't enough to live on, or you have to live frugally. You really need something in the summer," he said.

Construction paid as much or more than teaching, he said — and it was year-



Alan Daugherty feeds the fish at Angelkeep Pond on a pleasant spring afternoon.

(Photos by Glen Werling)

around.

So, he made a change to construction. "I was working for Jim Easley out of Ossian," he said. Daugherty was Easley's only employee for most of the year — except during the summertime. He taught Daugherty everything he knew about construction. "After a few years I had the skills to build an entire house myself, doing everything," he said.

At Ouabache State Park, the assistant manager's home by the office had an addition built onto it that Daugherty worked on. He's particularly satisfied that his stone work on the addition made it look like it was part of the part of the original construction.

"I started to realize I was getting older and construction was becoming harder," he said. So, he decided to get back into teaching. He put out some inquiries that at first went nowhere. The next year he got a call from the Lancaster School principal in Huntington County.

"He wanted to know if I would be interested in an art job which would start in two or three weeks," he said. "They had just found out that their art teacher had gotten married during the summer

and they called to get an update on her married name for their record and she told them she was not coming back," Daugherty said.

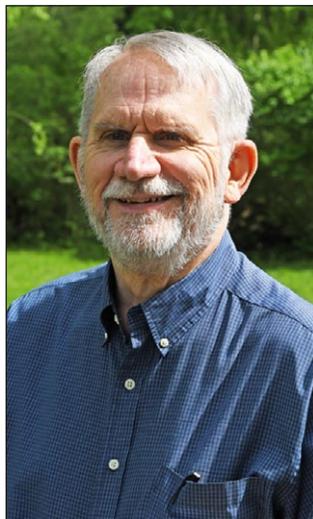
Because it was so late in the season for being able to find a qualified teacher, Daugherty became the ideal choice to fill the position. He was ready to jump back in. He ended up cutting a family vacation short in order to begin teaching at Lancaster.

He still stuck with light construction as a summer supplement and also taught summer courses in computer drawing.

"It worked out well for me. My license was still good. I had to take some lessons, but I still had to get my master's degree," he said. I had to start work on that all over again, because the first classes I had taken were too long ago," he said. His master's degree was from St. Francis University.

He would eventually end up teaching at Andrews Elementary School in Huntington County and wrapped up his teaching career in 2007 at Lincoln Elementary in Huntington. He decided to get out when, he observed, the state and

(Continued on Page 37)



Alan Daugherty

'Endgrain' flooring

(Continued from Page 27)

self-employed, working out of his parents' wood shop. In 2008, he accepted a job with a business in Lima, Ohio, commuting every day to manage a specialty woodworking shop there.

"This man had the sales but struggled with the production and the labor force and the management," he said. Jarod basically ran the business, doing similar work to what he's doing today: "A lot of reclaimed wood, making box beams."

An opportunity to work closer to home emerged, "managing the shop" for Eric Gerber at Edge Manufacturing. Meanwhile, he was still doing some projects out of his parents' shop. He decided to go it on his own a few years later. He hired an Amish crew; they were doing some construction and barn demolitions.

"What really put some wind in our sails was a call from Josh Barkley," Jarod explained. "He had a project over in Huntington County taking down a barn for a couple who wanted to use the wood to build a very nice home. We worked side by side salvaging the wood and then we took that and made all the woodwork in the new home except for the cabinets."

Trusses, trim, countertops, doors, the porches — all made from the salvaged barn wood. The success of that job has led



Jarod Studabaker puts some finishing touches on an endgrain parquet floor he was installing in a home in Wisconsin. The squares are "sliced" from an old barn beam.

(Photo provided)

to others.

About two years ago, Jarod and Carisa built their own shop just down the road from his parents. The steel framing for the 8,500-square-foot structure came from a building he tore down on South Main Street.

The state highway expansion had necessitated the Apostolic Church to move the loading docks of the Bible Distribution Center there. The church bought a couple buildings just north of the center. Jarod, who attends the church with his wife and two children, demolished the buildings in exchange for the framework. His Amish crew built their new building on East 300 South and they've since filled it with about 15 machines.

Those include some standard woodworking machines along with commercial-grade planers and sanders and a couple specialty machines they have built themselves.

"One of them was a brainchild of mine," he noted.

Jarod is reluctant to talk about the jobs in D.C. and Wisconsin and other far flung places. Those are only about one-half of their work.

"We also have had a great job for some wonderful people in Craigville and another one in Monroe," he said. "We made a really neat conference table for a business in Ohio."

As people became aware of and had seen several of his high-end projects,

"the local market perceived they couldn't afford me," he said. "I've tried really hard the past few years to get rid of that stigma."

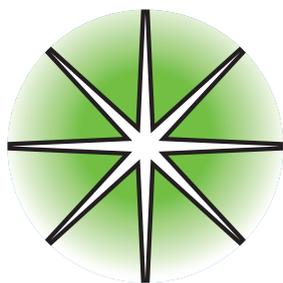
The endgrain floors are indeed expensive, averaging about \$25 per square foot, "and that's where I got started," he explained. "It did create an image of high dollar, but we also do a lot of standard tongue-in-groove wood flooring. We do a lot of \$10- to \$12-per-square-foot floors."

Today, Studabaker Specialty Woodworks does a lot of work with local and area builders. He cited Barkley Builders as one of his bigger collaborators and noted that he did the woodwork for Eric Gerber — his former employer — when he built a new home.

They employ anywhere from three to seven employees, depending on the season and the orders. While Mr. Juell has passed on, that salesman still contracts for work as do two or three others.

Jarod struggles at times to balance the dual responsibilities of running a business and working with his hands. The couple, working side-by-side, hope to complete a showroom to display the various options of flooring and other woodworking they offer.

"It's been challenging," he concludes. "I couldn't have done it without my parents, my spouse and the good, local people who have worked with us." ♦



HOTT

FAMILY DENTISTRY



Comprehensive Dental Care

- General Dentistry
- Sedation Dentistry
- Wisdom Teeth Removal
- Root Canals
- Immediate Dentures

Same Day Emergency Exams

- Easy Financing Options
- Accepting most Dental Insurance Plans Including Delta Dental Premier, HIP2.0 & Medicaid

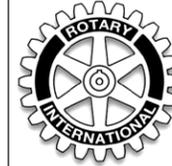
Call
Dr. Hott

260-824-2442

706 N. Main St.
Bluffton, Indiana

BlufftonDental.com

A key part of Bluffton Rotary – and Bluffton City – history



The Bluffton Rotary Club marked its 100th Anniversary in June.
See page 8

By MARK MILLER

Howard Rich smiles often when he talks about Rotary.

A member of the Bluffton Rotary Club for more than 55 years, he had told his wife that it was “a good group of guys.”

Rich joined the club at the suggestion of his new employer shortly after he came to Bluffton from his native Adams County in 1956 when he was 25 years old. Bill Thoma knew it was a good way to get acquainted with a number of people in the community.

“It stimulated me,” he continues. “There were a variety of guys, different professions and backgrounds — they were interesting people. Didn’t matter who you sat beside, you could get an interesting conversation going.”

Within five years, Rich became a partner with Thoma; the Thoma/Rich Funeral Home operated under that main name. Today, what is now the Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home remains an iconic business, the oldest and longest running continuous business in Wells County, dating back to 1853. Jeff and Jaime Lemler currently own and operate the funeral home, Rich having retired in 2001.

Rich’s involvement in Rotary, however, is only part of his story; his list of projects and service can only be classified as legendary. While he could easily earn the title of “Mr. Rotary” for the club’s second 50 years, he could also be called “Mr. Bluffton.” He credits much of his efforts to Rotary.

He refers to himself as “still being in my formative years” when he joined the club. The Four-Way Test made a big impact on his life. He can easily share the story of its origins: Rotarian Herbert Taylor introduced the test to his local Chicago club in 1932 after he adopted the test and applied it to the home cookware sales company he had taken over in near bankruptcy and then led it to a high



Howard Rich

level of success. The test was adopted by Rotary International in 1943.

“I’ve also always appreciated the Rotary motto — ‘Service Above Self,’” Rich continues. “If you contemplate on that, it’s really a pretty good thought.”

He fondly recalls one of his first opportunities for service.

During their first year as members of the downtown Merchants Association, Rich and his wife, Bev, responded immediately when Jack Eley, president of the association, announced that due to lack of funds, the City of Bluffton would not be putting up Christmas decorations. The couple volunteered to coordinate the project, donating their time and materials. The decorations might have been homemade, but Bluffton was well adorned for the season.

“I learned that I enjoy extracting money from people,” Rich says, chuckling as he reminisces. “And my reward for a successful campaign,” he continues, “was being appointed as the organization’s president the next year!”

His list of community service includes:

- Leading the successful campaign for the Wells Community Swimming Pool.

- Co-chairing (with his wife) the local bicentennial celebration

in 1976.

- Helping lead the revitalization efforts triggered by the loss of the Corning Glass plant in the late-1980s, which resulted in the creation of the Rivergreenway, the downtown landscaping and the Kehoe Riverfront Park.

- Although he defers credit to many others, he helped Bluffton become the first Indiana community to receive the “Outstanding Indiana Community of the Year” award in 1990.

- Conceiving what is now the Wells County Arts, Commerce and Visitors Centre when the Creative Arts Council and Chamber of Commerce were in need of a new home. He recruited Franklin Electric CEO Bill Lawson to help raise more than \$2 million. The grand opening was held in April 2004.

- Serving on “too many committees to remember,” including the Wells County Public Library

board of trustees and the Chamber of Commerce, serving as president of both.

Within Rotary, he served as president — the 1965-66 Rotary year — and took his turns writing the weekly Spur for several years while rarely missing a meeting for more than 55 years.

It was during Rich’s year as president that the club built what is now Rotary Park along the Wabash River. At the time, there was no Rivergreenway and River Road was a state highway connecting downtown Bluffton with the state park. The park would be officially dedicated as part of the new Rivergreenway project on Oct. 16, 1990.

“It was just a wide spot along the river bank and we thought it would be a good place for a park,” Rich recalls. He does not recall asking anyone for permission, or whether anyone actually owned the land.

“We just did it. We assumed we could and no one objected,” he says now, laughing at how that probably wouldn’t work these days. He describes the initial project as a parking lot with three entrances and a picnic pavilion the club obtained from the state at no cost.

“I think (the pavilion) was being made in one of the prisons,” he recalls. “I got a letter that said they would give it to us and that all we’d have to do was erect it.”

Originally named after Ray Renollet, a longtime secretary for the club, the park was totally refurbished in 2001. That project, of course, was led by Howard Rich, who felt it was a good time to change the name to one people would recognize.

As 2005 approached, word came from Rotary International headquarters in Evanston, Ill., that each club should identify



During a weekly Rotary meeting Sept. 2, 2014, held at River Terrace Estates, the club unveiled the sign that would soon be placed on the picnic pavilion at Rotary Park honoring Howard; his wife Bev was also in attendance. Surrounding the couple, from left, are Greg Hiday, Lee VonGunten, Jeremy Todd, Tess Dillman, Nick Nagel, Chon Michael, Jim Almdale, Steve Higgins, Phil Swain, Michael Towne, Mitch Harnish, Jon Jenkins, Matt Terhune is behind Kim Gentis, Gary Boone, Keith Huffman, Rick Gentis, Tim Babcock and Derek Myers.

The evolution
of a park ...



1966 — The club completed the construction of a new park along the Wabash River and named it in honor of longtime club secretary Ray Renollet. (News-Banner file photos)



May 15, 2001 — The club gathered at the newly renovated park. The project was led by Howard Rich, of course. Kneeling from left: Mark Miller, Bruce Miller, Ray Shaw, Ron Foudy. Standing: Tony Crowell, Stan Rigby, Doug Isch, Mark Settlemeyre, Dave Barth, Tim Babcock, Tess Dillman, Keith Huffman, John Whicker is only partially visible behind Dr. Jeff Schaefer, Phil Swain, Sue Laudidio, Howard Rich, Marty Lindsay, Bette Erxleben, Penny Marshall.

and execute a significant community project to honor the 100th anniversary of the founding of the first Rotary Club in Chicago. It was Rich who looked around town and proposed to the club to build a permanent stage at Kehoe Park.

Some time in the fall of 2011, he felt it was time he stepped away from the club. Now in retirement, he didn't feel like he could continue the attendance commitment. Nevertheless, when he took notice the pavilion at Rotary Park needed

upgraded and replaced, he initiated the project and raised the funds to rebuild it to be more flood-proof. The project was finished in May 2014; the club voted unanimously to name the pavilion in his honor.

At the 100th anniversary of Bluffton Rotary, Rich remains interested in the club's progress as he looks back fondly.

"The fellowship, the community projects," he says. "I know it's not for everybody but it suited me just fine." ♦



June 7, 2011 — The club held a picnic meeting at the newly refurbished pavilion at Rotary Park. Even though Howard Rich had been retired from his club membership for a few years, he recognized the need to update the pavilion. Front, from left: Preston Kaehr, Rick Gentis, Dr. Kevin Beer, Phil Swain, Paula Johnson, Kim Gentis, Nikki Surbaugh, Bette Erxleben, Steve Higgins, Derek Myers. Back row: Alan Gunkel, Lee VonGunten, Brian Barger, Rod Craft, Tim Babcock, Bruce Miller, Howard Rich, Dave Mahan, Kent Kitacofe, Mark Settlemeyre.

Quality Care, Everyday!
BEAUTIFUL, PRIVATE, LONG TERM CARE SUITES

**DEDICATED
to HOPE,
HEALING and
RECOVERY.**

Signature
HealthCARE

Come see us
for a tour!

1529 W. Lancaster | Bluffton, IN 46714
(260) 824-4320 • shcofbluffton.com

HIDAY AUTOMOTIVE GROUP
1743 N. Main St., Bluffton • 260-824-0900 | 1791 N. Main St., Bluffton • 260-824-1931



Family Owned and Operated Since 1975

www.HidayMotors.com

Bluffton Rotary's first female president left her mark on the club and the community

By MARK MILLER

There was "a lot of to-do about it," Bette Erxleben recalls.

"Jim Barbieri wrote an article in the News-Banner," she continues. "I seem to remember one member who made some (negative) comments but I can't remember who that was, which is just as well."

Erxleben made a number of marks on the Bluffton and Wells County community, one of which was being the first female to be elected and serve as the president of the Bluffton Rotary Club. Like all service clubs, membership had historically been open to men only. When societal changes began questioning that structure, Rotary International quickly changed its by-laws, encouraging all local clubs to change as well.

"I wasn't the first female in the club — that would have been Dianne Witwer," Erxleben says, "but as things worked out, I was the first female president."

During her year as president, the club made a major commitment to the River-greenway and other community projects. The club recognized community leader Amos Gerber with a Paul Harris Fellowship award. The award recognizes a \$1,000 or more gift to the Rotary Foundation, one of the largest philanthropic foundations in the world which focuses on programs to promote world peace and understanding. One of its main ongoing programs since the late 1980s has been to eradicate polio. Erxleben would, a year later, obtain the honor for herself.

"The Rotary Foundation is a wonderful, wonderful effort," she explains. "I was happy to support its work."

Her year wielding the gavel would have been noteworthy in and of itself, however she served during the fateful year from July 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998 — during which the Dutch Mill Restaurant was destroyed by fire on Dec. 29,

1997.

"Beyond the tragedy of its loss to the Steffen family and the community, it was such a great meeting place for us and several other of the service clubs," Erxleben recalls. The fire destroyed everything the club had — badges, songbooks, the club's collection of club flags left by visiting Rotarians and the club's archives.

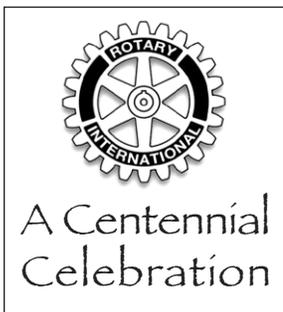
"We had all of our things in a cabinet there," she continues. "We'd used that for many, many years." Erxleben recalled that the club missed only one weekly meeting in the wake of the fire.

"It was tough finding a new spot. It wasn't a very nice thing to happen to the first female president," she says with a chuckle.

After trying out a couple locations, the club began meeting at the Rittenhouse Jan. 29, 1998, and began rebuilding and replacing what they could. One of those items was a small bell which was used to call meetings to order. Club member and secretary Don Skinner took a cowbell that Howard Rich had given him and painted the names of all the current members on its sides. It was used until an "official" Rotary bell could be ordered and delivered. The bell remains one of Erxleben's mementoes from her career.

A native of Greencastle, Erxleben first came to Bluffton in 1973 when her husband, Dr. Walter Erxleben accepted a position with the Caylor-Nickel Clinic. His career took their family, including two sons, to Ann Arbor, Mich., in 1979, but they returned to Bluffton in 1981.

She accepted the position of executive director of the fledgling Wells County Foundation on May 15, 1991. Although founded in 1957, the foundation's assets were just \$800,000. The board of directors recognized the significance of a new matching-grant program instituted by the Lilly Foundation to encourage the growth of community foundations in Indiana. By the time she retired at the end of 2005, the



Bette Erxleben



Don Skinner and Bette Erxleben, above, hold a cowbell in this recent photo which he had painted in January 1998 to replace the bell (which is used to call the weekly meetings to order) that had been lost in the Dutch Mill fire. Skinner credits Howard Rich with the idea. "He brought the bell to me the morning before our first meeting at The Rittenhouse," he recalls. "I think I got it done in an hour or so." (Current photo by Mark Miller; detail photos provided.)



foundation's assets had grown to more than \$14 million.

Beyond Rotary, Erxleben's commitment to community groups eventually led to a new "Community Volunteer of the Year" award being named after her. She was the first community member to serve on the board of Family Centered Services and led that board for many years. She served on the board of Bi-County Services for more than 14 years and the Council on Aging for "at least 16 years, I think," she says, and chaired those boards as well. In addition to those, there was work on the local Literacy Council, a vocational educa-

tion group, the medical wives club and she also served as a den mother for their sons' Cub Scout pack.

She was also elected to the Bluffton Common Council and served two terms from 2008 through 2015.

Erxleben was invited to join the club in 1992, shortly after she accepted the position at the foundation. She resigned her club membership in 2011.

"My years in Rotary were a very important part of my life," she says. "It was a wonderful experience, absolutely no regrets. I met so many people I would not have otherwise known if not for Rotary." ♦

Jail ministry serves those who are serving time

By PATTY ELWELL

The Wells County Jail has a capacity to house up to 94 inmates. The goal of those in a local jail ministry is to help those incarcerated begin a relationship with Jesus Christ.

"We do it because we love people and we like to help," said John Roe, who has been participating in the program for the last three years.

Six men from the ministry — Bruce Miller, Clem Reinhard, Gene Reinhard, Todd Gerber, Pastor Neil Ainslie and Roe — gathered recently at the Connecting Center in Bluffton to talk about its purpose and importance to the community.

Each of the men have taken time out of their week to visit inmates. Sometimes they are accompanied by another member and sometimes they go by themselves.

"I'm a firm believer in the 'Great Commission.' Go out and plant the seed and then we water the seed," said Reinhard. "I share my personal story. I have been a recovering alcoholic for 35 years. When you can share that with these guys I can say it's nothing that I did. It's what Christ did for me," he added.

When members go meet the inmates, they follow The Reformers Unanimous Schools for Discipleship started in 1996 in Rockford, Ill. According to the website, RU is best described as "a biblically based, Christian Addiction Recovery Program, designed to rescue, recover, and restore those in addictive behaviors with the power of the hidden life found only in Jesus Christ."

Even though members go and visit inmates time and again, often times there are no results.

"Results are God's business. Obedience is ours," said Gerber. "God has the ability to change lives."

Even though ministry members know why an inmate is incarcerated and how serious their crime may have been, they still visit them.

"We're no better than they are," Roe said.

Clem added, "God loves everyone

equally or he couldn't be God. We are all on the same playing field."

Miller said when he started volunteering in the ministry, inmates said they knew about church and the Bible and have even gone at times. Now when he asks inmates about the Bible they say "I've never heard of it."

"We are one generation from not knowing God at all. If we don't tell them, it's not going to go on through," said Miller.

To help spread the word, the ministry provides English Standard Version Bibles. Another group in Bluffton — the Gideons — also provide Bibles.

Former jail ministry member and current Gideon member John Cochran has also visited inmates for over 50 years. The Bluffton resident started visiting inmates after joining the Gideons in 1965. The 89-year-old had some memories of when the jail was downtown.

"We did teaching. We opened the Bible and taught out of it. I visited the jail when it was downtown. It had an upstairs and a downstairs. I sat at the table outside of the bars and talked to inmates. The whole jail heard me," said John.

Another time John remembered was when he visited prisoners in a cell block who he was told were pretty tough.

"The guys had fire in their eyes," he said. "After awhile they softened and sat and listened to me," he said.

Cochran believes there have been three



John Cochran, Gideon member and former jail ministry volunteer.



Some members of the Wells County Jail Ministry, left to right: Bruce Miller, Clem Reinhard, Gene Reinhard, Todd Gerber, John Roe and pastor Neil Ainslie. (Photos by Patty Elwell)

or four prisoners who changed their lives after being visited by the ministry. He added "I was teaching the word. I leave the changing of lives up to God and the Holy Spirit to apply it."

Ainslie said anyone who is interested in being a part of the Gideons in Wells County can call Dave Goodwin, group president, at 260-273-0397.

He added that anyone who wants to be a part of the jail ministry can call him at 260-273-0089. ♦

Who We Are
2019
ISON-LINE!
Who We Are
Wells County
www.news-banner.com



Working together for your financial future

BLUFFTON

DOUG FEAR, AAMS® Financial Advisor
2035 Commerce Dr., Suite 209
260-565-4134

JEREMY TODD, AAMS®/CFP® Financial Advisor
1169 N. Main St. Suite 2
260-824-0686

OSSIAN

LARRY A. SMITH, AAMS® Financial Advisor
102 S. Jefferson
260-622-7952

JEREMY PENROD, AAMS® Financial Advisor
201 E. Market St., Suite 1
260-824-2354

CORY MANN Financial Advisor
1169 N. Main St. Suite 2
260-824-0686

www.edwardjones.com
Member SIPC

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Joan Phelps - M.A., NCC, LMHC
Licensed Mental Health Counselor



- Individual, Marriage & Family
- Addictions Counseling
- Spiritual/Pastoral
- Career/Job Counseling

AVAILABLE
MONDAY – FRIDAY

For appointment
or information

824-9353

'I'm in a good county'

Roger Sherer, Extension educator for 4-H and youth development, arrived 40 years ago but didn't expect to stay long. He was wrong.

By **DAVE SCHULTZ**

It was quite a while ago when Roger Sherer went to Poland and then set down roots in Wells County.

Yes, they're kind of related.

Sherer, a native of Noble County and a graduate of East Noble High School, went to Purdue University. He was the middle child with four siblings; his three brothers went to Indiana University and his sister went to Ball State. "I was the only one to see the light," he says with a laugh.

He studied agriculture — "animal science, mostly" — and then added agriculture education. If he didn't get a job in the agriculture field, he figured he could teach.

There was another option. "I had always thought that Extension might be a possibility," he said during an interview at the Wells County Community Center at the 4-H Park, the facility where the Extension offices can be found. "I always looked up to my Extension educators, so I kind of had that in the back of my mind."

When he was ready to graduate from Purdue, he applied to be an IFFY — the nickname for a participant in the International 4-H Youth Exchange. He was selected, and he was sent to Poland — at the time, a nation still under communist rule. It was his first time he was on an airplane.

While taking three weeks of language and cultural training at George Washington University in the nation's capital, he met Elie Wiesel. This was 1978, eight years before Wiesel — a survivor of the Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps, a man whose brother and father had died in the Holocaust — won the Nobel Peace Prize. "He was a great teacher; he spoke from the heart," Sherer said. He also crossed paths with Mother Teresa, who happened to be testifying in Washington at that time.

He spent six months in Poland and when he returned, IFFY participants had to stay in Washington for a while for debriefing. While he was at the National 4-H Center, he had a message that he had to call his Extension agent in Noble County. That led to a call to Purdue, and an invitation that felt somewhat like a command.

This was November of 1978.

"They said, 'Well, we've got an interview scheduled for you in Wells County,'" he recalls. He was interviewed after the first of the year, and he started Jan. 16, 1979.

At the time, he understood that the Elkhart position was open as well. "No," he was told, "We want you to interview in Wells County."

"I always thought, 'OK, I'll go to Wells County and then I'll leave and go to a good county,'" he admits, a rueful smile on his face. "Well, I'm in a good county."

He's been the county Extension director — which usually follows being the senior Extension employee in a county office — since about 1986. That job is an administrative one; he represents the office before the County Council and is responsible for the operation of the office.

His primary focus has been on 4-H and youth development. Four decades after taking the job, he's the head honcho on 4-H matters in Wells County and continues to be involved in youth programs of various types. "We're trained to work with volunteers about the whole gamut of things," he said. "Yes, in 4-H we have all these projects, but it's not so much about the projects as it is about getting youth to participate in things and finding volunteers to lead them."

He has spent a great deal of time working with Junior Leaders, but he doesn't command the entire 4-H operation. "The front line is the volunteer club leaders," Sherer said. "If it wasn't for them, there wouldn't be a 4-H program."

Asked if there's a secret to relating to youth and their leaders, he emphasizes flexibility.

"You have to be willing to change, willing to roll with the flow," he said. "I think kids want to make friends, meet new people, and have fun, and in all of that you need to kind of have a purpose why you're meeting and kind of having an end goal."

"Kids have changed through the years," he said after a moment's reflection. "They still have a goal of working at times as a team to accomplish a goal." Teens used to drive around and congregate in parking lots, just hanging out;



Roger Sherer, right, who is the Purdue Extension educator for 4-H and youth as well as the Wells County director, speaks to those in attendance at the annual Extension meeting in March of 2016. Among those listening to him are Chad Kline, Wells County's economic development director; Bill Horan, Extension educator for agriculture and natural resources; and Molly Hoag, Extension educator for health and human sciences. Sherer has been in the Wells County Extension office for 40 years. (News-Banner file photo)

now, that's not so much the case. They might be talking to each other, but one's in his basement and the other's in another basement.

"That's certainly a change," Sherer said. "It is a bit different when it comes to getting the group together."

How much longer will he do what he's doing? He has something in mind, but he doesn't want to say anything more than that. He does have other things he'd like

to do, he said.

"Someone else is going to have a chance to do this," he said. "I guess I've stuck with it because I enjoy it. Not everybody has that sort of job."

With new people, he observed, come new ideas and new ways of doing things. He's aware of that. He's prepared for that. Sometime, but not now. He doesn't have a definite date, "but it's much closer to the end." ♦

SALES — RENTAL — SERVICE — INSTALLATION

Stylus
Technologies

**COMMERCIAL
RESIDENTIAL**

961 North Main Street • Bluffton, Indiana
260-824-8888 • www.stylusav.com

WE PROVIDE CONSULTING, DESIGN, INSTALLATION, & MAINTENANCE FOR:

- Sound Systems
- Audio-Visual and Projection systems
- Intercom and Office Communication
- Theatrical Lighting
- CCTV and Surveillance Video Systems
- Door/Lock Access Systems
- Corporate Presentation and Data Systems
- Audio Visual Interactive IT Solutions
- Cellular Signal Boost Systems

SALES — RENTAL — SERVICE — INSTALLATION

'The Bread Guy' gains a following in Markle

By TANYA ISCH CAYLOR

When The Bread Guy makes a sandwich, he starts with bread and butter.

But for the Markle-based bakery owner, also known as Zachary Halsema, butter isn't something to be merely slathered on top of bread.

Halsema wraps cold slabs of his own flavored butter bases into hand-folded envelopes of homemade dough. Then he runs the pillowy packages through a sheeting machine over and over again, refolding as he goes to create flaky, savory, melt-in-your-mouth pastry bases for his gourmet sandwich fillings.

His specialty is laminated doughs such as brioche, ciabatta and croissants. Lamination, he says, refers to the process of "the folding of the dough with the layering of the butter."

A good brioche, he says, "should have a pound of butter and a dozen eggs in it. And mine does."

How did a guy who describes himself as a second-generation "GM Gypsy" learn to bake well enough to impress his wife and business partner, Hillary, who was smitten by the cafes and bakeries in Normandy, France, while she was studying to become a French teacher?

Believe it or not, Halsema says he's mostly self taught. He did take one baking course during a brief stint in college, and attended a three-day seminar on running a bakery before he and his wife opened The Bread Guy in downtown Markle about a year and a half ago.

"Then after that it was Youtube University, baby!" he laughs. "Good old YU."

Halsema got the urge to try his first batch of homemade bread – a sourdough recipe like the one he remembered his mom making when he was a kid – shortly after he became a father.

He loved making the bread. And when he took some in for his GM co-workers to try, some of them loved it so much they asked him to make them some.

In the years since – their older son Corbin's now 5½ – Halsema has broadened his client base from his GM co-workers to customers in four different counties.

Though their bakery is open for walk-in business only on Saturdays and special occasions – such as Markle's downtown block party on the Fourth of July – Halsema fills wholesale orders as needed for other bakeries and convenience stores, as well as delivering boxed lunches to businesses who put in a minimum order of

eight to 10 sandwiches.

The Halsemas also run a reception hall and catering service called All Your Expectations. Both are located in a cavernous downtown building on Morse Street, next door to another bakery called Nadean's Cakes, Cookies and Catering.

How is that a small town like Markle could support not just one bakery, but two, right next door to each other?

"We don't really compete so much as complement each other," Halsema says. "She does the sweet treats, while I do the leavened stuff."

Besides, Halsema doesn't view Markle as his customer base so much as his base of operations.

"Retail-wise, that town would never hold me. But wholesale-wise, Markle is central to everywhere," he explained one day while sipping coffee at Hugh's in Bluffton after delivering sandwiches to the law firm of Dale, Huffman and Babcock.

"They ordered one of everything" off his menu of baked pocket sandwiches, he said. These days that includes everything from the Cuban – ham, turkey and swiss wrapped around a dill pickle spear baked inside a mustard-butter croissant – to the Tuscan Turkey, which is pesto butter-infused with turkey and mozzarella.

Halsema was born in Lafayette, but grew up in Muncie and Indianapolis as his father was transferred from one GM plant to another. When college turned out to not be a good fit for him, he started working for GM as well, first in Indianapolis, and then at the Fort Wayne plant after both he and his father were transferred there.

He and Hillary and their two boys, Corbin and Thaddeous, 3, eventually wound up in Markle because it's only 10 minutes from GM, where Halsema continues to work second shift. It's also centrally located between Fort Wayne and Marion, Huntington and Bluffton, all current or potential delivery sites for their bakery and catering businesses.

Hillary, who once thought about going to culinary school before becoming a French teacher, is now a stay-at-home mom as well as the cook and coordinator of both their businesses. She's the one who comes up with the majority of the gourmet fillings for his pocket sandwiches, he admits.

"She can't bake and I can't cook," Halsema says. But between his breads and her cooking, "we can do any kind of food for any kind of event." ♦

Zachary Halsema, aka The Bread Guy, tucks a butter slab into the dough to start the process of laminating a batch of croissants. The Bread Guy bakery in downtown Markle, is open for walk-in business on Saturdays and takes lunch orders and special orders on other days if called in advance. (Photos by Tanya Isch Caylor)



Hillary Halsema, left, co-owner of The Bread Guy bakery and All Your Expectations catering service in Markle, takes an order from customer Rick Singer one Saturday morning in May.



Peyton's Northern Distribution Center, located in the Decker Industrial Park at Bluffton's West-End, warehouses and distributes to over 850 Kroger Banner Stores across 7 plus states.

The Peyton's Northern facility in Bluffton was opened in May of 1983 and their employees have never seen a layoff! Peyton's employees currently produce customized store orders with general merchandise, specialty food, and pharmaceutical items.

Peyton's is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Kroger Company. Peyton's continues to look for ways to meet tomorrow's demands today.



Farming is in his blood

(although he didn't grow up on a farm)

By GLEN WERLING

Rick Johnloz is one of those fortunate people who has a job that he loves.

Johnloz manages approximately 20,000 acres of farm ground for several clients. Most of the owners have bought the ground as an investment, but have never farmed and really don't know much about farming. Johnloz does. As an employee of Halderman Farm Management, it's his job to act as the intermediary between his client and the individual tenants who farm the ground.

His clients vary. Some live nearby, some even live on the farms that Johnloz manages for them, while others live hundreds of miles away. One of his clients is Heritage Aggregates, which owns stone quarries around Indiana. Heritage owns farm ground that will someday be converted into stone quarries, but as Johnloz observed, that could be years from now. In the meantime, they rent those farms out and Johnloz manages the farms for them.

Some of his clients are actively involved with the management. They want to see their farms, look things over and check out what's happening at their farm. "But I've got a couple of owners that I've managed their farms for them for 37 years and they've never been to the farms," Johnloz added.

"I manage the leases, work with the tenants and oversee any improvement projects that need to be done on the farms. I'm right there making sure that all of that gets done right. I also take care of the accounting for the farm business, managing the receipts and expenses," Johnloz said.

It's just like any other investment clients may have. They hire a financial advisor to manage their investments, Johnloz observed, and he handles farm investments. "Except I'm a lot less expensive than a financial advisor," he said with a little bit of a laugh.

There's a lot of trust involved,



There's no doubt Rick Johnloz loves the outdoors. He's shown seated in his office at his farm on 100E near Norwell. (Photo by Glen Werling)

especially with the clients who simply want their rent check and rely on Johnloz to do the rest, he said. "When I interview with a prospective client I tell them, 'I'll take care of this just like it was my own farm,'" Johnloz said.

And the job often involves more than just managing the farms. Once that trust is developed, some clients just enjoy spending time talking with Johnloz about other subjects. He's a people person, so he doesn't mind that at all.

"Every owner is different. They all have different needs and wants," Johnloz said. Some may agree with a tenant that a tree needs to be cut down or a fence row needs to be taken out. Others may want such features left in, much to the chagrin of the tenant. Johnloz acts as the media-

tor. "I'm the bridge between both sides. I'll talk with both about the pluses and negatives to doing something and come up with a decision — but ultimately it's the owner's decision that's final," Johnloz said.

"You got to get to know each owner and what they want and tailor a management program for what they want," Johnloz said.

Because each farm, client and tenant are different, the job is never the same. "That's one of the things I love about it," he said. "It's something different almost everyday. I might do it multiple times for different owners, but from week to week, I don't know what my schedule is going to be," Johnloz said.

He added he might get a call from a tenant saying, "Hey, we got water standing out here. We've got a tile problem. We

need to get somebody out here with a backhoe and check that out." So, Johnloz will contact the owner and explain to them what has to be done to fix the problem.

Another time an owner might call him and ask him to check on a tax assessment for the farm because something doesn't look right.

Some owners call and ask him about bigger issues than just what's going on at the farm. "I might get a call from someone saying, 'We're really concerned about these tariffs on soybeans. Can you explain them to us?' A lot of my job is education," he said.

On the flip side, Johnloz has become involved in soil conservation practices through the Soil Health Partnership program and is working with farmers on cover crop management.

Johnloz said he is working with the Soil Health Partnership to learn more about cover crops and determine if cover crops are an economical land management tool. By tapping into information from the program, he said can be better informed on cover crops and be able to pass that information on to both the tenants and the owners. He's monitoring the performance and benefits of a cover crop on his own farm on 100E northeast of Bluffton.

"I see my role in what I do as being a lot of communication," Johnloz said.

He also serves as the agriculture representative for the Wells County Chamber of Commerce. "I give an ag report every Chamber board meeting. I let everyone know what's happening out here on the farm. I try to be to the Chamber what I am for my owners — a source of information," he said.

He spends as much time as possible reading the latest news on trade and ag markets to stay up to date. He pulls his information from multiple sources. "I want to have answers for people when they call or ask," he said. He can't always immediately answer a question, but he makes

About

Rick Johnloz...

"I've been a Christ follower and member of Hope Missionary Church for 36 years," Johnloz said, in describing what is most important in his life.

"My wife and I have been married for 33 years. We have three children, Sarah 29, Kyle 27, and Jason 17. We also have two and a half grandkids, Selah 2, Carter nearly three months old, and a baby on the way," he said.

The baby is actually due the day after this publication hits the streets.

—G.W.

every attempt to find the information the client wants, he said.

Johnloz likes to think he's done his job well. About the only time he has ever lost a client is when one has died and the survivors wish for him to sell the farm or farms. He can handle that through the real estate side of Halderman as he is also a licensed realtor.

"People have stuck with me, thankfully, so I must be doing something right for them," Johnloz said.

Farming is in Johnloz's blood, although he didn't grow up on a working farm, instead spending part of his childhood and all of his teenage years living in Fort Wayne. His father grew up in Wells County, but worked at IBM. He would quit that job to found United Art and Education in Fort Wayne and that remains the family business. Johnloz's brother and sister worked at United, but Johnloz liked farming.

His grandparents and uncle farmed in Wells County, however, and he helped them. That instilled a love for farming in him. He and his family still live on the home farm.

But Johnloz hit agriculture at absolutely the wrong time. A nationwide recession that was greatly worsened for farmers by a grain embargo to the Soviet Union in the early 1980s made it tough on anyone hoping to start out in farming. "It was probably

the deepest ag depression we've ever seen in our generation," Johnloz said. He sees a parallel between then and now with China's retaliatory tariffs. "We might have another tough year or two ahead before we turn a corner," he said.

The 1979 graduate of Northrop High School majored in agriculture economics at Purdue, hoping to be able to come back to Wells County to the farm. But the ag economics grad could see that financially, his dream of farming would be economically unsustainable.

"One of my professors at Purdue said that with my skills I would be a good professional farm manager," Johnloz recalled. So, he checked into it.

He interviewed with Halderman — which he believed to be the best in the business — but there was no opening in this area.

Meanwhile he got hired by a farm management company out of Columbus, Ohio. He wasn't there for very long when Halderman contacted him saying that their manager in this area was retiring, they were shifting some management territories around and asked: Would Johnloz

like to be the representative in this area?

"I said I'll be right over," he recalled.

He was assigned 3,000 acres to manage in 1983. He has grown the business considerably since. A lot of his business is referral. It's the same way with his farm real estate business through Halderman.

At one point in his career, he decided to give farming a go with the philosophy that farming would compliment his management abilities. "I thought I might have a little more credibility with farmers if I was actually farming some."

In 1991 he and Brian Imel started farming together. "We farmed several hundred acres. We bought a whole line of equipment I think for less than \$6,000. Brian was a good mechanic and we kept things going. We did OK and we had fun. We weren't doing it to make money, but we really enjoyed it."

Imel decided he didn't want to do it anymore, so Johnloz farmed with Dick Arnold for awhile, but Johnloz got out of it in 2006 when Arnolds' sons decided they wanted to farm and they needed a little help. Johnloz sold all of his equipment to the boys and rented his ground to them.

Nestled in a corner of the North Oaks subdivision, it's impossible to see the pond from the street. It creates a secluded area away from the rest of the world.

Like Henry David Thoreau, who had Walden Pond as his inspiration but also had to endure the occasional interruption of the Fitchburg Railroad crossing the pond, a Norfolk Southern train occasionally disturbs the peace of Angelkeep. Daugherty, however, who grew up near the Erie railroad tracks, hardly pays notice.

He came up with the plans for the house he and Gwen dwell in. His son, who had been an architect, tweaked them to make them better. It's why they picked North Oaks. The other housing additions in town all had rules of design to follow. Angelkeep is unique, even in the way it is angled to take the most advantage of the sun in the wintertime.

The lot had been used as a dump, but Daugherty wanted to see if it would be possible to have a pond "because I like to fish," he observed. The contractors told them it was the perfect spot for a pond.

"We wanted it to look natural. We didn't want to line it with rip-rap and dump all kinds of chemicals in it," he said.

"We're living in the woods, but we're two minutes from the grocery or anything else I need," he added.

"I will die ... someday. Oh, things could change that are beyond our control, but the plan is for us to stay here and remain until that day," he said. ♦

Angelkeep

(Continued from Page 28)

federal government started to take most of the responsibilities for teaching children away from teachers.

He's been busy since with his interest in history, genealogy and writing his Angelkeep column for the News-Banner. He was one of the founding members of the Wells County Genealogy society.

He likes finding segments of Wells County history that has missed observation by most folks and then researching those topics. One of those topics is the McBride funeral service. He had a book printed on the subject that is at the Wells County Public Library.

The other was the conscientious objector camp at what is now Ouabache State Park.

He also likes finding those obscure trivia and combining it with fiction. He's printed at least four or five booklets and several pamphlets.

"I usually print three copies — one for me, one for the historical society and one for the library," he said. He doesn't want to bother with marketing books, so he has no desire to be a published author.

Gwen, whom he married in 2001, is his proofreader and constructive critic.

Angelkeep Pond is his inspiration for his columns. "I just write for the joy of doing it," he said. The column became an extension of a journal that he had been keeping.

Johnloz's oldest son had no interest in farming and his youngest was too young to take over farming.

"There's some satisfaction there to be able to give a guy to be able to do some things that without that ground, they wouldn't be able to do," he said.

Johnloz still does some minor work from time to time on his home place with his Allis Chalmers 190XT tractor, but for the most part, his connection to farming is management, real estate and conservation.

Johnloz's youngest son, Jason, now plans to follow in his father's footsteps. He's a junior at Norwell now and he wants to also go to Purdue and learn the ropes of farm management and real estate.

"He wants to come back and do what I'm doing. I asked if I could set him up as my right hand man on some of these properties and he can learn as he goes," Johnloz said. Halderman was very receptive to the idea, so Jason plans to participate in the Interdisciplinary Cooperative Education program at Norwell next school year and work with his father. "He'll at least find out if this is what he wants to do," Johnloz said.

"Another real advantage of this job is it gets me outside," Johnloz said. An avid hunter, Johnloz's office is decorated with trophies from past hunts.

"I like all of the aspects of this job. I've got to, to do a good job of it," he said. ♦

Dine In 🍕 Carry Out 🍕 Free Delivery
(within city limits)

PIZZA KING

of Bluffton, Indiana



SERVING THE BEST SINCE 1970

Closed Mondays

114 W. Water • Bluffton, IN 46714

260-824-4956 • www.BlufftonPizzaKing.com

Bi-County Services

of Adams & Wells County



425 E. Harrison Rd. • Bluffton, IN • bi-countyservices.com • 260-824-1253

PROGRAMS of TODAY

Residential Group Homes • Medicaid Waiver Services • Supported Living
Sheltered Workshops • Habilitation Services • Music Therapy

BCS Industries

Sub-contract work

PRODUCTION DESIGNED TO FIT YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS

Small Part Assembly • Sorting • Crates
Wood Pallets • Training/Sales Binder Assembly

Call Us For A Quote • 260-824-1253

He's the niche man

Neil Ainslie loves God and loves science, and he's willing to serve where needed

By DAVE SCHULTZ

Neil Ainslie wears many hats and does many things, but maybe the most interesting thing he does is serve as a bridge.

He's a man of science, and he's a man of faith. He's happy to connect the two. He may irritate a few people along the way, but he's quite comfortable astride them, thank you very much.

Ainslie goes by "Pastor," even though he hasn't been in a located ministry for seven years now. He's the local Salvation Army representative, carrying the title of extension service representative. He is the operations manager for the ManUp Transitional Housing program for the Connection Center. He's the director of the Upper Wabash Conservation Science Center.

He is a consultant for the Upper Wabash River Basin Commission, monitoring water quality. He's Wells County's official National Weather Service observer. There are other things on his radar, too, but these things keep him more than busy.

Ainslie, 49, grew up in the Poe-Hoagland area and "married into Wells County." He lives north of Bluffton on Wells County Road 500N.

He's not a college graduate. "I had a partial scholarship to go to St. Francis (University), but I didn't have the other part," he said during a conversation in the Upper Wabash Conservation Science Center on South Johnson Street. What he wanted to do was major in chemistry. Instead, he developed a background in laboratory work through several internships.

"When I was working on the first set of classes to get my pastoral license with the United Methodist Church, they have an assessment test that they give all the candidates," he said. "They claim — and we'll put 'claim' in quotes, because I'm not sure how true this is — that if you ace it, you are the equivalent of somebody with an associate's degree. Well, I did ace it, but also I've taken a lot of side classes in specific industrial chemical training or continuing education credits. So, I'm an oddball in that."

He's been told that he's "the last of his kind" — people who learned this and that, encountering the necessary training, and "being able to study and do things." It's a trait from the end of the 19th century and

the beginning of the 20th, he said, not for the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st.

With a background in ministry and science, then, it begs the question: "Do you span the gap between faith and science?"

He paused for a moment and gave the short answer: "Yes." Then he expanded on it.

"In this day and age, our electronic equipment has gone from analog to digital, and our faith has also gone that way," he said. "It's got to be one of the other. Either you're for God or you're for science; you can't be between the two."

Ainslie begs to differ.

"I've had the good fortune of encountering many professional chemists and engineers and biologists who actually have a strong faith and work in science," he said.

He said there are some in the Christian community in Wells County who view him in a negative light because of his scientific bent. He knows science and he knows Scripture, and he puts them together.

He quibbles with timelines such as the famous one produced by Anglican Archbishop James Ussher in 1650 which says definitively that the universe was created Oct. 23, 4004 B.C.

"I respect him for his work because he was methodical and he used the best information he had at the time," he said. Has science given us more information about the world and worlds around us in the intervening centuries? Ainslie says yes.

"They're nervous about me and they think that I'm a heretic," he said, referring to some people he's come into contact with. "Yet the same people who say that God can do all and can work through all in any situation beyond our understanding, (they) can't apply that over to the science side.

"Was there a creator? Yes, there's a creator. Genesis conveys concepts, but it was not a science textbook."

He's not the only person in Christendom that views creation in that way, but he realizes it's not what many people want to hear.

"I have a great respect for people that have that pure faith, and in certain areas, I



The essence of Neil Ainslie: An open Bible in front of him and the periodic table of elements behind him. He's shown inside the Upper Wabash Conservation Science Center, 118 S. Johnson St. in Bluffton. (Photo by Dave Schultz)

embrace that," he said, "but in other areas because of my experience in life, I don't."

Simply put, he said, "I think that scientific knowledge is a gift of God."

His employment history led him to lab work with companies like the former

Huntington Laboratories. He managed a store. He worked in a mill room.

And he paid attention to his faith journey. He didn't have a personal relation-

(Continued on Page 56)



101 N. Main St. Bluffton, IN
Corner of Main & Market
"We are Senior Citizens working with Senior Citizens"

EDUCATION CENTER

FREE 1 Hour Information & Education • Tues. & Thurs. & from 4pm – 5pm

Space is limited — Please RSVP early to reserve your seat. Drawings at each meeting for a gift. Light refreshments along with coffee & water.

NO SALES & NEVER ANY OBLIGATION **260.824.1618**

Folks on or going on Medicare A+B/ Medicaid Options

FREE 1 Hour Consultations on Information/Education on Medicare A-B-C-D Programs • Same Location for 47 years • Handicapped Accessible
FREE Long Term Care Insurance Planning • FREE Life Insurance Ideas • FREE Investment Planning • FREE USA MADE Ink Pen with every visit



*Get In On
Everything*
LOCAL

*Connecting you to the
community where you
live, work and play!
Keeping you informed
and connected are
central to our mission.
Subscribe today!*

125 N. Johnson St.,
Bluffton, IN 46714
260-824-0224
www.news-banner.com

Local News
Local Businesses
Great Shopping
Special Offers
Festivals
Special Events
Dining & Bars
Community Theater
Volunteering
Local Politics
Local Jobs
Housing
State & National News
& So Much More



The
News - Banner
Bluffton, Indiana

Tech Services' services are in 22 states

By GLEN WERLING

Mike Mossburg has a heart for agriculture, but he came of age in the early 1980s at a time when the farm economy was so depressed, that the prospects of breaking even in farming were bleak, let alone being able to support a family on the income farming could generate.

He was raised on a dairy farm and that's where he learned his work ethic. "You worked like a dog to get a job done and to do it right," he recalled, "The hours didn't matter."

"In 1983 I was going to go home, farm and milk cows. My dad told me that was a bad idea," Mossburg recalled. "He said if you want to be in agriculture, you need to find a job in agriculture that pays."

And that wasn't going to be milking cows.

He was determined to keep that tie to agriculture so he enrolled in the Agriculture Short Course at Purdue University.

In the 1980s, Ciba Geigy had a Funks G corn research station at the corner of Ind. 124 and 300W and an office in Bluffton on Lancaster Street. The company was looking for seasonal help for pollinating corn and to work in the corn nursery. For Mossburg, it was a good way to stay in the ag industry and yet make enough cash to survive.

Ciba Geigy was a major manufacturer of all kinds of chemicals — including the creator of triazine, the active agent in the corn herbicide atrazine.

When Ciba Geigy decided to expand with a research station in Ithaca, Mich., Mossburg accepted a position there. They wanted someone who knew agriculture and knew it well. Mossburg fit the bill.

"Because I had worked at the Bluffton station, they knew me and they knew what I was able to do," Mossburg said.

There was a corn research scientist from Switzerland that Mossburg worked with at the Bluffton station. He was appointed to set up the Ithaca, Mich., research station and he picked Mossburg to be his assistant in March of 1986.

"I was the only one who had all of the working knowledge of how to put it together for Ciba Geigy because I had already been in their research program at Bluffton for a year. I was a natural fit because I knew how Ciba Geigy did their work as far as designing trials and setting up a structured research station. I could set up the research station and get it going without a lot of training," he said.

He was just 19 years old, but was already two years out of high school having graduated from Southern Wells at 17.

He recalled sitting in a McDonald's



Mike and Shelley Mossburg are surrounded by thousands of small manila packets that contain crop seeds that were to be planted in test trial plots. (Photo by Glen Werling)

"I'm either buying you out or I'm leaving. That's the two choices you have."

They picked the buy out option — sort of. MBS started negotiations with Mossburg in December of 1994.

However, a major customer of MBS was the seed company Asgrow, which had been purchased by the Mexican tobacco company Seminis, which is also a major player in the vegetable seed industry.

So Seminis was angling to swallow up MBS with a scheduled takeover June 30, 1995, at noon. Mossburg managed to close the deal with MBS for Tech Services at 11 a.m.

He signed the purchase agreement just before Seminis blotted out MBS.

"I would never have gotten Tech Services bought had it been absorbed by that big tobacco company," he said.

"MBS strung me along for six months trying to find a higher bidder. To me as a

restaurant at Purdue listening to graduate students complaining about not being able to find a job. He found himself deciding that the offer from Ciba Geigy made much more sense than trying to go for more education. It was good money and a whole lot more autonomy than anyone at 19 would normally be given.

He finished the eight-week winter course at Purdue and started at the Ithaca station immediately.

Hoping to get back to Bluffton, Mossburg applied for a position at Precision Soya, which was located west of Bluffton. Owner Russ Wilkin was starting Tech Services at the time Mossburg applied for the job at Precision.

Mossburg's experience with crop research plots was more valuable to Wilkin at Tech Services, so Mossburg hired in with Tech Services rather than Precision Soya. "When they did their startup, they moved to Fairmount, Ind., and bought what had been the Fairmount Farm Store. That's where Tech Services was launched," he said.

Mossburg then moved to Gas City because it was relatively close to being between Bluffton and Fairmount.

He knew right from the beginning he was going to take his knowledge and ability to innovate and run the business his way.

"And I did," he said.

In 1991 MBS of Ames, Iowa, bought Tech Services, and owned it for three years as a satellite office. "But Tech Services was not recognized as an independent testing company. We were just another branch of their business. I didn't like the direction they were going, so I offered to buy them out or I would be leaving and come back to Bluffton and start my own company," Mossburg said.

He was running the contract seed research business for MBS. "From the time I took over when they bought it from Russell and his partners, I had tripled sales and we had expanded to 12 states, but they didn't give me any recognition for that at all," he said. He worked hard for that increase for MBS and was hoping to have more say in how the Fairmount business should be operating.

But his suggestions and recommendations were pretty much ignored. "I said we need to make more of an investment and spend more money in doing certain things and they either couldn't or wouldn't do it," he said.

Mossburg recognized there was a lot more business that could be generated for the company, so he told the MBS management that if they were not going to invest in it, then they were not a good owner of the business. "I said at the time,

Daniel's
JEWELERS

Celebrating
25
YEARS

Simple Elegance

Bluffton's fine jewelers since 1994

DIAMONDS • COLORED STONES • CITIZEN WATCHES
IN-HOUSE JEWELRY REPAIR
CUSTOM DESIGN & RESETTING

Dan Geimer, Gemologist (GIA)
2155 N. Main St., Bluffton
(260)824-9643
www.daniels-jewelers.net

service business, to sell the company to another entity when the people who work there have offered to buy it is a bad idea," he said. "You're not likely to have a positive transition."

If Mossburg hadn't have been able to buy Tech Services, he's confident that the client base — the people that he had been dealing with on a daily basis — would have gone with him anyway when he formed his own business.

"In the end all (Semini) would have been buying was some plot equipment. The people were going to come with me either way," he said.

He moved the business to Wells County. He tried to move the business to Bluffton, but could not find anyone who was willing to rent him the space he needed at an affordable rate. So, he started out by renting a farmstead his dad owned. He built new buildings and made renovations to existing buildings, but ultimately outgrew them and moved the business to its current location on 300W south of Ind. 218.

"The space was more appropriate for plot work," he said. He retained the other buildings for equipment preparation and storage.

When he took over ownership of Tech Services Inc., it was in 12 states. Today it is in 22. TSI is the largest independent testing network providing contract research yield trial testing. "We're doing close to 400,000 plots. Nobody comes even close to what we do," Mossburg said. "If you put all of the other contract testers together, they do not equal what we do."

He said that he always wanted to be the biggest and the best in the plot business. "And I've said I want our plots to be just like McDonald's hamburgers. I don't care what location you go to, or what state, you will get the same plots the same way everywhere you go," Mossburg said. "Consistency is what we're really selling. A uniform trial with the same standards all the way across the entire nation — that's what big companies are looking for."

It's a family business, too. His wife Shelley, whom he married in 1985, serves as TSI's bookkeeper while daughter Chelsea works as a staff biologist. The Mossburgs also have a second daughter, Olivia.

TSI is one contract testing company with many branches, but all of those branches receive guidance from the same trunk on methods, structure, design, style and type, he added. He said he doesn't micro-manage his employees, but rather hires employees who know what they have to do and know how to do it.

All client correspondence, maps, information and data management comes

through the Poneto office.

Every major innovation in seed technology for the past 25 years, at some point or another, has passed through Tech Services, Mossburg said. His employees today are handling tomorrow's seed trait innovations.

Companies that develop new chemicals, pesticides, seed treatment, genetics, or techniques in the field for applying fertilizers and chemicals hire or contract



On the Web

www.techservicespro.com

with TSI to generate information. They generate data or create and provide research results for their various projects

Enlist soybeans, Round-up ready soybeans, Extend soybeans, BT corn, root-worm resistant corn, new time-release fertilizers, any new chemistry to control weeds — all new technology that impacts crop growth has had a high probability of passing through TSI first.

TSI doesn't create the innovations but generates the data that the companies need to either register their product or prepare it for marketing.

"All of the things we test are new. Any product or trait or characteristic of a crop, there's a high probability it has come through our offices for testing at one time or another," Mossburg said.

"We see it years before it ever hits the market," he added.

The companies that need the data may not have the ability of their own to do the trial work. He has worked with many of the biggest names in agriculture. "We have over 150 clients," he said.

TSI's strength is its economy of scale with its ability to put together groups of trials at a different site. "If you're a corn company and you want corn data generated in 25 different locations, but you're

Bruce K. Stinson
Owner

Be the ONE NAPA

643 Main St. Bluffton 260.824.4460
128 N. Wayne St. Warren 260.375.3401

- Quality Parts, Accessories, Paints, Tools, & Supplies
- Complete Line for Cars, Trucks, Imports, Marine, & Farm Equipment

based in Indiana, you can hire us to do that and it's much cheaper than to ever do it yourself," Mossburg said.

The business has grown every year as much as Mossburg has been willing for it to grow. "I've expanded every year. I started with three full-time people. I have 18 now," he said.

Because each field crew also means equipping them with planters, combines, tractors and trucks, it costs Mossburg at least \$500,000. It's a major investment even though the business does \$4.5 million worth of business a year.

"The challenge for me is, I'm 53, but every time I add staff, I have to ask myself how much business is enough? This year is an example of that. If you can't plant for a month, how much business can I get done?" he asked. There's a short optimal period already for planting the test plots, even when the weather is great. This year has made that window so tight that by the time this article is printed, Mossburg may have no corn test plots planted in eastern Indiana or all of Ohio.

"There's a window to plant. If you miss it, it's over. Who would want skewed data?" he asked.

"It's a phenomenal business. I can't see doing anything else," he said, but he also can't see doing it forever because of the extreme demands — especially in the

spring and the fall — that the business puts on him. There's just no real downtime. During the off season, there's conventions to attend, he observed.

"The challenge is always good. If you can see you're the biggest in the country, that's fun and your competitors aren't able to keep up with you, that's cool," he said.

"I the car collecting hobby, but I don't get much time to enjoy them," he said.

He also continues to be involved in farming, with a commercial farming branch of TSI of 1,400 acres. While he rents land in the other states where Tech Services is located, here he is able to use 100 acres of his own land for the trials. "That makes it convenient for us because we control it from beginning to end," he said.

Most of the remaining acres he still farms. "I can't quit. I should. Profits in agriculture are limited these days," he said.

He rents out 400 acres "for guys that like to plant corn," he said. Corn requires more resources and drying. "I don't have the capacity," he observed. He sticks to soybeans.

"But if I ever quit altogether, I'll never go back. I can't bring myself to stop," he said. "It's a legacy," he said. He doesn't want to be the last person in his family to farm. ♦

TRUSTED SOLUTIONS GROUP, INC.

At Trusted, we help those we touch, realize and fulfill their purpose. Oh and... we also design and manufacture some really innovative products! Come join us...



We're growing rapidly and hiring for manufacturing positions. Call us in Ossian at 260-622-6000 to learn more or visit us at Trustedmfg.com

Time for a change

Dawn Frauhiger leaves a career in accounting for a new career in nursing

By **DAVE SCHULTZ**

There was nothing wrong with her life. Nothing at all, really. However, Dawn Frauhiger wanted something more.

She found it following a nurse around in a retirement facility.

If things go according to plan, the former accountant will become Dawn Frauhiger, R.N.

It'll be a transition for the 49-year-old mother and grandmother, but when she talks about the challenge and the opportunity, the excitement shows in her voice.

This latest chapter in her life is a continuation of her experience with the Prayer of Jabez. In I Chronicles 4:10, Frauhiger found something that she took to heart:

“Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me,

and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request.”

So, she reasoned: Why not me?

Could she be blessed? Could she, in a manner of speaking, enlarge her territory?

Yes, she has decided. Several times.

Frauhiger grew up in southern Indiana and graduated from the University of Evansville in 1992 with a degree in accounting. She worked for the State Board of Accounts for several years, and when her daughters were starting school, she wanted to stay a little closer to home.

That's when she joined Bi-County Services for 10 years, being mentored by two notable Bluffton residents — John Whicker and Bette Erxleben, the chief executive of the organization and a member of the agency's board of directors.

When that ended, she hung out her



Dawn Frauhiger, second from right, is shown with classmates in her nursing class at Ivy Tech Community College. After a career in accounting, Frauhiger is making a transition to nursing and is seeking to become an R.N. (Photos provided)



Southern Wells Community Schools

“Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow”



Elementary • 765-728-2121

Junior/Senior High School • 765-728-5534



**Central Office
765-728-5537**

**9120 South 300 West
Poneto, IN 46781**

**Visit us on the web:
www.swraiders.com**



shingle and did taxes for a while. A friend worked at River Terrace Estates, and she caught on there at the business office.

Her experience there was career-altering. It was her first exposure to working with a senior facility, and she was intrigued. She figured she could serve as an administrator.

The effort takes time — 1,100 hours, in fact. It was an internship. She had to understand all the various aspects of the job before she could be licensed to lead such a facility.

She began in the area she knew the least about — nursing. She followed the director of nursing around and occasionally followed the individual nurses.

One of those nurses at the time was Grace Stalker. Something she observed gave the would-be administrator the impetus to change her mind.

The last week she was involved with the nursing staff, she was with Stalker. While she was distributing medication, a resident came up to her. The woman was in a wheelchair and couldn't speak, and Stalker asked if she was hungry. When she said she was, Stalker stopped what she was doing, got some yogurt, and fed the woman.

"I was touched," Frauiger said, her emotions showing as she recalled the moment. "I thought: Why am I getting so emotional over this little act?"

Perhaps, she said, it was a sign of something bigger.

She said she went home and talked to her husband Jeff about it, and her Bible study that night highlighted something else for her. Author Priscilla Shirer had written about spiritual warfare, and Frauiger was paying attention. She learned that the difference between faith and belief was that faith costs you something. This became a spiritual matter for her.

"I just told Jeff, 'I don't think I'm supposed to be an administrator,'" she said. "I think I'm supposed to go to school to be a nurse."

His response: "You are absolutely out-

of-your-mind crazy."

After a few weeks of thought and prayer, she decided to contact schools and "went back to college."

She decided to enroll at Ivy Tech Community College. She's working toward earning an associate of science in nursing degree; when she finishes that course of study, she'll be eligible to take the test to be a registered nurse.

She's been told that within a few years the nation will need 1 million more nurses than what it now has. If health care has problems now, she asked, what will it be like then?

At an age when most people may be looking to the end of their careers, Frauiger is looking forward to a new one. From a psychology class, she understands Erik Erikson's eight stages of development. For those in her age group, the conflict is between generativity — defined as leaving one's mark on the world — and stagnation.

Frauiger has not chosen stagnation.

"You're either going to continue to do something, or I hear people my age talking about retirement. I just can't imagine feeling that way at my age.

"I honestly truly feel it is what God wants out of me. There is no way this would have worked the way it had if it hadn't been God's plan. There's no way."

Frauiger has been in the public eye for a while, serving on the board of the Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District for 11 years. It was an outgrowth of who she is.

She quotes Whicker, her former boss at Bi-County: "We all have to pay rent to our community." That was her opportunity to do that, and she's glad she did. She's a great believer in public education and her daughters were in the Bluffton school system.

Now, for Frauiger, it's on to the next thing.

"I feel like it is what I am supposed to live out," she said. ♦



Dawn Frauiger hugs her grandson, Braxten, who's wearing a stethoscope — something that is a symbol of his grandmother's new nursing career.



Here for *you.* Here for *good.*

At 3Rivers, we're focused on empowering people to define and reach their money goals, and equally committed to giving back to the people, places, and ideas that matter most to the Wells County community and to you — through volunteerism, community funding, college scholarships, and more.

**We're here for you,
and we're here for good.**

Experience better banking and be confident with knowing your money stays in your community. Become a member today by stopping into our Bluffton branch or by visiting 3riversfcu.org/join.

3 RIVERS[®]

3riversfcu.org | **260.824.0042**

Connect with us on social media to learn more

 facebook.com/3rfcu  [@3riversfcu](https://twitter.com/3riversfcu)



Federally insured by the NCUA.

Ed Schwartz's novels take aim at child slavery in Haiti

By TANYA ISCH CAYLOR

Six-year-old Rose has to grow up in a hurry when her mother dies during childbirth in "A Rose Among Thorns," a novel by Ed Schwartz, founder of Loving Shepherd Ministries.

The Haitian girl does her best to help care for her five younger siblings and her unemployed father, but it's not enough. On her ninth birthday, her joy at receiving a spool of ribbon is soon overshadowed by the crushing realization that the man who's come bearing food and gifts is taking her away to live with another family.

The man makes many promises, none of which turn out to be true. Rose winds up far from home, the working prisoner of a cruel household. She never sees her family again.

"It's a very sad, very dark story," says Schwartz, "But the saddest part is that it's the present day reality."

Many people are aware of the extreme poverty in Haiti, one of the world's poorest nations. But Schwartz says that even many of those who've served there on mission trips may not be aware of the "dark secret" that plagues its poorest children – that they are forced to serve other families as "restaveks."

The children's families are told they will have a better life and the chance to go to school, but far too often they wind up underfed, overworked and abused, Schwartz says. Though "Rose" is a novel, the horrors inflicted on the five fictional restavek children whose intertwined stories make up the book are all based on real incidents derived from hundreds of interviews he's done over the years.

"There is nothing that's exaggerated in here," he says. "I could tell worse."

Schwartz, a longtime pastor at the Apostolic Christian Church, made his first mission trip to Haiti in 1985 to help build a school. He made many more trips to Haiti from 1986-1998, while serving on his denomination's Mission Committee.

Saddened by the plight of the poverty-stricken children he encountered in Haiti over the years, as well as "having our

hearts broken again and again" while he and his wife served as foster parents in Wells County in the 1980s, Schwartz founded Bluffton-based Loving Shepherd Ministries in 2002 primarily as an adoption agency designed to give Haiti's most vulnerable children a chance at a better life.

Seventeen years later, adoption now makes up only 1 percent of the ministry's work. In Haiti, more than 250 full-time local employees are involved in setting up mission homes and schools for troubled children.

Each of LSM's 20 Homes of Hope pair a set of foster parents with 12 boys or 12 girls, one-third of which are former restaveks. The other two-thirds, he says, are children who were at risk of suffering that same fate if the ministry had not intervened.

Another arm of LSM is now working on related problems in Ethiopia.

If he had known in 2002 what the ministry would grow into, Schwartz admits, "I would probably have been scared to death and not done it."

These days Schwartz's books play a role in the ministry's growth. "A Rose Among Thorns" has been distributed to donors as an educational tool to build interest in the ministry, which has a core philosophy of helping the world's most vulnerable children. Schwartz says that the book's sales, whether through Amazon or LSM's website, go back into the ministry.

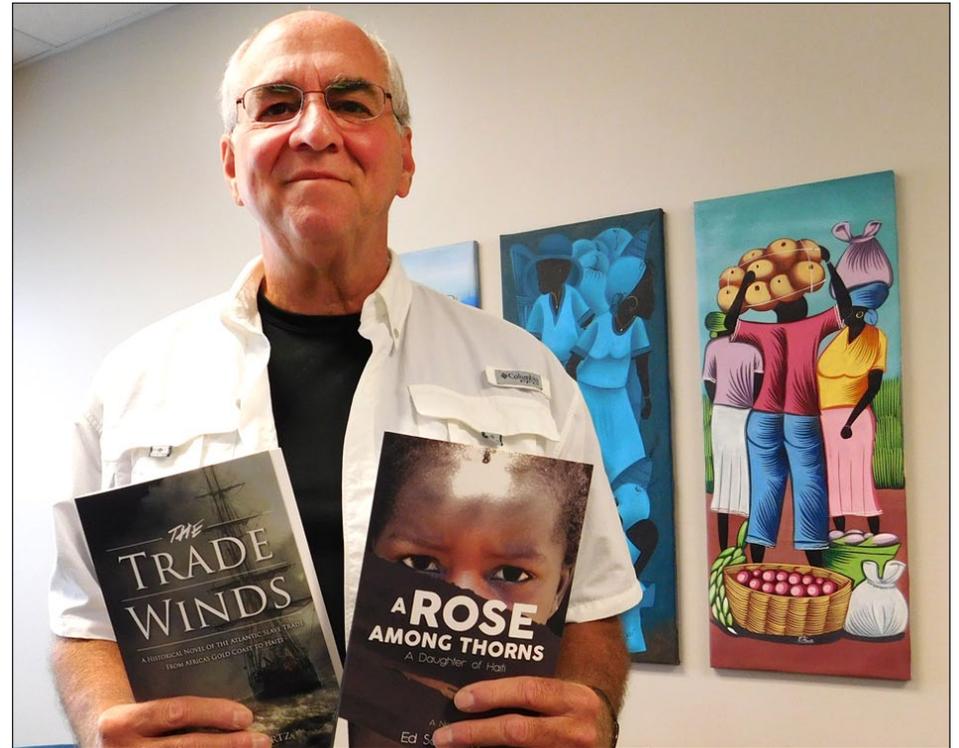
"The Trade Winds," his just-published historical novel about Haiti's slave trade and ensuing uprising that helps explain that country's struggles, will follow a similar fund-raising model.

Schwartz said he has had one woman who told him she was so troubled by "Rose" that she couldn't finish the book. "She was literally unable to sleep at night while trying to read it."

But others, he said, have felt moved by the book to become personally involved in the ministry, either financially or as a volunteer.

His goal is to do a series of sequels that help raise awareness of the restavek problem, not just in Haiti but in other countries

(Continued on Page 56)



Ed Schwartz, founder of Loving Shepherd Ministries, is hoping to raise funds and awareness of child slavery in Haiti with two recent novels, "The Trade Winds" and "A Rose Among Thorns." Both are available on Amazon or via the ministry's website, <https://loving-shepherd.org>. (Photo by Tanya Isch Caylor)



"Marie" is a former restavek, or child slave, in Haiti "who had a very difficult life," says Ed Schwartz, founder of Loving Shepherd Ministries and author of "A Rose Among Thorns," a novel about the intertwined lives of five restaveks. He says she is now a role model to some of the younger children in the ministry's foster homes in that country. (Photo provided)

We believe IN KEEPING YOUR BANKING LOCAL.

FIRST BANK OF BERNE is committed to supporting, investing and contributing to the success of our local community. Stop by our Bluffton branch to talk with **Kody Kumfer** or **Erica Bennett**.





First Bank
of Berne

FIRSTBANKOFBERNE.COM | 260.824.9982

It all worked out for Deb Coleman

Southern Wells teacher wraps up 43 years at her alma mater

By DEVAN FILCHAK

Deb Coleman loved teaching sixth grade at Southern Wells Elementary, so much so that she taught it for 43 years before recently retiring.

Coleman graduated from Southern Wells High School before going to Taylor University, where she got a dual license to teach special education and elementary school. She said her focus at the time was more on special education, but she fell into a sixth-grade teaching position after being hired out of college at at Southern Wells.

"And then after a few years, my room became an inclusion room, so I have the special education kids as well. It all worked out like it is supposed to," Coleman said.

But working with sixth graders really won her over.

"I love the age, and I think it's the age I'm meant to teach," she said. "They

are 11 and 12 years old. One day they are a little kid. One day they are a grown up. One day they're a teenager. One day they don't know who they are. You're dealing with all that and making them realize they can learn."

Coleman said it is not uncommon for people to apologize when she tells them she teaches sixth grade. "I laugh and think, 'Oh, they don't get it.'"

Coleman said that is what makes teaching all the more rewarding. She said she wanted to be a teacher for forever, or at least for what feels like forever.

"I usually tell people that when I stopped wanting to be a cowgirl or decided that was not practical, that I knew I wanted to teach," she said. "I've always wanted teach."

Even as a child in class, she saw that she had an easier time learning the material than many of the other students.

"I always felt that there should be a way to make it easier to learn," she said. "So that's what I've always wanted to do is make people want to learn and make it easier for them to learn. Whatever is getting in their way or blocking that, I want to change that."

Coleman said she cannot imagine teaching anywhere else, for one reason that she said is something that is often said about Southern Wells — it is a true community.

"That's a high priority at our school,"

she said. "So I think it would be difficult for me to teach at a school where that wasn't a priority. That would be tough for me."

She has also enjoyed watching Southern Wells change during her more than 40 years there. She said Southern Wells has always been a great school, but it has worked to improve its perception in a good way.

"When I grew up, it was the school out in the country that didn't have anything to do. That was never true. I think that the emphasis (was made) that our kids get everything they need.

Coleman said that includes teaching students about professions they may have never heard of just because no one in their family has worked in that type of profession.

But she's watched even more change in education as a whole.

"Before, early in my teaching, you had to be accountable yourself," she said. "There wasn't a lot of state accountability, but now there's a tremendous amount of that. For some people, that is difficult."

She said she thinks there's also more expected of students at a younger age, but that is an aspect that begins with society rather than in the classroom.

There's also a lot more technology available than when she first began teaching.

"I love that, and I love that I get the chance to learn that as we go along," she said. "Not everybody feels that way but that's something I've helped with in the school is the technology part. I enjoy learning new things and figuring out what can we do with this or how can we use it differently. I like to try new things."

Coleman's favorite part about teaching is that moment when she sees the light bulb go off in a student's head when she has been working with the student for quite some time.

"That's the rewarding part of teaching," she said. "That makes everything that you do or go through worth while. (It) encourages you to do it for another student."

Another perk is watching her sixth-graders start to figure out their purpose in the world.

"Every grade level has its special things, but sixth grade, they really are in a transition, especially since our sixth-graders are in an elementary going to a junior

high setting," she said.

The school campus is small enough that she sees former students around, including during the annual graduation walk where the seniors walk through the elementary school, donning their graduation caps and gowns. Since she's been at the school for what she calls "forever," Coleman has even had the opportunity to see some of her past students get hired as teachers at Southern Wells.

She doesn't have specific plans for retirement, but she is excited to be able to make plans with her family and her husband Mike without working around her schedule.

Each year, Coleman's family teases her because she acts like a kindergartner about to go to school for the first time before the first day of school. As the end of the school year was approaching, she said it didn't quite feel like the end of the road for her.

She said the fact that she is not going back to school may not fully sink in until the fall, but she's at peace with it.

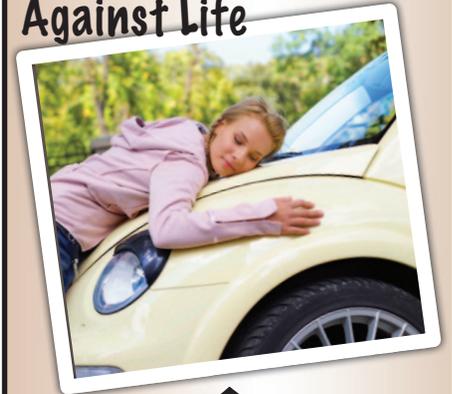
"It's what I'm supposed to do now," she said. ♦



Deb Coleman at home.
(Photo provided)

AUTO - HOME - LIFE - BUSINESS

Responsible Protection Against Life



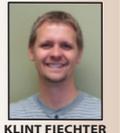
Les Gerber Insurance



PERRY GERBER

1120 N Main St,
Bluffton, IN 46714

824-1237



KLINT FIECHTER

perry.gerber@lesgerberins.com • klint.fiechter@lesgerberins.com



Erie
Insurance

Erie Insurance Exchange, Erie Insurance Co., Erie Insurance Property & Casualty Co., Flagship City Insurance Co. and Erie Family Life Insurance Co. (Erie, PA) or Erie Insurance Co. of New York (Rochester, NY). Company licensure details at erieinsurance.com. CMS149b 8/13

Quality Furniture, Mattresses & Window Treatments for Over 73 Years!



Cellular & Pleated • Wood/Faux • Roman Shades
Solar Roller Shades • Custom Valances, Draperies and Sheers
Sliding Panels • Outdoor Roller Shades • Verticals • Woven Woods

Quality Name Brand Furniture



Affordable
Price

Call Today for your Free In-Home Consultation



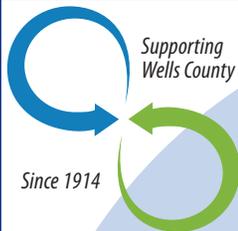
www.gerberfurniture.com

VISIT OUR MATTRESS SLEEP GALLERY



Over 70 Years of Experience
985 N. Main St., Bluffton
(800) 759-8795 or (260) 824-1200
M-Fri. 9-6, Sat. 9-4, Sun. Closed





WELLS COUNTY INDIANA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mission: To encourage a strong local economy and to work towards advancing the commercial, industrial, civic and general interests of citizens and businesses located in Wells County, Indiana.

Thanks to these member businesses that work together to maintain and improve a healthy business community and help to enhance the quality of life in Wells County.

211 West Water St., Bluffton • 260-824-0510 • www.wellscoc.com • www.wellsedc.com

2019 MEMBERSHIP

1st Source Bank
20/20 Custom Molded Plastics
2D's Consulting dba: FPC Technology Group
A1 U-Stor
AAM Powertrain
A Harvest of Health
A Perfect Blend
A T Ferrell
ABC Studio & Activity Center
ABC Travel
Above & Beyond Vehicle Reconditioning
Achieva Salon
Action Coach
AdamsWells Internet-Telecom-TV
AdamsWells Phone Books
Advance America
Affolder Implement Sales
Alexin, LLC
All Your Expectations
Almco Steel Products
American Legion Post 111
American Mortgage Service
American Pest Professionals
America's Best Value Inn & Suites
Andrews & Crell P.C.
Angel Corps
Anthony Wayne Area Council BSA
Anytime Fitness
Apache Propane
Archbold & Lewis Insurance
Auto Doctor
B & D Appliance Repair
Baller Signs
Barkley Builders
Becky Goshorn-Mary Kay Cosmetics
Bella Vita Salon
Bi-County Services
Big Brothers, Big Sisters NEI
Biggs Property Management
Bijou Gifts Boutique
Bill's Roofing & Siding, Inc.
Billy Ann's Supper Pub
BKM Real Estate
Bluffton Animal Clinic
Bluffton Dental Clinic
Bluffton Family Eye Care
Bluffton Fort Wayne South KOA Campground
Bluffton Free Street Fair Assoc.
Bluffton Insurance
Bluffton Plumbing, Heating & Electric
Bluffton Regional Medical Center
Bluffton Rentco
Bluffton Roofing Co.
Bluffton Rotary Club
Bluffton Strength & Conditioning
Bluffton Super Wash
Bluffton Tire
Bluffton-Harrison MSD
BNI - Alpha Group
Bona Vista Child Care Solutions
Bona Vita Architecture
Boost Mobile by Bravo Wireless
Bowen Center
Brick House Family Ministries
Briner Building
Brookwood Golf Club
Burkhart Advertising
Buskirk Engineering
Busted Haft Throwing
Cancer Services of Northeast Indiana
Capri Meadows Apartments
Caylor-Nickel Foundation Family YMCA
C. H. Robinson
Christian Care Retirement Community

Citizens Against Drug Abuse
City of Bluffton
CF's Flooring
Classic Painting
Clean Fuels National
Coldwell Banker Holloway
Collier's Comfort Services
Comfort Inn
Community Care of Wells County
Community Development Corporation
Community Harvest Food Bank of NE Indiana
Cooper Commerce Center
Corrective Chiropractic
Covington Financial Services
Craigville Appliance Store
Creative Arts Council
Crimson House
CrossPointe Studios
Crossroads Pantry
Croy Machine & Fabrication
Cupp Real Estate
Dale, Huffman & Babcock Attorneys
Daniel's Jewelers
Day Creative Solutions
Decatur Daily Democrat Newspaper
Double D Home Improvements
Dr. George Babcock
Dunwiddie Heating & Plumbing
East of Chicago Pizza
Edge Manufacturing
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Doug Fear
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Cory Mann
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Jeremy Penrod
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Larry Smith
Edward Jones - Financial Advisor: Jeremy Todd
El Camino Real
Elks Lodge
Emshwiller & Emshwiller Accountants
Environmental Solutions
Equipment Warehouse Div.
Eyecare Associates of Bluffton
E-Z Bowl
EZ Lube & Wash
F.C. Tucker/Malcolm & Schlueter
Fairway Floor Covering
Family Centered Services
Family Farm and Home
Family Ford of Bluffton
Family LifeCare
Farm Bureau Insurance
Farm Credit of Mid-America
Farmers Insurance - Shari Tomac Agency
Felger Hart
Fields of Grace Floral Boutique
First Bank of Berne
First Merchants Bank
FirstFleet
Forrest Carvings
Forgotten Children Worldwide
Fort Wayne TinCaps
Foudy CPA Group
Four Star Services
Freedom Academy, Inc.
Friends of Ouabache State Park
Friends of the Wells County Library
Friends Who Care Foundation
G6 Communications
General Insurance Agency
General Manufacturing, Inc.
Gerber Furniture, Mattress & Window Treatments
Goodwin-Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel
Gordon & Associates
Groups Recover Together
Habegger's Ace Lumber
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Fort Wayne

Halderman Farm Management & Real Estate
Haldrup USA
Harris Human Resources Group Inc.
Heartland Payment Systems
Heartland REMC
Helping Hands PRC
Heritage Pointe
Hiday Automotive Group
Holiday Inn Express & Suites
HomeCourt Home Care
Honegger Animal Clinic
Honegger, Ringger & Co.
Honest Automotive
Hott Family Dentistry
Hugh's Bakery & Coffeehouse
Humana Insurance
Indiana Michigan Power
Indiana Pancake House
Indiana Physical Therapy
Indiana Tech
Indiana Technical Installations
Innovative Technology Group, LLC
Integrity Inspections & Testing
Inventure Foods
Irving Materials, Inc.
Ivy Tech Community College
J&R Products
James S. Jackson Co.
Jefferson Place Apts, Country Place Apts, Country
Squire Apts
Jerry Flack's Investments & Insurance
Joan Phelps Counseling Service
Job Smasher
Karing for Kids
Keefer Printing
Kelly's Collision Center
Kemper Flooring
Kiwanis Club
KT Custom Engraving
Kroger
Lancaster Senior Apts, Cardinal Creek Crossing Apts
Laura Kukulhan D.D.S.
Legal Shield
Les Gerber Insurance
Liby's Stripe Right
Lighted Gardens
Lilac Lane Apartments
Linder Oil Company
Lockout Jujutsu
Lorelai Lace Boutique
Loren's Body Shop
Loving Shepherd Ministries
Lowe's Home Improvement
Manpower
Market Street Development
Markle Do-It-Best
Markle Health & Rehabilitation
Mat Matters
McDonald's
Media Services Unlimited
Melching Machine
Mercy Seat Dentistry
Metropolitan Title
Meyer Building, LLC
Meyer Renovation
Mi Casa Mexican Restaurant
Mike Anderson Chevrolet of Ossian
Milli's Restaurant
Minnich's Antiques & General Store
Minnich's Lawn Care
Mitchel Enterprises
Monument Center
More Than Mail
Mr. Bruce and Terri Miller
Mr. B's Services

Mr. Jeff Espich
Mr. Jim Ottjes
Mr. Mike Chaney
Ms. Bette Erleben
Ms. Rose Ann Hinesley
National Oil & Gas
Neoti
Nesco Specialty Rentals
New York Life Insurance Company
News-Banner Publications
Nicholson Family Dental
NIPSCO
Noble Home Essentials
North American Title Co.
North Eastern Group Realty
Northern Wells Community Schools
Northwestern Mutual-Brandon Gerber
Northwestern Mutual-Matthew Henry
Northwood Computer
Office 360
Office Concepts
Old National Bank
Olde 303 Music
Oooh La La Pet Spa
Optimist Club of Bluffton
Ossian Community Market
Ossian Deli
Ossian Furniture
Ossian Hardware
Ossian Health & Rehab. Center
Ossian State Bank
Ouabache State Park
Outdoor Concepts
Pages & Stuff
Pak-A-Sak
Park Center
Parlor City Trophy & Apparel
PeopleLink Staffing Solutions
Perfect Pet Food, Accessories, Training & Grooming
Perma-Column
Peyton's Northern
Physicians Health Plan of Northern Indiana
Pierre's Party and Tent Rental
Pine Grove Apartments
Pizza Hut
PNC Bank
Posy Pot Florist
Power to the Meeple
Premier Signs
Pretzels, Inc.
Prible Ag Products
Print Source Corp.
Pro Resources Staffing
ProFed Federal Credit Union
Proteus
Prough Design Builders
PTM Engraving
Purdue Cooperative Extension Service
Quality Car Care & Welding Supplies
R.H. & D. - Brickley Farms
Radiance, LLC
RAM Advertising
Raymond James Financial Services
RediMed
Redwood Living
Reed's Andy's Car Wash
Reed's Do It Best Hardware
Regional Chamber of Northeast Indiana
Rem Johnston Printing
Renovate Counseling Services, LLC
Republic Services
Resource Maintenance
Rethceif Packaging
River Terrace Retirement Community
Riverstone Dental

Rochester Travel Group
Rod's Rustics
Roembke Mfg. & Design
Roseberry Creative Marketing & Web Design
Rural 1st
RUOFF Home Mortgage
Safer Worker Systems, Inc.
Schwartz Plumbing & Heating
Shaw Real Estate & Auction
Shelton Financial Group
Signature Healthcare Bluffton
Snider Fleet Solutions
Southern Wells Community Schools
Spherion Staffing
Sprunger & Sprunger, Attorneys at Law
SR Schaefer Trucking
Star Engineering & Machine
Star Insurance Agency
State Farm Insurance: Kevin Beaty
State Farm Insurance: Erin Daugherty
Steffen Financial Group
Steffen Oil a division of Agbest, LLC
Stylus Technologies
Subway
Sweet Obsessions - Bake Shoppe
Swiss Village
Team Mantra Wear
Tech Services
Temp-Masters
The Andersons, Inc.
The Bread Guy
The Dance Co.
The Gadget Girl
The Groomin Shop
The Literacy Alliance
The Mattress & Furniture Store
Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home
Three Rivers Federal Credit Union
Timber Ridge Golf Club
TLC Window Solutions
Town of Ossian
Treeboy Productions
Troxel Equipment Co.
Trusted Supply Chain Partners
United Way of Wells County
Vacman Air Duct Cleaning
Valero Renewables
Velocity Motors
Villa North Centre
Wal-Mart Supercenter
Wedding Dreams feat. Grant's Catering
WEG Commercial Motors
Welches All Vehicle Repair
Wells Business Development
Wells Community Boys & Girls Club
Wells County 4-H Association
Wells County Automotive Supply - NAPA
Wells County EMS
Wells County Foundation
Wells County Historical Society & Museum
Wells County Junior Achievement
Wells County Land Title
Wells County Lock-Up
Wells County Public Library
Wells County Voice
Westland, LLC
Wheelers Bees
Wildwood Bath
Women's Health Dynamics
Woodforest National Bank
WZBD Radio
Ya Ya's Mid-Century & Modern
Yergy's State Road BBQ
You've Got Style
Zap Electric

2019 Business HONOR ROLL

Serving Wells County for ...

166 YEARS

Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home

Proud to be Family Owned & Operated
IN THE THOMA TRADITION

308 West Washington St., Bluffton, IN
260-824-3850 • www.thomarich.com

137 YEARS

BLUFFTON-HARRISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

"SINCE 1882"

805 EAST HARRISON, BLUFFTON
260-824-2620
WWW.BHMSD.ORG

128 YEARS



First Bank of Berne

824-9982
www.firstbankofberne.com Depend On Us

Local Company - Local People - Local Service

114 YEARS

AdamsWells

INTERNET TELECOM TV
A division of Craigville Telephone

107 YEARS



Community Banking Since 1912

Bluffton Ossian

FDIC STATE BANK www.ossianstatebank.com

105 YEARS



WELLS COUNTY INDIANA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

211 West Water St., Bluffton
260-824-0510
www.wellscoc.com • www.wellsedc.com

101 YEARS

Wells County Community Center

at the 4-H Park, Bluffton, IN

97 YEARS



Goodwin-Cole & Harnish MEMORIAL CHAPEL

A Tradition of Caring
3220 St. Rd. 124 East, Bluffton • 824-3852
Douglas L. Cole • Mitch Harnish

97 YEARS

need help?



turn to the experts

Bluffton Plumbing Heating & Electric, Inc.

260-824-3332 • 888-824-3332
2095 Commerce Dr. • Bluffton Licensed Plumbers PC 11300044
(behind Lowe's)

www.blufftonheating.com

96 YEARS



adams

MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

1100 Mercer Ave., Decatur, IN
260-724-2145 • www.adamshospital.org

94 YEARS

Leaders In The Sale of Agricultural Real Estate

ELLENBERGER BROTHERS, INC. and Auctioneers Real Estate

BLUFFTON, INDIANA | 260.824.2426 #AC31200014 1.800.373.6363
FT. WAYNE, INDIANA | 260.747.3189 www.EllenbergerBros.com

87 YEARS



MOSER & SON

Heating & Air Conditioning

824-0228 219 E. Perry St., Bluffton

73 YEARS



Gerber FURNITURE MATTRESSES & WINDOW TREATMENTS

985 North Main St. Bluffton, IN
824-1200
800-759-8795
www.gerberinterior.com

62 YEARS



WELLS COUNTY FOUNDATION

360 N. Main St. Suite C Bluffton
824-8620

62 YEARS



THE MONUMENT CENTER

2980 E. St. Rd. 124, Bluffton
260-824-2832 • 1-877-241-7131
www.themonumentcenter.com

61 YEARS

SCHWARTZ PLUMBING, HEATING & A/C INC.

Serving the Community since 1958
610 N. Main St. - Bluffton 260-824-1126

59 YEARS



TROXELE EQUIPMENT

Sales - Parts Service

5068 E. - 100 N. BLUFFTON 1-800-876-9351 4777 W. 500 N. HUNTINGTON 1-888-876-9352 834 N. St. Rd. 13 WABASH 1-888-876-9353
e-mail: troxel@troxelequipment.com | website: www.troxelequipment.com

These businesses contribute to the quality of life and our economic vitality. They are the foundation of our community. You can rely on them for trust, reliability and a commitment to serve you and the community.



Serving Wells County for ...

58 YEARS

NORTHERN WELLS
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Northern Wells
Community Schools
312 N. Jefferson St., Ossian, IN 46777
www.nwcs.k12.in.us

57 YEARS

BLUFFTON
TIRE INC.
1308 S. Main St., Bluffton • 824-0418

53 YEARS

Southern Wells
Community Schools
"Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow"

Central Office • 765-728-5537
Elementary • 765-728-2121
Junior/Senior High School • 765-728-5534

9120 South 300 West • Poneto, IN 46781
Visit us on the web: www.swraiders.com

800-742-2861

51 YEARS

MEYER BUILDING
www.meyerbuilding.com
260-565-3274

Craigville, IN

51 YEARS

Les Gerber Insurance
1120 N Main St, Bluffton, IN 46714 824-1237

51 YEARS

Bi-County Services
of Adams & Wells County
425 East Harrison Road, Bluffton, Indiana
260-824-1253

50 YEARS

Brinerbuilding.com
Design • Build • Construction • Development
761 N. Main St., Bluffton | (260) 824-0120

49 YEARS

PIZZA KING
of Bluffton, Indiana

Dine In
Carry Out
Free Delivery
114 W. Water, Bluffton | (260) 824-4956

48 YEARS

Signature
HealthCARE
1529 W. Lancaster | Bluffton, IN 46714 | (260) 824-4320

47 YEARS

*"We are Senior Citizens
working with Senior Citizens"*

Jerry Flack
& Associates
101 N. Main St. • Bluffton | 260.824.1618

45 YEARS

FOUR STAR
SERVICES, INC.
1764 S. Main, P.O. Box 463
Bluffton, Indiana 46714
www.fourstarservices.com (260) 824-5384

44 YEARS

HIDAY

AUTOMOTIVE GROUP
260-824-0900 OR 260-824-1931
GENERAL MOTORS CHRYSLER

41 YEARS

Lengerich Meats
FRESH • VARIETY • LOCAL • QUALITY *It's worth the Drive!*
West Van Horn St • Zanesville, IN
(260) 638-4123 • www.lengerichmeats.com

40 YEARS

Jasun Industrial Park - Harvest Rd.
Bluffton
Protects, Inc

40 YEARS

Celebrating 40 Years
Expert
Transmission & Automotive
1979 - 2019

2883 E State Road 124
Bluffton, IN 46714
(260) 824-4929
104 Belmont Rd
Decatur, IN 46733
(260) 724-2434

36 YEARS

Peyton's
INC
"Where Our People Make Us Better!"
1111 S. 100 E., Bluffton | (260) 824-0882

35 YEARS

Edward Jones
Serving Individual Investors Since 1871
www.edwardjones.com
Member SIPC

34 YEARS

pak-a-sak
204 W. Wabash
824-4794
904 S. Main
824-1566
Visit Our Web Site at: www.pakasak.com

32 YEARS

print
source
213 E. Perry St. • Bluffton, IN • 2 60-824-3911

32 YEARS

OUTDOOR
Concepts

-Landscape & Equipment Center-
2275 N. Main St., Bluffton 824-5189 www.OCILandscape.com

30 YEARS

Stylus
Technologies
961 North Main St. • Bluffton, IN • 260.824.8888
www.stylusav.com

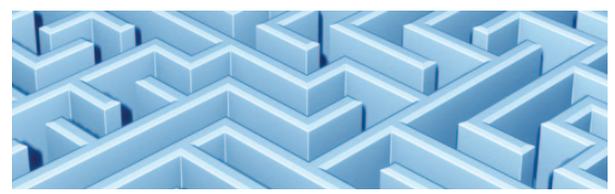
30 YEARS

CHRISTIAN
CARE Retirement
Community
720 E. Dustman Rd., Bluffton, 260-565-3000
www.christiancarerc.org

28 YEARS

1625 Baker Drive, Ossian, Indiana
info@trustedmfg.com
1-888-667-4761 • 260-622-6002

TRUSTED ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTS **TRUSTED** SUPPLY CHAIN PARTNERS



2019 Business HONOR ROLL

Serving Wells County for ...

28 YEARS

3 RIVERS

2030 Commerce Dr. | Bluffton, IN | 3riversfcu.org | 260.490.8328

28 YEARS

OSSIAN PARKS

Creating a place to GATHER & GROW
OSSIAN, INDIANA

25 YEARS

Daniel's

JEWELERS
2155 N. Main St., Bluffton (260)824-9643
Mon.-Fri. 9:30-6; Sat. 9:30-4 • www.daniels-jewelers.net

23 YEARS

RAYMOND JAMES

FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.
Member FINRA/SIPC
Kim Gentis, Financial Advisor
Wealth Management Specialist
1245 North Main St. Bluffton, IN 46714 (260)824-8070

23 YEARS

PEOPLELINK

STAFFING SOLUTIONS
A PEOPLELINK GROUP COMPANY
peoplelinkstaffing.com | (260) 824-1797

21 YEARS

Northwood Computer

3016 E State Road 124, Bluffton
824.5652 | 800.699.4762

20 YEARS

PINEGROVE

APARTMENTS
10 Pine Grove Court • Bluffton, IN
(260) 565-4241
pinegrove@hi-mgmt.com

19 YEARS

ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS

GREEN TECHNOLOGIES FOR CLEAN AIR, WATER, AND LAUNDRY

allergens - dust - breathing problems - pets - odors - smoke - mold
bacteria - germs - viruses - water quality/taste - clean laundry without
detergent or hot water ... and also nutrition & wellness solutions

Vollara Business Associate
1128 E High Pointe, Bluffton, IN 46714
(260)565-4212; cell (260)273-9014
email: janherring7@gmail.com
Mrs. Bob (Jan) Herring www.myvollara.com/jh | www.ketonezone.com/jh

15 YEARS

Mitchel Enterprises Corporation

712 Lancaster St., Bluffton, IN | 800-525-4202
www.mitchelenterprises.com

14 YEARS

WELLS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Toll Free 866-829-2177 • Office 260-827-0261
www.wellsbusinessdevelopment.com

14 YEARS

Rethceif Packaging

www.rethceif.com
420 Industrial Pkwy, Ossian
(260) 622-7200 • www.rethceif.com

14 YEARS

The BEST READ Phone Book in Wells County ...
Your LOCAL
AdamsWells Phone Book
A partnership of Craigville Telephone Co. & News-Banner Publications, Inc.

7 YEARS

Helping Hands

Pregnancy Resource Center
abundant life for families
Bluffton Montpelier
260.824.4263 765.209.4614
www.helpinghandscpc.org

6 YEARS

HOTT

FAMILY DENTISTRY
260-824-2442 — 706 North Main Street • Bluffton
BlufftonDental.com

6 YEARS

am american mortgage

Service Co.
www.AmericanMortgage.com
1169 N. Main St. Suite 3, Bluffton | (260) 353-3000

5 YEARS

Family of Bluffton

Ford
970 N Main St. Bluffton, IN 46714
www.familyfordofblufftonin.com

2 YEARS

HUGH'S

BAKERY & COFFEEHOUSE
Breakfast Brunch Lunch
119 S. Main St., Bluffton • 260-353-1477

1 YEAR

Valero

renewables
Bluffton
1441 S. Adams St. • Bluffton | 260.846.0011

These businesses contribute to the quality of life and our economic vitality. They are the foundation of our community. You can rely on them for trust, reliability and a commitment to serve you and the community.

50 years ...and counting

By **KAREN KELLY**

Small town living. Hardworking people and tax season. What do these characteristics have in common?

The answer to this question is Honegger, Ringger and Co. Inc., which is celebrating 50 years in business in Bluffton in 2019.

Fifty years ago, Ken Honegger left an established CPA firm to pursue his childhood vision of owning his own business.

"There was always a pull to have a business, start a company, a natural desire to do that," Honegger said. He had earned his CPA and with three years of required experience, he was ready for the future.

He wanted his firm to have faith at its core. "Our commitment to following Christ informs our decisions," he said. "One of our core values is integrity."

The results are impressive: Fifty years later, the firm has 1,900 clients and 22 staff, 11 of whom are Certified Public Accountants.

The size of the staff, Honegger said, enables HRC to promote spending time with their families and still supply the best quality of service.

Six months after starting his company, Honegger declined an offer of a large incentive to return to his former employer.

"I liked what I did, I enjoyed it," he said. "It was an easy decision to say no. God had planted that seed in me."

"It was a challenging time," he continued. "Times were lean." Back then, CPAs were not permitted to advertise or they would lose their professional license. "I could not approach a potential client and say, hey I'm Ken Honegger, I am new in Bluffton, and I would like to do your work."

Relying on word of mouth and reputation, he turned to the community and began to absorb the small town feel of belonging to something bigger. He joined the Lions Club, the United Way board and other organizations, establishing a tradition of community involvement that is still important in the lives of HRC employees today.

Honegger's first hire was Jackie Johnson in May 1970; she would retire "after more than 30 years of loyal and excellent service," he said.

Honegger, Ringger and Co. Inc. cannot be mentioned without including Steve

Ringger. According to Honegger "our business, any business, is people, the people you have reflects who you are. When Steve came in, he was the perfect person."

In October 1975, Ringger started his career as an employee of the Ken Honegger Accounting Firm, a role he filled until 1979.

"One day Ken wanted to show me a rendering of the new office building he was planning to build," Ringger said. "On the sign it said 'Honegger, Ringger and Co.' — this is how I found out that I was to be a new owner."

Forty years later, both men have "scaled back." Ringger is in his 11th year as the lead pastor of the Bluffton North Apostolic Christian Church. Honegger still works with a number of clients, particularly during the tax season.

In the early years Honegger wore many hats. He was the CEO and founder, but also worked long hours on the production line. —As the firm grew the need for even more people became more apparent. Thankful for all his employees, particularly during the long tax-season work weeks, Honegger said that "having the right people and treating people right are what makes it work."

Eventually Mark Gerber and Bruce Miller joined the firm; Miller started with HRC in July 1978. After seven years as an employee, he was offered ownership in 1985. For 31 years, he felt blessed to be in this partnership.

"It was a real blessing working there all those years with a bunch of neat Christian people," Miller said. In late 2016, Miller sold out and retired.

Trent Bucher is now the lead partner at HRC. He graduated in 1986, earned his CPA and was working in Fort Wayne. "I got a phone call out of the blue," Bucher recalled. It was Ringger, who wanted to talk to him about a job opportunity. There was a desire in Bucher's heart for hometown living. So he jumped at the offer to work in Bluffton, where he'd grown up. Seven years later, he would become a part owner.

As managing partner he is still a full-time CPA while a third of his time is devoted to management of the firm according to its mission statement: "Provide proactive consulting, tax and accounting services in an environment that promotes integrity and concern for both the client and team



Steve Ringger, Ken Honegger and Trent Bucher in the HRC building on North Main Street, which now employs 22 people. The colors of their ties may be significant: Ringger and Honegger are both Indiana University graduates while Bucher earned his accounting degree from Purdue University. (Photo by Karen Kelly)

needs."

The past 50 years have brought many milestones for Honegger, Ringger and Co. as well as four more partners: Lisa Girod, Mark Klopfenstein, Brad Johnson and Karla Lipscomb.

Worldwide changes in technology and tax law have changed the way the firm has to do business, but the core values have always stayed the same. Bucher explained that "while the numbers are important, Ken taught us that it is the personal touch (especially in the digital age) where we set ourselves apart. We have a great team of committed individuals who strive every day to perpetuate his philosophy."

"It's about the team and the clients," Honegger said. "They are more than employees and clients. They are family and friends. Some of the same clients have been with us over the 50 years."

"Our atmosphere is great to work in and that motivates me to keep going," Honegger added, referring to his continued part-

time involvement.

"Ken means so much to the firm," Bucher said, "his personality, the grace that he brings."

In the words of Ken Honegger, "it's about doing what is right: What is right for the client, what is right for the team." ♦

Serving Our Community for 101 Years

Wells County
Community Center

at the 4-H Park, Bluffton, IN

Rex Myers, Marketing Director

Call or email: 824-1689 • myers151@purdue.edu



VOTED BEST
Reception Hall & Event Center

- Reception area for up to 450 people
- Commercial kitchen available
- Caterer of your choice
- Air conditioned
- Carport for easy drop-off/pick-up
- Lighted parking
- Adjustable lighting
- Meeting rooms available
- Linens
- Round or rectangular tables
- Adult Beverages now permitted in facility

CALL 824-1689

Rex Myers
Marketing Director

ADVERTISING • WEBSITES
LISTING & DIRECTORIES
ALIGNMENT • SEO

125 N. Johnson St • Bluffton, IN
260.824.0224 • nb-digital.com
WEB PRESENCE • ONLINE ADVERTISING • WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

NB Digital
A DIVISION OF THE NEWS-BANNER

Ossian's amphitheater project nearly a reality

By GLEN WERLING

It was just a seed, really. And for nearly 20 years, members of the Ossian Psi Iota Xi sorority have been trying to cultivate it into something that everyone in the Ossian area — and for that matter, all of the surrounding area — can enjoy.

Watered and nurtured by members of the Ossian Park Board, Ossian Revitalization and Ossian Rolls, it looks like this seed is finally going to grow and blossom into something the whole community can treasure.

The amphitheater/pavilion at Archbold-Wilson Memorial Park was still just a dream two years ago, but hard work and dedication of all of the groups, plus help from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the United States Department of Interior, the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority, the Wells County Foundation, numerous donations from Ossian-area individuals, businesses, the Ossian Lions Club and a \$100,000 commitment of CEDIT funds from the Ossian Town Council, the project has \$846,110.89 in its coffers.

The grant from DNR has been on hold, although it has been approved at the state level, Martin said. The holdup is at the federal level where it reportedly has been stalled by the January federal government shut-down.

The estimated cost of the total project — which also includes an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant playground, a large chess and checkers game board, a nature area and a wall of honor recognizing the many donors — has been estimated at \$869,074.

"That's just an estimate," emphasized Ossian Town Manager Luann Martin. It could be less, it could be more, she added.

A chunk of the expense is just getting utilities to the area. While the park is surrounded on all four sides with electricity, water and sewage service, none extends into the 64.48-acre site. And because of the park's size, getting it to the interior of the park is expensive.

The new features, which include a 41-space paved parking lot (paving is an alternate bid, however) will nearly fill the entire north end of the park, which already sports Wells County's tallest sledding hill, a skate park and a fishing pond.

Also surrounding the entire park like a necklace is the Lenny Gerber Walking Trail, and a disc golf course. The newest feature to the park is the The Boneyard dog park.

And next year at this time the crown jewel of that necklace should be well on its way to completion. ♦



Plans are by this time next year this will be the newest addition to Ossian's Archbold-Wilson Memorial Park. The amphitheater project has been nearly 20 years in the planning, with the Ossian Psi Iota Xi sorority originating the idea for an amphitheater and raising funds for its construction.



"Topp" - Notch, "Beste" Mortgage Experience!

Call us or apply on-line at
www.AmericanMortgage.com



Angie Topp
Sr. Mortgage Loan Officer
NMLS #478736 • IN #23069
Cell: 260-273-2224
angie.topp@americanmortgage.com



Jessica Beste
Mortgage Loan Officer
NMLS #613932 • IN #328544
Cell: 260-273-2230
jessica.beste@americanmortgage.com

American Mortgage Service Co.

1169 N. Main St. Suite 3, Bluffton, IN 46714
260-353-3000 • NMLS# 8246 • IN# 11063

www.AmericanMortgage.com

Our Reputation Says it All!
WELLS • ALLEN • ADAMS • BLACKFORD • GRANT • HUNTINGTON • ALLEN

ELLENBERGER

BROTHERS, INC.

Auctioneers & Real Estate

Our professional services include Appraisals, CMA's, List Homes, Sell Homes, Auctions. Specializing in Agriculture Farm Land.



BLUFFTON, INDIANA
260-824-2426



WAYNE, INDIANA
260-747-3189

Jessica Dubbeld, Sales Clerk #AC31200014

GO TO www.Ellenbergerbros.com

to view our upcoming auctions and current home listings.

Home Town Auctioneers Since 1925 • 94 Years American Made

SATURDAY, JULY 13, 2019 • SALE STARTING AT 10:00AM • 9665 North 100 West -90, Markle, IN 46770

Well Maintained Ranch Home w/Open Concept, 3 Bedrooms, 4 Full Baths, Finished Walk-Out Basement, 3.5 Car Attached Garage, 64'x42' Meyer Pole Building w/Half Bath, 1/4 Acre ± Stocked Pond • Situated on 9.933 Acres ±. '08 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 Ext. Cab! Dale R. & Marie M. Dolby, Sellers.

SATURDAY, JULY 20, 2019 • SALE STARTING AT 11:00AM • Auction Conducted On-Site • 402 E Plum St., Van Buren, IN 46991

Exceptionally Maintained One Story All American Home. 3 Bedrooms, 2 Full Baths, Attached One Car Garage, Fenced in Back Yard, All Appliances Stay. Janet E. Hunnicutt Estate, Janine Felver, Per. Rep.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 2019 • AUCTION STARTS AT 9:00 AM • Auction to be held at the Wells County 4H Park • 500 East Spring St. • Bluffton

Online Internet Bidding at 10:00 A.M. • Auction Preview, Friday, August 2, 12-5PM.
Billie Dubach's Outstanding Collection of R.S. Prussia, Hummels, Cranberry, Pyrex, & More!

Check Out Our Website for More Upcoming Auctions & Home Listings

130 West Market St. | Bluffton | 260-824-2426 | 1-800-373-6363

Wells County men are revolutionizing soil sampling

By GLEN WERLING

Revolutionary soil sampling techniques take evolutionary thinking and design and that what's happening with the Rogo SmartCore soil sampling technology developed by a family of Wells County farmers.

Troy Fiechter along with brothers, Vince, Darin, and Benjamin, and partner Drew Schumacher of West Lafayette (with Wells County ties) have created, continually perfected, and are constantly updating SmartCore with the latest version being SmartCore 4.

The blanket method of applying fertilizer to a field, as was done in the past, is wasteful of both resources and cash, Fiechter observed, adding that precision farming requires specific, incorruptible data for the application of nutrients.

Fiechter developed the idea for SmartCore out of necessity. His family's farm covers a broad area with a wide variety of soil types that vary in their nutrient needs. Accuracy in soil sampling was a necessity.

"There were plenty of records on how the fields were intended to be sampled, but in agriculture, there are virtually no records or accountability on how the field was actually sampled," Schumacher said.

In addition to collecting an accurate sample, Fiechter also realized that consistency in the pattern across every sample was an absolute must. "Being inconsistent on pattern and depth across the same field will create an artificial variable rate technology map (spreading map). That misleading information is worse than no information at all," Fiechter said.

SmartCore Version 1 was a robotic Polaris all-terrain vehicle. "We realized it was location and depth control, so we had to figure out how to make a high-speed auger with a cleaning collar to prevent cross contamination," Fiechter said. Once that was patented, they were faced with the challenge of getting as many acres sampled as possible in a day.

The new SmartCore Version 4 is similar to the SmartCore Version 3. Both are

autonomous tracked Bobcat skid-steer loaders, but while the 2018 Version 3 model retained its original Bobcat loader arms to raise and lower the core drill, the 2019 Smartcore Version 4 injects the drill into the ground with a 90 degree vertical hydraulic system and uses a vacuum to suck the soil collected into the machine's patented bagging system.

Fiechter noted that SmartCore 4's control panel has been updated from SmartCore 3. The goal is accuracy with efficiency — collect a clean, uncontaminated sample as accurately and as quickly as possible.

While the tracked Bobcat can move across even wet fields at 8 mph to collect the samples from the areas programmed into its electronic brain, the collection system needed updated. With SmartCore 3, the loader arms would lower the drill, bore the sample, and then lift and use gravity to deposit the sample into a funnel in the soil sample bag opening. SmartCore 4 drills into the ground, retracts and the soil is sucked rapidly into a bag.

"It's just a lot faster system," Fiechter said. "We were doing 800 acres a day, but we need to go faster."

The sampling goal for this year is 100,000 to 150,000 acres. Since farmers need the data to make decisions about nutrient application in either the spring or fall, the window to collect can be limited.

This spring's wet weather has slowed, but not stopped, soil sampling, Fiechter said. "We can test when it's too wet to plant," he said. Most fields have some places that are too wet even for SmartCore 4 to track, but its autonomous system simply guides the machine around those areas. Programming the borders of a wet area is the same as programming the borders of the field to be sampled.

Once the samples are collected, Rogo will send the samples to the soil testing laboratories of the farmer's choosing.

"Typically people have strong opinions about that, so we send samples to six or seven different labs," Fiechter said. He's hoping to get more efficient in the logistics area of labeling, boxing and shipping



Above, Benjamin Fiechter, Darin Fiechter, Troy Fiechter, Levi Starrett (software engineer), and Vince Fiechter are shown with the Rogo SmartCore soil sampling machine. At right, Troy Fiechter operates the SmartCore through one of the family farm fields. (Photos by Glen Werling)



samples to the labs.

"We like to hold accountability for every step of the process," Fiechter said.

Fiechter said that he and his partners have learned so much in the past few years.

"Hard lessons," he said. "As a starter company we just did things and failed as fast as we could, but we learned as fast we could, too," Fiechter said. "When we realized we needed to do an update, we did

it," he added and he learned a lot just by going field-to-field asking farmers what they wanted, what they thought would make a good soil sampling service. "It's fascinating what you realize you don't know until you go out there and just do it," he said.

"All the amazing people that surround us also help us make sense of everything that is happening so that we can learn faster," Fiechter said. ♦

Library adds mobile hotspots, digital cards, book-a-librarian

By BARBARA BARBIERI

Wells County's Public Library has been adding services to reach even more residents of the county including three new initiatives—mobile hotspots, digital library cards and a book-a-librarian service.

Mobile Hotspots

In March of this year, the library began lending mobile hotspots. The Alcatel Linkzone hotspot is an electronic device that uses the T-Mobile wireless network to provide wireless internet to up to 15 devices.

What that means is that the patron checks out the device, takes it home, turns it on and then can connect 15 electronic devices to it to access the internet. Devices can be laptop computers, cellular phones, gaming devices, kindles, etc. Basically anything that can utilize a wireless signal. The hotspots have unlimited data.

Currently eight devices may be loaned, seven can have holds placed on them and one can be reserved. The reserve-able device was created so that families or individuals who are going on vacation can reserve it and the device can be checked out longer (up to two weeks).

The regular hotspots can be checked out by adults for a week and can be renewed one time if there are no holds on the device. In order to check out a hotspot, a user agreement must be signed. Devices must be checked out and returned to the WCPL circulation desk during operating hours. If a device is returned in the outside drop box, a \$10 fee will be added to the patron's account. Patrons with overdue hotspots will be fined \$2 per day (up to four dollars maximum) and the device is deactivated after 48 hours overdue.

Digital Library Card

With so many people on the go and using just digital services, the library created a Digital Library Card that can be used by adults and students without having to come into the library. This is particularly useful for students in area schools.

Teachers can have students apply for a Digital Library Card that will allow them access to materials to use in the classrooms on their iPads and other school-issued devices. This service, however, is



Wells County Public Library staff member Jason Habegger is shown with one of the mobile hotspots that can be checked out with your library card. (Photo provided)

open to anyone that would be eligible for a traditional library card.

The Digital Library Card basically gives students and adults access to digital materials via OverDrive (eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines) and most of the library's online databases/resources.

To get a Digital Library Card, just fill out an application online and a library staff member will email either a barcode and PIN number or further instructions within seven days.

Those eligible include all residents of Wells County, persons owning property in Wells County, students or teachers at

Wells County schools, institutions in Wells County, anyone that fits one of the criteria and that does not currently have a Wells County Public Library card (if an applicant has a physical card and applies for a digital card, a staff member will email further instructions since only one card is needed.

The full-service/physical card grants access to these same services.

Book-a-Librarian

In an effort to offer more in-depth reference help, the WCPL started the Book-a-Librarian service, where the public can set-up an appointment to get one-on-one assistance from a library staff member. These help sessions can be on a variety of topics, including computer help, genealogy, finding a good book or movie, checking out digital books from the Northeast Indiana Digital Library, learning how to use a cell phone, student/research assis-

(Continued on Page 54)

On the Web



• wellscolibrary.org

FRESH OFF THE BLOCK

Check Out Our Fresh Meat & Deli Selections

WEEKLY SPECIALS • CUSTOM CUTS
SMOKED MEATS • PORK • BEEF • CHICKEN • BBQ •
BRATWURST • DELI • CHEESES & MORE!



We offer a full line of ready-to-eat products:

Pulled Pork with or without BBQ sauce • Roasting Hogs • Sloppy Joe • Homemade Chicken and Ham Salad • Meat & Cheese Trays • Smoked Pork Chops

We also offer a great selection of gift boxes and gift cards!

Summer Sausage • Steak Boxes • Cheese Balls
Canned Beef & Chicken • Semi Boneless Hams
Boneless Hams • Smoked Bone-In Hams • Smoked Turkeys
Variety Gift Boxes • Assorted Meat and Cheese Trays

Boxes made to Order:
Call in advance for all special orders



BUY BULK AND SAVE...WITH OUR FREEZER BOX COMBOS!

Lengerich Meats

FRESH • VARIETY • LOCAL • QUALITY *It's worth the Drive!*

Mon-Wed: 8^{AM}-5^{PM}

Saturday: 8^{AM}-1^{PM}

Thurs-Fri: 8^{AM}-6^{PM}

Sunday: Closed

3095 W. Van Horn St. • Zanesville

West on 224 to 300 W., turn right (heading north) 6 miles

(260) 638-4123 • www.lengerichmeats.com

e-Learning workout

(Continued from Page 14)

Darnell said he has seen positive reactions from students at SWCS.

“Students seemed to really respond well. They are such digital natives,” he said. “Having so many days did, however, put a lot of extra responsibility on parents while students were at home for so many days this year.”

Yates said the reactions at BHMSD have been overwhelmingly positive as well, especially since eLearning is a form of online work many of the students will eventually experience through college or professional careers.

“Students, parents, and teachers have been supportive of eLearning usage as an option for inclement weather days as it provides an opportunity to continue learning and allows students to engage through technology that mirrors online learning techniques many of our students will experience in post-secondary education or through workforce training sessions.”

There are multiple reasons administrators in the county like eLearning. One is that school gets out earlier since the days do not have to be made up. Southern Wells let out school before Memorial Day on May 24, while NWCS let out on May 29 and BHMSD on May 30.

“It enabled the school year to end on the scheduled date that was originally approved by the school board,” Mills said. “So, there is no one complaining that we should be going to school up to the middle of June.”

But it's not just about being able to take those summer vacations early. Administrators like having as many instructional days as possible before students take standardized testing. During a BHMSD school board meeting, Bluffton-Harrison Middle School Principal Rick Mettler described it as having to make up football practice after the big game.

“This was far better than adding several days to the end of the school year after high-stakes testing for students achievement, like ILEARN, ISTEP+, ACT, SAT, and AP, had already occurred,” Darnell said.

While administrators agree that more instructional days before testing is important, Yates admits eLearning will never be as good as a regular instructional day in the classroom.

“Students were still able to experience learning opportunities during an eLearning day, but nothing replaces teacher-led instruction in a classroom setting,” he said.

Darnell said there's a balance between doing more with eLearning without introducing too much new content that could be difficult to learn in the technological style.

3 out of 4 Wells grads off to school this fall

By JUSTIN PEEPER

More than three out of every four students who graduated from one of Wells County's public high schools in 2019 plan to attend college this fall.

Fifty-five percent of the graduates indicated they would attend a four-year college, while 22 percent plan to study at a two-year college or enter a technical, trade or vocational education program.

Two-year colleges or technical, trade or vocational education programs are more popular with the Class of 2019, as 22 percent of this year's graduates will enroll in such a program compared to 18 percent of graduates from the Class of 2018.

Overall, the 2019 graduates' plans are similar to what their peers from the Classes of 2013-2018 said they would do after graduating from high school.

In both 2013 and 2014, 77 percent of graduates planned to attend college while 78 percent of 2015 and 2016 graduates indicated they would attend. In 2017, 79 percent of graduates said they were college bound. In 2018, 80 percent of Wells

public school graduates said they would attend college.

The News-Banner spoke with guidance department officials at each public high school this spring and received

information on 339 students from the Class of 2019.

School officials cautioned, however, the numbers could change because graduates sometimes change their plans. According to the data, 55 percent of 2019's seniors plan to attend four-year schools while 22 percent say they will begin their degrees at two-year colleges or enter a technical, trade, associate, vocational or apprenticeship program — meaning that 77 percent of Wells graduates are planning to pursue further education or training this year.

Last year 338 students graduated from Wells County's three public high schools while 339 graduated this year. Sixty-two percent of last year's graduates planned to study at a four-year school while 55 percent say they will this year.

Twenty-two percent of this year's graduates — 75 students — plan to attend a two-year school. Last year, 59 students — 18 percent — had plans to attend a two-year college or enter a technical, trade, associate, vocational or

apprenticeship program. Eight graduates, 3 percent, have plans to join the military this year. In 2018, 3 percent of graduates (11 students) also said they would join the military.

Approximately 69 graduates, or 20 percent, plan to enter the work force or fill their time with something else. Last year, 57 graduates, or 17 percent, planned to enter the work force or fill their time with something else. ♦

Where are they going?

Listed below is a breakdown of what 2019 graduates of Wells County's three public high schools plan to do now that they have graduated.

	4-year college	2-year college*	Military	Work force**
Norwell: (168 students)	94 students 56 percent	36 students 22 percent	4 students 2 percent	34 students 20 percent
Bluffton: (106 students)	56 students 53 percent	16 students 15 percent	3 students 3 percent	31 students 29 percent
So. Wells (65 students)	37 students 57 percent	23 students 35 percent	1 students 2 percent	4 students 6 percent

* Includes 2- or 3-year colleges and technical, trade, associate, vocational education programs or apprenticeships.

** Includes some graduates who will fill their time doing something else or who were undecided.

Source: Wells County public high schools / The News-Banner

information on 339 students from the Class of 2019.

School officials cautioned, however, the numbers could change because graduates sometimes change their plans.

According to the data, 55 percent of 2019's seniors plan to attend four-year schools while 22 percent say they will begin their degrees at two-year colleges or enter a technical, trade, associate, vocational or apprenticeship

Ryan Frauhiger turned a hobby into a career

(Continued from Page 24)

One of his jobs was on Line Street in Columbia City, a heavily traveled street. People saw his work. They stopped. They got out of their cars and talked with him.

That led to more jobs.

He also gets a lot of his referrals from Todd Nash of Yoder Tree Service. Publicity helps, too. When he did a job in Wabash, the Plain Dealer newspaper did an article on him and the carving.

There are a lot of chainsaw carvers, Frauhiger said. His attention to detail sets him apart, he believes. When he carves an owl it looks like a specific breed of owl.

“It's wood brought to life. That's my motto,” he said.

His jobs come from all over. Job numbers vary from season to season. He does between 20 and 30 a year.

Sometimes he'll get a customer that doesn't know what they want, they just know they want a carving. He'll sketch something out for them until they see something they like.

His carvings range in all sizes too. Right now he's carving about a three-inch

baby Jesus for a friend's nativity set.

Cost for a carving varies per job. He works it out with each individual customer. “The first couple of years have really been learning opportunities,” he said.

“One thing I like about this job is although I've done a lot of eagles and a couple of bears, I've never done the same project twice,” he added. “The challenge is always different.”

But one thing that doesn't change is that there is always potential in what some may see as just a piece of old firewood. ♦

Library adds mobile

(Continued from Page 53)

tance, job assistance, teacher collections and more.

Consultations are free and scheduled Monday-Friday during library hours. Sessions last about 30-45 minutes. There is a limit of two appointments per month and it's available in the library only.

Patrons can sign-up for 30-minute sessions at the library or online. ♦

SW students and the highway department

(Continued from Page 13)

Class of 1995, is in charge of the road signs. Russell Alford joined in 1982 and is a mechanic. Travis Jennings, who joined in 1992, is a road foreman. Meanwhile, Ed Herman retired as the department's superintendent after he worked his way up from SWHS ICE student.

With this track record, current Highway Superintendent Josh Cotton believes his department is a top retainer in the county for employing ICE students. The program gives them an opportunity to see if they like the job or not, Cotton said.

Bennett said it also provides the students a chance to have a job while in school — and if they aren't going to college, it gives them a foot in the door.

Added Cotton: "It's more of a segue into (the) real world."

If they don't like it, Bennett said, they can move on to something else. But he liked it, and it was the highest paying job when he graduated.

"That and it was an outdoor job," Bennett said. "That's what I wanted to do."

Alford said there were no other jobs when he was in high school; no one else was hiring. All of the former ICE students replaced someone who retired, he added; they had to wait for an opening in the department.

Bennett said that's the luck of the draw. Many students have come and gone and didn't get the opportunity to stay because there were no openings. Cotton said the department usually hires two summer helpers to assist with the hard labor — and they are normally ICE students who come back to help.

Cotton thinks the program has been successful for his department because they know the workers and they already have a certain set of skills. As a boss, he said it's nice to hold on to that knowledge.

"If you can keep someone who's worked here — just for knowing the guys and where we park stuff and where our fuel tanks (are), just the simple stuff — to retain that is so much better," Cotton said.

Steve Linderwell, Southern Wells business teacher and ICE supervisor for students like Huffman, is in his first year in the role but he's familiar with the connection between his school and the highway department.

The students are performing the same

tasks as the other workers based on their qualifications, he said. It's a multi-skilled trade; they don't departmentalize and they teach everything, Linderwell added.

Linderwell said the highway department also has "a commitment to development," which he assumes is one of the reasons why the students want to transition from ICE to full-time employment.

They also work together, Linderwell said of the employees, even though the job is labor-intensive.

"They create a welcoming culture," he added.

Often, students are pressured to go to college, Cotton said, but the world lacks people in trades and the pay is getting better because of it.

Cotton said ICE is a great program and he looks forward to having students enroll with his department. Even in other jobs he's had before becoming highway superintendent, Cotton said he's tried to get an ICE student in an attempt to later retain them.

"I think it's so important," he added.

In his end-of-year presentation to his class, Huffman broke down the pros and cons of working at the department through ICE: The job provided him good work experience and relationships, but he had to wake up early and make the 30-minute drive.

He still hopes to learn how to drive the road grader, operate the backhoe, and how to weld. He has been practicing in order to get his commercial driver's license and said the highway department will give him time to earn it.

Huffman said he wants to continue to work at the department while earning an online education through Ivy Tech — and he has aspirations to become a pro fisherman. When Linderwell asked how the two jobs relate, Huffman said he plans to use his earnings from the county job to participate in fishing tournaments on the weekends — and to buy his boat and fuel.

Cotton said Huffman will be joining the department full-time as a truck driver after his high school graduation.

"The ICE program at the Wells County Highway Department has helped me significantly over the school year," Huffman told his class. "It gave me valuable work experience and also (a) good, stable full-time job." ♦



Josh Cotton



Steve Linderwell

It's a Classic WIN-WIN

CONSUMERS WIN!

Residents and businesses get a phone book that's easier to read and easier to use. Bigger type, better organized and edited **by** LOCAL people **for** LOCAL people. It has the most accurate, most up-to-date and most comprehensive listings of any book distributed in Wells and Adams counties. Consumers also have quick access to the LOCAL online database at phonebook.adamswells.com without searching through cluttered national websites.



ADVERTISERS WIN!

It's Wells County's BEST READ Phone Book by far! An independent research study found that more people use The LOCAL AdamsWells Phone Book than any other directory.* And economical advertising rates make it more affordable to be in the book that more people use.

EVERYBODY WINS!

Your LOCAL AdamsWells Phone Book is locally owned. That means advertising dollars invested in Your LOCAL book stay right here in Wells County. No other phone book can say that!

WHEN YOU NEED TO KNOW, LOOK IN THE BOOK YOU CAN DEPEND ON ...



Your **LOCAL** AdamsWells Phone Book

A partnership of Craigville Telephone Co. and News-Banner Publications, Inc.
Sales Office: 125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton IN 46714 • 260-622-6046

Make sure your business is in the book more people use. Call 1-866-328-3231

* Indiana Research, Inc., Fort Wayne, Ind. • Project AW0807.
Full details available by calling 1-866-328-3231.

Graduation Pathways

(Continued from Page 12)

community Schools, Northern Wells Community Schools, South Adams Schools and Southern Wells Community Schools.

Each of those schools offer concentrators of their own, but students can go to neighboring school districts to take concentrator capstone classes. As examples, students could go to Southern Wells for a construction trades concentrator, to Bluffton for a welding concentrator, or to Norwell for an engineering concentrator.

"If Bluffton adds one, if Southern Wells adds one, if Belmont adds one, if we add one, that's four new pathways for all of our kids," Parker said.

The concentrators are meant to prepare

students for trade skills so they can go on to trade school or jump right into the field after graduation. A student graduated from Bluffton High School last year with a welding certification and was ready to start her career.

However, one obstacle for students taking CTE classes at other schools is the amount of time and money it takes to drive to other schools that may be up to an hour away.

Baker said one potential issue with students getting concentrators done is that the concentrator pathway requires students to get a C or above in each class, which could be a challenge for some students.

"But we are prepared for it," Baker said. ◆

Craigville Appliance

(Continued from Page 10)

him to compete on price but the big difference his crew is focused on is personal service and personal relationships. The buying group also helps with his presence on the internet.

"When you're out in the middle of nowhere, you have to have a good website," he said.

Part of the future of his family's company is closely tied to the community's future, which is a huge reason why Hunt has become involved and is running for Bluffton Common Council. He has served on the Bluffton NOW! revitalization group and continues to serve on the Community Reinvestment Program committee. He won a three-way primary race for the Republican nomination for this fall's District 2 council race.

Hunt's family — wife Staci and their three children — live within the Bluffton city limits.

Economic development and the retention of local talent are the main issues that drive his motivation.

He wants to improve the options local high school and college graduates have here, and "(the city) can be easier to do

business with," he said, citing the infrastructure needs on Bluffton's north side among other issues.

Bluffton's proximity to Fort Wayne has its advantages and disadvantages, Hunt said, much like Craigville Appliance's location in a very small community, yet strategically located close to Bluffton, Decatur, Berne and Fort Wayne.

"For our store, (those) are all good markets," Hunt said. "Fort Wayne is a tougher one but we're doing better there lately." All of which is part of the ongoing change as a 100-year-old business begins its second century. ◆

Ed Schwartz's novels

(Continued from Page 44)

around the world, where child slavery and human trafficking goes by other names.

Despite the problems Schwartz sees in Haiti, he is determined to do what he can to bring about change, one child at a time.

He says he is continually impressed with the people of Haiti, especially with their ability to remain full of faith despite the adversity they face.

"They are," he says, "some of the most beautiful people on Earth, in my opinion." ◆

Kellam Road Trips

(Continued from Page 22)

together again someday. The singing just seems to go on, it's so much a part of the family."

Tom does not want to do any live solo performing but is planning a gospel recording project which will include family, of course. Son Ryan, a pastor at the Church of God in Pendleton, also owns a recording studio: Kelly Sound Studio.

Marketing a new business, the couple has found, is perhaps the biggest challenge.

"It's been a family project," Stacy says, "and we wouldn't have been able to do it without our sons' help."

Ryan designed and built their website and Facebook page and taught them how to maintain and update it. He makes videos to help promote their trips. Younger son Colton designs their brochures and their business cards.

"If people are not comfortable with the internet, we can put them on our mailing list," Tom adds.

Kellam Road Trips can also assist private groups for their trips. The couple is working with one local non-profit, "Chosen Sisters," to stage a fund-raising trip in September.

They have and hope to work with

churches and organizations who want to take a motor coach trip for their own missions or tours.

"We can charter the motor coach, reserve hotel rooms and get event tickets and serve breakfast, whatever the group wants," Stacy says.

So it wasn't a walk to the post office that uncovered a story for me. It fell on my lap while riding on a bus. And it turned out to be much more than just about a traveling troubadour. ◆

Neil Ainslie

(Continued from Page 38)

ship with God, but that developed over a five-year span that led him into the ministry.

"People I worked with would come up to me and say, 'You wouldn't believe what I heard in the sermon on Sunday,'" he said. He started paying attention, and admits he had "a lot of Christian morals, but not a Christian relationship."

Now he's in Wells County, fitting in where needed and continuing that faith journey.

"Partly because this is a small community, I've fit in niches where there was a need to serve," he said. ◆

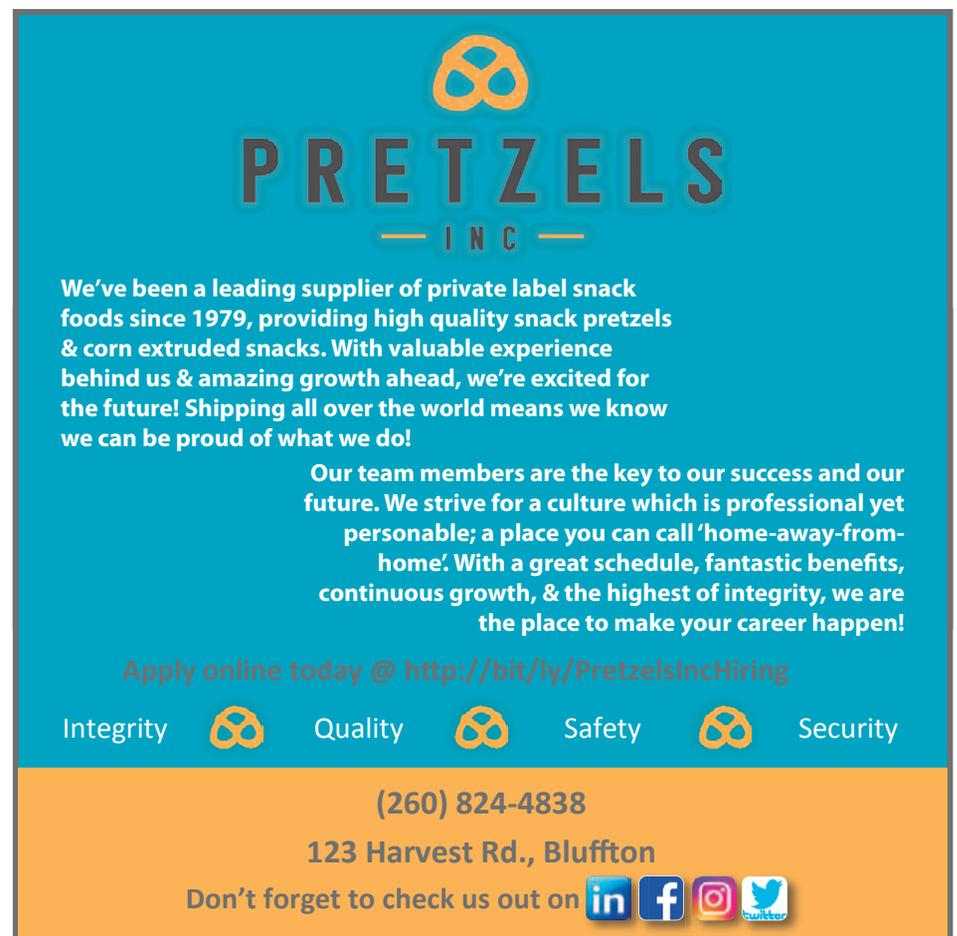


People. Process. Performance.

Since 1996, we've served the local Bluffton market, linking talented employees with great employers. Contact us today to find the perfect job or employee!

 **PEOPLELINK**
STAFFING SOLUTIONS
A PEOPLELINK GROUP COMPANY

260.824.1797 peoplelinkstaffing.com




PRETZELS
— INC —

We've been a leading supplier of private label snack foods since 1979, providing high quality snack pretzels & corn extruded snacks. With valuable experience behind us & amazing growth ahead, we're excited for the future! Shipping all over the world means we know we can be proud of what we do!

Our team members are the key to our success and our future. We strive for a culture which is professional yet personable; a place you can call 'home-away-from-home! With a great schedule, fantastic benefits, continuous growth, & the highest of integrity, we are the place to make your career happen!

Apply online today @ <http://bit.ly/PretzelsincHiring>

Integrity  Quality  Safety  Security

(260) 824-4838
123 Harvest Rd., Bluffton

Don't forget to check us out on    

FROM DESIGN = TO = DONE

→ **Briner Was Here.** ←

We've spent 50 years building a reputation for quality, integrity and responsibility. From concept to delivery, we're proud to call every project we do, a Briner project.

We Build as One.



BrinerBuilding.com

Bluffton-Harrison M.S.D.

Serving Students From Preschool Through Graduation



Bluffton-Harrison Elementary School

Mrs. Schlaura Linderwell, Principal
1100 East Spring Street
(260) 824-0333

Bluffton High School

Mr. Steve Baker, Principal
1 Tiger Trail
(260) 824-3724



Bluffton-Harrison Middle School

Mr. Rick Mettler, Principal
1500 Stogdill Road
(260) 824-3536

Bluffton-Harrison M.S.D.

Dr. Brad Yates, Superintendent
805 East Harrison Street
(260) 824-2620

Join the **BHMSD** Family Today!