

# The News - Banner

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## Colleges discuss how to convince students of degrees

*Representatives from the state's public higher education institutions said high costs is a main deterrent.*

By CASEY SMITH  
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Officials from Indiana's public colleges and universities agreed Thursday that their schools need to do a better job at convincing Hoosier students of the value of four-year degrees.

The discussion took place during the Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute's annual luncheon in downtown Indianapolis. Representatives from Indiana, Purdue, Ball State and Vincennes universities, as well as Indiana State and Ivy Tech Community College, conceded that rising tuition costs are deterring thousands of students from post-high school educations.

"How do we demonstrate the value of the education?" asked Christopher Ruhl, chief financial officer and treasurer at Purdue University. "Why would I spend all this money and incur all this debt? That's what students are asking. And we've also got to sell this better and make sure the degree is worth the value. What's your return on investment? Is this a good value? We hope at Purdue the answer is a resounding yes, but we have to continue focusing on that."

**More student aid — and transparency about costs**

Despite pushback from some state lawmakers and budget officials, Indiana's public colleges and universities are slated

(Continued on Page 2)

## Eclipse brings cheers as it moves across the Americas

By MARÍA VERZA and IVÁN VALENCIA  
Associated Press

CANCÚN, México (AP) — First came the darkening skies, then the crescent-shaped shadows on the ground, and finally an eruption of cheers by crowds that gathered Saturday along the narrow path of a rare "ring of fire" eclipse of the sun.

It was a spectacular show for millions of people across the Americas as the moon moved into place and blocked out all but a brilliant circle of the sun's outer edge.

Hundreds of people filed into the planetarium in the Caribbean resort city of Cancún to watch the eclipse. Some peered through box projectors, while others looked through telescopes and special glasses.

Excited children whistled, as some adults raised their arms toward the sky as if to welcome the eclipse.

Vendors selling plants outside observed the dance between the moon and the sun in a more natural way — with the help of trees as the shifting sunlight filtered through the leaves, casting unique shadows on the sidewalk.

"There was silence and like a mist, as if it was dusk, but only a few minutes later the birds were singing again," said Carmen Jardines, 56, one of the vendors.

(Continued on Page 2)

### Creating a new military exhibit

Pictured above, on the second floor of the Wells County Historical Museum, the military exhibits were carefully prepared for the move to their new home in the museum's annex. All exhibits were photographed by Connie Brubaker so they could be returned to their proper display order. Tackling that chore were, pictured left to right, Mark Bollinger, Brubaker, Jerry Drayer, Donald Goodwin and Bob Frantz.



Middle, new paneling was put up in the museum's annex on Saturday morning. Up on the fork lift were Phil Johnson, Alan Schwartz and Leon Gaiser. The new site will allow for more veterans to be able to explore the exhibit as it will be located on the ground floor.



At right, several items will be able to come out of the storage garage as the new exhibit takes shape. Checking out some of the items were Paul Griner, Larry McAfee, Jim Sturgeon and Ben Jones. (Photos by Barbara Barbieri)

## Gaza hospitals overwhelmed with patients, low on supplies

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMYA KULLAB and RAVI NESSMAN  
Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Medics in Gaza warned Sunday that thousands could die as hospitals packed with wounded people ran desperately low on fuel and basic supplies. Palestinians in the besieged coastal enclave struggled to find food, water and safety ahead of an expected Israeli ground offensive in the war sparked by Hamas' deadly attack.

Israeli forces, supported by a growing deployment of U.S. warships in the region, positioned themselves along Gaza's border and drilled for what Israel said would be a broad campaign to dismantle the militant group. A week of blistering airstrikes have demolished entire neighborhoods but failed to stem militant rocket fire into Israel.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 2,670 Palestinians have been killed and 9,600 wounded since the fighting erupted, more than in the 2014 Gaza war, which lasted over six weeks. That makes this the deadliest of the five Gaza wars for both sides.

More than 1,400 Israelis were killed, the vast majority of them civilians, in Hamas' Oct. 7 assault. At least 155 others, including children, were captured by Hamas and taken into Gaza, according to Israel. It's also the deadliest war for Israel since the 1973 conflict with Egypt and Syria.

The U.S. State Department said Secretary of State Antony Blinken

(Continued on Page 2)

## Israeli rabbis work around the clock to count the dead from Hamas attack

By JULIA FRANKEL  
Associated Press

SITRIYA, Israel (AP) — Rarely do rabbis spend the Sabbath counting bodies. But on Saturday, a week after Hamas militants blew easily past Israel's fortified security fence and gunned down hundreds of Israelis — at music festivals, in their homes, in cars while trying to flee — Israel's military rabbinate made an exception.

At Shura military base in central Israel, bodies have been coming in faster than the rabbis can identify them. Hundreds of soldiers, women, and children in body bags line shelves of refrigerated trucks, awaiting examination. Identification teams gather on plastic stools opposite the trucks to take

smoke breaks between shifts. They wear heavy gas masks — the smell of death is overwhelming.

"Generally, Jewish law says that you cannot break the Sabbath for a dead person," said Rabbi Israel Weiss, who is helping lead the operation. "The exception is when a family is in doubt, and the death is so crippling that it may risk the family's lives. Then, you must work on the Sabbath to identify the body and bring answers to the family."

Now, the best the country can offer the families of some 1,300 people killed by Hamas militants is final confirmation that their loved ones are dead.

The process was continuing Sunday and could

(Continued on Page 2)

**Inside**

Local/Area

Obituaries . . . . . 3  
Court Docket . . . . . 3

Opinion

Mark Franke . . . . . 4

Also...

Sports . . . . . 6-7  
Classifieds . . . . . 9  
Diversions . . . . . 8

**Outside**

A break from the rain until Wednesday night

Today	Tuesday	Wed.
High 55	High 58	High 65
Low 40	Low 41	Low 50

More Weather on Page 2

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OBITUARIES

Margaret L. (Love) Slentz, 91

Margaret L. (Love) Slentz, 91, of Keystone, passed away at 9:02 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 13, 2023, at Christian Care Retirement Community in Bluffton. She was born to the late Guy Jarret and Hazel Ruth (Dill) Love on May 8, 1932, in Muncie. She married William E. "Bill" Slentz on Saturday, August 8, 1953, in the Montpelier Methodist Church; Bill passed away on December 3, 2011.



Margaret attended Chester Center School and Montpelier High School. She was a homemaker and worked for Sheller globe for 30 years. Margaret faithfully attended Blackford Baptist Temple in Hartford City. She was known for her pies and fudge gifts at Christmas time. She enjoyed doing puzzles and most importantly had a deep love for her family.

Loving survivors include her children, Connie L. (Rick) Ramseyer, Poneto, Sandy (Tom) Crouch, Dunkirk, Steve (Lydia) Slentz, Sacramento, Calif., Tim (Sandy) Slentz, Modoc, Susan (Jamie) Robbins, Montpelier, and Ronald Slentz, Keystone; 16 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews; brother, Myron (Sherry) Love, Montpelier; sister, Betty Rinker, Hartford City; half sisters, Irene Love, Carolyn McDugle, and Marilyn Love, all of Haskell, Okla.

She was preceded in death by parents; husband; sisters, Laverne Winans, Virginia Maxine Halas, Dorothy Jester, Leah Alice Love, and Mary Jean Carver; and brothers, Gerald E. Love, Larry Love, Harrold Love, Lavaughn Love, and James Keith Love.

Family and friends may gather to share and remember at Walker & Glancy Funeral Home, located at 109 W Windsor Street, Montpelier, Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2023, from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. A service to celebrate Margaret's life will follow at 3:00 p.m. with Pastor Steven Lakie officiating. The burial will take place in the Keystone Friends Cemetery in Wells County.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Blackford Baptist Temple, 2252 N State Rd. 3, Hartford City, IN 47348.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Walker & Glancy Funeral Home in Montpelier.

Larry E. Connett, 77

Larry E. Connett, 77, of Ossian, died Saturday evening, Oct. 14, 2023, at his residence, surrounded by his loving family.

Funeral arrangements are pending at this time with the Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton.

Karen Holman, 68

Karen Holman, 68, of Huntington, died Sunday morning, Oct. 15, 2023, at her residence.

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

SBOA details auditing duties and added COVID responsibilities

By WHITNEY DOWNARD

Indiana Capital Chronicle

The influx of billions of dollars in federal relief funneled through the state to Indiana's counties, cities and townships has increased the workload for the State Board of Accounts by 30 percent, as the entity audits local budgets and implements federal spending requirements.

"Lots of communities are kind of 'sitting on their money.' They're not spending it all on one place," said Kendra Leatherman, the general counsel for the SBOA. "They are taking a more budgeted approach to what they're doing and because of that, we don't anticipate that (30 percent) increase to go away until probably after (Fiscal Year) 2027."

SBOA is tasked with auditing local government's finances at a cost that cannot exceed 80 percent of the market rate, or roughly \$262 per hour. The agency reported its full cost rate to be \$129 per hour, or 49 percent of the market rate in the last year.

The department presented its annual report before the Legislative Council's Auditing and Financial Reporting Subcommittee on Thursday, detailing its traditional duties alongside its added workload from federal dollars and proposals for future legislative action.

The trouble with federal dollars

Communities receiving funds from either the CARES Act, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) or the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law have until the end of 2026 to spend all of the funds, though various accounts have earlier deadlines.

Cris Johnston, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, noted that each pot of money had different missions for their dollars.

"The CARES Act was really looking in the rear-view mirror, covering your cost of fighting the pandemic. It's pretty easy to identify a cost that you incur," Johnston said.

"The ARPA and infrastructure dollars that came into the local units, you're looking forward."

Many, especially smaller municipalities, may not be familiar with a more forward-looking federal spending plan.

"A lot of times, in order to meet these federal guidelines, you have to put a plan together, submit it to the federal awarding agency and get them to sign off on that. Then you've got all of the terms that go behind that as well," Johnston said.

He said the latter may be why many municipalities are still carrying large balances. Additionally, the SBOA doesn't start the auditing process until someone has spent more than \$750,000 — though that bar could increase to \$1 million, based on federal regulations.

One of the problems several municipalities had encountered, Leatherman said, is not knowing the different procurement laws required when spending federal funds. Additionally, some units aren't checking to see whether their contractors have been suspended by the federal government and are thus ineligible for those dollars.

Traditional SBOA duties In years where SBOA doesn't check billions in federal spending, it audits local units of government at least once every four years — though school corporations are audited every other year.

As part of their annual report before the Legislative Council, SBOA detailed the various entities who had faltered in their financial reporting or were noncompliant and potentially failed to make corrective actions.



Laura Ainslie from the Fort Wayne Astronomical Society showed solar eclipse viewing devices, made from shoebox, cereal or other types of boxes. (Photos by Barbara Barbieri)

Partial eclipse viewing party at the library

By BARBARA BARBIERI

On Saturday Laura Ainslie and Russell Ainslie, from the Fort Wayne Astronomical Society, presented a live presentation about the annular solar eclipse at the Wells County Public Library.

Laura explained that this annular solar eclipse could be seen in both north and south America. The eclipse held Saturday is often called "the ring of fire" as the moon blocks out the total circle of the sun, leaving a ring of light around outside.

However, in this area, if the clouds had allowed, the entire ring would not have been viewable. At the library the viewing from other sites was followed via a NASA program managed by the Ainslie's.

Shoobox viewing devices were shown and directions of how to make them were explained by Laura, as it is



very important that no one look directly toward the sun during an eclipse. Special glasses may be used for viewing as well.

When a total eclipse, viewable in the area, occurs April 8, 2024, the library plans to hold another viewing program and will have some of the special glasses to share. They also plan to have another opportunity to create

viewing boxes.

Laura explained that in order to see an eclipse you have to have four things — the sun, the moon, the earth, and you. All four have to align just right for the moon to block the sun from the earth for us to see. The times can be predicted years and years in advance.

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Wells Court Docket

Wells Superior Court Criminal Cases

Jeffrey Holloway, 67, Huntington, was sentenced to 60 days in the Wells County Jail with all but two days suspended. The sentence was issued after Holloway pled guilty to reckless driving, a Class C misdemeanor, in the Wells Superior Court last week. One count for operating while intoxicated — endangering a person, and driving with an ACE of .15 or more, both Class A misdemeanors, was dismissed as part of the plea agreement. Holloway was also ordered to serve 363 days of probation and pay court costs and filing fees in the amount of

\$564.50.

Jared Isaac Williams, 33, Bluffton, appeared in the Wells Superior Court for an initial hearing last Tuesday. Williams was charged with one count of possession of methamphetamine and one count of possession of a narcotic drug, both Level 6 felonies, resisting law enforcement, a Class A misdemeanor, and possession of paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor. Williams' bond, originally set at \$6,500, was reduced to \$1,500 during his hearing. Williams is scheduled for a status hearing at 8:30 a.m. on Oct. 27 in the Wells Superior Court.

Paula Thieman, 48, Bluffton, appeared in the Wells Superior Court for an initial hearing last Tuesday. Williams was charged with one count of possession of methamphetamine and one count of possession of a narcotic drug, both Level 6 felonies, possession of a controlled substance, a Class A misdemeanor, and possession of marijuana, a Class A misdemeanor. Thieman's bond was reduced to \$1,500 during her hearing. Thieman is scheduled for a status hearing at 1 p.m. on Nov. 14 in the Wells Superior Court.

Michael K. O'Rourke, 37, Fort Wayne, appeared in the Wells Superior Court

for a hearing to revoke his suspended sentence. In January, O'Rourke was originally sentenced to 365 days in the Wells County Jail with all but 90 days suspended, and 255 days of probation. The sentence was issued after he pled guilty to invasion of privacy, a Class A misdemeanor. O'Rourke admitted to violating his probation at his hearing last week. He was ordered to serve 60 days of the suspended sentence with probation terminated upon his release from incarceration. O'Rourke was also ordered to pay court costs and filing fees in the amount of \$285 when he was sentenced in January. The fines are unpaid as of yet.

Strategence Capital launches a partnership with OneAscent

Strategence Capital, which opened its Bluffton office in 2022, is excited to announce a new partnership with OneAscent Financial. The Strategence Capital team includes Bluffton native and current resident Jordan Arnold, a financial advisor and certified financial planner.

Arnold advised the change will be seamless for clients. The partnership will support the Strategence mission and strengthen its client service processes.

"The affiliation with OneAscent is primarily operational," Arnold said, "but we believe it will help us do even more behind the scenes for our local clients."

One of the factors that motivated the change is the

cultural alignment between Strategence and OneAscent. OneAscent Financial is the premiere partner for faith-driven advisors and its values-aligned approach to planning, investments, and stewardship complements Strategence's focus on following the Golden Rule.

Strategence Capital joins a growing community of independent advisors across the nation who partner with OneAscent. Strategence Capital has offices in Bluffton and Fort Wayne, Indiana; Van Wert, Ohio; and Morris,

Minnesota. Its team of professionals is dedicated to helping its individual and employer clients safeguard their financial position long into the future.

Strategence principal Graig Stettner, who partners with Arnold to support Wells County clients, added that the firm is excited about its future.

"OneAscent is a well-respected name in our industry -- one we're thrilled to be associated with," he said. "We believe this partnership will make us even stronger moving forward."

Financial Focus When should you sell investments?

If you're a long-term investor, your portfolio may stay fairly stable over time. However, you may occasionally need to sell some investments. But when — and why?

For starters, if you have investments that consistently underperform, you might be better off selling them and using the proceeds to buy others that could help you make progress toward your goals.

And if an investment you own is quite similar to others in your portfolio, you might consider selling it and using the proceeds to broaden your investment mix.

Here's another possible reason for selling: An investment's value has grown so much that it now takes up a higher percentage of your portfolio than you intended.

Finally, your own needs can change. As you near retirement, you may want to move some of your portfolio into more conservative investment vehicles. Still, you won't want to sell all your growth-oriented investments, as you'll need some growth potential to help stay ahead of inflation.

The bottom line? If you're going to sell investments, make sure you do so for the right reasons.

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## Just because you're chosen doesn't mean you're liked

*"The government you elect is the government you deserve."*  
— Thomas Jefferson

Find someone who will speak positively about our government these days and you will have outdone the cynic Diogenes. He merely wanted to find a wise man; we are looking for a happy and contented one.

Fortunately we can let the Gallup Poll do our work for us. That organization conducts an annual survey of a representative group of Americans to ask their level of confidence in the major institutions of our society. Confidence dropped again in 2023 in nearly all 16 institutions included. We are an unhappy people.

There were a few categories that saw slight increases, one or two percentage points. For example churches improved but only one percent. I guess we should be thankful for little things.

So long as we are celebrating one percent improvements, give Congress a round of applause. It improved from seven to eight percent approval. Yes, you read that right. Congress ranks last in public confidence. Ninety-two percent of Americans have little or no confidence in Congress as an institution and can you blame them?

Just look at what that august body did in the past few weeks. First there is Matt Gaetz and his scorched earth politics. Angry with Kevin McCarthy for not being conservative enough, Gaetz teamed up with the Squad and other lefties in the Democrat party—in this case being every single one of them—to send McCarthy to the back benches. Congratulations, Matt; you proved something although I for one can't fathom what.

Of course our national press (which has a confidence factor only in the mid-teens) bewailed the lack of moderate Republicans in the House but never got around to asking where the moderate Democrats were on this vote. They could have saved McCarthy if they wanted to and apparently Nancy Pelosi had promised something of that sort. Maybe her lack of follow through on that commitment led to the eviction from her private digs at the Capitol building.

But then what Pelosi did or did not promise doesn't matter to us because our attention is on the honorable Jamaal Bowman, who apparently thinks he is back in junior high school where pranks like pulling fire alarms are thought to be cool. Somebody needs to send Jamaal to the principal's office.

Maybe it's time for the principal to call a school assembly and remind this pack of juveniles that they do have Constitutional responsibility to pass a new budget before the old one expires. The current budget law has been in effect for nearly 50 years but Congress has met its own deadline only five times, the last being 1997.

As a libertarian at heart, I like congressional gridlock since it prevents passage of expensive, onerous, anti-liberty laws. The budget is another thing entirely. Playing political Russian roulette every September is no way to run a railroad. Or maybe the analogy is appropriate since most railroads went bankrupt.

I am politically naive but I just don't understand how Matt Gaetz and his fellow travelers believe they can win a one-minute-before-midnight battle over the budget. Please remind me of a government shutdown that wasn't blamed on the Republicans by the media. The Republicans can pass whatever they want in the House of Representatives but then their noble efforts will come to naught in the Democrat Senate and the Democrat White House. And the public will blame the Republicans because the media will tell it to.

No wonder Congress ranks last in the public confidence sweepstakes. But they have a lot of company in the underwater category. Only two institutions, small business and the military, scored above 50 percent. This ought to frighten all of us.

How long can a civilization survive if its citizenry has no confidence in its major institutions? If it falls, how will that come about and will we see the warning signs? Is our collective attitude a contributing factor, even an irreversible one? Have we met the enemy and he is us?

I think the comic strip Pogo was on to something back in 1970 when his creator Walt Kelly used that line to support Earth Day and its concerns about pollution. Not to belittle the dangers of excessive pollution but spiritual pollution is much more dangerous to future generations. We can attempt to return earth to a Garden of Eden but will we find ourselves as unhappy with the situation as did our original parents?

This may be asking too much but can we accept our own responsibility for our role in selecting our leaders and not hold them to high standards?

Maybe H. L. Mencken figured this out.

Mark Franke, an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review, is formerly an associate vice chancellor at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.

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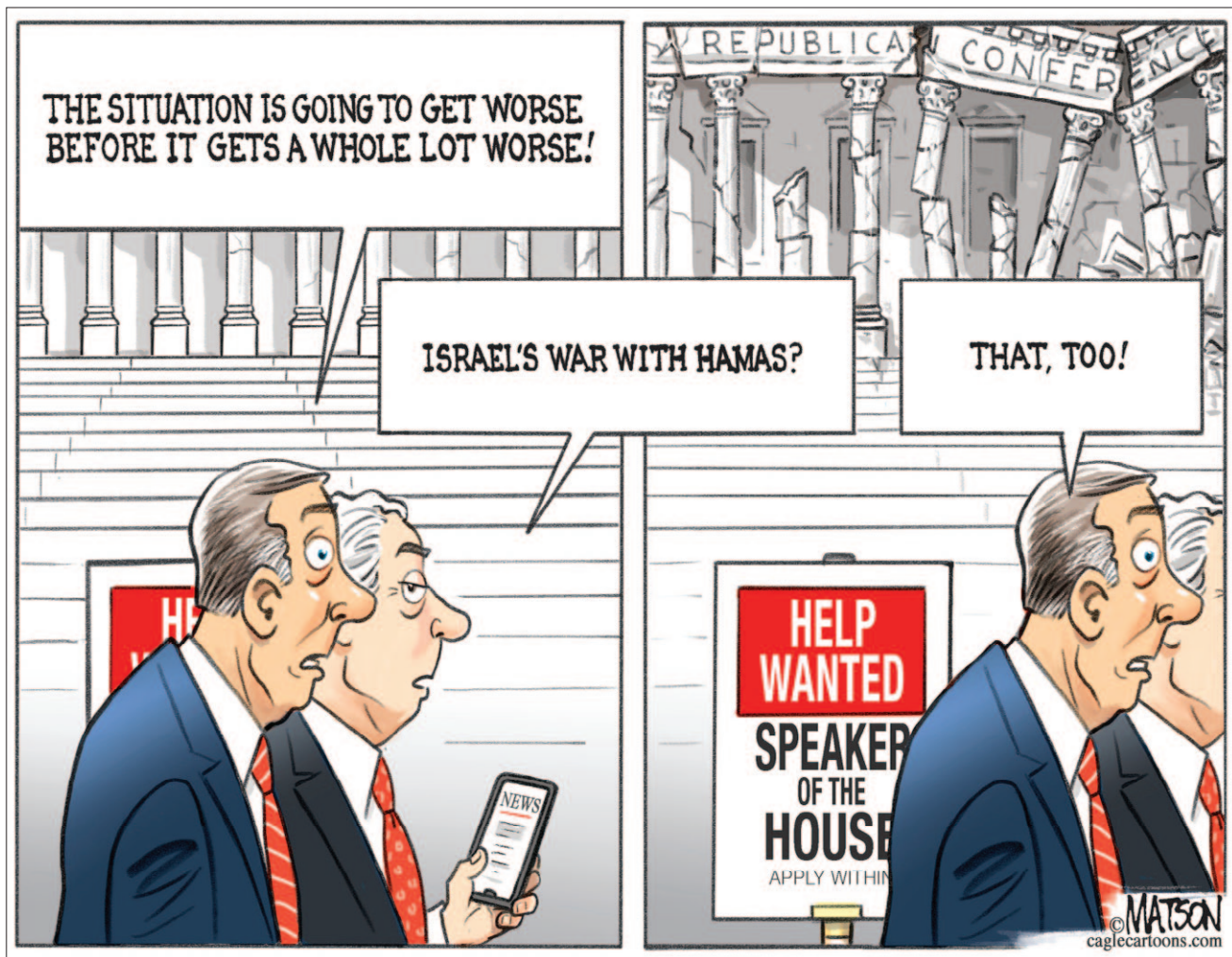
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Mark Franke

## Hoosier Opinions



## Federal government distrust

The last two American presidential assassinations — coming about 60 years apart — set in motion different yields when it comes to trust in government. When bullets felled President William McKinley in Buffalo in 1901, the subsequent ascension of President Theodore Roosevelt commenced a progressive movement that largely persisted over six decades, bringing us the New Deal and the Great Society.

And it was 60 years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas that ultimately led to a gradual unraveling of our public trust. Yes, the bullets of Dallas brought about the Great Society and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 two years later under President Lyndon B. Johnson, but those were quickly followed by the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal and President Nixon's resignation in disgrace, and a rise of a conservative movement beginning with Barry Goldwater in 1964.

When the National Election Study began asking about trust in government in 1958 for Pew Research, about three-quarters of Americans trusted the federal government to do the right thing almost always or most of the time. Today, Pew reports that 25% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents say they trust the federal government just about always or most of the time, compared with 8% of Republicans and Republican-leaning Americans.

This may have come to a head when President Reagan held a press conference on Aug. 12, 1986, in which he uttered this famous phrase still quoted by his GOP acolytes: "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: 'I'm from the government, and I'm here to help.'"

Donald Trump adroitly tapped into this notion three decades later. During Trump's presidency, there had been overt damning of the federal government. This ranged from his unproven allegations that the 2016 and 2020 elections were "rigged" and then "stolen," to the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol insurrection, to defining the federal bureaucracy as the "deep state," to his public distrust of the U.S. intelligence network and the federal courts, to his Stalinist definition of the news media as "fake news" and as the "enemy of the American people."

Reuters reported that the annual Edelman Trust Barometer reported in Davos, Switzerland in 2017 (the year Trump came to power) revealed that faith in the Chinese government jumped 8 points to 84%, while in the United States it fell 14 points to 33%. "The United States is enduring an unprecedented crisis of trust," said Richard Edelman, head of the communications marketing firm that commissioned the research.

By 2021, after a year of the COVID-19 pandemic, Edelman reported: "With a growing trust gap and trust declines worldwide, people are looking for leadership and solutions as they reject talking heads who they

deem not credible. In fact, none of the societal leaders we track — government leaders, CEOs, journalists and even religious leaders — are trusted to do what is right, with drops in trust scores for all."

Reagan explained in his January 1989 farewell address, "Back in the 1960's when I began, it seemed to me that we'd begun reversing the order of things; that through more and more rules and regulations and confiscatory taxes, the government was taking more of our money, more of our options and more of our freedom. I went into politics in part to put up my hand and say, 'Stop.' I was a citizen politician, and it seemed the right thing for a citizen to do."

The bookend to decades of acute conservative criticism of the federal government came last Sunday when Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Baird of Indiana reacted to last week's news that House Speaker Kevin McCarthy had been booted from office in a historical first, followed days later by the surprise attack on Israel by Hamas. "Our disunity on Capitol Hill is weakening America's position as a global leader and hindering our ability to respond to the atrocities committed by Hamas on the Israeli people," Baird posted on X. "We must stop these political games and show leadership during this international emergency."

But that's the federal government. State governments fare much better. When Morning Consult did its governor approval ratings in all 50 states last July, not a single sitting state executive had a higher disapproval than approval, and most (including Gov. Eric Holcomb at 55% approve, 35% disapprove) were well above 50%. Only three governors had approval below 50%.

As for the Trump era, in an essay for the Brookings Institute, Elaine Kamarck, founder of the Center of Effective Public Management, asks a series of questions: Did Trump weaken the powers of Congress? Has Trump damaged our system of shared power between the federal government and the states? Has Trump weakened the judiciary? Did Trump weaken the press? Was Trump able to exert control over the civil service?

The answer to all of these questions is "No." "The fact that Trump did not tear down the major guardrails of democracy does not mean that all is well in the United States," Kamarck said in July 2021. "The lesson is that democracy requires constant care and constant mobilization."

Yes, that's the lesson: Democracy demands maintenance. The columnist is publisher of *Howey Politics Indiana* at [www.howeypolitics.com](http://www.howeypolitics.com). Find him on Facebook and Twitter @hwypol.



Brian Howey

## Politicking

## Robbing the children's future

LOS ANGELES — The second-largest school district in the country is suffering from academic afflictions of its own making. While test scores show a continuing decline at the high school level in math proficiency (21 percent) and reading (51 percent), is the district making improvement in these subjects a top priority? Apparently not.

Instead they are emphasizing a week-long celebration of "National Coming Out Day." The "curriculum" is intended to teach children about identity and intersectionality. Celebrities are a major part of what many believe is the indoctrination process. Stars don't have to worry about making a living. How this will improve the eventual job prospects for graduates, however, no one is saying, because it doesn't.

LA schools are increasingly passing students who don't even meet grade-level standards. This is and will have important ramifications for their future. Nearly 60 percent of students come from low-income families. It's hard to argue that the imposition of this woke curriculum will improve their lives.

The problem exists beyond Los Angeles. A report in *City Journal* adds weight to the problematic prospects of so many students: "California now leads the country in illiteracy." According to the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress,



Cal Thomas

"just 30 percent of California eighth-graders are proficient in reading," results that were gathered before the Covid-19 lockdown.

Not surprisingly, public school enrollment is in decline. Quoting a poll from UC-Berkely's Institute of Government Studies, *City Journal* writes "just 35 percent of state voters gave public schools in their local district a grade of A or B, down from 55 percent in 2011. Twenty-five percent graded their local public schools a D or F, which was up 15 percentage points from 2011.

As always with such numbers, poor and minority students are disproportionately affected, but the dominant Democratic Party in California appears not to care. Like other states they are in the grip of the teacher's unions, who supply campaign contributions to keep them in office and continue voting in ways that serve their interests and not the interests of children.

The answer is school choice, but California offers neither school vouchers nor individual or corporate tax credits for parents who wish to send their children to private schools. In the current school year, there are 3,818 private schools serving 657,596 students statewide, compared to 10,374 public schools, serv-

ing 5,875,325 students. Ten percent of all K-12 students in California are educated in private schools, which matches the national average. Arguably there would be more if taxpayer money followed the students to private schools.

It's not just the failure to teach reading and an emphasis on non-academic and radical cultural subjects that have contributed to education decline here and around the country. According to The Heritage Foundation, an emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion is also having a negative impact. A Heritage study found "As of August 2023, 48 percent of school districts with enrollment of at least 15,000 students had a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), up from the 2021 figure of 39 percent. Having a CDO was associated with much greater learning loss during the pandemic by Black and Hispanic students. School districts with CDOs were significantly more likely to have policies that keep the 'gender transitioning' of students secret from parents."

School choice is spreading throughout the country, in part in reaction to this craziness. Given the left's dominance in the state, California may be the last place to offer it. That could be a contributing factor to the decision by increasing numbers of parents to leave the state in search of better schools that teach subjects they had to learn during their school days.

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# Four of the Wells County XC teams advance to regional

*Tigers' Dakota Lee makes it as an individual*

By RYAN WALKER

UPLAND — The IHSAA eliminated the cross-country semi-state race, making it more difficult to advance in the postseason. But the Bluffton, Norwell, and Southern Wells boys didn't let that phase them one bit.

The three beat the odds Saturday morning at Taylor University in the sectional meet. The Tigers (second) and the Knights (third) were projected to head to next week's regional in Fort Wayne, according to online projections, and hit. The Raiders, on the other hand, were given less than a 20 percent shot to do so.

As a representative from Delta read off the top five schools over the loudspeaker in front of all 27 boys and girls teams, came Southern Wells in fifth place. The boys and girls in red and blue jumped for joy and cheered.

Head coach Monica Edgeman shared her excitement for what could be the best team in school history. She was also proud of their hard work as a tightly-knit group.

"Great group of kids — they work really hard," Edgeman said. "We're running more miles than we ever have, and they're fun to be around. They're like family."

Southern Wells was one of, if not the smallest, school of the 13 participants. Due to the IHSAA having only one class for cross country, the Raiders have less opportunity to make noise in the postseason compared to schools even double and triple in size.

Despite that, they came out and proved they belong with the big teams at the sectional, but Edgeman still voiced per opinion on classes.

"We're probably one of the smallest schools here and (we) did some calculations and saw that at regional if we did divisions, we're the smallest school getting first place at regionals in our class. So, I would still love to see two classes broken up into our state. We have our best team we've ever had in our school, and we're getting fifth. If we're not the best, and we're just an average school, you might as well forget getting anything. It's pretty discouraging."

Both Tigers and Knights head coaches, Michael Vanderkolk and Cody Hannie, echoed one another in separate interviews that their boys did what they were asked to do in advancing, but resting their bodies to stay fresh for next week.

In terms of making it to next week, Hannie knew the Knights would have to have "something catastrophic" to have happen to not make it, but he also shared some displeasures with online projections like the Raiders.

"There were websites saying that we weren't going to. That always adds a little extra motivation," Hannie said.

The top individuals in the county started with Bluffton's Tyler Godwin, who legged out Delta's Tyler Dillon at the finish line to earn second place. His time was an impressive 16:28, down 15 seconds from the ACAC run the week prior.

Levi Johns (9th) and Jude Baumgartner (11th) also represented the Tigers on the big stage, earning ribbons for their top-20 finishes.

Gage Reinhard (13th) of Norwell and Joshua Bricker (18th) of Southern Wells also earned ribbons.

Complete individual and team results will be listed at the end.

For the girls, only Norwell placed in the top five to advance to the regional, placing third. Bluffton was 13th as a team, and Southern Wells had only four runners out of the five necessary for no team score.

Four Knights cracked the top 20 for ribbons: Ashley Waldman (10th), Elizabeth Norris (13th), Brooklyn Meyer (16th), and Haleigh Reinhard (18th).

Head coach Vanessa Hannie is a firm

believer in pack running, which challenges the team to run together and push one another. That strategy paid off, though some of them went off trail after two miles.

"Pack it up — that's what we were saying," Hannie said. "Just pack it up, and they did OK through almost two (miles). They split a little bit, but they had great finishes, and so we'll take it. We'll take it and see what we can do this next week."

Even though Bluffton did not make it as a team for the girls, Dakota Lee made it to the next round as an individual. She placed 30th with a time of 22:30.

"Today's just a big moment for Dakota Lee," Vanderkolk said. "(She) qualified to regional. She's worked her tail off; all these girls have worked their tail off. They've all pushed her, and the support that they've given her the boys given her the support and encouragement as well. (Its) really just kind of propelling her, and she had a great race today. Just incredibly proud and excited for her this opportunity and excited to see what this can do for the rest of the program as well."

The four teams will compete at the PLEX in Fort Wayne at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 21.

sports@news-banner.com

## Individual placers

### Bluffton

**Boys:** Tyler Godwin finished in second place with a (16:28.8), Levi Johns ninth 17:11.2), Jude Baumgartner 11th (17:28.4), Ayden Teeple 36th (18:10.2) Aidan Graves 40th 18:23.6), Brett Kuhlbeck 46th (18:42.1), and Jackson Rockwell 57th (19:10.0).

**Girls:** Dakota Lee finished in 30th place with a time of 22:30.1, Amarah Robles 64th (24:33.2), Reagan Harris 65th (24:38.4), Kierstynn Reed 75th (26:08.1), Lucia Corkwell 76th (26:10.3), Alydia Bertsch 81st (27:18.4), and Sophia Mayne 90th (30:28.0).

### Norwell

**Boys:** Gage Reinhard finished in 13th place with a time of 17:30.4, Elijah Jacob 27th (17:53.0), Gavin Threewits 29th (17:57.7), Lukas Mashuda 35th (18:08.4), Luke Johnson 38th (18:15.9), and Parker McCartney 72nd (19:46.0)

**Girls:** Ashley Waldman finished in 10th place with a time of 6:43.2, Elizabeth Norris 13th (21:07.1), Brooklyn Meyer 16th (21:20.3), Haleigh Reinhard 18th (21:29.3), Addison Meyer 39th (23:06.2), Alana Cady 41st (23:12.0), and Teagan Lesley 59th (24:19.0).

### Southern Wells

**Boys:** Joshua Bricker finished in 18th place with a time of 17:38.8, Andrew Aker 23rd (17:44.8), Jarin Frauhiger 34th (18:07.5), Kelton Barr 48th (18:46.6), Colter Kiel 52nd (18:54.5), Kane Jenkins 53rd (19:00.0), and Dalton Stephan 61st (19:20.8).

**Girls:** Alexix Leidig finished in 63rd place with a time of 24:31.3, Ella Lahr 84th (28:03.1), Chanie Mounsey 87th (28:42.3), and Shaylinn Geesaman (29:27.8).

## Team Scores

**Boys:** Wapahani finished in first place with a team score of 58, Bluffton second (96), Norwell third (138), Belmont fourth (160), Southern Wells fifth (169), Delta sixth (172), Monroe Central seventh (174), Adams Central eighth (177), South Adams ninth (185), Eastbrook 10th (218), Jay County 11th (240), Blackford 12th (252), and Winchester Community 13th (309).

**Girls:** Adams Central placed first with a team score of 59, Monroe Central second (91), Norwell third (95), Eastbrook fourth (121), Wapahani fifth (150), South Adams sixth (161), Randolph Southern seventh (200), Delta eighth (201), Belmont ninth (215), Blackford 10th (233), Winchester 11th (265), Jay County 12th (296), Bluffton 13th (301), and Southern Wells incomplete.



Joshua Bricker (left) of Southern Wells and Alexis Leidig (right) compete during the sectional meet at Taylor University on Saturday morning. Both were the top runners for the Raiders in the boys' and girls' races. Bricker finished in 18th place, good for a top-20 ribbon. (Photos by Ryan Walker)



Jude Baumgartner (left) and Dakota Lee (right) of Bluffton run in their respective races during the sectional meet. Baumgartner placed 11th with a ribbon, while Lee made it out to the regional race as an individual.



Gage Reinhard (left) and Haleigh Reinhard (right) of Norwell compete in the sectional. Gage finished first for the Knights and 13th overall with a ribbon, while Haleigh placed 18th for a ribbon.



## Sports Roundup

### Knights lose in sectional title to No. 1 Belmont Braves

Norwell won in the sectional over Maconaquah in the semi-final, then fell to Belmont in the championship at home on Saturday.

In the first match, the Knights defeated the Maconaquah Braves in straight sets (26-24, 25-16, and 25-19).

The Knights fell to the No. 1 Belmont Braves in the title match in three sets (25-3, 25-13, 25-10).

Individual stats were not sent.

Norwell finished the season with a 21-13 record.

### Tigers fall to No. 5 Starfires in V-ball semi-final

Bluffton finished its season at the hands of No. 5 South Adams Saturday afternoon.

The Tigers lost to the Starfires in straight sets (25-8, 25-12, and 25-17).

In the sectional championship, Adams Central upset South Adams 3-1.

Stat leaders for the match were Haley Gibson with 12 assists, three aces, and 23 digs, and Maryn Schreiber with 10 kills and two blocks.

Bluffton finished the season with an 11-20 record.

### Knights end JV football season with loss to Eagles

Norwell's junior varsity football team wrapped up its season with a 26-22 loss to Columbia City at home on Saturday.

Adam Mahnensmith ran in a touchdown from two yards, and Cayden Cassel converted on a conversion.

Luke Drieband scored on a 43-yard fumble recovery, with Cassel passing for the conversion.

Cassel then hit Korben Neunschwander for a 25-yard touchdown pass.

Titus Edwards recovered a fumble, and Brock Zent blocked a kick.



Norwell's Rebecca Settle, left, tips the ball over the net during Saturday's sectional semi-final game against Maconaquah. (Photo by Chad Kline)

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**The marching Tigers**

The Bengal Brigade placed twelfth in ISSMA Scholastic B Finals today at Franklin Central HS. The top five bands received placement trophies. They are: Fifth — Washington High School, Fourth — Heritage Hills High School, Third — Wawasee High School, Second — Bosses High School, First — Eastern High School. Above, the Bengal Brigade performs on the Franklin Center football field. At right, the seniors of The Bengal Brigade point to their 2023 sticker on the bands semi trailer. (Photos provided)

**AP source: Biden considering trip to Israel, travel isn't final**

By AAMER MADHANI and MATTHEW LEE  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is considering a trip to Israel in the coming days but no travel has been finalized, a senior administration official said Sunday.

Biden has staunchly proclaimed his support for Israel, and a trip there would be the firmest signal yet but would come amid heightening fears that a looming Israeli move into Gaza could spark a wider war with devastating humanitarian consequences.

The official could not publicly discuss internal deliberations about the potential presidential travel and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has already been traveling around the Mideast this past week trying to prevent the war with Hamas from igniting a broader regional conflict.

But Biden also made his strongest public effort yet to restrain Israel after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas that killed more than 1,300 people including at least 30 U.S. citizens, warning in an interview with CBS' 60 Minutes that aired Sunday that Israel should not reoccupy Gaza.

"I think it'd be a big mistake," Biden said. "Look, what happened in Gaza, in my view, is Hamas, and the extreme elements of Hamas don't represent all the Palestinian people. And I think that it would be a mistake for Israel to occupy Gaza again."

Still, he said, "taking out the extremists ... is a necessary requirement."

Biden and his administration officials have refused to criticize Israel or its bombing campaign that has killed civilians in Gaza. But they've urged Israel, Egypt and other nations to allow for humanitarian aid and supplies into the worsening conflict zone.

"I'm confident that Israel is going to act under the rules of war," Biden said in the interview. "There's standards that democratic institutions and countries go by. And I'm confident that there's going to be an ability for the innocents in Gaza to be able to have access to medicine and food and water."

Blinken, meanwhile, heard criticism of Israel's military operation from Egypt President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi. After Cairo he traveled to Jordan and planned to return to Israel on Monday, carrying to Israeli leaders the feedback he received in a rush of meetings with leaders throughout the Arab world.

Egypt's state-run media said el-Sissi told Blinken that Israel's Gaza operation has exceeded "the right of self-defense" and turned into "a collective punishment."

Blinken told reporters before leaving Egypt that "Israel has the right, indeed it has the obligation to defend itself against these attacks from Hamas and to try to do what it can to make sure that this never happens again." Mindful of the potential human cost in Gaza, Blinken said "the way that Israel does this matters. It needs to do it in a way that affirms the shared values that we have for human life and human dignity, taking every possible precaution to avoid harming civilians."

Earlier Sunday, the envoy met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh, talks that built upon earlier sessions with the leaders of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority.

**Schools near a Maui wildfire burn zone are beginning to reopen**

**Parents struggle whether to send kids back**

LAHAINA, Hawaii (AP) — Children take their places at folding tables on a church patio several miles from where their school burned down. Plastic tubs hold brand new textbooks quickly shipped from a publisher. Recess is on the resort golf course across the street.

The wind-driven wildfire that leveled the historic Maui town of Lahaina this summer displaced many pupils not just from their homes, but from their schools, forcing their families and education officials to scramble to find other ways to teach them.

Now, more than two months after the Aug. 8 wildfire killed at least 98 people, the three public schools that survived are set to reopen this week, posing an emotional crossroads for traumatized children and their families as they decide whether to go back to those campuses or continue at the other schools that took them in.

Some parents said they won't send their children

back because they worry the fire left toxins behind, despite assurances from education officials that the campuses are safe.

"I'm feeling optimistic about it and grateful we get to go back," said Cailee Cuaresma, a 10th-grader at Lahainaluna High School. "I'm grateful our school is still standing."

For the past month, Cuaresma has attended classes at the makeshift campus of Sacred Hearts School, a Catholic school founded in 1862. Most of the school burned down, but its leaders quickly got classes up and running at Sacred Hearts Mission Church 10 miles away.

Sacred Hearts and other private schools across the state took in displaced public school students, such as Cuaresma, while offering a year of free tuition. Other students bused more than 45 minutes away to public schools on the other side of Maui or opted for remote classes.

On a recent school day at Sacred Hearts' temporary site, teachers moved students between pockets of shade to keep them out of the relentless Lahaina sun. Principal Tonata Lolesio told students assembled on cushioned pews in a chapel that it might be two years before they can return to a rebuilt school.

"Pray that it can be sooner," she said.

Meanwhile, space limitations require students to attend classes on staggered days. Workers have been readying an adjacent lawn for tents allowing at least the younger children to attend school daily.

Cuaresma sat with a group of younger students petting a golden retriever comfort dog brought in by Assistance Dogs of Hawaii. Her home survived the fire but her dad only recently got his job back at a hotel. Being at Sacred Hearts was a good opportunity because the work was challenging, she said.

One public school in Lahaina, King Kamehameha III Elementary,

was destroyed. Pupils from there will share space with Princess Nāhi'ena'ena Elementary, which was closed for post-fire cleaning along with Lahainaluna High and Lahaina Intermediate.

The schools are just blocks away from piles of potentially dangerous ash, prompting concerns from parents, but education officials have said air-quality tests show it is safe to reopen.

"He is not going to be stepping one foot back there," said Tiffany Teruya, the mother of a Lahaina Intermediate eighth-grader.

She and her son, Pu'uwai Naho'oikaika, have been staying in a hotel since their apartment building burned down. He has been participating in a Hawaiian immersion program connected to Lahaina Intermediate.

After the school closed, the program held classes outdoors, away from the burn zone, and focused on cultural learning such as making bamboo trumpets and working in taro patches.

Teruya doesn't know

where she will send her son once the school reopens and the immersion program returns to campus, she said.

Debbie Tau's two children won't return to their Lahaina schools because she also is worried the air isn't safe.

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