

The News - Banner

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TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2023 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

Ossian moves ahead on sewer system upgrade

By DAVE SCHULTZ
Ossian is moving ahead with a recommendation for a two-phase upgrade of the town's sewer collection system at an estimated cost of \$5.4 million for both phases. Jim Breckler of Engineering Resources walked the four council members present — Josh Barkley, Brad Pursley, Dennis Ealing, and Stephanie Tucker — through six alternatives. The two-phase alternative was recommended as the best for the town, and the vote to accept that recommendation was 4-0.



Josh Barkley, president of the Ossian Town Council, signs documents related to the sewer improvement project as Jim Breckler of Engineering Services looks on. (Photo by Dave Schultz)

The council was under a deadline of Friday, March 31, to submit the plans to the Indiana Finance Authority's State Revolving Loan Fund. What was approved Monday was the preliminary engineering plan for the system upgrade, and that is what Breckler's firm must submit by Friday. Jeff Rowe and Scott Hadler of the BakerTilly municipal finance firm

were on hand to explain the finances, and it appears that the two phases will result in a 22.3 percent increase in sewer rates. The projects — this year and in 2027 — are needed because the town's two lift stations are antiquated, at least in terms of two residential developments now

under way — one unnamed project on the town's north side and the Crosswinds Lakes project on the southeast side of the town. The East Mill Street lift station was constructed in 1964 and rehabilitated in 2008 and the Davis Road lift station was constructed

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Members of the Ossian Town Council — clockwise from lower left, Brad Pursley, Dennis Ealing, and Josh Barkley — with Jim Breckler of Engineering Services in the right foreground, converse with Scott Hadler of the BakerTilly finance firm, who was present on the screen at top right. Council member Stephanie Tucker was also present, and was seated off-camera to the right. (Photo by Dave Schultz)

Ossian council opens process to select new member on April 10

The Ossian Town council intends to choose a new council member at its April 10 meeting. Longtime council member Brad Pursley resigned earlier this month, effective March 31, and participated in his final council meeting during Monday afternoon's special session. The other three members present Monday — Josh Barkley, Stephanie Tucker, and Dennis Ealing — agreed to accept appli-

cations for a new council member until noon April 10. Anyone applying to succeed Pursley must live in the town's west ward, as he does. Since Pursley was independent of any political party affiliation, the council will decide on his replacement. Had he been a Republican or a Democrat, a caucus would have determined his successor. — Dave Schultz

Construction begins at Southern Wells

Spring break brought with it construction on a new preschool, playground

By HOLLY GASKILL
Construction for Southern Wells Community Schools' new preschool began over spring break last week. The construction project is renovating the high school's previous family and consumer science room into a preschool classroom with a child's bathroom and observation room. A new playground will also be added nearby. The preschool, called Southern Wells Little Raiders, will begin in August. The program will be an On My Pre-K program licensed with the state of Indiana and will partner with a new Early Childhood Education course in the high school. Classroom instruction will be led by a full-time licensed teacher. High school students study-

ing to become teachers will have the opportunity to aid in teaching, maintain classroom materials and observe behaviors and teaching methods. Applications for both morning and afternoon sessions are open and available on the school's website or are available at the high school office. Sessions are available on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, with a morning time from 8:30-11 a.m. and an afternoon time from 12-2:30 p.m. The preschool costs \$80 monthly, with a \$25 registration fee and a one-time \$50 supply fee. Questions can be directed to the high school at 765-728-5534 or email Kim Conner at kconner@swraiders.com. holly@news-banner.com



Construction has begun at Southern Wells High School for its new preschool, which will begin next school year. (Photo by Holly Gaskill)

Nashville shooter organized attack

Six were killed after the shooter drew maps, surveilled school

By JONATHAN MATTISE, TRAVIS LOLLER and HOLLY MEYER
Associated Press
NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A former student shot through the doors of a Christian elementary school and killed three children and three adults after elaborately planning the massacre by drawing out a detailed map and conducting surveillance of the building, police said.

The massacre at The Covenant School in Nashville was the latest in a series of mass shootings in a country that has grown increasingly unnerved by bloodshed in schools.

The victims included three 9-year-old children, the school's top administrator, a substitute teacher and a custodian. Amid the chaos a familiar ritual played out: Panicked parents rushed to the school to see if their children were safe and tearfully hugged their kids, and a stunned community planned vigils for the victims.

"I was literally moved to tears to see this and the kids as they were being ushered out of the building," Metropolitan Nashville Police Chief John Drake said Monday during one of several news conferences.

Police gave unclear information on the gender of the shooter. For hours, police identified the shooter as a 28-year-old woman and even-

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Family of U.S. couple kidnapped in Haiti begs for help

By DÁNICA COTO
Associated Press
SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Nikese Toussaint was at church, so she didn't see the text message from her sister. All she knew at that point was that their brother and his wife, who live in the U.S., had landed safely in Haiti to visit ailing relatives and prepare for Rara, a colorful and boisterous festival born out of the dark days of slavery. It wasn't until Toussaint got home and her sister followed up the unread text with a phone call that she learned her warnings had materialized: their brother, an accountant; his wife, a social worker; and another person were snatched off a public bus amid a surge in gang-related kidnappings.

Toussaint took a deep breath. Not again, she thought. Seventeen years earlier, gangs had kidnapped two of her cousins in the capital of Port-au-Prince. They were eventually released but remain traumatized. This time, the gang that kidnapped her brother, wife and another person is demanding \$200,000 — each. "How are we ever going to come up with that money?" Toussaint told The Associated Press in a phone interview Monday from the U.S. The kidnapping occurred March 18, and since then, her brother, Jean-Dickens Toussaint, has been allowed to make only two brief calls. All his family knows is that

he and his wife, Abigail Michael Toussaint, are tied up. The phone calls are too brief to find out if they are being given food or water or treated generally well, Nikese Toussaint said. The couple were on their way to Jean-Dickens Toussaint's hometown of Leogane, which many Haitians believe organizes the country's best Rara festival. Three pandemic years had gone by since he last led a Rara band through those streets, and the 33-year-old accountant was excited to resume his role as "colonel." Rara is similar to a carnival, with drums, bamboo instruments and metal horns accompanying singers as they parade through the town behind band leaders like Toussaint in an homage to the

slave revolution that led Haiti to become the world's first Black republic. But the celebration was cut short. The Toussaints, who are from Tamarac, Florida, never made it to Leogane. Gangs stopped the public bus they were on as it tried to cross Martissant, considered ground zero for ongoing violence that has worsened since the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise. The gangs apparently noticed the suitcases in the bus and zeroed in on the couple and the person accompanying them on the trip, Nikese Toussaint said. The family paid someone they

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Outside

Partly sunny today, rain moves in tomorrow

Today	Wed.	Thursday
High 47	High 49	High 53
Low 31	Low 23	Low 45

More Weather on Page 2

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OBITUARIES

Richard "Dick" Bricker, 72

Richard "Dick" T. Bricker, 72, of Bluffton, passed away Sunday evening, March 26, 2023, at Bluffton Regional Medical Center.



Dick was born in Bluffton on Nov. 28, 1950, to Robert and Dorothy (Donald) Bricker. He married Linda Jones in Bluffton on April 17, 1999; she survives.

A 1970 graduate of Bluffton High School, he worked for the Military Department of Indiana where he retired after 23 years of service. After retirement, Dick became a bus driver for the Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan School District, where he was currently employed.

Dick was a long-time member of Calvary Lutheran Church in Bluffton and a current member of the board of directors for Bi-County Services. He also enjoyed working and volunteering at Bluffton High School sporting events for over the past 20 years. He had been involved with the Dream Team in Bluffton since its inception in 2001, and was also instrumental in developing the Wicker Park T-ball diamond, along with the concession stand, where he still oversaw the operations every year.

In addition to his wife, Dick is survived by a son, Kyle (Erin) Bricker of New Haven; five sisters, Carol (Larry) Studabaker, Judy Grimm, Linda Shane, Jean (Ron) Bowman and Betty (John) Kizer, all of Bluffton; a brother, Philip "Pete" Bricker of Bluffton; five grandchildren, Blake, Lane, Luke, Alyssa and Finn; along with several nieces and nephews, and his faithful companion, a pitbull mix, Daisy.

Aside from his parents, Dick was preceded in death by two sons, Allen Bricker and stillborn infant Christopher Alan Bricker; two brothers, Robert "Don" Bricker and Jeff Bricker; and a sister, Geraldine Niblick.

Visitation will be held from 2-7 p.m. on Thursday, Mar. 30, 2023, at Goodwin - Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton. Services will be held at 10 a.m. on Friday, Mar. 31, 2023, at the funeral home, with one hour of visitation prior to the service. Barry Crosbie will officiate. A private family burial at Fairview Cemetery in Bluffton will take place at a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Dream Team, in support of the concession stand.

Online condolences may be made at www.goodwincaleharnish.com.

Mary Hendricks, 77

Mary Hendricks, 77, of Bradington, Fla., and formerly of Ossian, passed away Sunday evening, March 26, 2023, at her residence.

Funeral arrangements are pending at this time with Goodwin - Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton.

Obituary Policy

The News-Banner and Ossian Journal publishes "basic" obituaries free of charge for "local" deaths. "Basic" obituaries will include the deceased's name, age, community of record, date and place of death, basic genealogical information, the date, time and location of calling hours and services and the name of the funeral home handling arrangements.

If additional information and/or a photo is desired to be included, or if the deceased does not meet the definitions of a "local" person, there is a charge.

Area funeral homes will provide details on the policy and will coordinate obituary publication.

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

City:
 Friday, 4:04 p.m., Connecting Center. Bike theft.
 Friday, 4:28 p.m., Bluffton Police Department. Crystal-like substance found and placed in evidence.
 Friday, 6:50 p.m., 302 Arrowhead Trail. Deceased person found. Believed to be a 63 year old male.
 Friday, 7:10 p.m., 910 West Washington Street. Standby during a property retrieval. Woman wanted to retrieve personal items and man claimed she was stealing from him.
 Friday, 10:22 p.m., Landmark Recovery. Man believed to be overdosing. Two doses of Narcan administered.
 Saturday, 7:24 a.m., Kroger. Multiple vehicle accident in parking lot. Report to follow.
 Saturday, 7:39 a.m., Short Stop. Lights on in building and doors are locked.
 Saturday, 2:28 p.m., South Bond Street and West Wiley Avenue. Branch in the roadway. Citizen stopped and assisted in removal.
 Saturday, 2:44 p.m., 714 Sycamore Lane. Garage door stuck open during power outage. Officer manually shut door and advised how to operate it when the power returns.
 Saturday, 2:53 p.m., 1247 Manor Drive. Trampoline in the roadway. Assisted in moving off the roadway.
 Saturday, 3:06 p.m., South Main Street and East Wiley Avenue. Tree blocking all lanes of traffic. Tree and debris moved.
 Saturday, 4:56 p.m., North Main Street and East Market Street. Road construction sign in northbound lane. Sign removed.
 Saturday, 7 p.m., Inteva Products. Vehicle was hit while calling person was at work.
 Saturday, 8:23 p.m., Linger Inn. Verbal altercation between a man and a woman.
 Saturday, 9:29 p.m., 1317

Lancaster Street. Wire hanging across driveway.
 Sunday, 10:44 a.m., Walmart. Two unsupervised juveniles knocking around merchandise and refusing to leave. Juveniles fled when officers arrived.
 Sunday, 2:07 p.m., Willobrook Trail and Lindenwood Drive. Tires in the roadway.
 Sunday, 2:52 p.m., Reed's Do It Best Hardware. Citation issued for 61 in a 40 mph zone.
 Sunday, 4:56 p.m., West Wabash Street and North Oak Street. Caller reported a juvenile threw belongings over the trestle and left on bike.
 Sunday, 8:46 p.m., Kroger. Lost wallet.
 Monday, 12:10 p.m., Redimed. Subject refusing to leave this location.

County:
 Friday, 12:50 a.m., Ind. 1 and East 400N. Part of a bumper found in the roadway.
 Friday, 9:20 a.m., 470W 300S, rural Bluffton. Vehicle ran off the road and hit a fence. Driver suffered minor arm injury but was signed off of the scene. The property owner gave permission to leave the vehicle. The area was tagged as a crime scene.
 Friday, 4:43 p.m., North 300W and West Ind. 124. The bumper of a semi-truck fell off and the truck ran over it. Parts of the bumper were removed from the roadway.
 Friday, 4:12 p.m., residence on East Center Drive, Bluffton. Responded to a call of a man at this location feeling unsafe after an alleged physical altercation with two others. Deputies spoke with the individuals at the residence and it appeared the complainant was not completely coherent. Deputies later transferred the individual to Parkview Behavioral Health for voluntary evaluation.
 Friday, 5:48 p.m., 11687 North Marzane Road.

Flipped vehicle blocking traffic. Indiana State Police handled the accident. Vehicle towed by Freeman's.
 Friday, 9:34 p.m., Capri Apartments, Bluffton. Report of loud music coming from an unknown apartment.
 Saturday, 5:34 a.m., Southeast Ind. 116 and East 200N. Vehicle ran off the road and into a field after windshield wiper's weren't working in the rain. AAA Insurance pulled the vehicle out.
 Saturday, 2:47 p.m., North 100E and East 300N. Large black dog running in the roadway. Contacted owner indicated on the dog's collar, who stated the dog had gotten away from their dog sitter. Dog was returned to the property.
 Saturday, 9:11 p.m., South 100E and East Ind. 218. Vehicle out of gas with a dead battery on the side of the road.
 Saturday, 10:37 p.m., South 900W and West 1100S. Vehicle slid off the road while trying to avoid a deer.
 Sunday, 1:29 a.m., West 300S and South 200W, Liberty Center. Nathaniel R. McCullough, 29, Bluffton was driving a 2016 Ford F-150 westbound on 300S when a deer entered from the north side of the roadway and McCullough was unable to avoid collision. Damage exceeded \$5,000.
 Sunday, 9:32 a.m., residence on 300W, Keystone. Report of a neighbor's dog continually coming onto the caller's property and going after their chickens. Deputies made contact with the owner, who said it would not happen again.
 Sunday, 10:02 a.m., Airplane Express and Service Station, Bluffton. Deputies executed a warrant out of Dekalb County for a Level 6 felony for forgery of checks. In the driver's vehicle, deputies located the smell of marijuana. Marijuana shake

and stems were collected as evidence.
 Sunday, 3:59 p.m., 900S near 550E, Nottingham Township. Benjamin J. Shaffer, 24, Petroleum, was driving a 2013 Ford Escape when a dog entered the roadway and was unable to avoid collision. The dog was deceased on the scene. Damage exceeded \$2,500.
ACCIDENTS
County:
 Saturday, 11:35 a.m., Ind. 116, Uniondale. Dale McCune, 53, Markle, was driving a 2013 Chevrolet Silverado pick-up truck west on Ind. 116 with a load of hay and hit his brakes after another vehicle passed quickly in front of him. This caused a bale of hay to fall out of the bed of the truck, hitting a 2008 Dodge Charger driven by Aaron Kinsey, 21, Markle. Kinsey's vehicle was towed from the scene by Freeman's. Damage exceeded \$1,000.

FIRES
 Friday, 5:48 p.m., 11687 North Marzane Road, Markle. Vehicle on its side in the roadway. One person pinned with a leg injury. Ossian and Markle fire departments responded. Indiana State Police will handle accident report.
 Sunday, 3:07 p.m., residence on Pine Grove Court, Bluffton. Possible overdose.

ARRESTS
 Carrie Deanne Dowell, 49, Ossian; disorderly conduct, a Class B misdemeanor.
 Jeffrey Joseph Basgall, 51, Ossian; disorderly conduct, a Class B misdemeanor.
 Michael Ashley French, 42, Bluffton; obstruction of traffic, a Class A misdemeanor, possession of marijuana, a Class B misdemeanor, operating a vehicle with PTR of .15 or higher, and operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangerment, a Class A misdemeanor. No bond set.



AC home school actors

On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings (March 30, 31, and April 1) the students from the AC Home School Group, ages 5th grade through high school, will present "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" at the Life Community Church Auditorium in Bluffton. The curtain will go up at 7 p.m. for all three free performances (donations accepted). Directing the rehearsal were Brittany Isch, JaNon Isch, and Rachelle Tonner. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

Bill banning gender-affirming care sent to Governor Holcomb

By **ARLEIGH RODGERS**
 Associated Press

/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)

— Indiana House Republicans on Monday approved a bill that would ban all gender-affirming care for minors in the state, sending the measure to Indiana's Republican governor amid a wave of anti-LGBTQ legislation across the U.S.

The House advanced the ban 65-30 after contentious hearings that primarily featured testimony from vocal opponents. The bill would prohibit trans youth under 18 from accessing hormone therapies, puberty blockers and surgeries in the state.

"This is good public policy to protect our children from irreversible, harmful, life-altering procedures," said bill sponsor Indiana Rep. Joanna King of Middlebury.

In many U.S. states, lawmakers are approving or considering laws that target transgender health care and limit competitions open to trans athletes.

At least nine states have enacted laws restricting or banning some forms of gender-affirming health-

care for minors: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Mississippi, Tennessee, Utah and South Dakota. A proposed ban is pending before West Virginia's governor, while federal judges have blocked enforcement of laws in Alabama and Arkansas.

Opponents of the Indiana bill said the most commonly used treatments banned in the legislation — hormone therapies and puberty blockers — are often life-saving for trans kids.

"When I started hormone therapy, it made me feel so much better about myself," said Jessica Wayner, 16, at a House public health committee hearing earlier this month.

Supporters of the bill voiced concerns about those treatments.

Xandra Roberts testified at the public health committee hearing that she detransitioned after living for 10 years as a man. Roberts says she feels lingering effects of testosterone.

"Too many kids are losing body parts and causing irreversible harm to their bodies and minds," said Roberts, who was 26 when

she began testosterone.

Hospital representatives testified that the treatments available to minors are safe and reversible, while surgical procedures that are harder to undo aren't currently offered to minors anyway.

Now the bill goes to Gov. Eric Holcomb, who hasn't said if he'll sign or veto it.

When asked about the bill on March 17, Holcomb said, "In general, parents not only have a right to their children's health and well-being, they, in fact, have the responsibility of it."

Last year, Holcomb vetoed a bill banning transgender students from competing in girls school sports that has since become law after Republican legislators voted to override his action.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana sued to overturn the law but dropped the case when the lead plaintiff, a 10-year-old transgender girl, transferred to a charter school.

On Monday, the ACLU of Indiana urged Holcomb to veto the healthcare legislation and promised legal action if it becomes law.

"Politicians harm us all when they ignore medical judgment and block access to standard care in favor of

discriminatory fearmongering," said ACLU spokesperson Katie Blair.

Republican Reps. Ed

Clere of New Albany and Jerry Torr of Carmel joined all 28 Democrats present in voting against the bill.

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Welcoming spring with a grilled pizza pie

Last week marked the official change from winter to spring, and I for one am excited to bid farewell to another Indiana winter.

This year's winter was more on the mild side than others we have experienced in the last decade, but the older I get the more I grow to dislike snow-covered driveways, icy roads, bone-chilling wind and morning and evening drives to and from work in the dark.

This season of the year also means that it will soon be time to leave the treadmills, stationary bikes and elliptical machines at the gym in the rearview mirror as it becomes warm enough to run, bike and go for longer walks outdoors — a welcome change of pace after having spent the last five months exercising indoors.

Sunday's beautiful preview of the temperatures to come was enough to get anyone excited, as the trails were as busy as I have seen them in 2023.

It also turned out to be the ideal day to refill our propane tank and grill dinner outdoors. One of our go-to grilling meals this past year, however, is not what you might expect.

While Jen and I love to grill chicken, salmon, hamburgers, vegetables and more, we have become quite fond of putting something else on the steel grates because of a gift we received for our wedding.

One of our friends gifted us a cast iron pizza pan that you use to grill a pizza instead of cooking it in the oven.

The cast-iron pan sat in our closet for almost two years. Honestly, I think we both forgot that we had received it. We moved from one house to another about a year after we married, and the cast iron pan ended up in a closet with other items that needed to be sorted at some point.

When we finally rediscovered the wedding gift last summer, we decided to give it a try by grilling our first pizza. It was love at first sight — or should I say love at first taste.

We tried making our own pizza dough but soon discovered that it's much easier to buy a pre-made dough from the grocery store. It takes just a few minutes to add sauce and toppings while the grill heats up.

From there, it goes on the grill for about 10 minutes.

It's the easiest meal we grill, as it requires no flipping or using thermometers. And not only does it taste better than pizzas we used to make in the oven, but it also has less grease.

It has been a win-win for us, especially on those nights when we need to prepare a quick meal or when we both get home late for work.

Now that spring has finally sprung and warmer weather is right around the corner, it's time also to look forward to preparing more meals outdoors.

Did I mention that I'm just a bit excited about spring's arrival?

jdpeeper2@hotmail.com



Justin Peeper



America seems to go crazy every 50 years or so

Amid news that Donald Trump is about to be indicted by a hyperpartisan prosecutor and of his hysterical responses, and prompted by vagrant reading about the War of 1812 and Woodrow Wilson's violations of civil liberties in World War I, a thought occurred to me. America seems to go crazy every 50 years or so.

Start with the War of 1812, about 50 years after colonies' Stamp Act protests. There's a touch of absurdity here. Because of the slowness of trans-Atlantic communication, Congress declared war because of British restrictions on neutral shipping six days after the British repealed them. Americans won their major land victory in New Orleans, 15 days after the peace treaty had already been signed in Ghent.

The Americans' strategy was based on a delusion — that Canadians would welcome American conquest — and American tactics were riddled with blunders. Detroit was surrendered without a shot, and Washington was left undefended, allowing the British to burn the White House. The treaty left in place the status quo, and the positive response was psychological, verging on delusional. In historian Gordon Wood's words, this inconclusive war "did finally establish for Americans that independence and nationhood of the United States that so many had doubted."

Almost exactly 50 years later, the U.S. plunged into civil war, which outgoing President James Buchanan might have prevented by sending troops to secessionist South Carolina, as his mentor Andrew Jackson had done almost 30 years earlier. But the differences were fundamental. Democrats supported the "liberty" of slaveholders to retain their "property" anywhere in a nation an increasing number of whose citizens regarded slavery as intolerable. Republicans were determined to deploy the federal government to put slavery, in Abraham Lincoln's words, "on the path to extinction."

Winfield Scott, a young officer in 1812, provided Lincoln with the Anaconda strategy, squeezing the South by blockade until Grant and Sherman could defeat the Confederate armies. The result wasn't crazy — slavery was abolished in an ultimately intact Union. But it all came at a crazy cost, with some 600,000 lives in a nation of 38 million.

Fast forward 50 years to the only American president who spent his boyhood in the Confederacy, watching Sherman march into South Carolina, Woodrow Wilson. After Congress, with 56 dissenters, voted to enter World War I, Wilson superintended the overbroad 1917 Espionage Act. As Adam Hochschild vividly recounts in "American Midnight", the Wilson administration imprisoned those who spoke against the war or the draft, including Socialist presidential candidate Eugene Debs. Wilson deported aliens supposedly involved in radical activities under the supervision of the 20-something J. Edgar Hoover. He censored the press, stamping out what liberals today call "misinformation," and cooperated with local efforts to suppress German cultural organizations.

As Hochschild makes clear, it wasn't only the Wilson administration that went crazy. Radical anarchists set off deadly bombs on Wall Street, at Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's house and across the street

from Assistant Navy Secretary Franklin Roosevelt.

The much-derided "Red Scare" was a response to fears raised by the takeover of the larger and more populous Russia by a handful of Bolsheviks, whose murderous and squalid regime ended up lasting 70 years. Americans a century ago didn't know that this wasn't going to happen here.

Sometimes people can learn from mistakes. In World War II, FDR, who witnessed Wilson's excesses up close, didn't seize the railroads or shipyards. With the important exception of the Japanese American internments, he also didn't violate civil liberties as Wilson had.

Unfortunately, sometimes people don't learn. Fifty years ago, America saw a tripling, roughly, of violent crime and welfare dependency in a decade, even as prison populations were reduced and police delegitimized. A rash of hundreds of violent bombings was followed by serious government misconduct.

Ironically, after the 1964-68 civil rights acts changed America for the better, there were cries that racist treatment of blacks was as bad as ever. America was going crazy again, on schedule.

And so it has in the last few years. After the election and reelection of the first black president, we heard Black Lives Matter, like the Black Panthers 50 years before, proclaim that America was even more racist than it ever had been. Since the "mostly peaceful" riots of summer 2020, there have been sharp increases in violent crime and moves to defund and delegitimize police departments, which are, in fact, far less racist than in the 1960s.

America went crazy too over COVID, in my view, by treating a virus fatal to just a small segment of the population as if, like Ebola, it had an infection fatality rate of around 50 percent. Authorities imposed lockdowns and mandates while ignoring economic costs and lasting collateral damage, like adults missing cancer screenings and children missing first and second grade.

Like Woodrow Wilson's propagandist George Creel, government agencies suppressed as "misinformation" speech and arguments, including many that turned out to be accurate.

Another symptom of America going crazy is presidential dysfunction. Fifty years ago, the highly intelligent and experienced Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon were ousted at ages 60 and 61 because of Vietnam and Watergate. Now, despite repeated stumbles, the inexperienced and distractible Donald Trump and the (according to bipartisan Defense Secretary Robert Gates) nearly-always-wrong Joe Biden are seeking second terms they would complete at ages 82 and 86, respectively.

Having witnessed and written for publication during two 50-years-apart episodes of craziness, I seek consolation from Adam Smith's reflection, after Britain lost the 13 colonies, that "there is a great deal of ruin in a nation." But I hope America will do a better job, 50 years hence, of learning from this episode's mistakes.

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Michael Barone

Who's Who

A continuing series on how to contact government officials

BLUFFTON CITY ELECTED OFFICIALS

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Tamara Runyon (R), Clerk-Treasurer, City Hall, 128 E. Market St., Bluffton, 824-0612. Email: tami@blufftonindiana.gov

Chandler Gerber (R), 1st District Common Council. Home address: 411 Stillwater, 273-8792. Email: chandler.gerber@blufftonindiana.gov

Josh Hunt (R), 2nd District Common Council. Home address: 734 N. Main St., 417-1024. Email: josh.hunt@blufftonindiana.gov

Janella Stroncsek (R), 3rd District Common Council. Home address: 802 S. Main St., 273-1539. Email: janella.stroncsek@blufftonindiana.gov

Scott Mentzer (R), 4th District Common Council and Common Council President. Home address: 628 E. South St., 615-1566. Email: scott.mentzer@blufftonindiana.gov

Rick Elwell (R), Common Council at-large, 704 W. Dustman Road, 827-8216. Email: rick.elwell@blufftonindiana.gov

Robert Bate (R), City Court Judge, Police-Fire Building, 200 E. Market St., 824-3392. Email: court@blufftonindiana.gov

Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, March 28, the 87th day of 2023. There are 278 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On March 28, 1979, America's worst commercial nuclear accident occurred with a partial meltdown inside the Unit 2 reactor at the Three Mile Island plant near Middletown, Pennsylvania.

On this date: In 1797, Nathaniel Briggs of New Hampshire received a patent for a washing machine.

In 1854, during the Crimean War, Britain and

France declared war on Russia.

In 1898, the U.S. Supreme Court, in United States v. Wong Kim Ark, ruled 6-2 that Wong, who was born in the United States to Chinese immigrants, was an American citizen.

In 1935, the notorious Nazi propaganda film "Triumph des Willens" (Triumph of the Will), directed by Leni Riefenstahl, premiered in Berlin with Adolf Hitler present.

In 1939, the Spanish Civil War neared its end as Madrid fell to the forces of Francisco Franco.

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Let's do more to help elder caregivers

Like most Americans, Hoosiers aren't doing a good job of planning for their long-term care needs. And like many states, Indiana needs to do more to assist the family members who are bridging the care-giving gap.

An American Association of Retired Persons report found 790,000 Hoosiers have provided more than 740 million hours of elder care for family members at an estimated value of \$10.8 billion.

"The state of Indiana should be very thankful for these unpaid family caregivers because without them they would have quite an issue to solve in their state budget," Sarah Waddle, the AARP state director, told the Indiana Capital Chronicle.

The government can assist those caregivers, according to the AARP, by offering tax credits, ensuring

family and medical leave is paid and funding more community-based services.

It's well-documented that Indiana is facing an assisted living and nursing home crisis. Chronic worker shortages and funding issues in those facilities is making it harder for elders to find a quality place to spend their golden years. An aging population is expected to exacerbate the

dilemma. Couple that issue with a heavy reliance on families to provide care for their elders and it's easy to imagine how our older Hoosiers are being protected by a flimsy safety net.

Some Hoosiers simply can't afford supervised private care, and they are left dependent upon their family members. Those family members who provide the needed services should be commended, but such responsibilities exact physical, financial and mental tolls.

By ensuring caregivers will be paid within reason when they are forced to take time off to help a family member, our state can help. Lawmakers at the federal and state level should also explore tax credits for unpaid caregivers to offset their expenses.

Personal responsibility is also important. While we'd like to believe that we'll live forever, and that aging won't affect our daily lives, both are untrue. We must do a better job of planning for our care. While many family members are willing to sacrifice to care for their relatives, requiring their constant care can burden their lives. Most of us don't want that for our loved ones, and that's why it's crucial that we plan for the storm before it arrives.

Our elders deserve quality care and dignity in their later years. If families are to continue to lead in providing that care, we must better support them.

Jeffersonville News and Tribune

Hoosier Opinions

Suggestions on using a tax refund to fight inflation

By **KIMBERLY PALMER** of NerdWallet

If inflation has eaten away at your budget the way waves erode a beach, then your tax refund might just provide a much-needed protective barrier.

As of March, prices are up 6 percent over the past 12 months, according to the most recent consumer price index. At the same time, just over half of filers (55 percent) are expecting tax refunds for the 2022 tax year, with an average expected refund of \$2,205, according to the 2023 NerdWallet Tax Report. Financial experts say consumers can use that windfall — which is really just a delayed paycheck that you



Kimberly Palmer

already earned — to help offset the strain of those higher prices.

“Tax refunds are going to arrive at just the right time for many consumers this spring,” says Drew Wessell, a certified financial planner at Fiduciary Financial Advisors in Grand Rapids, Mich.

UNLOAD HIGH-INTEREST DEBT

With rising interest rates, variable-rate debt becomes more

expensive — including credit cards. That’s why many financial experts put paying off debt at the top of the priority list, even considering it a type of investment.

“Using your tax refund to pay off a credit card debt with a 20 percent interest rate gives you an instant, tax-free 20 percent return on that investment. It’s not a creative idea, but the math makes it the most impactful action that a consumer can take,” Wessell says.

SAVE IN A HIGH-YIELD ACCOUNT

Rising rates also mean rising yields on savings accounts, so you can save your refund and earn more on it. “If you already have a high-yield savings account, you can also look at CDs,” says Marguerita Cheng, a certified financial planner and the founder of Blue Ocean Global Wealth in Gaithersburg, Maryland. CDs, or certificates of deposit, offer higher yields in exchange for less liquidity.

Wessell advises saving enough to start or boost an emergency fund, which could help you in the event of a sudden unexpected expense or job loss. “Life is full of surprises, and having an emergency fund helps you avoid going into



another debt spiral,” he says.

FUND LONG-TERM GOALS

Because higher prices have cut into long-term savings goals like retirement and college, a refund can offer an opportunity to get back on track, Cheng says. “You don’t have to put a lot in, but it can be the seed money,” she adds, noting that her son is using his first refund as he begins his career to open a Roth IRA.

Similarly, you could take care of other delayed financial tasks, such as buying life insurance. “Revisit your family situation,” Cheng urges, especially if you have younger children.

UPGRADE YOUR HOME

In many real estate markets, rising home prices along with the higher interest rates make it harder to buy your dream home. Instead, use your refund to improve your current home, suggests Ryan Greiser, a certified financial planner and the founder of the financial firm Opulus in Doylestown, Penn. New flooring, energy-efficient appliances or improved windows can boost your home’s energy efficiency as well as increase its value.

“We love the idea of people loving the space they live in,”

Greiser says, especially when they’re priced out of buying a new home.

For your outdoor space, invest in a chicken coop and gardening supplies to harvest eggs and vegetables — all of which have become pricier at the grocery store — suggests Tim Melia, a certified financial planner who is the principal and financial planner at Embolden Financial Planning in Seattle. If you have neighbors with skills such as carpentry, you could barter with them for additional savings.

CREATE MORE INCOME

Remodeling a room in your home to create a rental unit could generate income that helps offset inflation for years, says Melia, who operates a couple of short-term lodging options through vacation rental website Airbnb. He says upfront investments could include better furniture and decor: “You want to be able to stand out.”

Similarly, investing in yourself by taking classes for a new skill or certification could increase your income. “It increases your potential to earn and can allow you to step into a more lucrative career or take the next step in your existing career,” Melia adds.

FIND SMALL WAYS TO TREAT YOURSELF

While air travel and other bigger splurges might be prohibitively expensive, your refund can give

you more affordable pleasures, even after taking care of other priorities, Cheng says. She indulges in listening to audiobooks (most recently “Spare” by Prince Harry). “I was getting anxiety watching the news at the gym, so instead, I listen to audiobooks,” she says.

ADJUST YOUR WITHHOLDINGS

Lastly, if you’re receiving a refund, it means you overpaid taxes in 2022. You might be better off adjusting your withholdings so you receive more in each paycheck instead. “If you’re getting more than \$3,000, then you probably want to revisit your withholdings because that could be \$200 to \$300 a month,” Cheng says.

And that could help offset those higher gas, restaurant or grocery bills all year long.

This column was provided to The Associated Press by the personal finance website NerdWallet. The content is for educational and informational purposes and does not constitute investment advice.

— — —
Kimberly Palmer is a personal finance expert at NerdWallet and the author of “Smart Mom, Rich Mom.” Email: kpalmer@nerdwallet.com. Twitter: @KimberlyPalmer.

RELATED LINK
NerdWallet: 2023 Tax Report <https://bit.ly/nerdwallet-2023-tax-report>

Kline will speak to Ossian Rotary Club Thursday morning



Chad Kline

Chad Kline, Wells County’s economic development director, will be the speaker for Thursday’s meeting of the Ossian Rotary Club. The meeting begins at 7:30 a.m. and will be held at the First Baptist Church of Ossian, 1001 Dehner Drive.

Kline has held his current position since 2015.

Wells County Economic Development strives to improve Wells County

through business retention efforts, workforce training opportunities, and collaborative involvement in quality of place initiatives. The organization blends strategic thinking and problem solving to develop new and innovative ideas to facilitate economic growth in northeast Indiana.

Kline and his wife currently host two foreign exchange students at Norwell High School. Kline is also a

member of the Northern Wells Community Schools Board of Trustees.

A time for questions and about Wells County Economic Development will follow the presentation.

Next week’s speaker for the Ossian Rotary Club will be Layne Fisher of Bluffton Regional Medical Center, speaking on the topic of dementia.

Ossian Rotary is a group of people with a desire to meet new people, net-

work, get involved and make a difference in Ossian and the surrounding community.

Each week the club has a different speaker, usually business experts, political and civic leaders, and entrepreneurs, who help us stay informed on topics that are relevant to our community. Contact Jeff Keplar, Ossian Rotary president, at jeffkeplar@gmail.com with questions.

Bunny to visit at Easter brunch

The Easter Bunny will be a visitor at Bluffton’s Club 250 Event Center as Timber Ridge Catering hosts a Brunch on Sunday, April 9, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

There will be a photo op with the Easter bunny and a cookie decorating station. In addition Easter movies will be shown on a big screen.

Cost is \$22.95 for adults, \$10.95 for children (5-10) and free for those 4 and younger. For reservations call 260-452-6066.

Pop-up event at promenade park March 25

A spring celebration on Saturday, March 25, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Fort Wayne’s Promenade Park will celebrate the arrival of spring.

Among the events will be bird watching, bird seed crafts, a paper bag kite craft and a scavenger hunt. From noon to 1 p.m. the Soarin’ Hawk Birds of Prey will be on hand with birds.

For more information about the event go to riverfrontfw.org/events.

More coffee with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic

Fort Wayne’s Crescendo Coffee & More, by the Clyde Theater, is hosting two opportunities to have Coffee with the Philharmonic at 10 a.m. Wednesday, March 29, and Friday, March 31.

The Meadowlark Quartet will play March 29 and a violin duo will play March 31. Coffee and breakfast items will be available for purchase, no tickets needed.

All About Health

Make sure your family is heart healthy; don’t ignore COVID-19

Heart troubles seem to run in my family -- so I worry about having a heart attack while I exercise and about my 35-year-old son’s risks and how to help protect him. Any suggestions? -- Drew R., Santa Barbara, CA

It’s true that the risk for cardiovascular disease can be genetically passed down in some families -- chronic high cholesterol or cardiomyopathy (there are two kinds, one that causes the heart wall to thicken, the other causes it to become thin and weak), for example. If those conditions appeared in your parents, their close relatives or your siblings, you should be screened and so should your son -- and regular cardio-checkups are wise. Fortunately, there are steps to take, such as improved lifestyle habits and medications and/or surgical procedures, that can reduce -- even eliminate -- the risks associated with genetic predispositions to these conditions. It simply requires that you have frequent interaction with -- and pay attention to the advice of -- an aggressive, preventive internist or cardiologist.

However, families may see heart disease in multiple generations because of a family history of habits and conditions such as sedentary behavior, overweight/obesity, smoking, excessive drinking, and not managing chronic stress responses linked to life circumstances or mental health challenges.

A 2019 study found that the proportion of heart attack in folks younger than 40 increased by 2% annually from 2000 to 2016. That’s because obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure are affecting increasingly younger adults -- and those folks aren’t tuned into how easy it is to manage such conditions into non-problems.

You and your son need to work with your docs to determine what your risk factors for heart disease are -- and then address them.

As for your worry about the risk of a sudden heart attack when you exercise, a recent study that looked at records of 4,078 sudden cardiac arrest cases in people 65 and older found that just 1.9% happened during or following an activity, such as bicycling, a gym workout, running, or playing golf or tennis.

With mask and vaccination mandates being lifted and the declaration of a COVID-19 emergency scheduled to end in May, do I need to worry about COVID-19 any more or get the more recent bivalent COVID-19 booster? -- Julie P., Iowa City, Iowa

There are still over 40,000 COVID-19 cases reported every week in the U.S. So, whether you’re fully vaccinated or not, wearing an N95 mask in crowds and enclosed spaces with other folks still makes sense, especially if you have underlying health

conditions such as autoimmune disease, cancer, heart issues or diabetes and obesity.

It’s less clear cut when it comes to getting another booster shot. If you are under 50, and without comorbidities like obesity, Type 2 diabetes or cancer, then you’re probably better off without the third bivalent mRNA booster. For folks over 50, the benefits of that booster after the second monovalent booster and of getting any additional booster within one year of the last one are now being debated in academic circles. In addition, risk-benefit data about additional boosters after two of the original ones and of the newer mRNA booster is now mixed (even if you are at increased risk because of age or other health issues). So, do make sure you have the original vaccine -- and (if possible) the two original boosters. Then, talk with your primary care provider. Non-mRNA vaccine boosters may be safer, so look for those recommendations in the future (we will keep you updated in these columns).

I also urge you to adopt lifestyle choices that help protect you from infection and (if infected) prolonged symptoms. A Harvard study found that if you can stick with five to six healthy lifestyle factors -- a healthy weight, never smoking, a high-quality diet, moderate alcohol intake, regular exercise and adequate sleep -- you slash the risk of long COVID-19 by almost half compared to other women with no healthy lifestyle factors.

PRACTICING EXCELLENCE. SETTING THE STANDARD.

Dr. Amy Lai specializes in pediatric and adult diseases of the ear, nose and throat including: sinus and allergy disorders, ear and throat infections, and facial plastic surgery.

Dr. Elizabeth Davis has joined the ENT team and will be providing hearing care services in Wells County.

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By Michael Roizen, M.D. and Mehmet Oz, M.D.

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Boys 5th-8th grade basketball league wraps up 2022-23 season

by Ryan Walker

The Boys 5th-8th grade basketball league wrapped up two weeks ago at the Bluffton City Gym for another great season.

Started by former Bluffton police officer Dave Terhune, the league has been running for over 40 years now. In 1995, the Bluffton Parks and Rec hired Barry Crosbie, and has ever since owned and organized the league.

This year, six teams have been competing in regular season games since Dec. 10. Each team played 11 games which helped seed them into the end-of-the-year tournament, which hosted its championship game on March 14.

In the regular season standings, the

Clean Fuels/Optimist Club had the best record at 9-2. Pretzels Inc. came in second with a 7-4 record, followed by the Parlor City Trophy's 6-5, Moose 242/Farm Bureau Insurance 5-6, EP Graphics/Peytons Northern 4-7, and National Oil 2-9.

The tournament champion was the Clean Fuels/Optimist Club, who defeated Pretzels, Inc., by a score of 47-32.

The leading scorer in the title game was Axton Beste, who put up 21 points. Max White scored 18 for the team, and the duo of Chanley Shaw and Maddox White added four points a piece.

For Pretzels, Inc., Jared Moser led

the way with 19 points. Cooper Jenkins scored nine, and Dawson Lee and Palmer Krug had two each.

The league also named award-winners for the season at the end. The honorees are as follows:

- League Scoring Champions Award: Jared Moser and Max White with 182 points.
- Most Improved Player Award: Koby Hartman.
- Tourney Most Valuable Player Awards: Axton Beste and Max White.
- Most Valuable Player Runner-Up Award: Jared Moser.
- Jason Werling Mental Attitude: Cade Thornton and Palmer Krug.

sports@news-banner.com



Members of the Clean Fuels/Optimist Club Boys 5th-8th grade basketball league tournament champions are from left to right: Front row, Cooper Bunn, Ryker Beste, Parker Barnes, Ben Captain, Case Wireman, Miles Kelly, Chanley Shaw, and Maddox White. Back Row, Sponsor Steve Higgins, Coach Toby Shaw, AJ Bunn, Ryan Schlagenhau, Max White, Eli Kerner, Axton Beste, Coach Trent White, Sponsor Dan Gerdom, and Sponsor Elmer Pate. (Photos provided)



Members of the Pretzels, Inc. runner-up team are from left to right: Front row, Simeon Terry, Brant Moser, Cooper Bustos, Cody Waldman, Griff Bailey, Matthew Tierney, and Lance Moser. Back Row, Jared Moser, Keegan Green, Dawson Lee, Cooper Jenkins, Braylon Terry, Palmer Krug, and Coach Barry Crosbie



The two winners of the tournament MVP awards and their families are from left to right, Matt Beste, Jessica Beste, Axton Beste, Barry Crosbie, Max White, Stephanie White, and Trent White.

Hoerner, Cubs agree to 3 years, \$35 million

By JAY COHEN
AP Baseball Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Cubs have locked up another infielder, agreeing to a \$35 million, three-year contract with Nico Hoerner.

A person familiar with the negotiations confirmed the contract to The Associated Press on Monday night on condition of anonymity because the move had not been announced. The deal begins with the 2024 season.

Hoerner, who turns 26 in May, is moving back to second base this year

after he was the team's regular shortstop in 2022. The Cubs signed All-Star shortstop Dansby Swanson to a \$177 million, seven-year contract in December.

The new deal for Hoerner means the team could have its middle infield in place through the 2026 season.

Hoerner was selected by Chicago in the first round of the 2018 amateur draft out of Stanford University. He made his big league debut the following year, batting .282 with three homers and 17 RBIs in 20 games.

Hoerner is coming off a breakout

season, batting .281 with a career-best 10 homers, 55 RBIs and 20 steals in 135 games. He played in a total of 112 games over his first three years in the majors.

Chicago had struggled to re-sign its own players in recent years, trading Kris Bryant, Anthony Rizzo and Javier Báez at the 2021 deadline. All-Star outfielder Ian Happ, a first-round pick in the 2015 amateur draft, is eligible for free agency after the upcoming season.

The Cubs host the Milwaukee Brewers on opening day on Thursday.

Tigers, Raiders tab three players on the ACAC hoops awards

The Allen County Athletic Conference named its selections for the 2022-23 boys' basketball award winners from this season on March 9.

Bluffton's big man Tucker Jenkins received first-team all-conference, while freshman guard Kaden Grau earned honorable mention.

Southern Wells's junior Chandler Oswald earned second-team all-conference.

Adams Central had the most representatives on the list, with four, along with two on the first team Ethan Poling and Isaac Schultz. The Jets were also the conference champions with a 6-1 record.

The rest of the first team follows with Woodlan's Braden Smith and Trey Yoder, Heritage's Luke Saylor, and Jay County's Dusty Pearson.



Jared Moser won the Most Valuable Player Runner-Up Award playing for Pretzels, Inc. Members in the photo are Lane Gerber, Tara Moser, Jared Moser, and Barry Crosbie.

High School Calendar

TUESDAY, MARCH 28

No events scheduled.

TUESDAY, MARCH 28

No events scheduled.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29

No events scheduled.

THURSDAY, MARCH 30

No events scheduled.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31

No events scheduled.

SATURDAY, April 1

BASEBALL: Norwell at Jennings County, 11 a.m.; Norwell vs. Seeger Memorial at Jennings County, 2 p.m.

SOFTBALL: Southern Wells at Wes-Del, 10 a.m.

MONDAY, APRIL 3

No events scheduled.

TUESDAY, APRIL 4

BASEBALL: South Adams at Norwell, 5 p.m.; New Haven at Bluffton, 5 p.m.; Oak Hill at Southern Wells, 5 p.m.

SOFTBALL: Eastbrook at Bluffton, 5 p.m.; Southern Wells at Madison-Grant, 5 p.m.

TRACK & FIELD (CO-ED): Bluffton at Eastbrook, 5:30 p.m.

Tigers acquire INF Zach McKinstry in trade with Cubs

DETROIT (AP) — The Detroit Tigers acquired veteran infielder Zach McKinstry in a trade with the Chicago Cubs on Monday.

The Tigers sent minor league right-hander Carlos Guzman to the Cubs for McKinstry, a .208 hitter with 12 homers and 43 RBIs in parts of three big league seasons.

The 24-year-old Guzman went 9-6 with a 4.11 ERA in 27 games last year, finishing the season with two appearances for Double-A Erie.

McKinstry, who turns 28 on April 29, broke into the majors with the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2020. He was traded to the Cubs for reliever Chris Martin in July.

McKinstry batted .199 with five homers and 14 RBIs in 57 games with the Dodgers and Cubs last year.

Chicago also announced that it had optioned infielder Christopher Morel to Triple-A Iowa. Reliever Rowan Wick cleared waivers and was outrighted to Iowa.

The McKinstry trade and the move with Morel likely means infielder Miles Mastrobuoni will be on the team's opening-day roster. The 27-year-old Mastrobuoni made his big league debut last year, batting .188 (3 for 16) in eight games with Tampa Bay late in the season.

Guardians' McKenzie could miss 2 months with shoulder strain

By TOM WITHERS
AP Sports Writer

Cleveland Guardians starter Triston McKenzie could be sidelined for two months with a shoulder strain, an early blow to the defending AL Central champions.

The team said Monday night an MRI in Goodyear, Arizona, revealed a strain of his right teres major muscle (back of the shoulder). McKenzie will be shut down from throwing for two weeks and then re-evaluated. The Guardians estimated it will be eight weeks before he's back.

McKenzie was scheduled to start Cleveland's second game in Seattle on Saturday. Now, manager Terry Francona will be forced to juggle his rotation in the first week, hardly an ideal way to begin the season.

McKenzie was removed from an exhibition start Sunday against the Cincinnati Reds after one inning when he felt tightness in his right triceps. He later described it as "a weird sensation."

The 25-year-old McKenzie went 11-11 with a 2.96 ERA in 31 games last season, helping the Guardians pull away in their division. The right-hander struck out 190 in 191 1/3 innings. He's 18-21 with a 3.64 ERA in 60 starts over three seasons.

2023 MARCH MAYHEM

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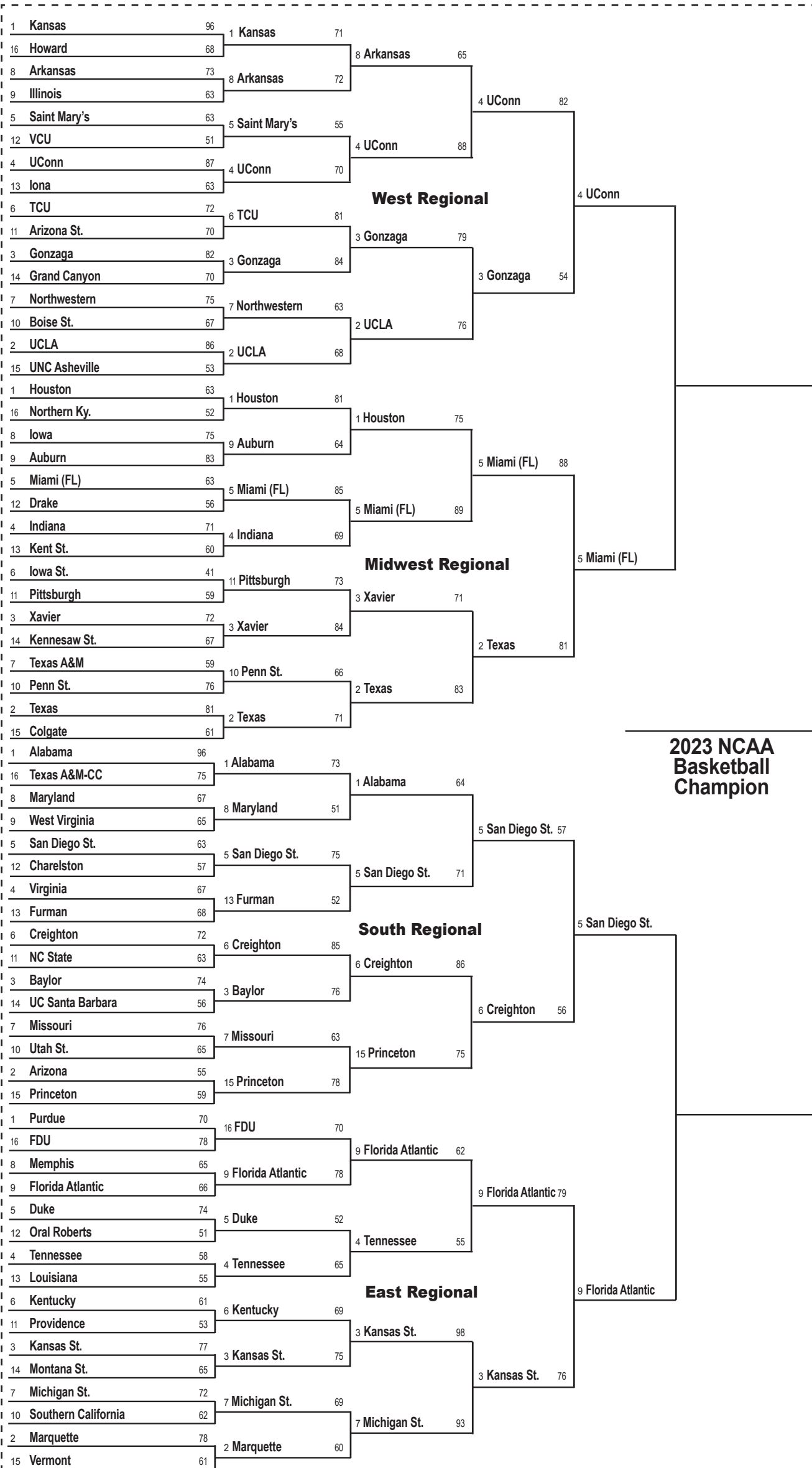
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Families honored with the Hoosier Homestead Award

56 families were honored, including two families from Wells County

INDIANAPOLIS — At the Indiana Statehouse, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch and Indiana State Department of Agriculture Director Don Lamb presented 56 farming families with a Hoosier Homestead Award in recognition of their commitment to Indiana agriculture.

"It is a true honor to be in the historic Statehouse today celebrating your incredible family farming history," said Lt. Gov. Crouch, Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development.

To be named a Hoosier Homestead, farms must be owned by the same family for more than 100 consecutive years, and consist of more than 20 acres. If less than 20 acres, the farm must produce more than \$1,000 of agricultural products per year. Indiana farms may qualify for three honors: Centennial Award for 100 years of ownership, Sesquicentennial Award for 150 years of ownership and the Bicentennial Award for 200 years of ownership.

Since the program's inception in 1976, over 6,000 families have received the Hoosier Homestead Award. Many past awardees can be identified by the sign proudly displayed in front of the family farm or field.

"Being a farmer myself I know how challenging it is to farm today in general, and to keep the same property in the family for decades on end, no less," said Lamb. "This award being presented today to your farming families is proof of your dedication to agriculture, to our State and to feeding our world, so I thank you."

- Families awarded are:
- Adams County**
 - Maller, 1889—Centennial.
 - Peter D. & Barbara Moser, 1838—Sesquicentennial.
 - Allen County**
 - Koennenman, 1899—Centennial.
 - Ronald J. & Linda K. Schlatter, 1835—Sesquicentennial.
 - Ronald J. & Neil C.

Schlatter, 1835—Sesquicentennial.

- Schuhler/Connor/Loesch, 1866—Sesquicentennial.

- Bartholomew County**
 - Tooley-Calvin, 1907—Centennial.

- Benton County**
 - Atkinson, 1852—Sesquicentennial.
 - Brandt, 1886—Centennial.

- Ferguson/Creek, 1871—Sesquicentennial.

- Cass County**
 - Berlet, 1918—Centennial.

- Clay County**
 - Dierdorf, 1889—Centennial.

- Keith & Paula Jones, 1870—Sesquicentennial.
- Wayne R. & Mary A. Jones, 1905—Centennial.
- Zurcher, 1868—Sesquicentennial.

- Dearborn County**
 - Decker, 1919—Centennial.
 - Hoog, 1919—Centennial.

- Delaware County**
 - Smith, 1892—Centennial.

- Fountain County**
 - Gray, 1869—Sesquicentennial.

- Franklin County**
 - Meyer, 1920—Centennial.

- Grant County**
 - Harner, 1850—Sesquicentennial.
 - Philip W. Corey, 1866—Sesquicentennial.

- Greene County**
 - Hays, 1855—Sesquicentennial.

- Hamilton County**
 - Sowers-Pickett, 1918—Centennial.

- Harrison County**
 - Crosier, 1917—Centennial.
 - Pate/Gettelfinger, 1906—Centennial.

- Howard County**
 - McQuiston-Howell, 1880—Centennial.

- Hunting County**
 - Thorne, 1910—Centennial.

- Johnson County**
 - Becker, 1919—Centennial.

- Kosciusko County**
 - McSherry Farms, Inc., 1838—Sesquicentennial.

- LaGrange County**
 - Strayer, 1916—Centennial.

- Madison County**
 - Williams, 1920—Centennial.

- Martin County**
 - Brown, 1922—Centennial.

- Newton County**
 - Constable, 1869—Sesquicentennial.
 - Frank Douglas Best & John Berry Best, 1860—Sesquicentennial.

- Noble County**
 - Hooley, 1920—Centennial.

- Orange County**
 - Dennis F. & Patricia F. Cleveland, 1842—Sesquicentennial.

- Owen County**
 - Watson, 1907—Centennial.

- Pike County**
 - Charles Wayne & Barbara J. Satkamp, 1922—Centennial.

- Putnam County**
 - Carter, 1862—Sesquicentennial.
 - Risk, 1870—Sesquicentennial.

- Randolph County**
 - Bowen, Taylor, Cowen, 1882—Centennial.

- Ripley County**
 - Bogges/Bauman, 1922—Centennial.

- Rush County**
 - Harcourt, 1873—Sesquicentennial.

- Shelby County**
 - Marvin Covalt, 1922—Centennial.

- Tippecanoe County**
 - Meisenhelder-Jones, 1859—Sesquicentennial.

- Tipton County**
 - Phenias A. Salsberry, 1896—Centennial.

- Wabash County**
 - Albright, 1847—Sesquicentennial.

- Warren County**
 - Adams, 1896—Centennial.
 - Akers, 1868—Sesquicentennial.
 - Fleming, 1918—Centennial.
 - Warrick County
 - Titzer, 1913—Centennial.
 - Wayne County
 - Druley-Pierce, 1866—Sesquicentennial.
 - Wells County
 - DeVoe, 1841—Sesquicentennial.
 - Fred & Emma (Meyer) Nuerge, 1913—Centennial.
 - Whitley County
 - Milton Rupley, 1923—Centennial.



At top, Members of the DeVoe family stand with Lieutenant Governor Suzanne Crouch (far left) and ISDA Director Don Lamb (far right). The DeVoe family was given the sesquicentennial honor for the year 1841. At bottom, members of the Nuerge family are honored for their centennial homestead from 1913. Both families reside in Wells County. (Photos provided)

Christmas trees and Indiana's ag economy

By C.J. MILLER
Indiana Agriculture News

Christmas trees being grown at Millbrook Tree Farm near Yorktown in Delaware County. Photo courtesy of Millbrook Tree Farm.

As part of National Ag Week, Hoosier Ag Today is highlighting several different ag industries—including one that you may not be thinking about this time of year.

"The Christmas tree season for the general public goes from November to December, but for us farmers, it's 12 months," says Brent Reed with the Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association. He and his wife Cara also own Millbrook Tree Farm in Yorktown not far from Muncie.

Reed says Christmas tree production involves a lot of work from January to October.

"Currently, I'm picking up seedlings this month to plant for the next eight-to-ten years of the future," according to Reed. "I've already picked up my first batch of seedlings and I'm going to pick up my next batch of seedlings this Friday. We will plant a minimum of one tree for every tree that was cut down on

our farm. We try to make it one-to-two trees that are cut down, so you're trying to hedge your bets on the mortality that you're going to see from the summer before."

Not only is it a year-round process to grow Christmas trees—it's also nearly a decade-long process.

"The pine trees—which would be like a Scotch pine or a White pine that people would get for Christmas tree—on average, is about seven years to harvest. That's talking about a seven-and-a-half to an eight-foot tree," according to Reed. "A fir tree, which would be like a Fraser fir—even though

most of the state can't grow them—those trees are the seven-to-eight foot harvestable trees and they're running around eight to ten years of growth."

How many Christmas trees can be grown on just one acre of land?

"The traditional spacing on one acre—you're going to get about 1,100 Christmas trees, and that gives the customer a little bit of a breathing room when they come. Plus, it gives the tree a nice full growth ring.

So, what advice does Reed have for those who may be interested in starting their own Christmas tree farm?

"Talk to your local grower when you go out for the season to buy a tree," says Reed. "Every one of the growers in the Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association are more than happy to talk to people about starting a tree farm."

Indiana ranks 11th in the U.S. for Christmas tree production—with nearly 200,000 harvestable trees for the Christmas season.

Read more about the Indiana Christmas Tree Growers Association at IndianaChristmasTrees.com.

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DNA Site sparks fresh family drama

Dear Annie: I have a family estrangement issue. It all started when a 44-year-old woman contacted my older brother on a DNA site. I immediately wrote her and acknowledged paternity and expressed a strong desire to establish a long-term relationship. She seems to be a very nice person.

She told me she wasn't ready yet to meet me; over the next 2 1/2 years, we exchanged many emails, and we were talking seriously about meeting. She is married and has three children. Very recently, my younger brother's adult daughter noticed the seeming connection on the internet. My brother told her the full story (all my siblings were aware of my efforts).

I told my brother that I would prefer to see her myself and fully involve everyone after that meeting. The niece disregarded my request and contacted my daughter anyway and went off to have lunch with her. The niece, on her own, wrote me later and said she was going to call all first cousins "because they have a right to know."

She called up all five of the cousins anyway. All of them questioned her involvement. After that, the niece is unbelievably upset at me, as is my own brother for the way I wrote to her. He isn't talking to me until I give a full apology directly to his daughter.

My position is simple: This is my story to tell and no one else's at this time, but eventually, I will explain what happened. I have two adult daughters to consider as well as to

advise. My new daughter has agreed to have dinner with me — in two weeks. Have I handled this wrong? Is this my story to tell without outside parties deciding what I am supposed to do? Was I wrong in asking the niece to essentially mind her own business? Did the niece handle her end fairly and responsibly? — Confused

Dear Confused: You handled this difficult situation the way that you wanted to handle it, and your niece ignored your request and got involved on her own. The good news is that your new daughter will meet with you in two weeks. I understand your irritation with your niece, but I also understand your brother's defense of his daughter.

You'll be less confused after meeting your newly discovered daughter, and at that point, I would suggest telling your brother and his daughter the whole story. I agree it is none of their business, if you don't mind being estranged from them. But I think you don't want that, and an open conversation — without criticism or recriminations — will help heal family divisions.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit http://www.creatorspublishing.com for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

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My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



Every preacher should pray that God will give him a tender heart

was especially antagonistic. After the lecture, she came to him and said, "I don't believe anything you said." He replied, "I'm sorry that you don't agree, but do you mind if I pray for you?" She answered, "Nobody has ever prayed for me before. I guess it won't do any harm."

He bowed his head and began to pray. She stood looking straight ahead. But suddenly she noticed that while he was praying, tears were coming down his cheeks. When he opened his eyes, she herself was in tears. She said, "No one in my entire life has ever shed a tear for me." They sat on a bench, and that woman accepted Christ as her Savior.

Every preacher should pray that God will give him a tender heart for the people he preaches to. It is so important to make evident the love of the Lord and His Gospel to those in earshot. We must always pray that the Lord will strengthen us "by His Word" knowing that it is the very Spirit of God that draws people to His call of salvation.

John the beloved apostle wrote, "Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18).

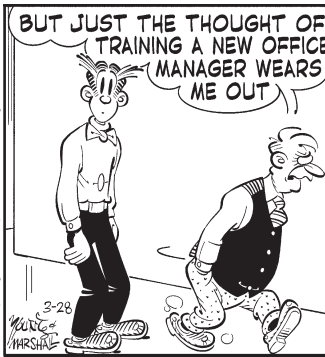
(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)

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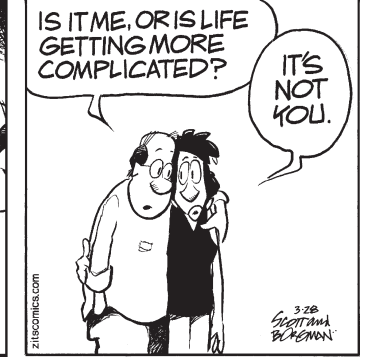
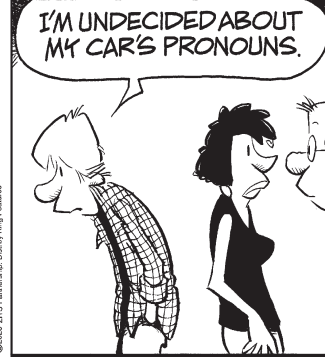
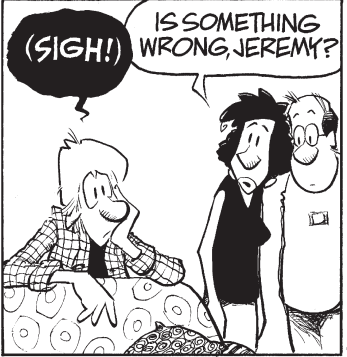
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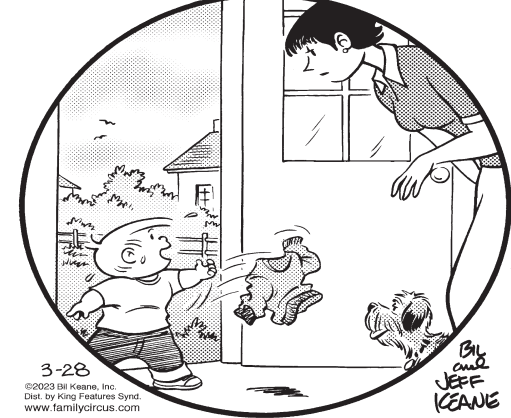
CRANKSHAFT



THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

The LOCKHORNS



"It's too warm for a sweater. March must be turnin' into a lamb."



"LORETTA'S STEAMED, SO YES, I'M IN HOT WATER AGAIN."

Table with 24 columns (chapters) and 24 rows (days of the week). Columns include program names like WINM, CBS WANE, ABC WPTA, etc. Rows include days of the week from LIFE to FREEFORM.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes 'Solution time: 22 mins.' and 'Yesterday's answer 3-28'.

Grid for yesterday's crossword answer 3-28, showing numbers 1 through 53 in a crossword pattern.

Netanyahu delays judicial overhaul after mass protests

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and ILAN BEN ZION
Associated Press
 JERUSALEM (AP) — Bending to a wave of mass protests, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delayed his contentious judicial overhaul plan Monday and said he wanted “to avoid civil war” by making time to seek a compromise with political opponents.

The announcement appeared to calm some of the tensions that have fueled three tumultuous months of unrest. But it failed to address the underlying issues that have polarized the nation, and the anti-government protest movement vowed to intensify its efforts.

In his prime-time address, Netanyahu, who

had previously rejected calls to delay the legislation, took a more conciliatory tone than in recent speeches. He acknowledged the deep divisions in the country and said he was hitting the pause button “to prevent a rift in the nation.”

“When there’s an opportunity to avoid civil war through dialogue, I, as prime minister, am taking a timeout for dialogue,” he said. He vowed to reach a “broad consensus” during the summer session of parliament, which begins on April 30.

He spoke after tens of thousands of Israelis demonstrated outside parliament, and the country’s largest labor union launched a nationwide strike in a dramatic escalation of the mass

protest movement against his plan.

Netanyahu and his religious and ultranationalist allies presented the overhaul in January just days after forming their government, the most right-wing in Israel’s history.

The proposal has plunged Israel into its worst domestic crisis in decades. Business leaders, top economists and former security chiefs have all come out against the plan, saying it is pushing the country toward an autocracy. Fighter pilots and military reservists have threatened not to report for duty, and the country’s currency, the shekel, has tumbled in value.

The plan would give Netanyahu, who is on trial on corruption charges, and his allies the final say

in appointing the nation’s judges. It would also give parliament, which is controlled by his allies, authority to overturn Supreme Court decisions and limit the court’s ability to review laws.

Netanyahu has argued that the overhaul is needed to rein in a liberal and overly interventionist court of unelected judges. But his opponents say the package would damage the country’s system of checks and balances by concentrating power in the hands of Netanyahu’s allies. They also say that he has a conflict of interest as a criminal defendant.

Tens of thousands of people, largely secular, middle-class Israelis, have regularly joined mass protests against

the plan.

Those demonstrations ramped up Sunday night after Netanyahu abruptly fired Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who had urged the prime minister to put his plan on hold, citing concerns about damage to the Israeli military.

The firing sparked a spontaneous outburst of anger, with tens of thousands of people taking to the streets in just one hour.

Chanting “the country is on fire,” they lit bonfires on Tel Aviv’s main highway, closing the thoroughfare and many others throughout the country for hours.

Demonstrators continued Monday outside the Knesset, or parliament, turning the streets surrounding the building and the Supreme

Court into a roiling sea of blue-and-white Israeli flags dotted with rainbow Pride banners.

“This is the last chance to stop this move into a dictatorship,” said Matityahu Sperber, 68, who joined a stream of people headed to the protest outside the Knesset. “I’m here for the fight to the end.”

Israel’s main trade union, the Histadrut, declared a general strike in what it said was the first time it has carried out such an action over a political issue.

The chaos shut down much of the country and threatened to paralyze the economy. Departing flights from the main international airport were grounded, stranding tens of thousands of travelers.

All 7 Pennsylvania chocolate factory explosion victims found

WEST READING, Pa. (AP) — All seven bodies have been recovered from the site of a powerful explosion at a chocolate factory in a small town in eastern Pennsylvania, officials said.

West Reading Mayor Samantha Kaag said in a statement Sunday night that none of the victims will be named until officials are certain that all families have been contacted.

“Please understand that this is a devastating loss, but we are truly grateful to bring closure to the families involved in the upcoming days,” Kaag said.

West Reading Borough

Chief of Police Wayne Holben said at a press briefing just after 9 p.m. that rescue workers had found the bodies earlier in the evening and that they are believed to be the remaining two individuals who were listed as missing earlier in the day. Their identities will be confirmed by the Berks County Coroner’s Office, he said.

One of the victims was found around 6:50 p.m. and the other around 8:20 p.m., Holben said. The deaths brought the total number killed to seven in the blast that occurred just before 5 p.m. Friday.

Earlier, Kaag confirmed to The Associated Press that

the fifth body was found Sunday morning by first responders.

Holben said the body of a fourth victim was found under debris early Sunday at the R.M. Palmer Co. plant in the borough of West Reading, about 60 miles (96 kilometers) northwest of Philadelphia.

Rescue crews had been using heat imaging equipment and dogs to search for possible survivors after the blast destroyed one building and damaged a neighboring building. Crews were using heavy equipment to methodically and carefully pull debris from the site, Holben said.

Three buildings around the site will be condemned as a precaution, Kaag said.

“This does not mean they are slated for demolition or uninhabitable,” she said. “Simply that there will still be work happening around them as we proceed and they will need to be looked at further by structural engineers.”

Officials said they had no update on the condition of a woman pulled alive from the rubble early Saturday. Kaag said she had apparently been on the second floor and was found in a “hopeful circumstance,” calling out to rescuers despite her injuries after a dog located her.

Officials also reported no updates on the conditions of those taken to hospitals. Reading Hospital said it received 10 patients and transferred two to other facilities, while two others were admitted in good and fair condition respectively and the others had been discharged.

R.M. Palmer said in a statement Saturday that everyone at the company was “devastated” and it was reaching out to employees and their families through first responders and disaster recovery organizations because its communication systems were down.

Kaag, a volunteer fire-

fighter herself, said rescue crews had been working 12- to 16-hour shifts and were so dedicated to continuing the search that “you have to pull them away at this point” to swap out and get some rest.

Gov. Josh Shapiro visited the site Saturday and vowed support from the state.

Kaag said some residents have reported damage to windows from the blast, and she asked people to “take a walk around your house” and report any damage.

State and local fire investigators are continuing to examine the scene to try to determine the cause of the blast.

No atmosphere found at faraway Earth-sized world, study says

By MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer
 CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The Webb Space Telescope has found no evidence of an atmosphere at one of the seven rocky, Earth-sized planets orbiting another star.

Scientists said Monday that doesn’t bode well for the rest of the planets in this solar system, some of which are in the sweet spot for harboring water and potentially life.

“This is not necessarily a bust” for the other planets, Massachusetts Institute of Technology astrophysicist Sara Seager, who wasn’t part of the study, said in an email. “But we will have to wait and see.”

The Trappist solar sys-

tem — a rarity with seven planets about the size of our own — has enticed astronomers ever since they spotted it just 40 light-years away. That’s close by cosmic standards; a light-year is about 5.8 trillion miles. Three of the seven planets are in their star’s habitable zone, making this star system even more alluring.

The NASA-led team reported little if any atmosphere exists at the innermost planet. Results were published Monday in the journal Nature.

The lack of an atmosphere would mean no water and no protection from cosmic rays, said lead researcher Thomas Greene of NASA’s Ames Research Center.

As for the other planets orbiting the small, feeble Trappist star, “I would have been more optimistic about the others” having atmospheres if this one had, Greene said in an email.

If rocky planets orbiting ultracool red dwarf stars like this one “do turn out to be a bust, we will have to wait for Earths around sun-like stars, which could be a long wait,” said MIT’s Seager.

Because the Trappist system’s innermost planet is bombarded by solar radiation — four times as much as Earth gets from our sun — it’s possible that extra energy is why there’s no atmosphere, Greene noted. His team found temperatures there hitting 450

degrees Fahrenheit on the side of the planet constantly facing its star.

By using Webb — the largest and most powerful telescope ever sent into space — the U.S. and French scientists were able to measure the change in brightness as the innermost planet moved behind its star and estimate how much infrared light was emitted from the planet.

The change in brightness was minuscule since the Trappist star is more than 1,000 times brighter than this planet, and so Webb’s detection of it “is itself a major milestone,” the European Space Agency said.

More observations are planned not only of this planet, but the others in the

Trappist system. Looking at this particular planet in another wavelength could uncover an atmosphere much thinner than our own, although it seems unlikely it could survive, said Taylor Bell of the Bay Area Environmental Research Institute, who was part of the study.

Further research could still uncover an atmosphere of sorts, even if it’s not exactly like what’s seen on Earth, said Michael Gillon of the University of Liege in Belgium who was part of the team that discovered the first three Trappist planets in 2016. He did not take part in the latest study.

“With rocky exoplanets, we are in uncharted territory” since scientists’ under-

standing is based on the four rocky planets of our solar system, Gillon said in an email.

Launched in late 2021 to an observation post 1 million miles (1.6 million kilometers) away, Webb is considered the successor to the Hubble Space Telescope, orbiting Earth for more than three decades.

In the past, Hubble and the Spitzer Space Telescope scoured the Trappist system for atmospheres, but without definitive results.

“It is just the beginning, and what we can learn with the inner planets is going to be different from what we can learn from the other ones,” MIT’s Julien de Wit, who was not involved in the study, said in an email.

Streets and fields seethe with protest in France

By JOHN LEICESTER
Associated Press
 PARIS (AP) — A big day has come for French high school student Elisa Fares. At age 17, she is taking part in her first protest.

In a country that taught the world about people power with its revolution of 1789 — and a country again seething with anger against its leaders — graduating from bystander to demonstrator is a generations-old rite of passage. Fares looks both excited and nervous as she prepares to march down Paris streets where people for centuries have similarly defied authority and declared: “Non!”

Two friends, neither older than 18 but already protest veterans whose parents took them to demonstrations when they were little, are showing Fares the ropes. They’ve readied eye-drops and gas masks in case police fire tear gas — as they have done repeatedly in recent weeks.

“The French are known for fighting and we’ll fight,” says one of the friends, Coline Marionneau, also 17.

“My mother goes to a lot of demonstrations ... She says if you have things to say, you should protest.”

For French President Emmanuel Macron, the look of determination on their young faces only heralds deepening crisis. His government has ignited a firestorm of anger with unpopular pension reforms that he railroaded through parliament and which, most notably, push the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

Furious not just with the prospect of working for longer but also with the way Macron imposed it, his opponents have switched to full-on disobedience mode. They’re regularly striking and demonstrating and threatening to make his second and final term as president even more difficult than his first. It, too, was rocked by months of protests — often violent — by so-called yellow vest campaigners against social injustice.

Critics accuse Macron of effectively ruling by decree, likening him to France’s kings of old. Their reign finished badly: In the French

Revolution, King Louis XVI ended up on the guillotine. There’s no danger of that happening to Macron. But hobbled in parliament and contested on the streets piled high with reeking garbage uncollected by striking workers, he’s being given a tough lesson, again, about French people power. Freshly scrawled slogans in Paris reference 1789.

So drastically has Macron lost the initiative that he was forced to indefinitely postpone a planned state visit

this week by King Charles III. Germany, not France, will now get the honor of being the first overseas ally to host Charles as monarch.

The France leg of Charles’ tour would have coincided with a new round of strikes and demonstrations planned for Tuesday that are again likely to mobilize many hundreds of thousands of protesters. Macron said the royal visit likely would have become their target, which risked creating a “detestable situation.”

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