Page 3

Wells foundation

names grant recipients

ACAC Tourney pairings reveled

Page 6

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2023

BLUFFTON, INDIANA · Wells County's Hometown Connection





Songs of the Season

Students at Lancaster Elementary School wrapped up their last school day before winter break with the annual sing-along program. Music teacher Hannah Hobson led the students through a series of classic Christmas songs, and closed with the teacher-led song, "Teachers Christmas Wish." While the teachers sang to the students, a video played on the screen showing the teachers' Christmas wishes for the students, like "Hope and Hugs" and "Happiness." (Photos by Holly

Holcomb considers legacy, next steps

By WHITNEY DOWNARD **İndiana Capital Chronicle**

As Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb heads into his last year leading the Hoosier State, he emphasized that his administration won't be resting on its laurels — and will continue to be aggressive about new projects.

"I think that's my attitude and approach to life: 'You better be looking out in front, not behind you.' I'm too young to coast or retire," the 55-yearold Holcomb said. "Besides, 60 is the new 40, so I'm just getting going."

Holcomb is term-limited and cannot run again for governor in 2024. A bevy of candidates have filed to replace him,

and the fight for the Republican nomination will be both fierce and expen-

Though Holcomb has professional and political ties to nearly every candidate, he has declined to endorse anyone. The major candidates include: U.S. Sen. Mike Braun, former Secretary of Commerce Brad Chambers, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Fort Wayne businessman Eric Doden, former Attorney General Curtis Hill, former Superintendent of Public Instruction Jennifer McCormick, a Democrat, and Libertarian Donald Rainwater.

During the traditional end-of-year interview, it briefly started to snow —

prompting a quick moment at the window to admire the icy flakes falling in downtown Indianapolis.

Holcomb said he hadn't yet decided what his next steps would be and "by design" isn't committing to anything.

His predecessor, former Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, left the state to pursue an even higher elected office and became Vice President in 2020. When reminded of that legacy, Holcomb laughed and said, "Well, I'm not pressuring myself on that route for sure."

What's ahead for 2024

Holcomb admitted he's received inquiries and suggestions for a post-(Continued on Page 2)

Markle approves county economic agreements

By JONATHAN SNYDERThe last meeting of 2023 for Markle's Town Council was held in a new location on East Morse Street while being showered with praise for Markle's community and government from both Wells and Huntington Counties.

Council Members — President Nicolas Lund, Matt Doss and Blake Caley — approved both the Wells County and Huntington County Economic Development Agreements. Chad Kline, Wells County Economic Development executive director, and Mark Wickersham, executive director for the Huntington County United Economic Development, both spoke to the council about Markle's growth and some potential goals for 2024.

There are no significant changes to the Wells agreement, and Kline mentioned that over the next year he would focus on workforce development and attracting people to Markle. Kline also mentioned that a recent housing study will be published after Jan. 1. The study focused on data for wages, workforce and housing trends, giving the council an opportunity to show where Markle is at and where they could improve.

"Housing is really the top priority right now," said Doss. Wickersham's excitement for Markle's growth was apparent while presenting the HCUED agreement. Wickersham said out of nine new economic projects garnering over \$70,750,000 in private investment, \$30 million were put into Markle. The only difference in 2024's agreement is the increase in payments for operations. Markle will now pay \$4,200 instead of the traditional \$4,000 due to inflation.

'It's been phenomenal what this community has done," said Wickersham. "You've got a good team here."

The council also approved to keep Joseph Wells in charge (Continued on Page 2)

Indiana looks to reserves for \$1B **Medicaid shortfall**

By WHITNEY DOWNARD **Indiana Capital Chronicle**

The state's April Medicaid expenditure forecast missed the mark by roughly \$984 million due to a combination of state budget reversions and unexpected growth of services for aging and disabled Hoosiers, leaving a state agency scrambling for a solution as lawmakers consider how much to cover from the state's reserve funds.

Sen. Ryan Mishler, the key budget architect for the Senate Republicans, cautioned that Indiana's finances won't be immediately impacted. But the long-term spending plan for the Family and Social Services Administration, which oversees Medicaid, may be.

"I'm concerned about the long haul but, in the short haul ... we'll work with FSSA on some solutions and we do have a pretty positive reserve," said Mishler, R-Mishawaka. "Remember this forecast, this is long-term. Currently we're in good shape. Fortunately, we have a year before the next budget to work on this."

Cris Johnston, director of the Office of Management and Budget, noted challenges with getting timely forecasting data for Medicaid claims.

"It also happened to be the same time that increased utilization of services, as well as enrollment, was occurring with that expenditure base. All of that together prompted this challenge," Johnston said. "I think part of the long term is changing those practices (and) looking at more timely information. Also ... challenging assumptions that are going into this forecast with what is really happening on the ground."

The state's two-year budget, passed by lawmakers in (Continued on Page 2)

History of the poinsettia's namesake, origins get new attention

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) - LikeChristmas trees, Santa and reindeer, the poinsettia has long been a ubiquitous symbol of the holiday season in the U.S. and across

But now, nearly 200 years after the plant with the bright crimson leaves was introduced in the U.S., attention is once again turning to

the poinsettia's origins and the checkered history of its namesake, a slaveowner and lawmaker who played a part in the forced removal of Native Americans from their land. Some people would now rather call the plant by the name of its Indigenous origin in southern Mexico.

Some things to know: WHERE DID THE NAME **POINSETTIA COME FROM?**

The name comes from the amateur botanist and statesman Joel Roberts Poinsett, who happened upon the plant in 1828 during his tenure as the first U.S. minister to the newly independent Mexico.

Poinsett, who was interested in science as well as potential cash crops, sent clippings of the plant to his home in South Carolina and to a botanist in Philadelphia, who affixed the eponymous name to the plant in gratitude.

À life-size bronze statue of Poinsett still stands in his honor in downtown Greenville, South Carolina.

However, he was cast out of Mexico within a year of his discovery, having earned a local reputation for intrusive political maneuvering that extended to a network of secretive masonic lodges and schemes to contain

British influence.

IS THE 'POINSETTIA' NAME LOSING ITS LUSTER?

As more people learn of its namesake's complicated history, the name "poinsettia" has become less attractive in the United States.

Unvarnished published accounts reveal Poinsett as a disruptive advocate for business interests abroad, a slaveholder on a rice (Continued on Page 2)

Local/Area

Obituaries.....3 Police Notebook . . . 3

Opinion Angelkeep 4

Also...

Sports. 6-7 Classifieds 9 Diversions 8

Cloudy and warm(er), cool and breezy tonight

Friday Saturday High 48 | High 49 High 45 Low 34 | Low 41 | Low 45

More Weather on Page 2



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Markle council

(Continued from Page 1) of capital assets for Markle. He is responsible for taking inventory on Markle's infrastructure and valuing the depreciation of all infrastructure assets for the town. Markle Secretary Stephenie Hensley said that he makes her job easier because of his thoroughness.

Additionally, the council approved of a bid to lease out the old town hall building, 197 East Morse St — the building will be the home of a future salon for hair and nail services. The tenant will be responsible for a \$1,000 a month pay-

ment alongside any internal construction and utility fees; Markle will take care of maintenance and updates to the exterior of the building.

Furthermore, the council also approved to keep \$30,000 in the Downtown Development Group for grants. The DDG gives out a Building Improvement Grant, which matches up to \$10,000 for any downtown buildings used for commercial activity in the riverfront district, and the Small Business Grant, which matches up to \$5,000 for commercial signs and internal fixtures. This will not

be a yearly investment for the town, instead Markle will reinvest an additional \$30,000 when funds run

Additional council actions include:

- Introduced Gatlin Sunday as the new general town
- Approved the Wells County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Read a letter from the Huntington County Chamber of Commerce thanking them for membership investments.
- Invested \$125 for the Youth Services Bureau.

• Read a notice from the Novae Corporation about air quality.

• Paid \$2,118 to update the alarm system on the police building.

- Approved a bid from Applied Technology Group for their IT services at \$1,300 a month.
- Established a fee for renting out the Carriage House for \$100 for four hours or less and \$150 for four hours or more. There will also be a \$100 damage deposit, which will be refunded if the building is kept clean.

jonathan@news-banner.com

Medicaid shortfalls

April, relies heavily on forecasted expenses and revenues to make appropriations. However, lawmakers noted that the bill isn't immediately due and flagged increasing Medicaid costs for future concerns, while FSSA committed to increasing scrutiny of ongoing claims for services to try to bring costs

State Budget Director Zac Jackson said he'd learned about the calculation mistake roughly two weeks ago: that the rosy April 2023 forecast predicted a \$570 million surplus, prompting a \$525 million reversion to the general

"With this revised forecast, you can see we probably over-reverted," Jackson said.

Jackson pointed to the use of data that was months old, saying the April forecast depended upon January Medicaid claims data rather than more cur-

To correct the above, \$271 million will go back to Medicaid from the General Fund, Jackson said.

But the single-biggest difference in

forecasts came from an unanticipated demand for Home- and Community-Based Services and other Long-Term Supports and Services, which includes institutional care like nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Testimony from FSSA seemed to indicate a reliance on pre-pandemic use rates for such programs, even as demand surged during and after the COVID-19 pandemic even after federal funds expired, leaving the state to shoulder the unanticipated cost.

"... The cost for nursing facilities are largely based on cost-based reimbursement and the rate of change and the costs are not known with certainty at the time of the forecast," said Jeremy Palmer, an actuary with Milliman presenting on behalf of FSSA. "Additionally, for HCBSs we are continuing to observe cost increases to an unanticipated level.'

Smaller factors include increased Medicaid rates for physicians and Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy as well as the decrease of certain federal pandemic funds.

In the past, the state aimed to have the equivalent of roughly 10 percent-12.5 percent of expenses in reserves but that funding will dip depending on the Medicaid need.

This reflects the wisdom of retaining 10 percent-12.5 percent ... We've been doing that (for) economic declines. Frankly, this was a forecasting error and thankfully we had sufficient reserves to absorb that \$984 million impact," Jackson said.

olis, decried the use of reserves for 'accounting errors.'

the purpose of the surplus was to cover accounting errors," he said.

For at least one member, the unanticipated cost demonstrated ongoing concerns about growing Medicaid expenditures.

Back in April, following the first forecast, Mishler was concerned about the 2 percent growth in Medicaid spending as education spending fell by ² percent.

April) was short," said Mishler. "We have to get a handle on this. If we don't, it has the potential to blow up our budget ... This cannot happen again."

Mishler said that there were budget items he personally would have reconsidered had the April forecast reflected

"There's going to be some tough

This comes as lawmakers continue to take aim at high health care costs, which some say are a result of the state's low Medicaid reimbursement rates.

This is why we don't want to open the budget in a non-budget year,' Mishler said, advising lawmakers against Medicaid expansion or other budgetary measures in 2024. "I prefer to keep the budget closed this year and not have any more spending until we see how things go."

But Rep. Ed DeLaney, D-Indianap-

"I was not aware until today that

Ongoing concerns

"That 2 percent increase (from

the additional millions needed.

decisions ahead," Johnston agreed.

Weather

Thursday, December 21, 2023 (24-hour observations at 8:08 p.m. Wednesday) High: 47; Low: 27; Precipitation: None

Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.32 feet at 10:45 p.m. Wednesday

Wells County forecast

Today: Cloudy, with a high near 45. Southeast wind around 5 mph.

Tonight: Cloudy, with a low around 34. Southeast wind around 5 mph. Friday: A 30 percent chance of rain after 1 p.m. Mostly

cloudy, with a high near 48. South wind 5 to 10 mph. **Friday Night:** Rain likely, mainly after 1 a.m. Cloudy, with a low around 41. South wind 5 to 10 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent. New precipitation amounts

Saturday: A 50 percent chance of rain, mainly before 1 p.m. Cloudy, with a high near 49.

between a tenth and quarter of an inch possible.

Saturday Night: A 20 percent chance of rain. Cloudy, with a low around 45.

Sunday: A 20 percent chance of rain. Mostly cloudy,

with a high near 55. Sunday Night: A 30 percent chance of rain, mainly after

a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 45. **Christmas Day:** Rain likely, mainly after 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 56. Chance of precipitation is 60

Monday Night: Rain likely. Cloudy, with a low around 48. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent.

The poinsettia

(Continued from Page 1) plantation in the U.S., and a secretary of war who helped oversee the forced removal of Native Americans, including the westward relocation of Cherokee populations to Oklahoma known as the "Trail of Tears."

In a new biography titled "Flowers, Guns and Money," historian Lindsay Schakenbach Regele describes the cosmopolitan Poinsett as a political and economic pragmatist who conspired with a Chilean independence leader and colluded with British bankers in Mexico. Though he was a slaveowner, he opposed secession, and he didn't live to see the Civil War.

Schakenbach Regele renders tough judgment on Poinsett's treatment of and regard for Indigenous peoples.

"Because Poinsett belonged to learned societies, contributed to botanists' collections, and purchased art from Europe, he could more readily justify the expulsion of Natives from their homes," she writes.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER OF MANY NAMES

The cultivation of the plant dates back to the Aztec empire in Mexico 500 years

Among Nahuatl-speaking communities of Mexico, the plant is known as the cuetlaxochitl (kwet-la-SHOsheet), meaning "flower that withers." It's an apt description of the thin red leaves on wild varieties of the plant that grow to heights above 10 feet.

Year-end holiday markets in Latin America brim

with the potted plant known in Spanish as the "flor de Nochebuena," or "flower of Christmas Eye," which is entwined with celebrations of the night before Christmas. The "Nochebuena" name is traced to early Franciscan friars who arrived from Spain in the 16th century. Spaniards once called it "scarlet cloth." Additional nicknames

abound: "Santa Catarina" in Mexico, "estrella federal," or "federal star" in Argentina and "penacho de Incan," or "headdress" in Peru. Ascribed in the 19th

century, the Latin name, Euphorbia pulcherrima, means "the most beautiful" of a diverse genus with a milky sap of latex.

SO WHAT IS ITS PREFERRED NAME?

"Cuetaxochitl" is winning over some enthusiasts among Mexican youths, including the diaspora in the U.S., according to Elena Jackson Albarrán, a professor of Mexican history and global and intercultural studies at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

"I've seen a trend towards people openly saying: 'Don't call this flower either poinsettia or Noche buena. It's cuetlaxochitl,"" said Jackson Albarrán. "There's going to be a big cohort of people who are like, 'Who cares?""

Most ordinary people in Mexico never say "poinsettia" and don't talk about Poinsett, according to Laura Trejo, a Mexican biologist who is leading studies on the genetic history of the U.S. poinsettia.





Budget reversions and growing costs

Gov. Eric Holcomb said the Medicaid update reveals "there is work to be done. We have begun a deep dive to understand the factors driving the spending increases and what is causing the unanticipated growth. In the meantime, we will be able to mitigate the fiscal impact while continuing to deliver needed services thanks to a healthy

rent numbers.

(Continued from Page 1)

governor job but said his

wife, Janet, asked for two

months after his term lapses

before making any deci-

o weeks she will

'Isn't there somewhere you

need to be?' But I'm going

to commit to what she asked

and that will give me time to

figure it out," Holcomb said.

"I'll need to catch my breath

and not — in my own mind

take my eye off the ball

Instead, he emphasized

a desire to stay focused

going into his last year and

his final legislative session,

which leadership has prom-

ised will be kept brief and

hyper-focused on priority

landing and launching,

meaning landing certain

projects or deals and finish-

ing what we started and then

launching new. I don't want

there to be a sense in this

administration that we're

just landing planes safely.

We have to be launching,'

it in and coast, people would

start looking elsewhere. I'm

not going to be one of those

remains in limbo is whether

Indiana can land a trans-

formational tenant to the

controversial LEAP innova-

tion park in Boone County,

which has caused conster-

nation over a possible water

pipeline and state farmland

for his administration will

be the push to advertise

state programs that already

exist, such as Manufacturing

Readiness Grants from the

Indiana Economic Develop-

ment Corporation and pro-

grams to combat the state's

high rates of infant and

pates in such programs, Hol-

comb said, and he viewed

it as a "shared responsibil-

Not every county partici-

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maternal mortality.

Another continued focus

purchases.

One major project that

people," he continued.

'If we were to just throw

Holcomb said.

"Next year will be about

over this next year.'

items.

"I'm confident that after

Holcomb considers legacy and ask local leaders what's stopping them from opting

> "I want every citizen, policy that comes out of this legislature," Holcomb said. "I can go into any county and say, ... 'We had 52 counties participate, why didn't you? We have infant or maternal mortality programs — and we have certain areas that are hyperactive in participation — why

aren't you?' "These programs are for all, not just where they're most pronounced or where there's a greatest need. They're for everywhere," he continued. "And so we'll spend a lot of time next year making sure those connections are made so we can lift all boats.'

Surprises ahead and behind

Heading into the New Year, his resolutions remain the same: to embrace spontaneity and be kind to both the unexpected and those around him. As for Indiana, he wanted the state "to go places we've never gone before" in 2024.

His last year could still hold surprises, he said, even after seven years on the job. It's not uncommon for his days to start with news of someone else's personal tragedy, a natural disaster or something else unexpected.

One of the biggest surprises so far was the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, especially its financial and psychological toll.

"The imprint — or the scar — that it would leave, the change in perspectives and the acceleration of doubting truth or claiming what is true ... it surprised me how extensive (it was)," Holcomb said.

Repeated studies have analyzed the spike of misand disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic,

ity" to increase awareness which filtered into public testimony and weakened Holcomb's eventual push to invest in the state's beleaguered public health whether they're a taxpayer infrastructure and spurred or not, to benefit from the distrust in vaccinations. Children are still bening pre-pandemic education goals and various gubernatorial candidates continue to harp on Holcomb's COVID-19 closures, which started in March 2020 and were mostly lifted within months.

Holcomb emphasized that the high level of distrust didn't just impact him though Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita famously questioned the veracity of his administration's COVID-19 reporting but everyone, whether government employees or local business leaders.

"These (committed state employees) are talented, good people that can be doing other things, quite frankly, but ... they love what they do and that's surprising when someone calls that into question," Holcomb said.

Considering his legacy

A rabid history fan who collects the signatures of famous historical figures, Holcomb spends a lot of time thinking about how politicians are remembered. But his personal philosophy for being remembered comes from pop culture figure Indiana Jones, a fictional archeologist and adven-

"(He) says, 'If you want to be a good archaeologist, you have to get out of the library.' And I think that's true ... that may take you to Cairo, by the way, it may also take you to Seoul," Holcomb said, referencing two recent trips abroad. "I don't want there to be a sense in this administra-

tion that we're just landing planes safely. We have to be launching," he said. One of those decisions will be how to encapsulate

his tenure in his gubernatorial portrait. Holcomb could choose to incorporate Indiana's First Dog, Henry Holcomb — a first for Indiana's governors — or, as he recently suggested to his wife, a parody version of American Gothic, which depicts two grim-faced farmers in front of a home with a pitchfork.

Henry Holcomb died unexpectedly on Monday.

Aside from being remembered as someone accessible, easy to work with and respectful, Holcomb said that he'd like to be remembered "maybe most importantly, (as) a governor who wasn't afraid of the future but was determined to

define it.' "Indiana is doing just that right now; we've always been a state full of pioneers. Now we're doing it on a global stage that is going to improve not just our quality of life but others around the world and that's pretty exciting," he said.

Country Road 2446 E. 350 N., Bluffton, IN 260-273-0222 Store Closing For the Winter Sale Dec. 22nd, 23rd, 29th and 30th • 10am to 4pm

Bereavement Shop will continue taking orders and serving customers by calling 260-273-0222 for personal appointments.

Have a Very Merry Christmas!

OBITUARIES

Tara Marie Azzara, 40

Tara Marie Azzara, 40, of Bluffton, passed away unexpectedly from a head injury on Dec. 18,

Tara was born Jan. 17, 1983, in Wolcotville, Ind., to Gina Azzara Lamons. She graduated from Bluffton High School and went on to earn her degree in occupational therapy and criminal justice.

Surviving are her mother, two children, Landon Azzara of New Castle, and Ginna Disheaux of

Richmond; grandmother, Sharon King; aunt, Marjorie Azzara Lister; and uncle, Matthew Gibson.

There will be no services, but she will live on through the donation of her organs. Arrangements are being handled by FairHaven Funeral Home of Fort Wayne.

Julia Ann (Pond) Osborne, 70

Julia Ann (Pond) Osborne, 70, of Bluffton, and a longtime resident of Lansing, Mich., passed away Sunday evening, Dec. 17, 2023, at Stoneleigh Residence & Hospice Home in Lansing, Mich.

Julia was born Aug. 7, 1953 in Bluffton to Ralph (AKA Barney) A. and Carol L (Voirol) Pond. She graduated in 1971 from Bluffton High School, then furthered her education at Lansing Community College and Michigan State University. She worked for Michigan

State University from 1980 until 2014, when she retired. Gardening was her passion; she was active in the garden club in Lansing and enjoyed reading, traveling, bowling, playing softball, and golf.

Survivors include two daughters, Joy Pond and Carrie (Jay) Hill; four grandchildren, Dwayne, Aubrey, Charlotte and Arianna; and her siblings, Jane Gehron, Jacklyn Paulsel, John Pond, Jeffrey Pond and Jené Bastian.

Julia is preceded in death by her parents and brother Visitation will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024 at Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton with service to take place at 1:00

p.m. with Barry Crosbie officiating. Cremains will be laid to rest at Elm Grove Cemetery next to her parents. Memorials may be made in Julia Osborne's memory to the Capital Area Humane Society, with online

form notifications going to joypond01@gmail.com. https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink. aspx?name=cahsad&id=23 Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the

care of the Lemler family of Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home. Friends can send online condolences to the family at www.thomarich.com.

Frances "Jean" Gilliam, 89

Frances "Jean" Gilliam, 89, of Bluffton, died Tuesday evening, Dec. 19, 2023, at Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne.

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

Christian Care on Best Continuing Care Retirement Communities 2024 List

Christian Care Retirement Community has been awarded on Newsweek's list of America's Best Continuing Care Retirement Communities 2024. This prestigious award is presented by Newsweek and Statista Inc., the world-leading statistics portal and industry ranking provider.

Christian Care Retirement Community is ranked the 3rd best Continuing Care Retirement Community in Indiana, standing as the sole Northeast Indiana community on the list. The awards list was announced on Nov. 29, 2023, and can currently be viewed on Newsweek's website at newsweek.com/rankings/americas-best-continuing-care-retirement-communities-2024/indiana.

"It is an absolute honor to care for the Seniors in Bluffton and the surrounding communities, as we truly do strive to enrich senior living with Christian values and quality, compassionate care," said Executive Director Austin Smith. "We express great gratitude to God for His provisions, particularly for guiding team members and volunteers to join and support our mission. Without their and the community's support this award wouldn't be possible.'

Continuing Care Retirement Communities are facilities that offer long-term care options, allowing residents to access higher-level care when medical needs progress. The communities include Independent Living, Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing Care, and Memory Care. To provide people looking for guidance on CCRCs with a comprehensive resource for informed decision making, Statista and Newsweek have partnered for the first time to award America's Best Continuing Care Retirement Communities 2024.

The list is based on three data sources:

1. National Online Surveys: Surveys from medical professionals (e.g., registered nurses, therapists, and physicians) and staff working in the management/administration, acquaintances of residents and residents living in CCRCs, etc.

2. Quality Dimension Score: For each recommended CCRC, participants were asked to rate the eight quality dimensions on a scale from 1 to 10.

3. Accreditations: Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, accreditations relevant for Continuing Care Retirement Communities were considered.

To provide people looking for guidance on CCRCs with a comprehensive resource for informed decision making, Statista and Newsweek have partnered for the first time to award the leading CCRCs in the US. Christian Care Retirement Community is ecstatic to be recognized on Newsweek's list of America's Best Continuing Care Retirement Communities 2024.

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

City: Monday, 4:10 p.m., North Main Street and East Dustman Road. Report of a pallet in roadway.

INCIDENTS

Monday, 4:50 p.m., 400 block of West Ohio Street. Freeman's. Search warrant Officer responded to domestic disturbance between family members.

Monday, 5:49 p.m., Lowes. Caller reported receiving threatening messages from subject who she has a no contact order with.

Monday, 6:00 p.m., 1000 West Washington Street. Report of suspicious behav-

ior by multiple juveniles. No issues found.

Tuesday, 5:14 p.m., 300 block of West Cherry Street. Caller reported tires on trailer were slashed.

Tuesday, 11:43 p.m., executed on vehicle.

Wednesday, 12:16 a.m., 1300 block of West Cherry Street. Welfare check requested for subject potentially without power.

Wednesday, 8:27 a.m., AutoZone. Driver cited for expired license plates.

Wednesday, 9:33 a.m., Inteva Products. Caller

host its Christmas Eve ser-

vices at 9 a.m., 11 a.m. and

5 p.m. at Bluffton High

Sonlight Wesleyan

Church

Church, 2350 S. Ind. 1 south

of Bluffton, will host Christ-

mas Eve services at 10:30

a.m. There will be no Sun-

Bethlehem Lutheran

an Church LCMS,

6514E-750N in Ossian, will

a Christmas Eve service 9

a.m. Sunday. Adult Bible

class and Sunday School

will follow at 10:15 a.m. A

Christmas Eve Service of

Light will be held at 7 p.m.

Ossian United

Methodist

odist Church, 201 W. Main

St. in Ossian, will hold a

"Candles and Candlelight"

Christmas Eve service at 9

St. Luke Church

located at 4960W 100N in

Adams County, will offer

two services on Christmas

Eve. A morning worship

service will begin at 10

a.m. after a time of coffee,

juice and donuts and self-

St. Luke's Church,

p.m. Sunday.

The Ossian United Meth-

Bethlehem Luther-

day School classes.

Sonlight Wesleyan

School, 1 Tiger Trail.

minated, concerned about potential issues and asked for additional patrol.

Wednesday, 10:21 a.m., Dollar General South. Report of a woman who stole a backpack full of items.

County:

Tuesday, 5:31 p.m., 100 block of North Johnson Street, Bluffton. Protection order served.

Tuesday, 5:42 p.m., 100 East and East 300 North, Bluffton. Driver cited for speeding 95 in a 55 mph

Tuesday, 6:57 p.m., felonies.

South Adams Street and East 100 South, Bluffton. Report of kitchen cabinets in Westbound lane.

Wednesday, 10:04 a.m., Ind. 124 and South 600 west, Markle. Driver cited for

ARRESTS

speeding.

Curtis A Schorey, 52, Bluffton, dealing a schedule IV substance, a Level 3 felony, dealing cocaine or narcotic drug, a Level 5 felony, interfering with public safety, possession of cocaine, and possession of paraphernalia, all Level 6

Area Christmas services and events

Wreaths Across America

A special wreath ceremony honoring veterans will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 23, at Old Ossian Cemetery, 205 W. Young St. in Ossian. All members of the public are welcome to attend.

Hope Missionary Church

Instead of its regular service hours, Hope Missionary Church, 429 E. Dustman Road in Bluffton, will hold Christmas Eve services at 3 p.m., 5 p.m., and 7 p.m. at its main campus.

Christmas Eve services will be held at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. at the church's Ossian campus. The Ossian campus is at 1705 Hillcrest Dr.

Apostolic Christian Church

The Bluffton Country church at 1970S-800E and the North church at 630 E. Dustman Road will each offer Christmas worship services at 9:45 a.m. Sunday, Christmas Eve.

St. Joseph Catholic Church

St. Joseph Catholic Church 1300 N. Main St. in Bluffton, will have two Christmas Eve two services during the day Sunday — a Vigil Mass with the Children's Choir at 4 p.m. and a Vigil Mass with the Adult Choir at 6 p.m. The choir will lead the congregation in singing Christmas carols at 5:30 p.m.

A candlelight Midnight Mass will be held Sunday night/Monday morning. A morning mass will follow Christmas morning at 9 a.m.

First Baptist, Bluffton

First Baptist Church, 202 W. Cherry St. in Bluffton, will have a Christmas Eve candlelight service at 7 p.m. on Sunday.

Sunday School will also be at 9 a.m. and a regular worship service will follow at 10:15 a.m.

First Church of Christ, Bluffton

First Church of Christ, 909 W. Spring St. in Bluffton, will hold a Carols and Candelight Service at 11 a.m. Sunday.

First Presbyterian Church

First Presbyterian Church, located at 123 South Jefferson St. in Ossian, will offer Sunday School classes at 8:45 a.m. and worship service at 10 a.m. A candlelight service will follow at 7 p.m. Services are also available via livestream on Youtube.

First United

Methodist, Bluffton First United Methodist

Church, 325 W. Washington St. in Bluffton, will hold Sunday Worship at 9:30 a.m., with Sunday School following at 10:45 a.m.

A special Christmas Eve service will be held at 4:30

> **ITOWN Church** ITOWN Church will

guided tours of the recently Grace Bible Church expanded and renovated

facility. The traditional "Carols and Candles" Christmas Even service will begin at 6 p.m. This quiet reflective service will include the Chime Choir, special music, a devotional, and carol singing by candlelight.

Grace Bible Church, located at 6626 Village Way in Berne, will hold a Christmas Eve worship service at 10 a.m. and candlelight service at 7 p.m. There will be no regular Sunday School



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Merry Christmas to All!

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Beth Davis

Lisa McCormick

Colin Andrews Mike Lautzenheiser Jr.

Area Plan Commission **Dewey Randall & Yvonne Clark**

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Cook



Pictured, from left, are the Bluffton Valero Renewables employees presenting the check to the backpack volunteers. Pictured left to right, are Kent Ulmer, 4-H Association President; Joshua Peppers, Plant Engineer; Steve Cutter, Hydrite Representative; Susan Girod, backpack volunteer; Matt Wilson, Production Manager; Dawn Donnelly, Controller; Kim Barger, Office Coordinator; Bruce Snyder, QA/QC Manager; Shawn Stafford, Engineering Manager; Gretta Nussbaumer, backpack volunteer; and Anya Aulbach, Extension 4-H Educator. (Photo submitted)

Backpack program receives \$25,000 from the Valero Benefit for Children

The Wells County kid's food backpack program "Feeding Tomorrow's Future Today" recently received a charitable grant of \$25,000 from the Valero Benefit for Children thanks to the Valero Texas Open golf tournament and associated events.

Backpack program volunteers Susan Girod and Gretta Nussbaumer stated that they were overwhelmed with the generosity of the staff at Valero, "The gift will go a long way and will be put to good use as we purchase the needed food supplies for the weekly bags. We really appreciate their outstanding support as we work together in making a difference with the hunger issue in our communi-

More than \$23 million in net proceeds from the Valero Texas Open golf tournament have been distributed to agencies and community service organizations across the United States, supporting the work of hundreds of outstanding charity partners like the Feeding Tomorrow's Future Today.

operates the ethanol plant at the southwest edge of Bluffton. The 70 employees and staff each year have volunteered with the backpack program by helping pack food bags several times during the school year and collect needed food items to assist the program.

The backpack program distributes approximately 150 bags of food each week to hungry kids for the weekend and is coordinated by 4-H volunteers with assistance from the Purdue Extension Service - Wells County Office. Various groups volunteer to help pack the bags and other volunteers transport them to the nine participating schools. For more information about the program contact Gretta Nusbaumer, 765-499-

In Wells County, Valero Renewables

1412 or Susan Girod, 260-827-8393.

Gloria reflects on Christmas traditions

Christmas bells are ringing. It is close enough, you can almost touch it. Around the world homes are getting ready for this day. It may not be celebrated all the same, but it's Christmas. To each of us Christmas brings its own sense of congruity.

I picture homes in other countries where children run in bare feet year round, padding into their primitive home with a dirt floor, excited to have a rooster to make over the fire for Christmas Day. I loved the Haitian culture when I was there visiting a number of years ago to visit family, though I would undoubtedly have adjustments living there.

Here at home, Christmas is also in the air. The children are excited to all go caroling in the nursing homes tonight with my mom. Their favorite part is the baaing, hee-hawing, and mooing in the song, Jesus our Brother. Their little faces burst with smiles of delight as they call out with childish voices. The tradition of Grandma and the grandchildren going around to sing for the neighbors has shifted a bit, and this year they'll be singing for elderly folks in Robinson.

The children love looking at all the pretty lights along the way. What is Christmas like for you? Trees, presents, candy, celebrating Jesus... the list goes on. Does it bring back fond childhood days or has it been a more difficult time of the year for you?

In our home it is a special time to celebrate Jesus' birth and the wonder of God's plan in promising to take us to heaven through his son, Jesus

The Amish repent a n d w a 1 k in His ways.

There are many ways this is celebrated including programs or special gatherings with family and friends and hearty meal to go with it. Among the Amish you will also find some gift exchange, varying from one community to the

Oh, and listen to this, today I heard of a family who sleeps in the barn each Christmas Eve to impress on the children's hearts how their Savior was born in these humble conditions.

I was intrigued with the idea. I pictured scattering our large hay bale over the barn flour and then pitching sleeping bags on top. When I told the children about my brainstorm, I got a kick out of their responses."Let's do it!" Julia quipped. "That would be creepy with the animals!" A small voice said. "I'll sleep with rabbits," Austin declared. "I want sleep with the little lamb," Joshua decided. We'll see. I wonder what the weath-

er was like that night, back in the day, when Mary gave birth to Jesus? When I picture Jesus in a manger, or feed trough, as we'd now call it. I imagine a warm climate.

What was it like for Mary that night? Did God come close enough to show her the magnitude of the plan for all mankind through this infant, ready to spring up as any other child, and on into adulthood. Did she know that He

would finally give his life for you and me? I wonder how she must have felt. Imagine the sacrifice she made to have her baby born in a barn full of donkeys which had brought other people to the

There were not doctors to aid her or nurses in clean uniforms to assist her after she gave birth. Instead the ruddy shepherds came straight from the fields to worship her son.

Next I wonder if I'll ask her those questions when I spend eternal years with her in heaven? I don't know; it may not matter that much anymore. For today I'll just know it was a perfect story.

Enjoy my friend's delicious potato casserole, and have a Merry Christmas in the comfy surrounding of a cozy dwelling place!

SIMPLE POTATO CAS-**SEROLE**

8 cups raw, shredded pota-

- 2 ½ cups milk
- 2 tablespoons butter 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper 2 cups shredded cheese

Mix milk, flour, salt, and pepper together. Set aside. Pour shredded potatoes into a 9 X 13-inch greased pan. Dot with butter. Pour milk mixture on top and cover with foil and bake at 350 for 50 minutes. Remove from oven and top with cheese. Bake an additional 10 minutes.

This Weekend

Ouabache's Wonderland

of LightsOuabache State Park's Wonderland of Lights are viewable every evening through Dec. 31.

Admission is \$5 per car. There will be three different light shows at the fire tower to be synchronized to music. One selection will run Monday through Thursday, a different selection on Friday and Saturday and another on Sundays.

Pokagon's Toboggan Run

The Toboggan Run at Pokagon State Park is open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on weekends through Feb. 25.

In addition to weekends the slide will be open every day Dec. 26 through Jan. 7. Sleds rent for \$20 per hour and the park entry is \$7 per car. Gloves must be worn when riding. A warming house is available as are concessions. The slide closes if the weather is below

Fort Wayne's Fantasy of Lights

Fort Wayne's Blue Jacket Fantasy of Lights at Franke Park will be open for driveby viewing through Dec. 31st at Franke Park every evening beginning at 5:30 p.m. A Santa Christmas Market will be open through Dec. 23rd.

Admission is \$15 per car (\$60 per bus or trolley). On some special nights admission is free and included are:

Dec. 26: Four-legged

night—all cars with pets Dec. 31: Pay what you want night.

Timeless Tradition at Botanical Conservatory

"Timeless Tradition: 40 years" is the theme for the Fort Wayne Botanical Gardens holiday display through Jan. 7.

Special programs this weekend will include:

*Art Display: Through Jan. 5 with works of art by Julia Meeks.

Regular hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday (until 8 p.m. on Thursdays) and noon to 4 p.m. on Sundays. Admission is \$7 for adults, \$5 for youth (3-17) and free to those 2 and under. Thursday Dollar Nights are \$1.

A Talk with Tego



Bandit is a five-year-old, domestic short hair, neutered and declawed male.



Oreo is a four-year-old, domestic short hair, spayed female.

Tego's Tips: These cats/kitten will do best in a quieter type home!

These are just a few pets available for adoption at the Wells County Animal Shelter, 1613 W. Cherry St., Bluffton. For more information call 824-6063.



old, domestic short hair



Tego



Christmas Caroling

Students at Three Oaks Christian School in Decatur spent time Monday afternoon sharing Christmas carols and kindness with residents of Golden Meadows Home and Adams Woodcrest. Around 20 students and staff visited with individuals and shared popular Christmas songs. (Photos submitted)



Coffee for emergency response personnel

John and Laura Martin would like to open their home for free coffee for the Bluffton police and fire departments and EMS beginning 8 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 21 through 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 26.

When the front porch of the home, located at 322 W. Wabash St., is on, emergency response personnel are welcome to stop by for a free coffee and thanks for their service. Personnel can park behind the house, off Perry



Tigers, Raiders to play in ACAC Tourney Round 1

By RYAN WALKER

DECATUR — The Back 40 Junction in Decatur hosted the annual drawing for the annual ACAC Tournament, and the result of it got a pairing that lights up the eyes of Wells County.

Athletic directors and head coaches represented each of the seven schools for lunch and waited for the President of the conference, Steve Thompson, to reveal the field.

Jay County girls' basketball coach Sherri

McIntire did the honors to pull team names out of the hat. After the first game was revealed with South Adams at Adams Central, Bluffton was pulled out as the away team. Then, McIntire snagged Southern Wells to host the Tigers for Round 1 on Jan 9. The county clash will start at 6 p.m. with the girls' game followed by the boys at the Raiderdome.

The winners will advance to head to Heritage or Woodlan, and the host site will be determined by who is at the bottom of the bracket in Round 2 of the boys' game.

Jay County got the lone bye and will visit either South Adams or Adams Central.

Bluffton and Southern Wells have already played one another, both in favor of the Tigers. The boys won 44-23 last Friday, and the girls won earlier in the season

All four of the county's coaches were excited for the challenge in January. Both boys coaches emphasized the importance and atmosphere of the game.

"I think you always want to play your county rivals as much as possible," Southern Wells boys' coach Joel Roush said following the results of the draw. "There's a certain importance that's meant to games like that. This one probably double important because it's in the conference tournament, it's a county game and it's just been such a good matchup for the last however many years. It just always matters more, and I think our guys will be excited to play.'

"I think the crowd will be great with both the girls and boys varsity," Bluffton boys' coach Craig Teagle said. "We had a really good crowd there last Friday. I love the gym; It's always been a highlight to play there."

In the tournament last season, both boys' teams lost in the first round, so one of them will get to advance to play

the winner of Heritage and Woodlan later in

A final look at the ACAC Tournament bracket after

Recently, the games have been an even 1-1. Southern Wells took down Bluffton last year at The Tiger Den by five. In their match last week, the Raiders shot just 6-38 on their home floor.

When asked about playing again, both coaches considered the Raiders' shooting woes and looking to improve it for a closer

"We feel fortunate that we beat them last week at their place because they didn't shoot the ball very well," Teagle said. "They're going to shoot it a heck of a lot better than they did last game. It'll be a real challenge



Jay County girls' head coach Sherri McIntire (left) picks out the first name of the ACAC Tournament draw Wednesday at Back 40 Junction in Decatur. McIntire and Adams Central boys' head coach Aaron McClure won their respective tournaments last season and were picked to draw the names for the bracket. (Photos by Ryan Walker)

for us, and it's hard to go on the road anyway and Roush does a great job anyway."

'I think we'd like another shot certainly if we can shoot better than 15 percent from the field," Roush said. "But seriously, I think it's just (Bluffton) is so solid on the boys' side, and it's a nice measuring stick."

On the girls' side, this will be Southern Wells' head coach Jessica Killingbeck's first home game in the conference tournament she once played in at Garrett.

She's looking forward to bouncing back after traveling to Bluffton and heading back to Poneto with a loss to see where her group has come along a few months after the first

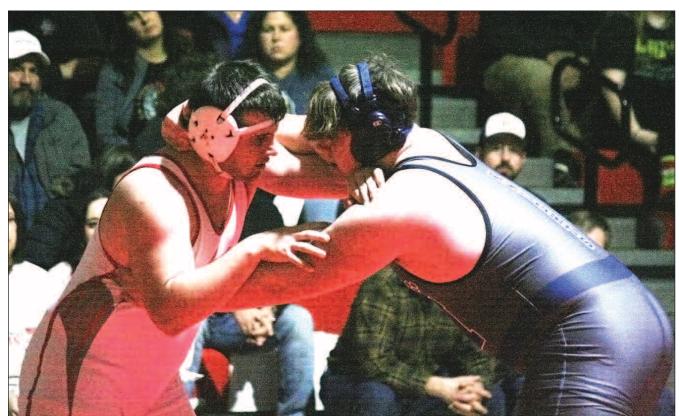
"I think my kids are going to be excited to get another shot at them," Killingbeck said. "They know that we have gotten better. They have improved, and we're coming together as a team right now. We're liking what we see, so I think our kids will be excited to have another chance to perform

Bluffton head coach Doug Curtis has his team rolling at 12-1 currently, but has had recent injuries to both his top players. Konley Ault, who has been out with a wrist injury since the Blackford game on Nov. 30. Maryn Schrieber also has a wrist injury, but is expected to be back this week against Fairfield.

Even though the team has had success, they're not going to look down on Southern

"I think they'll be eager to go," Curtis said about how his team will find out who they're playing in the tournament. "There's rivalries, and for us, all conference games are big games. We talk about conference a little differently than we talk about different games, so I think the girls will be ready to go. I anticipate they'll be excited to get another shot at Southern Wells and see how it goes.

sports@news-banner.com



Norwell's Carson Powell (right) sizes up Adams Central's Gavin Rumple Wednesday night at The Hangar. Powell ended up winning the match by fall in the third period, but the Knights fell 48-21 to the Jets in the dual. (Photo by Ryan Walker)

No. 1 Jets prove their ranking in win over the Knights in wrestling

By RYAN WALKER

MONROE — Adams Central gave all Norwell could handle on the wrestling mat Wednesday night.

The Jets beat down the Knights 48-21 fresh off of the new rankings slotting Adams Central as the No. 1 dual team in 1A this week.

Head coach John Johnson tipped his cap to a Jets program that is always near the top year after year.

"Yeah, we got handled tonight," Johnson said after the match. "Always, always hats off to (head coach Tony Currie) and Adam Central. This is a great program. It's got a lot of history a lot of culture here. So again, I know it was always gonna be tough and proved it tonight. I mean, we just got throttled."

Starting at 190, Adams Central got off to a 9-0 early start that stretched into 21-12 after both squads traded voids at 113 and 120.

way of Carson Powell in the heavyweight match in the third period.

Adams Central's Gavin Rumple, but was taking some shots early that seemingly gave Rumple the advantage. Then practically out of nowhere he took down

By RALPH D. RUSSO

AP College Sports Writer

are working on a deal to become affili-

ate members of the West Coast Confer-

ence for basketball and other Olympic

sports for two years, two people with

knowledge of the situation told The

this week, according to the people

who spoke on condition of anonym-

ity because details had not been final-

ized. WCC university presidents were

A deal could be done as soon as

Associated Press on Wednesday.

Oregon State and Washington State

Rumple and finished him off for a pin.

"I told (Powell) he had a great match," Johnson said. "Securing that takedown at the end and then we talked about taking advantage of opportunities when we get guys on our back not to rush, not to hurry, just sinking in get a little bit deeper and then get the fall. So, he did a great job.

But the Jets' next six matches were at their best, winning all of them to earn a 48-12 lead.

Cody Cox and Elijah Behning picked up wins in the last two bouts by decision to end the night.

Norwell has been dealing with injuries recently, according to Johnson. At least two wrestlers are out for the season, and two more weight classes have been roughed up.

"We're really green or we're banged up like a lot of guys out of the lineup,' Johnson said. "I mean, but again, no excuses. It's just we've got to be able to figure out spots in the lineup to compete. So it's been rough. And I'm hoping we settle in a little bit. We get get some guys back in the lineup.

Norwell will host Bluffton at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 3.

Results

- Myles Kaehr (AC) defeated Eli Thomas by fall at 106.
- Kale Beer (AC) won by forfeit at
- Hunter Douglas (N) won by forfeit at 120.
- Dylann Ogg (AC) defeated Jason
- Prough by decision 4-1 at 126. Brason Schortgen (AC) defeated
- Jake Gruss by fall at 132. • Maverick Dubach (AC) defeated
- Conner Lothamer by fall at 138. Xander Schwartz (AC) defeated
- Chace Behning by decision 10-3 at
- Max Byerly (AC) defeated Luke Dreiband by decision 9-4 at 150.
- Jaret Smith (AC) defeated Aiden McJury by fall at 157. Cody Cox (N) defeated Matt
- Heiser by fall at 165. Elijah Behning (N) defeated Max
- Maehr by decision 10-8 at 175.
- Trevor Currie (AC) defeated Zach
- Wilson by decision 6-1 at 190. Wyatt McAfee (AC) defeated
- Ethan Michael by fall at 215. • Casron Powell (N) defeated Gavin
- Rumple by fall at 285.

notice of allegations from the NCAA By LARRY LAGE **AP Sports Writer** ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP) — The NCAA sent Michi-

Michigan receives

gan a notice of allegations related to impermissible on- and off-campus recruiting during the COVID-19 dead period and coaching activities, potential violations that led to the school's self-imposed three-game suspension of Jim Harbaugh to start the season.

School spokesman Kurt Svoboda confirmed Wednesday that the notice was received this week.

The Big Ten suspended Harbaugh for the final three games of the regular season for an unrelated matter, stemming from a sign-stealing scheme, that is still under inves-

Harbaugh returned to coach in the Big Ten championship game and will lead the Wolverines against Alabama in the semifinals of the College Football Playoffs on Jan. 1 at the

Hoping to mitigate some of the damages of an eventual punishment, Michigan chose to suspended Harbaugh for the first three games for impermissible texts and calls — including some by him — to high school prospects during part of a pandemic-related dead period for contact with potential

The NCAA also is looking at whether a member of Michigan's off-field football staff violated rules by doing on-the-field coaching during practice.

Harbaugh previously told NCAA investigators that he would not agree to an unethical conduct charge for not being forthright, according to multiple people familiar with the situation. The people spoke earlier this year to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because details of the investigation have not been shared.

Pacers snap losing skid in victory over Hornets

By CHRIS GOFF Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Buddy Hield scored 25 points, Tyrese Haliburton had 19 points and 13 assists and the Indiana Pacers snapped a four-game losing streak, routing the Charlotte Hornets 144-113 on Wednesday night behind 61 "Our offense looked better," Haliburton said. "We got a

lot of good looks. I thought we went back to the basics on a lot of stuff (in practice), and it helped. A good win for us. Just figured out a way to win.' The Pacers made 28 of 30 free throws and led by 33.

Aaron Nesmith added 19 points, Myles Turner had 18, Bennedict Mathurin 14 and Jalen Smith and Isaiah Jackson 10 apiece. T.J. McConnell had nine points, nine assists and five

Terry Rozier had 25 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for Charlotte, and rookie Brandon Miller added 21 points and six rebounds. The Hornets shot 47 percent from the field, making only eight 3-pointers to the Pacers' 18.

"It just gets frustrating when they're scoring like that," Charlotte coach Steve Clifford said. "We don't have a lot of room for error. Our guys know that. Weak fouls, secondchance points, not getting matched up. It takes its toll.'

Playing without starting point guard LaMelo Ball and center Mark Williams, the Hornets dropped their sixth in a row to fall to 7-19. Ball, averaging 24.7 points, 8.2 assists and 5.5 rebounds, missed his 11th straight game because of a sprained right ankle. Williams, averaging 12.7 points and 9.7 rebounds, sat out his sixth in a row due to a back contu-

Indiana led 31-29 at the end of the first quarter, 71-60 at halftime and 107-86 entering the final period. Charlotte never led by more than two.

"Winning cures a lot," Hield said. "Everybody's relieved. Coming off the high of the in-season tournament, we rode the storm (out). (Thursday night at Memphis) we have another storm to weather. Ja Morant is back."

UP NEXT

Hornets: Host Denver on Saturday night. Pacers: At Memphis on Thursday night.

The Knights' first victory came by Powell stood his ground against

sports@news-banner.com

Oregon State, Washington State eye affiliate

was first reported by CBS Sports.

membership in West Coast Conference expected to meet by Thursday to consider the proposed arrangement, which

Earlier this month, Oregon State and Washington State announced a football scheduling agreement with the Mountain West Conference for next season as they try to survive the collapse of the Pac-12, with the other 10 schools all leaving for other leagues next summer. The Beavers and Cougars will play six football games against Mountain West opponents and pay the league \$14 million as part of the scheduling agreement,. The schools had discussions about

expanding the agreement with the Mountain West to other sports, one of the people said, but were also looking into alternative plans with the WCC, which includes men's basketball power Gonzaga.

The WCC also includes Saint Mary's, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Loyola Marymount, Portland, Pacific and Pepperdine.

The agreement being discussed with the WCC would allow Oregon State and Washington State to compete

Is Christ back getting back into Christmas?

I have noticed two differences this December compared with last year.

First is how fast it is passing. Perhaps it is the unusually warm December here in Indiana, fooling us into thinking it is still November. The climatologists blame it on El Nino but that is too complicated for my non-scientific mind to comprehend.

For me as a Christian, the season of Advent is a special time for slowing down for reflection and repentance. Instead somebody hit the calendar's

accelerator. I am writing this just a week before Christmas Day, wondering when Advent is going to start. Needless to say, I have not faithfully followed my usual Advent devotional rubrics.



Mark Franke

Hoosier **Opinions**

Which brings me to the second difference. Remember the anti-Christmas dictate that one must say "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas"? There may be a reaction developing against that nonsense, at least based on my small but significant sampling during the past week. When someone such as a store clerk or package delivery man wishes me "Happy Holidays," I respond with "Merry Christmas to you." Nearly all of them immediately responded with their own "Merry Christmas." My study won't be published by any academic journal but it does give me hope.

One more data point can be found at the post office. I went into my local one to get more Christmas stamps with a religious theme. All sold out. So I went to another with the same result. There were other secular stamps but nothing with the Holy Family, wise men or Christmas star. Fortunately there are still some to be had at the USPS website. Unfortunately, some of our cards are going to arrive late but better late than with stamps displaying Frosty the Snowman.

The campaign to remove God from the public square has seen substantial success. Manger displays have been disappearing from public buildings, even nongovernmental ones. A trip through any subdivision will show more blow-up Santas and reindeer than lighted

The assault on Christmas has been fought on many fronts. The most inane example was President Joe Biden's 2021 declaration of a National Day of Prayer, a declaration that somehow failed to mention God. To whom, or Whom, were we to pray? To Biden's credit his 2023 declaration did invoke God's "continued guidance, mercy and protection."

Our public figures, going back to the Founding Fathers, have been careful to mention God even if in a rather generic manner. Our Pledge of Allegiance is to "one nation under God" and our currency states "In God We Trust." A quick review of presidential inaugural addresses informs me that they all brought God into it, some more than others, but all did. They also all took their oath on a Bible, frequently a special family

America was founded by Christians on Christian moral principles — principles built into western civilization. These principles are foundational for the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Remember that it was a Congress populated by Christians that adopted what became the First Amendment, guaranteeing free exercise of religion to all including non-Christians.

Consider this: December 25 is a paid holiday for nearly all workers, those of non-Christian faiths as well as no faith. It is still Christmas, Christ's Mass, on the calendar. Even Congress, which can prime itself for all sorts of legislative mischief, hasn't the hubris to enact a law changing the name to Mid-Winter Day or something equally anodyne.

Even if Christ has been disappearing from His birthday, much of His message remains. Gift-giving, despite its gross commercialization, is part of our culture. Yes, it probably has pagan origins but Christians adopted the practice as a remembrance of the Magi's gifts to the Christ Child. The Magi's star is recalled by the star that tops many of our Christmas trees, even if the reason for this has been forgotten.

The spirit of Christmas, one of peace and love, is referenced secularly as well as religiously. Too bad it doesn't last past December 25, in part because the advertisements begin focusing us on St. Valentine's Day shopping. Note the Christian antecedent for that holiday, too.

The money changers have returned to the temple with a vengeance.

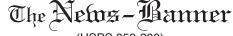
We are a blessed society, blessed with financial wealth and leisure time. It is unfortunate that Christmas shopping and bowl games take precedence over religious observance. But not for all of us, as imperfect as we may be.

So we Christians wish each other a Merry Christmas and offer the same blessing to our non-Christian friends and fellow citizens. Christ's sacrificial love extends to all and His followers are empowered to offer that to all in His name.

Even if we can't assure peace on earth, we can show goodwill to all.

Merry Christ's Mass!

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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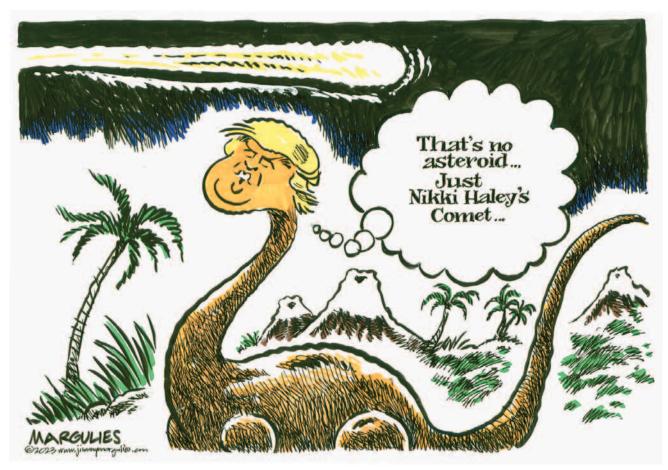
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Mark Miller, Opinion Page Editor



Nikki Haley, Donald Trump and the 'chaos follows him'

Like all the Republican candidates for president, Nikki Haley is trying to find the secret formula for running against Donald Trump. The most recent Fox News national poll — in which the former president is leading Ron DeSantis by 57 points and Haley by 60 shows that no one has discovered the formula yet.

Haley's most recent attempt to deal with the Trump question — why vote for me instead of him? — is to say that "chaos follows" Trump wherever he goes. Haley began testing the "chaos" idea in October and specifically used the phrase "chaos follows him" in an interview with CNBC on Nov. 15. But she gave it a full airing for the first time in a speech in Bluffton, South Carolina, on Nov. 27. Here's what

'We have to acknowledge some hard truths. Republicans have lost the last seven out of eight popular votes for president. That is nothing to be proud of. We should want to win the majority of Americans. But the only way you do that is you have to go with a new generational leader. We have to leave the negativity and the baggage of the past and start looking at the solutions in the future.

'And the truth of it all — and this is another hard truth - I believe President Trump was the right president at the right time. I was proud to serve America in his administration, and I agree with a lot of his policies. But the truth is, rightly or wrongly, chaos follows him. You know I'm right. Chaos follows him. We have too much division in this country and too many threats around the world to be sitting in chaos once again.'

When Haley first said "chaos follows him," there was a mix of murmurs and approval in the crowd. That's when she pressed her point by saying, "You know I'm right." With that, the crowd applauded. But clearly, at first, that group of South Carolina Republicans didn't quite know how to react to Haley's "chaos

So what to make of it? At first glance, "chaos follows him" seems to be simply an acknowledgment of Trump fatigue — what Republican voters mean when they say they liked Trump's policies but got tired of all the "drama" surrounding Trump's time in the White House. But on second thought, "chaos follows him" seems to be something bigger, and that is what might not sit well with many Republicans.

A commonsense reading of "chaos follows him" leads to the question: Is Haley talking about chaos that Trump created, or chaos that Trump's adversaries, Democrats, Resistance and Never Trump Republicans, created in an effort to bring him down? Haley's problem is that — this is more a guess than the result of polling - most Republican primary and caucus voters hold Democrats more to blame for the controversies of the Trump years than they hold Trump himself to blame.

But here's the other side. In some instances, Trump did create chaos, but it's not something that many Republicans like to acknowledge. It started when Trump first took office, when he imposed a travel ban on a few terror-plagued Muslim-majority nations. It was within Trump's authority to do, but he had done nothing to prepare the nation for doing it, and chaos briefly ensued. There were other examples, all created or exacerbated by Trump. Still, when a Republican refers to the "chaos" of the Trump years, that is usually a reference to what Republicans see as the unhinged opposition that tried to bring Trump down.

Byron York

Who knows if Haley will stick with the phrase the search for the secret formula of running against Trump is an ongoing effort. And here is the worrisome news, for Haley and the other challengers: Maybe there is no secret formula.

No Republican alive today has ever run against a former president running to get his old job back. None has run against a former president they have to acknowledge "was the right president at the right time" but now seek to defeat. None has run against a former president who voters picture in the White House, behind the Resolute Desk, standing behind the presidential seal and boarding Air Force One in other words, at home amidst the trappings of the presidency. None has run against a former president who they have to acknowledge that, "I agree with a lot of his policies." And none has run against a former president who has been indicted four times and whose standing in the polls rose, not fell, when each charge against him was made.

So have some understanding when Haley and the other challengers struggle to find the right way to run against Trump. It isn't easy. It might not even be possible. But here's the thing: Trump is running like an incumbent president, but he is not the incumbent president. There have to be caucuses and primaries. There have to be other candidates so that Republicans can make a choice. If knowing everything they know, they choose Trump again, so be it. But it is important that Haley, DeSantis and the rest of the Republican field give the GOP a real contest.

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Pre-Christmas thoughts of 2023

The world experienced a whirlwind type of year in 2023. It's about to come to a close soon after a short pause for the world to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child.

It's always been interesting to watch people of other faiths adapt themselves to use Christmas as their celebration through some form.

In childhood years, the first day of winter, less than a week prior to Christmas, meant nothing about nature. It was a time filled with anticipation of Santa's gifts to come, an extended family gathering with more gifts, Grandma's candy, and gazing at Christmas tree lights glinting off strands of silvery icicles hanging on tall boughs. Characters within the nativity scene on top the Philco TV were constantly rearranged, sibling after sibling after sibling.

Six decades later, nostalgia reverted to the beginning of year 2023 and all that transpired as weeks were devoured faster than Grandma's candy.

Thoughts of moving the three wise men and their gifts in the nativity scene created a comparison of their gifts to Baby Jesus with gifts Angelkeep offered. Spring itself became a gift, following a winter not harsh. Crocus emerged early as though a sign surer than that bright star of Bethlehem. They suggested blessings were yet to come.

Three Wise Men's three gifts remained an annual feature of Christmas. Covid 19's three shots, seemed to have turned to "lumps of coal in a stocking" when Covid hit the Angelkeep household. Perhaps the three shots aided in lessening the disease's impact and shortened the course. At least in 2023 medications remained



available. During the Angelkeep quarantine period, birds built nests. Nests soon held eggs, then nest-

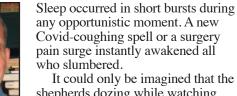
Daugherty lings were cared for. Their loved ones supplied their every need. Today that remembered activity reflected God's gift of Jesus being birthed at Christmas to supply mankind's every true need.

Alan

Gwen's severe health condition finally found an answer via major surgery. The condition's diagnosis came later than normal. This caused added work and recovery. The lessons of caregiving on an extreme level, witnessed earlier as bird parents provided for their helpless children, had also been learned during the Covid quarantine. The strongest did for the weakest of a married pair of Covid patients, roles flip-flopping by the hour.

Post-surgery days reflected the parenting care for baby birds and fawns at Angelkeep. Angelkeep life revolved around the pain, needs, medications, and rehabilitation of the patient. All alternate activity time necessarily converted to additional caregiving time. Covid and major surgery recovery tested the "in sickness and in health" wedding vows spoken over two decades prior in the very same living room.

Recovery periods involved weeks without day and night concepts. Pain, disease, and medications hark no heraldry regarding light and dark hours.



It could only be imagined that the shepherds dozing while watching their flocks by night were awakened just as abruptly when a host of heavenly choristers, numbering a multitude, began harkening their carol of the joyous announcement. A Christ Child is born this day, in the city of David, the town of Bethlehem, so get up and do your Biblical duty. No, you don't need to take a gift.

It could not have been an easy task to roust the sheep and herd them toward Bethlehem to follow instructions supplied by the heavenly hosts. In the travel frenzy, some shepherds may have carried a slow sheep part of the way. It involved a journey of love. Love was a gift greater than gold, frankincense, or myrrh.

Joseph felt that love of God. He cared for Mary's every need, providing her a blanketed donkey ride, rather than hiking the miles as he was forced to endure due to government demands to meet in Bethlehem to be counted among his family. It seems Rome started the Christmas family gathering tradition, albeit unwittingly.

Rome wasn't built in a day. Surgery recovery wasn't promised quickly. Christmas approaches with a renewal of faith, hope, love, joy, peace, thanks, and anticipation, steady and true, like every camel stride headed toward Bethlehem. Rays of the Star of Bethlehem continue to light Angelkeep's path ahead.

Emmanuel! (God with us.) Mr. Daugherty is a Wells County resident who, along with his wife Gwen, enjoy their backyard and have named it "Angelkeep."

Opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily represent the views of this newspaper.

News-Banner Scoreboard

FOOTBALL

College 2023-24 Bowl Glance Saturday, Dec. 16 Myrtle Beach Bowl Conway, S.C. Ohio 41, Georgia Southern 21 Celebration Bowl

Atlanta Florida A&M 30, Howard 26 New Orleans Bowl

Jacksonville St. 34, Louisiana 31, 01

Cure Bowl Orlando, Fla. Appalachian St. 13, Miami (Ohio) 9 New Mexico Bowl Albuquerque, N.M. Fresno St. 37, New Mexico St. 10 LA Bowl Hosted Inglewood, Calif. UCLA 35, Boise St. 22 Independence Bowl

Monday, Dec. 18
Famous Toastery Bowl Charlotte, N.C. W. Kentucky 38, Old Dominion

Texas Tech 34, California 14

Shreveport, La.

35, OT Tuesday, Dec 19 Frisco Bowl

Frisco, Texas
UTSA vs. Marshall, 9:00 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 21
Boca Raton Bowl Boca Raton, Fla. USF vs. Syracuse, 8:00 p.m. Friday, Dec. 22

Gasparilla Bowl Tampa, Fla. Geogia Tech vs. UCF, 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 23 Camellia Bowl

Montgomery, Ala. Arkansas St. vs. N. Illinois, noon Birmingham Bowl Birmingham, Ala. Trov vs. Duke, noon Armed Forces Bowl Fort Worth, Texas No. 24 James Madison vs. Air

Force, 3:30 p.m. Famous Idaho Potato Bowl Boise, Idaho Georgia St. vs. Utah St., 3:30 p.m. 68 Ventures Bowl Mobile, Ala. South Alabama vs. Eastern Michigan, 7:00 p.m.

Las Vegas Bowl Las Vegas Utah vs. Northwestern, 7:30 p.m. Hawaii Bowl Honolulu, Hawaii

Coastal Carolina vs. San Jose St.,

BASKETBALL High School

Wednesday Boys' Scores Bedford N. Lawrence 55, Mooresville Center Grove 83, Indpls Perry Merid-

Central Noble 68, Wawasee 48 Evansville Harrison 76, Floyd Central 67, OT

Greenfield 58. Rushville 23 Hebron 45, LaVille 35 Indpls Attucks 96. Eminence 22 Indpls Metro 60, Owen Valley 58 Jimtown 61. Triton 29

Liberty Christian 64, Phalen 54
N. Central (Farmersburg) 72, Union (Dugger) 36 N. Knox 61, Vincennes Rivet 42 N. Vermillion 66, S. Newton 38 Northfield 49, Argos 40
Northridge 69, S. Bend Washington 62 Richmond 89, Noblesville HomeSchool

Southridge 52, Corydon 44 Springs Valley 84, S. Spencer 74

Tipton 67, Cass 39 Triton Central 71, Indpls Riverside 45 Wabash 65, Carroll (Flora) 45 Delphi Classic Semifinal

N. Newton 59, N. Montgomery 37 McLean County (Ky.) Tournament Ev. Day 56, Rock Creek Academy 55

Wednesday Girls' Scores Anderson 83, Tipton 12 Anderson Prep Academy 61, IMSA

Cascade 63. S. Putnam 29 Center Grove 62, Indpls Perry Meridian 14

Clinton Central 47, Rochester 31 Eastern (Greene) 69, N. Daviess 56 Ft. Wayne Concordia 60, Woodlan

Ft. Wayne North 66, Marion 27 Henryville 55, S. Decatur 52 Huntington North 63, Warsaw 56 Indpls Roncalli 56, Indpls Ben Davis 47

Jennings Co. 62, E. Central 18 Linton 58, Vincennes 57, OT Maconaguah 40, Mississinewa 38 Mishawaka 51, Westview 44 Munster 59. Hanover Central 28 Northfield 49, Southern Wells 44,

Oldenburg 66, Greenwood Christian 20

Pendleton Hts. 69, Yorktown 41 S. Adams 58, Adams Central 37 Salem 43, New Albany 42 Tri 69, Winchester 31
Tri-Central 53, Madison-Grant 41 Wawasee 42, Central Noble 39 Central Christian Tournament Championship Indianapolis Trailblazers Homeschool 34, Central Christian 23

Third Place Indpls Herron 66, Crosspointe Christian Academy 33 Delphi Tournament Semifinal Winamac 65, N. Montgomery 48 Edinburg Tournament Consolation Edinburgh 55, Hagerstown 27 Indpls Lutheran 69, Indpls Tindley

First Round Austin 55, Indpls Lutheran 43 Knightstown 44, Edinburgh 32 S. Ripley 67, Indpls Tindley 25 Austin 55, S. Ripley 41

College Men's Basketball Scores Wednesday, Dec. 20 EAST Pittsburgh 62, Fort Wayne 48

Radford 66, West Virginia 65 Rider 88, Delaware 85, OT Robert Morris 75, St. Francis (Pa.) 73 Seton Hall 75, UConn 60 St. John's 81, Xavier 66

SOUTH Belmont 74, Arkansas St. 70 Duke 78, Baylor 70 ETSU 70, UMKC 57 East Carolina 79. Delaware St. 50 Georgia 94, Mount St. Mary's 82 Lipscomb 101, Bryan 55 NC Central 79, Longwood 70 NC State 82, Saint Louis 70 SE Louisiana 48, Grambling St. 47 UT Martin 78, William Woods 75 MIDWEST

Dayton 91, Oakland 67 Evansville 82, Tennessee Tech 51 Iowa 103, UMBC 81 Nebraska 83, North Dakota 75 Vermont 86. Toledo 60 SOUTHWEST Oklahoma St. 76, Wofford 70

Rice 82, Prairie View 56 W. Illinois 65, Cent. Arkansas 54 Wyoming 78, S. Dakota St. 65 FAR WEST California 71, UC San Diego 67 Chicago St. 55, Bethune-Cookman 54

Cleveland St. 70, Southern Miss. 63 Coastal Carolina 53, Chattanooga

Duke 70, Toledo 45 ETSU 60, Gardner-Webb 48 FIU 73, Chicago St. 55 Florida Gulf Coast 61, Drexel 35 Florida Gulf Coast 61, Drexel 35 Florida St. 110, Alabama St. 45 Georgia 65, Pittsburgh 59 Georgia Tech 81, SC-Upstate 50 Grambling St. 69, Nicholls 50 LSU 80, Coppin St. 48 Liberty 65, Grand Canyon 52 Louisville 59, Washington 51 Maine 80, Duquesne 72 Miami 59, Jackson St. 52 Middle Tennessee 83, N. Kentucky

Grand Canyon 76, Sam Houston

estern 65, Arizona St. 46

Women's Basketball Scores

Wednesday, Dec. 20 EAST

Maryland 78, James Madison 55 Penn St. 101, CCSU 73 Saint Joseph's 72, New Hampshire

Albany (NY) 74, UMass 52 Binghamton 73, Army 51 Boston College 94, Bryant 57 Holy Cross 55, Merrimack 43

Seton Hall 57, Georgetown 49

UMBC 60, American 59 Vermont 70, Sacred Heart 64 SOUTH

Alabama 99, Jacksonville 61

Auburn 69, Washington St. 62 Austin Peay 57, New Mexico St.

UAB 79, Wagner 39 UConn 111, Bold 34

Liberty 79, Utah Valley St. 63

. NC A&T 66, Bethune-Cookman 47 NC State 87, Old Dominion 50 New Orleans 83, Alcorn St. 59 North Florida 55, Winthrop 49 San Diego St. 75, Kennesaw St. 52 Stetson 78, Valparaiso 62 Texas St. 63, Alabama A&M 52 Troy 98, Stephen F. Austin 78 Tulane 66, UALR 57 VCU 59. Md.-Eastern Shore 36 Vanderbilt 70, Dayton 53 W. Carolina 69, Queens (NC) 63 MIDWEST

DePaul 76, Xavier 55 Florida 82, Michigan 65 III. Chicago 81, UTEP 65 Iowa St. 87, N. Iowa 70 IoWa St. 87, N. IoWa 70 Kansas 69, Nebraska 52 Kansas St. 84, Southern U. 52 Milwaukee 100, V-Hawks 37 Missouri St. 56, BYU 55 N. Dakota St. 67, Cent. Michigan 57 Oral Roberts 76, Wichita St. 74 Purdue 79 Indiana St 63 SIU-Edwardsville 106, Harris-Stowe

South Dakota 68, Bradley 47 South Florida 85, IUPUI 49 Texas 104, Texas Rio Grande Val-

W. Kentucky 66, Nevada 60 SOUTHWEST Arkansas 60, Illinois 59 Baylor 61, Providence 36 Cal Baptist 83, Texas Southern 62 Cent. Arkansas 75, Northwestern

Houston 71, Rice 63, OT Incarnate Word 70, Texas Lutheran TCU 96, Omaha 56 Texas A&M 88, Prairie View 36

FAR WEST Arizona St. 80, Fresno St. 76 Gonzaga 81, Arizona 69 Gonzaga 81, Arizona 69 Mississippi St. 82, Colorado St. 75 Montana 72, San Diego 52 Oklahoma St. 87, Utah Tech 61 Oregon St. 92, SE Louisiana 69 Pacific 108, Cal Martime 45 Portland 67, Portland St. 54 Stanford 92, UC Davis 52 UC San Diego 62, Boise St. 56 UC Santa Barbara 107, Life Pacific

Atlantic Division GB Pct Boston .769 .704 20 19 1½ Philadelphia 8 11 14 .593 Brooklyn 13 .481 Toronto 11 1 Southeast Division 16 .407 W Pct GB 10 12 Orlando .571 Miami .444 15 19 41/2 Charlotte Washington 4
Central Division 22 12

GB

4½ 5½

EASTERN CONFERENCE

12 12 12 17 .741 .571 .538 Milwaukee Cleveland 16 14 12 Chicago .414 Detroit 2 25 .074
WESTERN CONFERENCE Southwest Division

GB .615 .571 .520 Dallas 10 16 13 7 4 1 2½ 12 12 New Orleans Houston 19 22 9 San Antonio **Northwest Division** GB

Minnesota 20 2½ 2½ Oklahoma City17 8 Denver 19 .655 11 13 10 18 19 Portland
Pacific Division
W GB 16 16 .640 .615 Sacramento L.A. Clippers 10 L.A. Lakers 15 Phoenix 14 Golden State 13 13 .536 13 .519 14 .481

Tuesday's Games
Memphis 115, New Orleans 113 Milwaukee 132, San Antonio 119 Portland 109, Phoenix 104 Golden State 132, Boston 126, OT

Wednesday's Games Cleveland 124, Utah 116 Indiana 144, Charlotte 113 Miami 115, Orlando 106 Milami 113, Orlando 109 Philadelphia 127, Minnesota 113 Denver 113, Toronto 104 New York 121, Brooklyn 102 Chicago 124, L.A. Lakers 108 Atlanta 134, Houston 127 L.A. Clippers at Dallas, late Boston at Sacramento, late Thursday's Games
Utah at Detroit, 7 p.m.
New Orleans at Cleveland, 7:30

Indiana at Memphis, 8 p.m L.A. Clippers at Oklahoma City, 8

Orlando at Milwaukee, 8 p.m. San Antonio at Chicago, 8 p.m. L.A. Lakers at Minnesota, 9 p.m. Washington at Portland, 10 p.m.

Friday's Games
Toronto at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Denver at Brooklyn, 7:30 p.m. Atlanta at Miami, 8 p.m. Dallas at Houston, 8 p.m. Phoenix at Sacramento, 10 p.m. Washington at Golden State, 10 p.m.

Saturday's Games Milwaukee at New York, 12:30 p.m. Boston at L.A. Clippers, 3:30 p.m. Denver at Charlotte, 7 p.m. Houston at New Orleans, 7 p.m. Orlando at Indiana, 7 p.m. Detroit at Brooklyn, 7:30 p.m. Memphis at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m Utah at Toronto, 7:30 p.m. Cleveland at Chicago, 8 p.m. L.A. Lakers at Oklahoma City, 8

p.m. Portland at Golden State, 8:30 p.m. San Antonio at Dallas, 8:30 p.m. Minnesota at Sacramento, 10 p.m.

HOCKEY

EASTERN CONFERENCE **Atlantic Division**

GP W L **OTPts GF GA**30 19 5 6 44 97 77
29 16 7 6 38108 95 6 44 97 77 6 38108 95 2 38 91 81 5 35111 115 **Boston** Toronto Florida 31 18 11 Tampa Bay 33 15 13 Detroit 32 15 13 Montreal 31 14 13 4 34112 104 4 32 87 106 3 29 94 114 0 22 91 93 33 13 17 27 11 16 Ottawa

Metropolitan Division

GP W L OTPts GF GA

N.Y. Rangers3022 7 1 45101 82

Philadelphia311810 3 39 93 81 N.Y. Islanders32158 Carolina 32 17 12 Washington2916 9 9 39 99 104 3 37106 103 4 36 73 82 2 34103 107 3 31 87 84 New Jersey3016 12 Pittsburgh 30 14 13 5 27105 121 Columbus 33 11 17 WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central Division
GP W L OTPts GF GA 3 41104 81 4 40107 95 2 40115 99 0 36101 99 31 19 9 30 18 8 32 19 11 Winnipeg Colorado 32 18 14 31 16 13 31 15 15 Nashville 2 34 97 89 1 31 89 105 Arizona St. Louis 4 30 93 98 1 21 73 111 Minnesota 30 13 13 31 10 20 Chicago

Pacific Division
GP W L OTPts GF GA
33 21 7 5 47116 87
ver 33 22 9 2 46125 81 Vegas 33 21 Vancouver 33 22 Los Angeles2818 6 4 40101 32 13 14 33 10 14 5 31 96 110 9 29 90 109 Edmonton 29 13 15 Anaheim 31 12 19 1 27 98 100 0 24 84 105 San Jose 32 9 20 3 21 67 NOTE: Two points for a win, one 3 21 67 128 point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Tuesday's Games Tampa Bay 6, St. Louis 1 Columbus 9, Buffalo 4 Philadelphia 3, New Jersey 2, OT N.Y. Rangers 5, Toronto 2 Carolina 6, Vegas 3 Minnesota 4, Boston 3, OT N Y Islanders 3 Edmonton 1 Vancouver 5, Nashville 2 Chicago 3, Colorado 2 Arizona 4, Ottawa 3 Los Angeles 4, San Jose 1

Wednesday's Games
Washington 3, N.Y. Islanders 2, OT
Winnipeg 5, Detroit 2
Seattle at Los Angeles, late

Thursday's Games
Carolina at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Nashville at Philadelphia, 7 p.m. St. Louis at Florida, 7 p.m. Toronto at Buffalo, 7 p.m. Vegas at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m. Washington at Columbus, 7 p.m. Edmonton at New Jersey, 7:30 p.m. Montreal at Minnesota, 8 p.m. Vancouver at Dallas, 8 p.m. Ottawa at Colorado, 9 p.m. Calgary at Anaheim, 10 p.m. Arizona at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

Friday's Games Philadelphia at Detroit, 7 p.m. Edmonton at N.Y. Rangers, 7:30

.m.
Boston at Winnipeg, 8 p.m.
Montreal at Chicago, 8:30 p.m.
Saturday's Games
Dallas at Nashville, 3 p.m.
Vegas at Florida, 3 p.m.

vegas at Florida, 3 p.m.
Boston at Minnesota, 7 p.m.
Detroit at New Jersey, 7 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Ottawa, 7 p.m.
Tampa Bay at Washington, 7 p.m.
Toronto at Columbus, 7 p.m.
Buffalo at N.Y. Rangers, 7:30 p.m.
N.Y. Islanders at Carolina, 7:30 p.m. N.Y. Islanders at Carolina, 7:30 p.m. Chicago at St. Louis, 8 p.m. Seattle at Anaheim, 8 p.m. Arizona at Colorado, 9 p.m. Calgary at Los Angeles, 10 p.m. San Jose at Vancouver, 10 p.m.

<u>TRANSACTIONS</u>

Wednesday's Transactions BASEBALL Major League Baseball American League CHICAGO WHITE SOX — Selected

the contract of RHP Josimar Cousin from Birmingham (SL). Designated RHP Luis Patino for assignment.

DETROIT TIGERS — Agreed to terms

with RHP Jack Flaherty on a one-year

National League NEW YORK METS — Acquired RHP Adrioa Houser and OF Tyrone Taylor Adrioa Houser and Or Tyrone Taylor from Milwaukee in exchange for a minor league RHP Coleman Crow. PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Agreed to

terms with OF Andrew McCutchen on a one-year contract. Traded RHP Roddery Munoz to Miami for cash. FOOTBALL

National Football League ARIZONA CARDINALS — Signed TE John Samuel Shenker and resigned LB Davion Taylor to the practice squad. Released WR Daniel Arias from the practice squad. Signed TE Travis Vokolek from Baltimore's practice squad. Promoted LB Tyreek Maddox-Williams to the active roster from the practice squad. Placed TE Geoff Swaim and LB Josh Woods on injured reserve/

ATLANTA FALCONS — Signed DL Tommy Togiai from the Cleveland practice squad to the active roster.

BALTIMORE RAVENS — Signed TE

Ben Mason to the practice squad.

CAROLINA PANTHERS — Released

QB Jake Luton from the practice squad. Designated LB Claudin Cherelus to return from injured reserve.

CINCINNATI BENGALS — Acquired

DT Travis Bell off waivers from Atlanta. LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Resigned QB Max Duggan to the practice

NEW YORK GIANTS — Designated OL Matt Pearl ad RB Gary Brightwell to return from injured reserve to practice.

NEW YORK JETS — Activated QB

Aaron Rodgers from injured reserve to

practice. Waived FB Nick Bawden.

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS — Des-

ignated WR Rakim Jarrett to return from injured reserve to practice. Reinstated OL Silas Dzansi from the practice squad injured reserve list.

TENNESSEE TITANS — Signed LB

Garret Wallow to the active roster from the Houston practice squad. Placed WR Nick Westbrook-Ikhine on injured reserve. Designated CB Caleb Farley to return from injured reserve to practice and will remain on the physically unable to perform (PUP) list.

Canadian Football League
WINNIPEG BLUE BOMBERS Agreed to terms with LB Tanner Cadwallader on a two-year extension contract. **HOCKEY**

National Hockey League
ANAHEIM DUCKS — Loaned G Calle Clang to San Deigo (AHL). Recalled
G Alex Stalock from San Diego.
DETROIT RED WINGS — Reassigned G John Lehenon to Grand Rapids (AHL) from Toledo (ECHL).

NEW JERSEY DEVILS — Assigned

G Nico Davis to Utica (AHL).
PITTSBURGH PENGUINS — Reas signed D Ryan Shea to Wilkes-Barre/ Scranton (AHL). Recalled RW Vinnie Hinostroza from Wilkes-Barre/Scranton. TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS — Assigned D Max Lajoie to Toronto

VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS Announced the retirement of C Nolan

Minor League Hockey
American Hockey League
LEHIGH VALLEY PHANTOMS — Recalled G Parker Gahagen from Read-

High School Calendar

SWIMMING & DIVING (CO-ED): Norwell at Angola, 6 p.m.

Wells, 7:30 p.m. WRESTLING: Bluffton at ECIC Tournament

SATURDAY, DEC 23

Norwell, 3:30 p.m

BOYS BASKETBALL: Norwell at Bluffton,

(Jay County High School), 9 a.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL: Lawrence North at

Castle Holiday Tournament (vs. Decatur Central), 5:30 p.m. & Norwell vs. New Castle, 7:45

THURSDAY, DEC 28

BOYS BASKETBALL: Bluffton, Southern Wells at 1st Annual Holiday Tournament

(Union City High School), 12 p.m. GIRLS BASKETBALL: Norwell at Noblesville Holiday Tournament vs. Noblesville, 10 a.m.; Randolph Southern at Southern Wells,

Classic, 9 a.m.

THURSDAY, DEC 21

GIRLS BASKETBALL: Bluffton at Fairfield, 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY. DEC 22

GIRLS BASKETBALL: Garrett at Southern

MONDAY, DEC 25 No events scheduled

TUESDAY, DEC 26 No events scheduled **WEDNESDAY, DEC 27**

L: Norwell at New

WRESTLING: Southern Wells at Spartan

Sting Ray Robb to drive No. 41 Chevy in **IndyCar Series in 2024**

IndyCar Series. The 22-year-old Robb is entering his second year in the series and will drive a Chevy for the first time for the team founded by the four-time Indianapolis 500 winner and run by son Larry Foyt. The graduate of IndyCar's open wheel ladder series debuted for Dale Coyne Racing and finished 23rd with 147 points in the standings, highlighted by a career-best 12th-place finish in the season finale at Mon-

Named after the Chevy Stingray Corvette, Robb said he was honored to drive the No. 41 and thanked the team's partners and supporters in a release Friday.

"It provides an opportunity for me to implement past lessons and carry momentum forward in my sophomore season as we enter a very competitive field of teams and drivers," Robb said. "Building

together upon our successes, I am excited for the season ahead.'

The Indianapolis resident, who calls Pavette. Idaho, home, won the 2020 Indy Pro 2000 title with seven victories, five poles, 11 podiums and four track records. Robb's performance earned a scholarship to the Indy NXT Series, where he claimed the Vice-Champion title and won the season finale in his second season.

His path to finishing as the 2022 runner-up status included two poles, 10 topfives — eight of which were on the podium — and 10 top-10s in 14 starts.

Larry Foyt said in a virtual news conference that the team has watched Robb ascend through the ranks and added that his catchy name stuck out. The team president noted that they had talked in recent years without working something out but added, "This year, everything just fell into place where it really worked out. So, we're happy to have him on the team and full speed ahead."

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Jack Flaherty and Detroit Tigers finalize \$14 million, 1-year deal Flaherty said the team DETROIT (AP) -Right-hander Jack Flais ready to win, an opinion herty and the Detroit Tigers have finalized a its leadership.

\$14 million, one-year contract in a deal that allows the 28-year-old righthander to earn an additional \$1 million in performances bonuses with a franchise that has invested a lot in improving next season. "There's a lot of belief

in this team," Flaherty

that excited me about the opportunity." Detroit finished second in the AL Central at 78-84 this year, its seventh straight losing season, and recently signed manager A.J. Hinch to what the team called a long-term contract extension.

"It's no secret Jack is betting on himself

said Wednesday. "That's one of the things

with this contract, and we are very supportive of him coming here and betting on himself," Tigers president of baseball operations Scott Harris said. Early in an active offseason, the Tigers exercised Mark Canha's \$11.5 million option after the 34-year-old outfielder was

acquired from the Milwaukee Brewers for minor league pitcher Blake Holub. The Tigers also signed 35-year-old Japanese right-hander Kenta Maeda to a \$24 million, two-year contract and left-hander Andrew Chafin to a \$4.75 million, one-year

"The ballpark helps us from a pitching standpoint," Harris said. "I think we have started to demonstrate that our pitching group and our manager have a way to reach pitchers and help them get a little bit more out of their ability."



formed from talking with "You could feel it," he said. "You could see it."

Flaherty, who had a \$5.4 million salary last season, has had an ERA over 4.00 in three of the past four seasons. He would earn \$250,000 each for 26 and 28 starts and \$500,000 for

Flaherty went 8-9 with a

Orioles. Baltimore acquired him in an Aug. 1 trade with St. Louis for infielder César Prieto, left-hander Drew Rom and righthander Zack Showalter. "Despite the top line performance that he showed in Baltimore, we noticed that he started to recapture the fastball shape and playability that he had earlier in his career," Harris said. "That pitch started to play bet-

4.99 ERA in 27 starts and two relief appear-

ances, including 1-3 with a 6.75 ERA in

seven starts and two relief outings with the

seed that we can hopefully continue to grow here in Detroit." Flaherty is 42-35 with a 3.75 ERA in seven major league seasons.

ter in Baltimore, and we think that planted a

"Jack had a lot of interest because of the performance that he flashed earlier in his career," Harris said.

He was fifth in NL Rookie of the Year voting in 2018, and the following year he went 11-8 with a 2.75 ERA for the Cardinals, placing fourth in the Cy Young Award

"I've got a lot of baseball in front of me," said Flaherty, who made his major league debut in 2017.



INDIANAPOLIS (AP) - A.J. Foyt Racing has named Sting Ray Robb as driver of the No. 41 Chevrolet next season in the NTT

terey, California.



www.hidaymotors.com





Uninvited guests threaten wedding day fun

Dear Annie: My nephew will be job is right for getting married in a couple of months. him. Without They are trying to stick to a budget. any education On their wedding website, there is a "question-and-answer" page with details for the big day. It clearly states that although they love children, it is an adults only event. It also states that either quits or plus ones are not invited.

My youngest brother has asked my sister — the mother of the groom — if he could bring his two kids as well as a guest of one of the children. My sister said yes, which understandably upset my nephew. I also hear that a sister of the bride plans to attend, along with uninvited children, because she does not have a babysitter.

How do you think things like this should be handled? I have no children, but I think it is disrespectful to go against the couple's wishes. I personally think my sister needs to get in touch with my youngest brother and tell him she misspoke. I'd say his daughters are welcome to come visit but not to come to the wedding. What thoughts might you have on the subject? — Hoping for a Respectful Wedding

Dear Hoping: You are absolutely right that the couple's wishes are to be respected. I'm not sure why your sister felt she had authority over the guest list, but you should tell her exactly what you told me in this letter. It's your nephew's special day, and if his guests cannot follow the rules he so clearly laid out, they shouldn't attend. Hopefully your sister can reach out to everyone she misinformed and let them know she was mistaken before the news has time to reach the couple and inevitably cause them stress.

Dear Annie: My girlfriend has a 36-year-old son who refuses to work. He has every excuse in the book. No

Dear Annie by Annie Lane



known him and currently lives with us. He never found any job, even part-time, last year and never paid any rent. We were forced to move.

or training, he

wants to make \$20 per hour.

Even then, he

gets fired. He has

lived off fam-

ily for all of the

five years I've

Now we are in a 55-plus community that does not allow anyone younger. He has been hiding in the living room and porch. If discovered, the community can evict us. How do we get him out? — Stuck With GF's Son

Dear Stuck: The first step is making sure you and your girlfriend are on the same page. Is she OK with her son living with you? Does she think his behavior is a problem? Assuming she agrees with you, the next step would be to initiate a loving yet honest conversation between the three of you. Give him a timeline to move out, and you can even help him try to find a job. Better late than never.

"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.

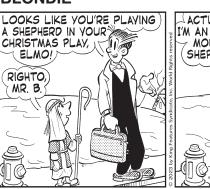
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BEETLE BAILEY





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By Bil Keane



My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham

Q: It seems to me that our world has not improved at all since the Dark Ages. Why are some drawn to loving deeds and lifting up high standards of behavior while others are drawn to wickedness and seek it out? Why doesn't God just move in and stop all the carnage, all the evil, and bring judgment down on wicked people and allow the good people to enjoy His creation? -G.E.

A: The world has been corrupt since the fall of man. Society, as a whole, abides by the rules of men: paying taxes on time, obeying the rules of the road, etc. If we don't obey these things, man imposes penalties, and consequences follow that

M A D1 D2 5 PM 5:30 6 PM

God's judgment applies to all

our lives. Yet people mock when it is suggested that we obey the rules of the One who created everything. We have loosened our grip on the standards God has set before us. We've seen disaster in the pages of history. Violent strife and conflict have haunted the human race to one degree of another since the beginning of time. Conflict brings suffering and

can seriously alter

There are times that God withholds His judgments, possibly even for several generations, because many have listened to His message of warning and turned to Him in repentance and faith. He can use the fear that grips the hearts of people today to point

them to eternal truths the truth of God's eternal judgment, and the truth of His eternal love.

The Bible says not one person is good. None of us deserves God's love. All of us deserve His righteous judgment (see Romans 3:9-12). It's easy to think of an evil man like Adolf Hitler deserving divine judgment, but think of others who seem good and kind. They, too, will be lost if they refuse and neglect God's offer of mercy and forgiveness. God's judgment applies

(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Gra-

ham.) ©2023 Billy Graham Literary Trust. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS



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News (N) Ria Brother Reindeer Van Dyke Honoring the legendary career of the iconic actor and performer for his 98th birthday. (N) Wheel of (:35) Late Show-Colbert 15 Edition (N) Chicago P.D. "I Can Let | Chicago P.D. "The (15.2) 106 20 WANE-2 the Depths ABC21 News at 5 (N) ABC21 (N) ABC World ABC21 iHeartRadio Jingle Ball 2023 Performances by the The \$100,000 Pyramid ABC21 (N) Nightline Christmas at 25 Words NBC News P Dolly Parton's Mountain Magic Christmas News (N) (:35) Tonight Show (N) News (N) :35) Seth Family Family 21.2 (2022, Family) Tom Everett Scott, Ana Gasteyer Chicago P.D. 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(L) (N) College Basketball Kentucky at Louisville From the KFC Yum! Center in Louisville, Ky. (L) (N) 31 50 140 206 Around (N) Pardon (L) ESPN 32 54 143 209 ESPN BET Live (L) (N) NBA G League Basketball Teams TBA (L) (N) College Basketball Basketball To Be Announced ESPN2 SportsCenter NHL Hockey St. Louis Blues at Florida Panthers From Amerant Bank Arena in Sunrise, Fla. (L) (N) Blues Post, Life New NASCAR 2022 Charlotte: World Poker Ladies Law-SVU "Our Words Law-SVU "In the Year Law-SVU "Trick-Rolled Law-SVU "Post USA Will Not Be Heard" We All Fell Down' at the Moulin' Contraband: Seized Contraban Caught! Caught! Caught! Caught! Caught! Caught! DISC Dr. Pimple Popper (N) Dr. Pimple Popper Dr. Pimple Popper Dr. Pimple Popper 36 73 183 280 1000-Lb. Sisters 1000-Lb. Sisters 1000-Lb. Sisters Dr. Pimple Popper 38 77 120 269 To Be Announced (:35) Swamp People: Blood and Guts Enhanced and updated episodes of the reality series, "Swamp People." (N) HIST 39 | 134 | 118 | 265 | First 48 "Cover Story" | First 48 "Tripped Out" | The First 48 After the First 48 (N) Interrogation Raw (N) Accused: Guilty (N) (:05) The First 48 \$\P\$\$ A Biltmore Christmas (2023, Romance) \$\P\$\$ Haul Out the Holly (2022, Comedy) Wes Brown, Kristoffer Polaha, Robert Picardo, Bethany Joy Lenz. \$\P\$\$ Haul Out the Holly (2022, Comedy) Wes Brown, Merry \$\P\$\$ 'Is the Season to Be Merry HALL \mathfrak{\pm} \pm \text{* Pitch Black (2000, Sci-Fi) Vin Diesel, Cole Hauser, Radha Mitchell. \mathfrak{\pm} \pm \text{* The Chronicles of Riddick (2004, Sci-Fi) Colm Feore, Thandie Newton, Vin Diesel. SYFY 43 130 139 247 Big Bang Big Ba TNT 131 254 Mail ('98) Tom Hanks. 107 249 Seinfeld | Seinf AMC COM 48 64 150 219 (4:30) Speak (L) (N) NFL Films Joel Klatt Presents Tony Petitti WWE Friday Night SmackDown The biggest and baddest wrestling superstars. 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(:45) 🛠★★ Scream VI (2023, Horror) Jenna Ortega, Courteney ★★★ Jules ('23) Harriet Sanso Fellow Travelers "Make It Easy" SHOW (15) **** The Wings of the Dove (197, Drama) Linus Roache, Alison Elliott, Helena Bonham Carter. Ledger, Peter Stormare, Matt Damon. #** * Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (107) Johnny Depp. ♀★★★★ The Crying Game ('92) Stephen R

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THE TOWN OF Warren is now accepting applications for a general labor position serving all departments of the Town - Water, Electric, Sewer, Street, and Park as well as any other duties which could/would be assigned under Town operations. Prior Municipal work experience, background in electric work, and/or licensing preferred but not necessary to be considered. Applications be found online at warrenindiana.us or picked up at Town Hall, 132 N. Wayne Street and will be accepted until January 15, 2024. Call 260-375-2656 for further information. Town of Warren, Indiana, is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

THE TOWN OF Warren is now accepting applications for Operations Manager to oversee all departments of the Town -Water, Sewer, Electric, Street, Park as well as any other duties which could/would be assigned through the Town to Public Council related Works operations. Prior Municipal Work Experience, Managerial Experience, and at least one License preferred but all three not required. Wage based on experience Applications can be online found

warrenindiana.us or picked up at Town Hall, 132 N. Wayne Street. Applications and resumes will be accepted until January 15. 2024. 260-375-2656 for further information. Town of Warren, Indiana, is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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Public Notices

LEGAL NOTICE DUKE ENERGY INDIANA, LLC AND HEARTLAND RURAL ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION NOTICE OF INTENT TO FILE CHANGE IN

BOUNDARY LINES DUKE ENERGY INDIANA, LLC ("Duke Energy Indiana") and Heart-land Rural Electric Membership Corporation ("Heartland REMC") hereby give notice that on December 15, 2023, a Joint Petition was filed with the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission for approval to modify service area boundaries between Duke Energy Indiana and Heartland REMC associated with the location of: HJM LLC, 400 E. Logan Street, Markle, Indiana 46770, located on U.S.G.S. Facet Map V-9 in Wells County, Indiana pursuant to Ind. Code § 8-1-2.3-6.

Duke Energy Indiana, LLC

By: Stan Pinegar oj, nb 12/21

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Cash4Life — 15-26-28-34-37, Cash Ball: 01

Quick Draw Midday -06-12-14-16-18-20-28-33-41-44-45-49-51-52-58-62-65-68-72-73, BE: X

Daily Three-Midday — 01-08-03, SB: 09

Daily Three-Evening —

Daily Four-Midday 08-03-02-07, SB: 09 Daily Four-Evening —

01-07-04-05, SB: 05 **Quick Draw Evening** -02-03-20-21-24-26-32-35-

37-40-43-44-49-54-57-65-66-68-70-74, BE: 44

Hoosier Lotto — 01-13-26-30-36-41

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27-35-41-56-60 Powerball: 16; Power Play: 2X

Public Notice
The Town of Ossian, Indiana, (507 N Jefferson St, Ossian, IN 46777) is submitting a Notice of Intent to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management of our intent to comply with the requirements of Construction Stormwater General Permit (CSGP) to discharge storm water from construction activities associated with North Collection System Improvements located along Davis Rd between Metts St and SR 1, along an alignment west 600 feet from the SR 1 and Davis Rd intersection, and south through easements and Town properties to Maplewood Drive east of Homestead Avenue in Ossian, Indiana. Runoff from the project site will discharge to the regulated Allen Mellot Ditch and Eightmile Creek. Questions or comments should be directed to Crystal Chapman of the Town of Ossian at 260.622.4251.

nb 12/21

Public Notice The Town of Ossian, Indiana, (507 N Jefferson St, Ossian, IN

46777) is submitting a Notice of Intent to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management of our intent to comply with the require-ments of Construction Stormwater General Permit (CSGP) to dis-charge storm water from construction activities associated with Collection System Improvements & Septic Relief located along Dyar Drive, McNeal Circle, SR 1 from 250 ft south of Dyar Drive to 400 ft north of CR 1050N, the north and west limits of Homestead Place subdivision, CR 1050N from 950 ft west of SR 1 to 400ft east of SR 1, and Mill St from Maxine Dr to 150 ft east of Lynfield Ct in Ossian and Wells County, Indiana. Runoff from the project site will discharge to the regulated Allen Mellot Drain, Bunn Tile Drain, and Eightmile Creek. Questions or comments should be directed to Crystal Chapman of the Town of Ossian at 260.622.4251 nb 12/21

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COUNTRY

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Wells County Foundation announces final 2023 grants

The Wells County Foundation, Inc. Board of Directors recently approved grants totaling \$90,050 for the third and final grant cycle in 2023. A total of 11 grants were awarded as follows:

Bi-County Services, Inc., \$20,000 — This grant will provide funding support for the construction of a pavilion at Whicker Park. A second pavilion will provide additional seating/eating areas for park guests in addition to increasing the availability of a covered area for the many family reunions, birthday parties, etc. that are held at the park. Grant made from the Margaret Powers Unrestricted Endowment Fund.

Wells County Revitalization, Inc., \$15,000 - This grant will provide funding for "Bland to Brand – Wells County's Tourism and Leisure Marketing." This project will market Wells County's assets for attracting tourism from the region, identify opportunities for further development of leisure facilities and opportunities to make the county known throughout the region. For this project, LC Media and students from Huntington University will capture video and still photography content at area events to utilize in commercials, social media and additional marketing platforms to enhance leisure opportunities for those who are interested in visiting Wells County. Grant made from the Community Enhancement Endowment Fund.

Youth for Christ, \$10,000 — This grant will provide funding for

Campus Life programming within the Bluffton-Harrison, Northern Wells and Southern Wells middle and high schools. Campus Life programming impacts over 2,847 students in Wells County. This grant will complement the Campus Life programming by providing funding for the directors to purchase food for meetings, provide scholarships for students to attend Youth for Christ enrichment trips, leadership development and supplies for large group events. Grant made from the Community Enhancement Endowment Fund.

Bluffton Parks & Recreation Department, \$11,235 — This grant will provide funding for the repair of bank erosion between Wayne Street and the Howard Rich Pavilion. Future phases of the project when complete, will cover the trail from Kehoe Park to the White Bridge. The Rivergreenway is a highly used amenity with trail counters measuring more than 20,400 uses from June to August 2022. Given the trail is a valuable and highly-used asset, ensuring that it is safe is a high priority. Grant made from the Community Enhancement Endowment Fund.

Junior Achievement of Northern Indiana, \$7,500 — This grant will provide funding for JA programming at the following schools: Bluffton-Harrison Elementary, Lancaster Elementary, Ossian Elementary, Southern Wells Elementary, Bluffton Middle School, Norwell Middle School, Norwell Middle School, Norwell High School, Southern Wells Jr./Sr. High and Kingdom Academy. Junior

Achievement prepares young people to succeed in the global economy through practical economic education, workforce readiness skills and financial literacy programs and experiences. During the 2022-23 academic year, Junior Achievement served 2,602 Wells County students. Grant made from the Community Enhancement Endowment Fund.

Stillwater Hospice, \$7,000 This grant will provide funding for Wells County residents receiving grief support, hospice and palliative care. Hospice services in residential homes, senior living apartments, assisted living and skilled nursing facilities are provided through Visiting Nurse. Additionally, palliative medicine consultations for individuals who have a serious or chronic condition are provided as well. Wells County patients represent 6.4 percent of Stillwater Hospice's total patient census. In 2022, 210 Wells County residents were served. Many of the services provided by Stillwater Hospice are not reimbursable by insurance companies. Grant made from the Elizabeth Patton Unrestricted Endowment Fund

Creative Arts Council of Wells County, \$6,035 — This grant will provide funding for the rights and royalties for the productions of Shrek the Musical, Jr.; and Disney's The Jungle Book Kids Show. Shrek the Musical, Jr. will be performed June 14 and 15 at Life Community Church. Disney's The Jungle Book Kids will be performed June 28 and 29. Both

productions will be rehearsed during a two-week theater intensive for students ages 8-11 years old climaxing with the performances. Through the production of these musicals, young actors build self-confidence and practice self-actualization. The productions are attended by hundreds of community members, providing a source of local entertainment. Grant made from the Community Enhancement Endowment Fund.

American Red Cross of Northeast Indiana, \$5,000 — This grant will provide partial funding for the Home Fire Relief program in Wells County. The Red Cross connects with survivors of home fires immediately to assess their most pressing needs, often including shelter, food, clothing, prescriptions, eyeglasses, toiletries and other critical items lost in the fire. Financial support is also provided. All of these services are provided to Wells County residents who have experienced a home fire free-of-charge. During fiscal year 2023, the Red Cross provided assistance to 34 individuals in Wells County through the Home Fire Relief program. Grant made from the Community Enhancement Endowment Fund.

Wells County Food & Clothing Bureau, \$5,000 — This grant was made to assist the Food and Clothing Bureau in maximizing their annual dollar-for-dollar matching opportunity. Grant made from the Unrestricted Fund.

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northeast Indiana, \$3,000 — This grant will provide fund-

ing support to underwrite expenses of Wells County families who are staying at the Ronald McDonald House at the Parkview campus in Fort Wayne. The House provides families with a hospitalized child a comfortable guest room, laundry facilities and a large kitchen where snacks, and home cooked evening meals are provided. Wells County families stayed in the House an average of 58 nights from January through October of 2023. Families are not charged for their stays at the House. Grant made from the Margaret Powers Unrestricted Endowment Fund.

Creative Arts Council of Wells County, \$280 — This grant will provide funding for the rights and royalties for the production of Noir Suspicions. This production will be performed at Life Community Church on Feb. 16 and 17, 2024. Through productions such as these, the Wells Community Theatre provides a constructive outlet for community members to exercise their creativity and a supportive group for people young and old with which to identify. In addition, it provides a great source of entertainment for Wells County residents to enjoy. Grant made from the Ossian State Bank Community Enhancement Endowment Fund.

The Wells County Foundation, Inc. is a nonprofit public charity established in 1957 to serve donors, award grants and provide leadership to improve Wells County forever. Grants proposals to be considered for the next cycle are due to the Foundation office by Feb. 15.

Israel uncovers major Hamas command center in Gaza City

Cease-fire talks gain momentum

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, WAFAA SHURAFA and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military on Wednesday said it had uncovered a major Hamas command center in the heart of Gaza City, inflicting what it described as a serious blow to the Islamic militant group as pressure grows on Israel to scale back its devastating military offensive in the coastal enclave.

The army said it had exposed the center of a vast underground network used by Hamas to move weapons, militants and supplies throughout the Gaza Strip. Israel has said destroying the tunnels is a major objective of the offensive.

The announcement came as Hamas' top leader arrived in Egypt for talks aimed at brokering a temporary cease-fire and a new deal for Hamas to swap Israeli hostages for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Israeli leaders have vowed to press ahead with the two-month-old offensive, launched in response to a bloody cross-border attack by Hamas in October that killed some 1,200 people and saw 240 others taken hostage.

The offensive has devastated much of northern Gaza, killed nearly 20,000 Palestinians, and driven some 1.9 million people — nearly 85% of the population — from their homes. The widespread destruction and heavy civilian death toll has drawn increasing international calls for a cease-fire.

Hamas militants have put up stiff resistance lately against Israeli ground troops, and its forces appear to remain largely intact in southern Gaza. It also continues to fire rockets into Israel every day.

The United States, Israel's closest ally, has continued to support Israel's right to defend itself while also urging greater effort to protect

Gaza's civilians.

But in some of the toughest

American language yet, Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday called on Israel to scale back its operation.

"It's clear that the conflict will move and needs to move to a lower intensity phase," Blinken said. He said the U.S. wants to see "more targeted operations" with smaller levels of forces focused on specific targets, such as Hamas' leaders and the group's tunnel network

"As that happens, I think you'll see as well, the harm done to civilians also decrease significantly," he said.

His comments were more pointed than statements by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who in a visit to Israel this week said the U.S. would not dictate any timeframes to its ally.

TUNNEL NETWORK

The Israeli military escorted Israeli reporters into Palestine Square in the heart of Gaza City to show off what it described as the center of Hamas' tunnel network.

Military commanders boasted

that they had uncovered offices, tunnels and elevators used by Hamas' top leaders. The military released videos of underground offices and claimed to have found a wheelchair belonging to Hamas' shadowy military commander, Mohammed Deif, who has not been seen in public in years.

The army's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said the army had located a vast underground complex. "They all used this infrastructure routinely, during emergencies and also at the beginning of the war on Oct. 7," he said. He said the tunnels stretched across Gaza and into major hospitals. The claims could not be independently verified.

Hagari also indicated that Israel was winding down its operations in northern Gaza, including Gaza City, where it has been battling Hamas militants for weeks. He said the army had moved into a final remaining Hamas stronghold, the Gaza City neighborhood of Tufah.

But the army also acknowl-

edged a significant misstep. An investigation into its soldiers' mistaken shooting of three Israelis held hostage in Gaza found that, five days before the shooting, a military search dog with a body camera had captured audio of them shouting for help in Hebrew.

Hagari said the recording was not reviewed until after the hostages were killed while trying to make themselves known to Israeli forces.

The incident has sparked an uproar in Israel and put pressure on the government to reach a new deal with Hamas. The military chief has said the shooting was against its rules of engagement.

The Israeli military campaign now is largely focused on southern Gaza, where it says Hamas' leaders are hiding.

"We will continue the war until the end. It will continue until Hamas is destroyed, until victory," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a video statement. "Whoever thinks we will stop is detached from reality."

Study shows AI image-generators being trained on explicit photos of children

By MATT O'BRIEN and HALELUYA HADERO

Associated Press
Hidden inside the foundation of popular artificial intelligence image-generators are thousands of images of child sexual abuse, according to a new report that urges companies to take action to address a harmful flaw in the technology they built.

Those same images have made it easier for AI systems to produce realistic and explicit imagery of fake children as well as transform social media photos of fully clothed real teens into nudes, much to the alarm of schools and law enforcement around the world.

Until recently, anti-abuse researchers thought the only way that some unchecked AI tools produced abusive imagery of children was by essentially combining what they've learned from two separate buckets of online images — adult pornography and benign photos of kids.

But the Stanford Internet Observatory found more than 3,200 images of suspected child sexual abuse in the giant AI database LAION, an index of online images and captions that's been used to train leading AI image-makers such as Stable Diffusion. The watchdog group based at Stanford University worked with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and other anti-abuse charities to identify the illegal material and report the original photo links to law enforcement. It said roughly 1,000 of the images it found were externally validated.

lly validated.
The response was imme-

diate. On the eve of the Wednesday release of the Stanford Internet Observatory's report, LAION told The Associated Press it was temporarily removing its detectors.

LAION, which stands for the nonprofit Large-scale Artificial Intelligence Open Network, said in a statement that it "has a zero tolerance policy for illegal content and in an abundance of caution, we have taken down the LAION datasets to ensure they are safe before republishing them."

While the images account for just a fraction of LAION's index of some 5.8 billion images, the Stanford group says it is likely influencing the ability of AI tools to generate harmful outputs and reinforcing the prior abuse of real victims who appear multiple times.

It's not an easy problem to fix, and traces back to many generative AI projects being "effectively rushed to market" and made widely accessible because the field is so competitive, said Stanford Internet Observatory's chief technologist David Thiel, who authored the report.

"Taking an entire internet-wide scrape and making that dataset to train models is something that should have been confined to a research operation, if anything, and is not something that should have been opensourced without a lot more rigorous attention," Thiel said in an interview.

A prominent LAION user that helped shape the dataset's development is London-based startup Stability AI, maker of the Sta-

ble Diffusion text-to-image models. New versions of Stable Diffusion have made it much harder to create harmful content, but an older version introduced last year — which Stability AI says it didn't release — is still baked into other applications and tools and remains "the most popular model for generating explicit imagery," according to the Stanford report.

"We can't take that back. That model is in the hands of many people on their local machines," said Lloyd Richardson, direcogy at the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, which runs Canada's hotline for reporting online sexual

exploitation.
Stability AI on Wednesday said it only hosts filtered versions of Stable Diffusion and that "since taking over the exclusive development of Stable Diffusion, Stability AI has taken proactive steps to mitigate the risk of misuse."

"Those filters remove unsafe content from reaching the models," the company said in a prepared statement. "By removing that content before it ever reaches the model, we can help to prevent the model from generating unsafe content."

LAION was the brainchild of a German researcher and teacher, Christoph Schuhmann, who told the AP earlier this year that part of the reason to make such a huge visual database publicly accessible was to ensure that the future of AI development isn't controlled by a handful of powerful companies.



No Credit Needed Financing



Amy & Tracy Houtz 260-227-2145 7824 Bluffton Rd.

Fort Wayne, IN

Tues - Wed - Thurs Showroom Open: Fri & Sat 11am - 4pm

By Appointment:



DECEMBER 23-JANUARY 1 - Online only auction - Various consignors, seller. Modeline MCM floor & table lamps and Art Nuevo, Presidential collection, advertising, toys, early Moxie thermometer, 25+ Nativity scenes, antiques, vintage primitives, artifacts, trains, Fenton, Haviland & Franciscan china, antique furniture, military items, salesman samples and miniatures, coins & currency. Preview: Dec. 26 from 3 p.m.-6 p.m. and Dec. 28 from 3 p.m.-6 p.m., 102 South Jefferson, Ossian. Sale manager, Rod Fetters. *The Steffen Group Inc.*, www.steffengrp.com, 260-

BIDDING NOW OPEN AND STARTS CLOSING DECEMBER 27 - 10 a.m. EST - Whites Meat Market, owner. Complete liquidation. Meat saws, scales, display coolers, retail shelving, stainless sinks and tables, Herring Hall Marvin safe and much more! Auction pick up Dec. 29, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. EST, 46 W 400 S #1, Kokomo, IN. Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC, 260-724-7402, Kiauction com

DECEMBER 31-JANUARY 7 - Estate of Mary Lynn Lautzenheiser, seller. Personal property online only auction. John Deere mower, lawn & garden, furniture, Christmas, books, household. Open houses: Jan. 4 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Jan. 6 from 10 a.m. to noon, 4917 E 100 N., Bluffton, IN. Isaac Stoller, sale manager, *The Steffen Group Inc.*, http://www.steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006.

JANUARY 11 - 6 p.m. - Estate of Mary Lynn Lautzenheiser, seller. 4917 E. 100 N., Bluffton, IN. One-of-a-kind property w/ quick access to Bluffton, Decatur, Fort Wayne. Main home was once township school building, and has covered porch walk through to previous dance studio that has potential to be fourth living unit. Property also offers detached two car garage and two-unit apartment building. Open houses: Jan. 4 from 4-6 p.m., Jan. 6 from 10 a.m.-noon. Isaac Stoller, sale manager, *The Steffen Group Inc.*, http://www.steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006.

Group Inc., http://www.steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006. JANUARY 12 - 10 a.m. - Secured creditors & various consignors, owners. 815 Adams St., Decatur. Online only truck and equipment auction. Online bidding only. Offering 500+ lots! 2012-2014 Freightliner M2106 box trucks, dump trucks, day cabs, sleepers, utility trucks, bucket trucks, utility & semi trailers, SUV's, pickup trucks, 250+ various skid steer attachments, various truck parts, fencing, work benches, tool boxes and much more! Accepting consignments! Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC, 260-724-7402, Kjauction.com.

BIDDING NOW OPEN AND STARTS CLOSING JANUARY 17 - 6 p.m. EST. - Gary Meyer, owner. Online only commercial real estate auction! 1,376 sq. feet building, 2 bay service area, 15'x16' office space, paved parking lot, .46 acre triangle lot located on N. Main Street, (Hwy. 27)! Zoned: Commercial. Year built: 1950. Wabash Township, Section 29, Adams County, Indiana, South Adams School Corp. Auction preview Jan. 8, 4-5 p.m. or by appointment, 617 N. Main St., Geneva. Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC, 260-724-7402, Kjauction.com.