

# The News - Banner

www.News-Banner.com

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

## Roughly 70 Indiana schools receive bomb threat, Adams schools evacuate

By HOLLY GASKILL

Approximately 70 Indiana schools received bomb threats Monday, including neighboring Adams and Allen counties.

This prompted all three Wells districts to issue statements to the public, assuring their schools had not received these threats. Each Wells district also retained its regular schedules.

In a Facebook post, Southern Wells Superintendent Trent Lehman wrote: "The police believe it is a SCAM call as 70 schools total received the same threat. SW has not received any threats. SW has taken extra precautions and had security and maintenance check all buses, surroundings outside, doors, etc. and nothing concerning or suspicious has been found thus we have continued with a normal school day."

According to a statement from Adams Central schools, the threat was sent via email and was "not considered to be customized to Adams Central." The statement reported the specific threat read, "There are explosives inside every school in your dis-

trict." Adams Central, South Adams and North Adams schools evacuated their buildings and reunited students with their families during the middle of the school day. In a statement Monday afternoon, North Adams said the decision to evacuate was made "out of an abundance of caution."

Similarly, East Allen County Schools questioned the validity of the threats in a statement: "Despite the widespread nature of these threats, no suspicious or explosive devices have been discovered in any of the schools, and there is no evidence supporting the validity of these threats. Furthermore, law enforcement has informed us that similar threats have been reported in other municipalities across the state and the country in recent weeks, with no established validity in those cases either."

The Indiana State Police also issued a statement regarding their investigation and assistance with evacuation, but no source of the threats has been reported at the time of print.

holly@news-banner.com



Jim Breckler (right) presents updates on a variety of projects to the Ossian Town Council. (Photo by Sydney Kent)

## Ossian council discusses new projects, renovations

By SYDNEY KENT

Jim Breckler with Engineering Resources advised the Ossian Town Council that several new projects that will soon be advertised for bidding after permits are approved at the Monday evening meeting.

According to Breckler, the Indiana Department of Transportation has approved funds for work on Melching Drive and Hillside Court in Ossian. The council also approved pay application number three to the Wastewater plant in the amount of \$272,175. Breckler gave special thanks to Town Manager Crystal Chapman and Clerk-Treasurer Angie Ealing for taking extra time to help customers in need of septic relief before the council meeting.

Josh Barkley was approved to continue as president of the Ossian Town Council, with Dennis Ealing approved to continue as vice president. The board unanimously approved both motions at the Monday evening meeting.

The council also approved a motion for renovations to the Ossian Town Hall, specifically the office area of the building, in the amount of \$54,026.74. A significant portion of the funds are allocated to replace outdated office furniture. The renovations will be paid for with leftover COVID funds.

The council also approved a request to use a portion of the remaining COVID

funds to pay for the contract with the Wells County Sheriff's Department. The department's newest officer, Sam Oliver, began work on Monday, and an additional officer will begin soon. However, neither of the two officers will have the ability to work on their own until they have completed the police academy later this year. Sheriff Scott Holliday, who was present at the meeting, confirmed that the department will continue the agreement.

"For the town of Ossian, response times are important," Holliday said. "If we can fill in some gaps for the town, even if we may be in the Southern part of the county and it may take us 20 minutes to get here in the event of an emergency, we have people willing to do it."

Mike Lautzenheiser, executive director of the Area Plan Commission, requested approval to make adjustments to the Wells County zoning ordinance and subdivision control. Of the many changes, complainants will now be required to write and sign complaints. Requirements for the solar energy system that would eliminate the existing property line setback were also approved. The goal would be to compact the size of the project to take a smaller footprint for the same amount of power generation.

Additional ordinance changes include

(Continued on Page 2)

## Wells RSD discusses background issues for 2024

By JONATHAN SNYDER

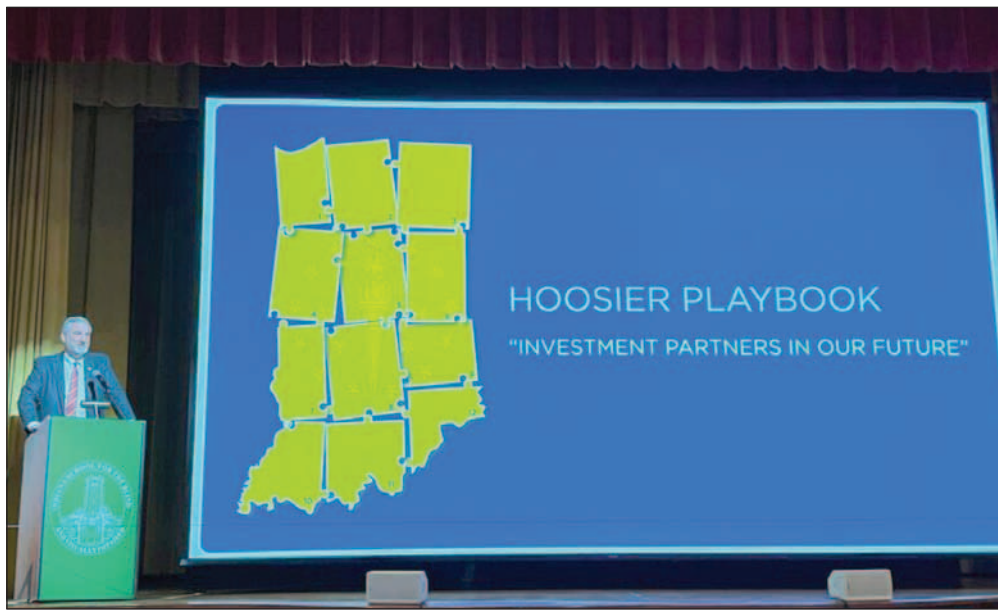
The Wells County Regional Sewer District was able to discuss behind the scenes issues involving a potential new building, truck and website on Monday.

The Regional Sewer District held the first discussion of their 2024 budget plan. Treasurer of the Wells County Chamber of Commerce Trent Bucher stated that there is about \$13 million worth of equipment currently in the ground. While there is significant debt, a large portion of it will be forgiven, according to Bucher. The final budget number for the RSD will be given in their February meeting.

There are few updates for the Craigville project as needed corrections to their punch list line items will be addressed soon. RSD Superintendent Lewis Brown is pleased with VTF Excavation's willingness to get things right. Project homeowners are still hooking up to the district's connection system, with 76 customers connected out of 132 in the area.

The completion date for Kingsland's gravity sewer is still in flux because of Rail-Pro's delay with the jack and bore process. All the force main and service lines are installed, but the Rail-Pro permit is good

(Continued on Page 2)



Gov. Eric Holcomb unveils his governing agenda Monday Jan. 8, 2024. (Casey Smith/Indiana Capital Chronicle)

## Holcomb lays out agenda

2024 plans focus on education and workforce

By CASEY SMITH  
Indiana Capital Chronicle

In his final go, Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb wants to double down on K-12 literacy initiatives and bolster workforce training but won't seek specific policy related to growing concerns around Medicaid spending.

His reading plan could result in holding thousands more third-graders back a year in school.

The Republican governor on Monday unveiled his 2024 agenda, the last in his eight-year term. His policy goals additionally emphasize a need for expanded pre-K and childcare voucher eligibility, as well as increased access to disaster relief at the local level.

Specifically, Holcomb's agenda targets earlier access to IREAD-3 testing and ensuring Hoosier students are mastering foundational literacy skills. The latest reading scores showed that one in five Hoosier third graders continue to struggle.

Currently, the IREAD-3 exam is only required in third grade. The governor's administration is hoping to require testing in second grade, too. Doing so could help teachers and parents better identify struggling students and implement additional supports — such as through summer school or after-school tutoring — before kids get too far behind.

Students who fail the standardized exam can already be held back, but there are

(Continued on Page 2)

## Heavy winter storm conditions bear down on central U.S.

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A "highly impactful" winter storm delivered a punch to the country's midsection on Monday, with blizzard conditions dumping as much as a foot or more of snow and shutting down schools and highways in several Midwest states.

Through Tuesday, snow as deep as 8 to 12 inches could blanket a broad area stretching from southeastern Colorado all the way to

the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, including western Kansas, eastern Nebraska, large parts of Iowa, northern Missouri and northwestern Illinois, said Bob Oravec, a forecaster with the National Weather Service in College Park, Maryland.

"So a very, very highly impactful event coming forward," Oravec said.

There were widespread school closures across Nebraska and

Kansas on Monday ahead of the storm, where forecasters predicted 5 to 8 inches of snow. The school district that includes Nebraska's capital, Lincoln, told students to stay home. Lines were long Sunday at a Target Store drive-up in Omaha as residents stocked up on milk, bread and booze ahead of the storm.

Whiteout conditions in central Nebraska closed a long stretch of Interstate 80. Kansas closed Inter-

state 70 from the central city of Russell all the way to the Colorado border due to dangerous travel conditions, as well as many secondary roads in northwestern Kansas. Several vehicles slid off I-70 in the northeastern part of the state.

Federal courts in Omaha and Lincoln closed at noon Monday. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began increasing the flow through a Missouri River dam that

sits on the Nebraska-South Dakota border near Yankton by 2,000 cubic feet per second to reduce the chance of ice jams forming.

The weather service office in Des Moines, Iowa, warned of the potential for "widespread heavy, possibly extreme, snowfall," with up to 9 to 15 inches, and said that commuters on Monday evening and Tuesday morning would face "significant impacts," with possible

(Continued on Page 2)

**Inside**  
Local/Area  
Obituaries . . . . . 3  
Police Notebook . . . 3  
Opinion  
Michael Hicks . . . . . 4  
Also...  
Sports . . . . . 6-7  
Classifieds . . . . . 2a  
Diversions . . . . . 3a

**Outside**  
  
Rain and snow today with wind gusts, snow tonight  
Today Wed. Thursday  
High 44 High 34 High 36  
Low 30 Low 27 Low 27  
More Weather on Page 2

**Online**  
Follow us on Facebook!  
Go to [www.facebook.com/newsbanner](http://www.facebook.com/newsbanner)  
Place Your Classified Ads 24/7  
Vol. 95 No. 57  
TUESDAY  
January 9, 2024

close to home; far from ordinary  
Ossian Assisted Living  
215 DAVIS ROAD  
OSSIAN, IN  
PH: 260-622-7821  
[www.ossianhealthandrehab.com](http://www.ossianhealthandrehab.com)

How to contact us:  
Call us: 824-0224  
or 1-800-579-7476  
email@news-banner.com  
On the Web:  
[www.news-banner.com](http://www.news-banner.com)  
Follow us at:  
[twitter.com/newsbanner](https://twitter.com/newsbanner)





## What does new GDP data tell us about us Hoosiers?

The U.S. Department of Commerce is reviewing the National Income Accounts, which measure the size and composition of our economy. This process is undertaken every few years, as better measurement tools are available. Right now, the data only extends back to 2017, but it tells a few interesting stories about the Hoosier economy.



Michael Hicks

### Hoosier Opinions

From 2017 through 2022, the Indiana economy grew more slowly than the nation as a whole. In inflation-adjusted terms, the Hoosier economy expanded by 10.8 percent, while the nation as a whole grew by 11.3 percent. That trend continues our long-term underperformance. But, the dismal growth of 2017 through 2020 accounts for all the lagging performance of the Hoosier economy. The expansion from 2009 to 2019 was the worst relative performance of our economy in state history. By 2019, the Indiana economy was slipping into recession due primarily to the tariffs put in place by the Trump administration.

During the post-COVID period, Indiana's economy has grown steadily. No matter which period you examine from 2020 to 2022, we ranked among the top six states for economic growth post-COVID. There are two clear reasons for this.

The first is the American shift of consumption towards manufacturing. From 2017 to 2022, American household consumption of durable goods grew by 316 billion dollars, or 17.7 percent. All of this shift occurred from the start of the pandemic through late 2022. This shift is partially attributable to the low levels of travel and tourism the nation experienced in 2020. But, the vast majority of increased demand for manufactured goods came from federal stimulus payments in the CARES and Pandemic Recovery Act.

A whopping 46.4 percent of Indiana's GDP growth since the pandemic comes from the manufacturing of goods. However, almost all of that growth was due to federal pandemic spending. That spending boom ended in mid-2022, and the Indiana manufacturing sector has actually shrunk over the past six quarters. In fact, most of Indiana's economy shrank over the past 18 months, since the pandemic stimulus spending ran out.

In fact, just four sectors account for 85.8 percent of our state's growth since the end of stimulus. These are retail, transportation, information services and professional and scientific services. Taken together these data tell a pretty clear story. Indiana's slow growth during the last expansion from 2009 to 2019 hit a tariff wall in 2018. That pushed us into an early recession. Then COVID hit, and the U.S. economy slumped to Great Depression levels of joblessness.

The quick rebound was concentrated in the manufacturing sector. Some of that shift was due to consumers substituting RVs, patio furniture and new carpet for the Disney vacation they couldn't safely take. The largest causal factor in Indiana's rapid post-COVID growth was the series of federal government stimulus checks. Those stimulus payments have been spent, and the result was a shrinking manufacturing sector since mid-2022.

The Hoosier economy is now returning to a more pre-COVID trend, with growth that is slower than the nation as a whole. A more interesting story is where that growth is occurring. Before COVID, the geography of economic activity continued to occur overwhelmingly in the Indianapolis metropolitan area. So far in this century, Indianapolis and its suburbs have captured 82 percent of the state's population growth and 105 percent of its jobs. Over the last year for which we have data, that has fallen to 70 percent of population growth and 50 percent of job growth.

The post-COVID world is one in which remote work is now common, and as many as one in three Hoosiers have some remote work options. That allows families far more flexibility in their choice of locations. This has meant departure from the largest city centers, for suburbs and smaller towns.

From 2000 to 2022, Hamilton, Hendricks and Marion County alone accounted for half the state's population growth. However, from 2020 to 2022, Marion County was one of 34 Hoosier counties that lost population. According to the IRS files from 2020-2021, Hamilton County was the number one destination of previous Marion County residents. In fact, the growth in Hamilton and Hendricks counties were so strong, that together they accounted for more than half of all the state's new residents since 2020.

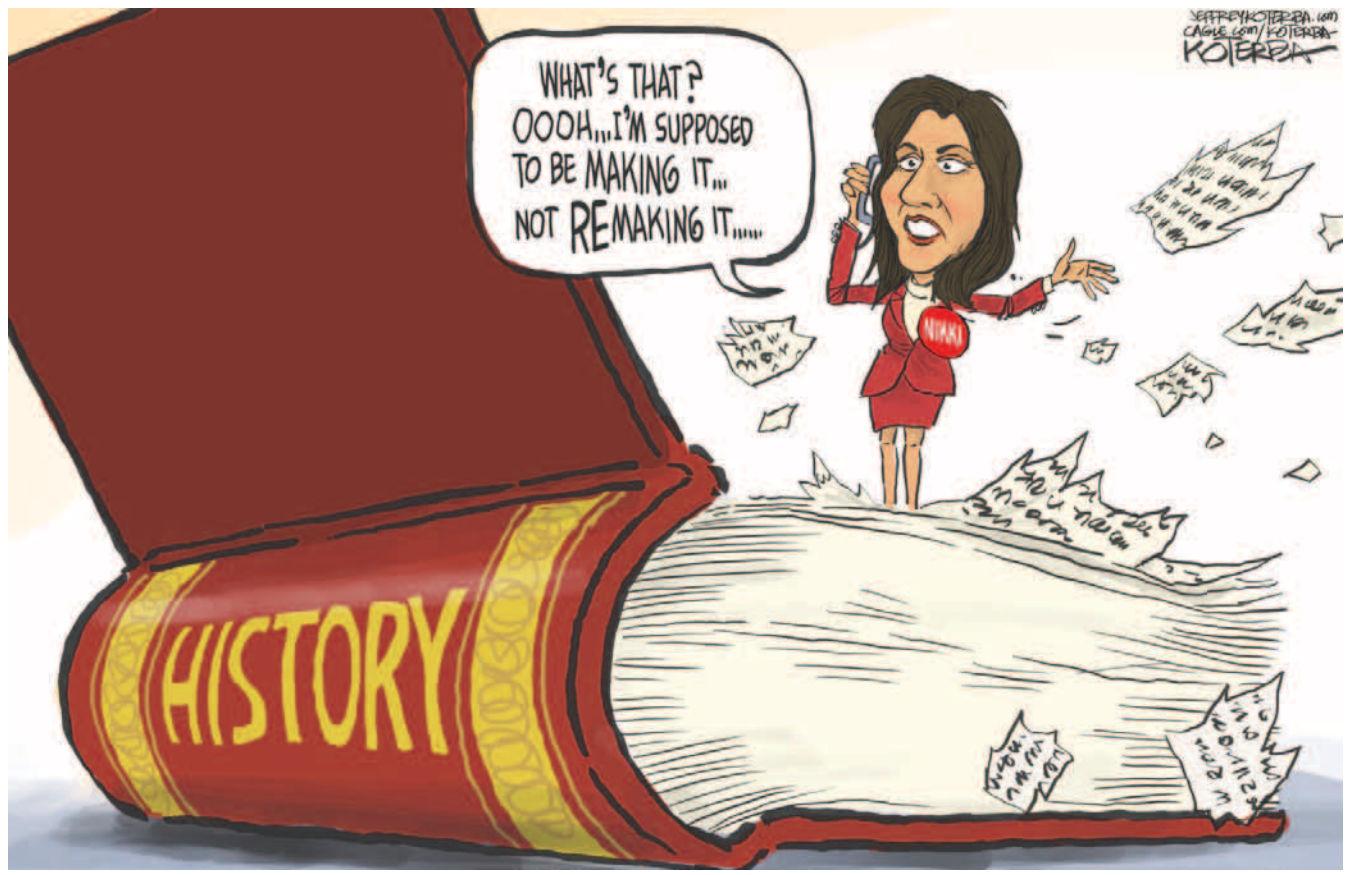
The new GDP data offers some tantalizing evidence that we are seeing an increasing separation between businesses and household location. The Indy metro area is the perfect place to explore this. From 2017 to 2022, the period of revised data, the Indy metro area claimed 38.3 percent of the state's GDP growth. Marion County alone collected a quarter of the state's GDP growth, along with 7.1 percent of the state's population growth. But, since the COVID downturn, Marion County continued to hold 25 percent of the state's total GDP growth while losing more than 7,000 residents.

I apologize for all the data here, but a quick narrative summary might pull it all together. Since the end of the Great Recession, the Hoosier economy has performed poorly, growing slower than the nation. This left us slipping farther and farther behind in terms of income and prosperity.

The one astonishing bright spot has been the performance of the manufacturing sector in the first 18 months after COVID. This burst in manufacturing production was caused primarily by the federal government stimulus, which was exhausted by the middle of 2022. In the six quarters since, Indiana's manufacturing sector shrunk modestly.

At the same time, population growth is happening in a modestly broader set of counties. The shock of the pandemic is too recent to make clear if this is a permanent trend, but it does suggest that as Indiana returns to a pre-COVID economy, more Hoosier counties might expect to pull in a larger share of new residents. This of course means places must become more like the successful counties of Hamilton, Hendricks, Allen, Johnson, and Boone.

Michael Hicks is the George and Frances Ball Distinguished Professor of Economics and the Director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University.



## The rational case for President Nikki Haley

Though it seems as if campaigning for the 2024 presidential election began right after the last one ended, the voting is only now beginning with Iowa's Republican caucuses on Jan. 15. As usual, we'll learn that the caucuses are strange and chaotic. We'll be reminded that the winner might not become the GOP nominee but one of the losers might. And it's on to New Hampshire on Jan. 23 and South Carolina's first-in-the-South primary on Feb. 24.

Most bets are on Donald Trump, despite fierce campaigning by his top challengers, former U.N. ambassador Nikki Haley and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has visited all 99 Iowa counties and secured the governor's endorsement. DeSantis is seen as needing to score second place in Iowa to continue his bid, as Haley and Trump are polling ahead of him in New Hampshire.

Countless are the reasons that Trump, who has declared himself the "revenge" candidate, should be swept into history's dustbin and left to spend his golden years as a professional defendant. If he continues to insist that the 2020 election was stolen from him, a noxious and provable lie, imagine what he'd do with a 2024 loss.

In addition to risking a repeat of Jan. 6, 2021, a Trump loss would leave us with the elderly Joe Biden in the presidency and the painful probability that he won't live to complete his second term. And you know what that means. The single strongest argument against Biden's reelection is Vice President Harris.

I can't stress enough how irresponsible it would be to make a Harris presidency possible. Just listen to her speeches. Her rhetorical flourishes can be dumbfounding, as when she says, "When we talk about the children of the community, they are a children of the community."

Then there's the laugh, maniacal and mystifying. What is she laughing at? Nothing funny, it so often seems. I'm sure the vice president is lovely in other contexts, but as president, she would frighten the world.

Biden has different issues. Never mind the verbal pratfalls for which he has long been infamous; it's his physical ones that are most worrisome. Falling is the No. 1 cause of fatal injuries in older people, and at times, it seems Biden is tilting too far for comfort. No one wants to hear personal criticism of our aged president, so we'll leave it at: Go home, Joe.

Biden was surely the better choice in 2020 — far preferable to a guy accused of paying a porn star for sex and silence while his wife was taking care of an infant, a constitutional heathen who encouraged a siege of the U.S. Capitol by his supporters and believers in the "big

lie." Trump, don't forget, was impeached by the House of Representatives for "inciting violence against the Government of the United States."

This glowering, pouty-frowned schlump belongs nowhere near the White House. Trump is an unfit candidate. Full stop.

Thus, we are left with Haley and DeSantis. My view is that Haley is far and above the best pick for the job of chief executive and commander in chief. Like DeSantis, she has been a governor (South Carolina), where she was popular enough to be reelected. She left that job to become Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, where she was a natural. Articulate, knowledgeable and a quick study, she entered and left the position as a polished pro.

Critics point to Haley's ambition and strategically timed policy positions, such as the decision to remove the Confederate battle flag from the State House grounds following the murders of nine African American parishioners in a historic Charleston church. If it was the right thing to do, why didn't she do it before a racist lunatic mowed down innocent people in prayer? The answer is that politics is about compromises, adjustments and unfolding circumstances. When South Carolina was ready to purge the flag, Haley was ready.

DeSantis is plainly smart, too — a graduate of Harvard Law and Yale University. A JAG officer in the Navy, DeSantis was an adviser to a Navy SEAL commander and received both a Bronze Star and the Iraq Campaign Medal.

For all this, however, he seems a man unfamiliar with his own skin. He lacks what Haley has in abundance: charisma. In addition to her proven competence as an executive and her superior performance in debate after debate, she is also warm, approachable and likable. A mother of two, she's the wife of a deployed military officer. Most impressive, she's a dark-skinned, second-generation Sikh American who grew up in Bamberg, S.C. (population 3,607), with a father who wore a *dastar* (Sikh turban).

As someone who spent my childhood summers racing up and down the scorching sidewalks of nearby Barnwell, S.C., I can tell you: A person who can make it out of Bamberg to govern and perform on the world stage can do anything, including lead the United States.

Do the right thing for your country, Iowa, and vote Haley.

kathleenparker@washpost.com.



Kathleen Parker

## Haley fumbled her Civil War answer. Her real error was not immediately owning up to it.

To kick off 2024, I didn't have the origins of the Civil War on my bingo card.

Republican presidential hopeful Nikki Haley has not made many mistakes. Until now.

I can't decide what is more maddening: Haley's lame answer to a question from a New Hampshire voter about what started the Civil War, or the simplistic attacks on Haley by people in both parties who don't know much about history.

In college, I majored in U.S. history and took courses on the Civil War. The causes of the conflict are multidimensional.

On the one hand, if that question were on the final exam and I had written exactly what the former governor of South Carolina said, I'd have gotten a D.

Yet, if I had said — as many of Haley's critics suggest — that the sole cause of the Civil War was slavery, I still wouldn't have managed better than a C-minus.

Haley began her answer by saying: "I think the cause of the Civil War was basically how (the) government was going to run, the freedoms and what people could and couldn't do."

After pausing for a few seconds, she completed her thought.

"I think it always comes down to the role of government and what the rights of the people are," she said. "And I will always stand by the fact that I think (the) government was intended to secure the rights and freedoms of the people. It was never meant to be all things to all people."

Whose rights and freedoms were protected by the government before April 1861, when Confederate troops



Ruben Navarette

attacked Fort Sumter and began the Civil War? Not those of African slaves.

Haley was probably worried about how it would look to voters back home in the Palmetto State if she said — to a roomful of Northerners — that the Confederacy went to war to defend slavery.

Meanwhile, Haley's critics also erred in suggesting the Civil War was entirely

about slavery.

In an op-ed for The Guardian, Democratic operative Sidney Blumenthal said the answer to the question that was posed to Haley was "an easy one for any eighth grader."

Gov. Ron DeSantis, another contender for the Republican nomination, said Haley "had some problems with some basic American history," and that it's "not that difficult to identify and acknowledge the role slavery played in the Civil War."

But U.S. history is complex. According to History.com, the website of the History Channel, the Civil War began "after decades of simmering tensions between northern and southern states over slavery, states' rights and westward expansion." Other factors cited by historians include the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860; booming economies that gave Southern states the confidence to secede; the invention of the cotton gin, which increased the value of cotton and made the South even more dependent on slaves; and the question of whether Southern states could nullify federal laws.

Of course, much of this is tied to slavery. But saying that slavery was the main cause of the Civil War is not accurate.

People who talk for a living will sometimes be afflicted with "foot-in-mouth" disease.

The real problem is how Haley reacted to her gaffe. Instead of owning it and immediately setting the record straight, she suggested the question was planted by Democrats.

Twelve hours later, she said in a radio interview: "Of course the Civil War was about slavery." She declared that "freedom matters" and "individual rights and liberties matter for all people."

Maybe I'm the wrong person to decide whether gaffes should doom politicians. I voted for Joe Biden in 2020 because the other name on the ballot was Donald Trump. I overlooked Biden's record of making tone-deaf remarks, many of them racially charged.

The former Delaware senator — who authored the 1994 crime bill, which led to the mass incarceration of Blacks and Latinos — once joked that the bill did "everything but hang people for jaywalking." Biden — who opposed forced busing in the 1970s and kept company with Southern segregationists in the Senate — also implied that Black women didn't know "how to raise their children" without the help of White social workers who could tell them to "make sure you have the record player on at night."

I voted for Biden anyway. Why? Because I believe there should be a special dispensation for those who face off against Trump. They should get a free pass when they say the wrong thing — or fail to say the right thing.

Biden got that free pass, and now so should someone else who is squaring off against Trump: Nikki Haley. crimscribe@icloud.com.

### THE NEWS-BANNER

(USPS 059-200)  
Evening News est. 1892 • Evening Banner est. 1899 • Consolidated 1929  
Telephone Number 260-824-0224  
George B. Witwer, Chairman of the Board  
Doug Brown, President/Publisher  
Dianne Witwer, Secretary/Treasurer  
Holly Gaskill, Editor

Periodicals Postage Paid at Bluffton, TN. Published every day except Sundays and Principal Holidays at 125 N. Johnson Street, Bluffton, TN. 46714. Post Office Box 436.

# How men can live longer

Also: The latest weight loss and diabetes meds

*Question: It is scary to hear that men in the U.S. have an increasingly shorter lifespan compared to women. What can I do to buck the trend? — Richard F., Seattle*

*Answer: You're right — women in this country now live, on average, almost six years longer than men. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data published in JAMA Internal Medicine shows that in 2021, women's life expectancy was around 79 years, compared to around 73 years for men. Clearly, there is a crisis affecting American men's quality and length of life. Let's look at what's fueling this.*

*A combination of increasing rates of obesity and associated health problems such as diabetes, differences in men's immune response to COVID-19 and drug abuse are likely contributors.*

- In the 2017-2018 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, more middle-aged men had obesity than any other group, coming in at 46 percent.

- Worldwide, an estimated 17.7 million more men than women have diabetes. Men develop Type 2 diabetes at a lower weight than women because they store their fat in the belly. And more men than women have undiagnosed (and therefore untreated) Type 2 diabetes. On average, people with diabetes die six years earlier than adults without diabetes.

- More men than women die from COVID-19 — perhaps because of inherent immune differences, a reluctance to acknowledge they are ill, and the fact that they have diabetes.

- And men are more than twice as likely as women to die from drug overdoses. Opioids account for almost 70 percent of deaths; cocaine and psychostimulants come in at around 20 percent each, since some deaths are



Mehmet Oz, M.D. and Mike Roizen, M.D.

from multiple drugs. Since 1999, the number of men dying from drug overdoses has risen by 14 percent annually.

These statistics tell you what you need to do to live long and prosper. Avoid illicit drugs, eat a healthy plant-based diet, get lots of physical activity, get regular medical check-ups, and if you are ill, see a doctor pronto! Want to know your ActualAge? Go to [LongevityPlaybook.com](http://LongevityPlaybook.com).

*Question: There's so much confusing news about the diabetes and weight loss drugs that are being marketed. Can you explain which ones are approved for what uses and what the pros and cons are? — Joyce D., Springfield, Illinois*

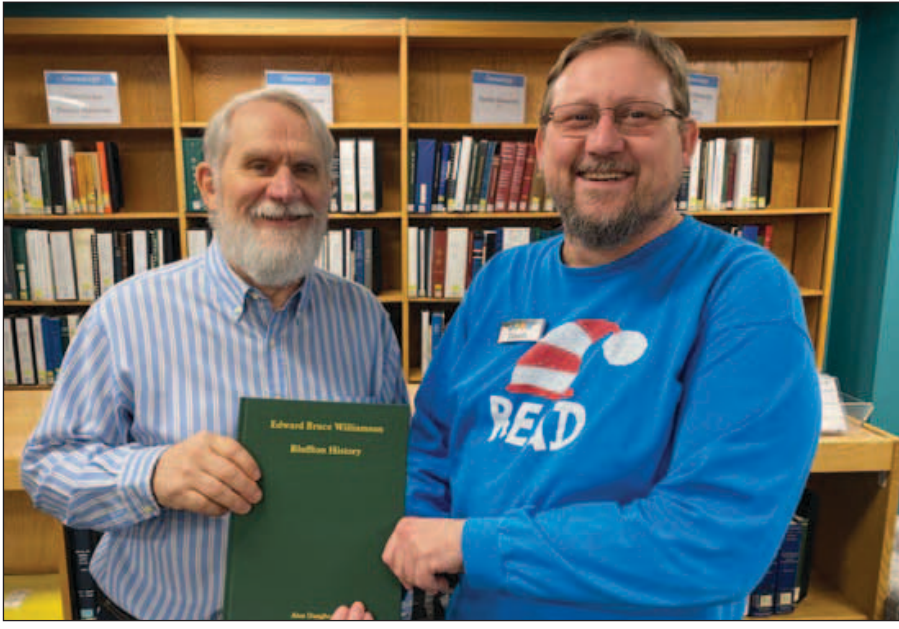
*Answer: The basics are that Ozempic (AKA semaglutide) is the injectable diabetes drug that launched the craze of off-label use for weight loss. Then a similar medication called Wegovy was approved for weight loss (the dosing is different than the diabetes version). After that, Mounjaro was OK'd to combat Type 2 diabetes and folks started using it off label for weight loss, too. That led to the most recent version on the market, Zepbound, which has the active ingredient in Mounjaro (tirzepatide), but is approved for weight loss.*

The weight loss versions

are for folks who have obesity or are overweight and contend with at least one weight-related condition, such as high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes or high LDL cholesterol.

The diabetes medications, Ozempic and Mounjaro, are GLP-1 and GLP-1 and GIP analogues respectively. They help you produce more insulin and reduce the amount of glucose that your liver produces. In addition, they increase bone mass and decrease cravings for food and alcohol.

There are potential — though rare — risks from these meds. If you do not do resistance exercises regularly, you may see a loss of muscle mass. But complications such as pancreatitis, bowel obstruction, and gastroparesis in users of GLP-1, are about 1 percent or less per year of GLP-1 use according to a recent study. However, as the author of an opinion piece in JAMA Network points out, when so many people are using a medication even a small risk of complications can affect a lot of folks. So, if you take these medications, pay attention to how they affect you and alert your doctor to any potential side effects. And make sure to combine consistent resistance exercise and a healthy fish and plant-based diet with your medication routine.



Author Alan Daugherty, at left, is shown presenting two copies of his book about Wells County resident E.B. Williamson to Jason Habegger, adult service manager for the Indiana Room at the library in Bluffton. (Photo provided)

## Local author to give city history talk

Local author Alan Daugherty will be at the Wells County Public Library's Bluffton location on Tuesday, Jan. 16, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. to discuss his new book: "Edward Bruce Williamson: Bluffton History."

E.B. Williamson was a renowned naturalist with a particular interest in dragonflies and damselflies, as well as, a botanist and iris breeder. Daugherty's talk will focus mostly on Williamson's life in the early 1900s and his influence on several businesses and organizations in Bluffton and Wells County.

Daugherty recently donated two

copies of the book to the Wells County Public Library. Accepting the book was Adult Service Manager Jason Habegger, who oversees the Indiana Room at the library.

Daugherty will be signing books at the end of the presentation and will have additional copies that can be purchased that evening. Proceeds from the sale of the books will go to Loving Shepherd Ministries.

Pre-registration is appreciated to attend this event. Please register at the library, call (260) 824-1612 or via the Library's Event Calendar at [wellscolibrary.org](http://wellscolibrary.org).

## "Making a Difference" sponsors



Excel Homes will be one of the sponsors when the Wells Community Boys & Girls Club hosts their annual "Making a Difference" banquet on Jan. 22, at the club. Left to right in the photo are Vicki Bell (club manager), Marlin Schmucher and Bob Grover (both Excel staff), Nick Huffman (club board member) and Gene Bell (resource development officer for the club).



Peyton's also will be one of the sponsors of the Boys & Girls Club fund-raiser. Left to right in the photo are Gene Bell and Vicki Bell (club representatives), Jason Suman (Sr. Operations manager), Theresa Trotter (general manager) and Drew Dunavent (Sr. operations manager). (Photos provided)

## Activities at Fort Wayne's riverfront areas

A variety of activities are planned at river side areas in downtown Fort Wayne.

The Winter Cozy 80s Apres Ski Party will be held at the Promenade Park Pavilion on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 6 to 10 p.m. Those attending must be 21 or older and admission is \$10 with online credit card only at the door.

On Friday, Jan. 12, 7 to 9 p.m. a Skate Off will be held at the Headwaters Ice Rink.

The January Sunday Heritage Concert will be held on Jan. 14, from 2 to 3 p.m. at the Promenade Park Pavilion featuring acoustic guitar and vocals by Topher Beyer. On Feb. 11 the entertainment will be an Open Jam Session with folks bringing their own instruments.

"A Night at the Ballroom" will be featured on Jan. 18, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at the Promenade Park Pavilion.

A free "Sunday Sweat on the Riverfront" will take place the 2nd Sundays of

the month (Jan. 13 and Feb. 11) with Kickboxing with 9Round from 9 to 10 a.m. and Yoga on the Riverfronts

from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

More info about the events at [fortwayneparks.org](http://fortwayneparks.org).

## ESTATE SALE

### LOG HOMES

**PAY ONLY THE BALANCE OWED!**

**JUST RELEASED: AMERICAN LOG HOMES**  
is assisting estate and account settlement on houses

### LOG HOME KITS

**Selling for BALANCE OWED with FREE DELIVERY**

Model #101, Carolina, \$40,840	<b>BALANCE OWED \$17,000</b>
Model #203, Georgia, \$49,500	<b>BALANCE OWED \$19,950</b>
Model #305, Ellioxi, \$36,825	<b>BALANCE OWED \$14,500</b>
Model #403, Augusta, \$42,450	<b>BALANCE OWED \$16,500</b>

---

**NEW HOMES:** Serious Inquiries only **Call: 704 368-4528**

- Never been manufactured
- **NO TIME LIMIT FOR DELIVERY**
- Comes with complete building blueprints and Construction Manual

\* Windows, Doors and Roofing not included

**Before Calling View House Plans at**  
[www.americanloghomesandcabins.com](http://www.americanloghomesandcabins.com)

## Attention Advertisers!

COMING IN FEBRUARY ... OUR 26th ANNUAL

Wells County

# Fact Book

## 2024

### Wells County Fact Book

One of our most popular annual projects, it is sure to be a "keeper!"

Jampacked with information we use everyday but take for granted, updated with newly elected officials and more!

Useful information for new residents and visitors as well as natives! From who to call at city hall, county offices, schools and utilities ... how to get a building permit, listings of regional zip codes, important phone numbers...

There are statistics, information on health care, recreation, churches, state government, maps and so much more!

You'll want your business to be a part of this year-round handy reference guide to Wells County!



The News-Banner

**AD DEADLINE: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24**

Contact Your Ad Rep Today or

## Call 824-0224

or 800-579-7476 and ask for Display Advertising





# Pope Francis calls for a universal ban on surrogacy

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis called Monday for a universal ban on what he called the “despicable” practice of surrogate motherhood, as he included the “commercialization” of pregnancy in an annual speech listing threats to global peace and human dignity.

In a foreign policy address to ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, Francis lamented that 2024 had dawned at a time in which peace is “increasingly threatened, weakened and in some part lost.”

Citing Russia’s war in Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas war, the issue of migration, climate crises and the “immoral” production of nuclear and conventional weapons, Fran-

cis delivered a list of the ills afflicting humanity and the increasing violation of international humanitarian law that allows them.

But Francis also listed smaller-scale issues that he said were threats to peace and human dignity, including surrogacy. He said the life of the unborn child must be protected and not “suppressed or turned into an object of trafficking.”

“I consider despicable the practice of so-called surrogate motherhood, which represents a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child, based on the exploitation of situations of the mother’s material needs,” he said. Saying a child is a gift and

“never the basis of a commercial contract,” he called for a global ban on surrogacy “to prohibit this practice universally.”

Vatican teaching opposes in vitro fertilization, and Francis has previously voiced the Roman Catholic Church’s opposition to surrogacy, or what he has called “uterus for rent.” At the same time, however, the Vatican’s doctrine office has made clear that same-sex parents who resort to surrogacy can have their children baptized.

While commercial surrogacy contracts are common in the United States, including protections for the mothers, guarantees of independent legal representation and

medical coverage, they are banned in parts of Europe, including Spain and Italy.

Russia’s war in Ukraine, and the threat to babies born to surrogate Ukrainian mothers, exposed the country’s thriving industry. Ukraine is one of the few countries that allow surrogacy for foreigners.

Critics say commercial surrogacy targets women who are poor and from vulnerable communities. Supporters say surrogacy gives women a chance to provide children to childless couples, and that commercial contracts protect both the surrogates and the intended parents.

On Monday, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops quoted

Francis’ words in explaining why the Catholic Church teaches that surrogacy “is not morally permissible.”

“Instead, we should pray for, and work towards, a world that upholds the profound dignity of every person, at every stage and in every circumstance of life,” spokesperson Chieko Noguchi said.

In his geopolitical roundup, Francis singled out Russia by name in noting the “large-scale war waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.” It marked an unusual break with Francis’ usual tendency to spare Moscow direct and public blame for the invasion when expressing solidarity with the Ukrainian people.



## Come See Us



The Allen County War Memorial Coliseum  
4000 Parnell Avenue, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46805

# Fort Wayne Farm Show

Tuesday, January 16	Wednesday, January 17	Thursday, January 18
Appleseed Room A 10:00 a.m.	Appleseed Room A 9:00 a.m.	Appleseed Room A 10:00 a.m.
Midwest Ag Market Outlook Jon Cavanaugh <i>WOWO Market Analyst</i>	Coffee and... The Demand for Regenerative Ag (Breakfast Served) Noah Radde <i>Grain Origination Specialist, ADM</i>	Cultivating Resiliency: Financial Incentives for Environmental Stewardship with the Soil and Water Outcomes Fund® (Breakfast Served) <i>Indiana Soybean Alliance, Indiana Corn Marketing Council, Soil and Water Outcomes Fund</i>
David Kohli <i>WOWO Market Analyst</i> Ryan Martin <i>Farm Origination Specialist, Louis Dreyfus Co.</i> Rob Winters <i>Farm Director, News/Talk 1190, WOWO</i>	11:30 a.m. (Luncheon) Hot Topics in Land Use Appleseed Room B Brianna Schroeder <i>Partner, Janzen Schroeder Ag Law</i>	11:00 a.m. Insurance & Agritourism Mike Lampton <i>Agent, Indiana Farm Bureau</i>
How Farmers Can Take Advantage of Global Climate Action Carrie Vollmer-Sanders <i>Sustainability Director, U.S. Farmers &amp; Ranchers in Action</i>	2:00 p.m. New Technology in Conservation Rhiannon Lake <i>Conservation Program Specialist, Allen County SWCD</i>	12:30 p.m. Office Hours: Meet Your Agency Staff CCSI <i>Farm Service Agency</i> <i>Indiana State Department of Ag</i> <i>Local SWCDs</i> <i>Local Watershed Organizations</i> NRCS OCRA <i>Purdue University Extension</i>
2:00 p.m. Pesticide Applicator Program PARP, CCH Credits Available James Wolff <i>Ag &amp; Natural Resources Educator, County Extension Director, Purdue Extension, Allen County</i> Christian Krupke, <i>Professor of Entomology, Purdue University</i> Ann Klein <i>Extension Educator, Purdue Extension, Noble County</i>	5:30 p.m. Back By Popular Demand: Five Ways to Lose the Family Farm Dan Gordon <i>Owner, Attorney, Gordon Legal</i>	Be sure to visit our booths on the lower level, Expo Hall 4

3095 Van Horn St., Zanesville  
(West on 224 to 300 W., Turn right (heading north) 6 miles)  
**(260)638-4123**  
**Lengerich** MEATS  
LOCALLY SUPPLIED  
LOCALLY OWNED  
Mon-Wed 9-5pm  
Thurs-Fri 9-6pm  
Sat 8-1pm

“Conserving our Natural Resources”  
**Wells County Soil & Water Conservation District**  
117 W. Harvest Rd., Bluffton, IN 46714 • 260-824-1930, ext 3  
www.wellscountyswcd.org • lyme.huffman@in.nadnet.net  
♦ Semi-annual Fish and Tree Sales ♦ Rain Barrel and Survey Flag Sales  
♦ Farm Bill Conservation Programs ♦ Technical and Financial Assistance  
♦ Whole Farm Conservation Planning ♦ Soil Health Improvement  
*Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, productive cropland and grazing*

**DeHoff** INSULATION INC.  
Residential / Commercial / Farm  
“Keeping You Comfortable Year Round”  
**260-565-3679**  
dehoffinsulation.net

Rick Johnloz | Bluffton, IN  
260.827.8181  
rickj@halderman.com  
APPRAISALS | REAL ESTATE  
FARM MANAGEMENT  
FIND US AT BOOTH #12 & 13  
Ask about upcoming auctions!  
**HALDERMAN**  
REAL ESTATE & FARM MANAGEMENT  
800.424.2324 | halderman.com

**Bluffton CPA Group P.C.**  
Certified Public Accountant  
2401 N. Main St.  
Bluffton, IN 46714  
260-824-1040  
www.blufftonCPAGroup.com  
Email: info@blufftoncpagroup.com  
Over 30 years experience serving our community

**Wells Jay Allen Grant Adams Blackford Huntington**  
**FISHER'S GARAGE DOORS, LLC**  
SALES & SERVICE  
RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL  
• Replace Broken Springs & Cables on All Makes  
• Replace or Repair Doors & Openers on All Makes  
Large Enough to Serve, Small Enough to Care!  
260-849-0206 • www.fishersgaragedoors.com

MEYER BUILDING  
Visit us at booth #11  
High quality post-frame buildings by a team you can trust.  
LET'S BRING YOUR VISION TO LIFE  
MeyerBuilding.com (260) 565-3274

**Arnold Lumber Co.**  
YOUR COMPLETE BUILDING CENTER!  
We Can Provide All Material and Labor for ALL Your Building Needs  
**260-724-3108**  
FREE QUOTES!  
225 S. Winchester St., Decatur, Indiana • Hours: Mon-Thurs 7AM-5PM • Fri 7AM-4:30PM • Sat 7AM-11:30AM

For more educational resources visit  
**WWW.ALLENSWCD.ORG**  
or scan the code



# Growers on edge about 2024's commodity prices, input costs

By BRIAN BOYCE  
AGDAILY

It may have felt something like a "Hard Candy Christmas," as Dolly Parton might sing, for U.S. farmers this year, especially as they await more information about commodity prices and input costs for 2024. Meanwhile, the word has been out for quite a while that market prices for major crops like corn and soybeans are expected to fall this year from historic highs. Even so, many input costs are on the rise, and interest rates remain high, particularly for new equipment.

Earlier in November, President Joe Biden signed a funding extension of the 2018 Farm Bill for yet another year, with lawmakers looking to craft new and updated legislation that reflects present numbers. With the existing legislation based on pre-COVID pricing and inputs, farmers across the country have entered 2024 with a lot of questions.

Shane Litz, vice-president and commercial loan officer at Terre Haute Savings Bank, which serves the greater Wabash Valley in west-central Indiana, said the present reminds him of the past.

"We saw this back in 2008, as well as back in 2012 after the drought," the ag lender of 20-plus years said. "I think it's pretty cyclical."

With market disruptions as seismic as COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and relatively stark changes in the prime interest rate at play, it's no wonder that what goes up must come down.

### Coming up soon

Late this past year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released the U.S.-focused portion of its Agricultural Projections to 2033 report, with a complete report due out in February. Some of the numbers projected are reminiscent of a hayride through a bumpy field.

According to the U.S.

corn long-term projections, total planted acres for that crop in the U.S. will jump from 88.6 million acres in the 2022/2023 season to 94.9 million acres in 2023/2024. Bushels harvested per acre are expected to stay the same, but what's noticeable is the projected farm price dropping from \$6.54 per bushel to \$4.95, with \$4.50 projected for 2024, and \$4.30 the year afterward. The U.S. report estimates that net returns could fall from \$617 per acre to \$386, \$372, and \$350 in coming years.

Meanwhile, the net return for oats per acre is expected to drop from \$100 to \$50 in the same period, but sorghum could spike from \$34 to \$91.

Input costs and yet more whackery within the global supply chain are all at play, as the U.S. Macroeconomic Assumptions through 2033 point out the difference in interest rates on all things financing. Whereas in 2022, the U.S. Federal Reserve

Prime Interest rate was 4.85 percent, in 2023 it jumped to 8.19 percent and is expected to fall only to 7.70 percent in 2024. Crude oil prices per barrel averaged \$92.80 in 2022 versus \$76.30 in 2023 and are expected to go back to \$80.50 in 2024 and then perhaps up to \$101 by 2029.

Fertilizer and other direct input costs are expected to fall slightly from their spike in 2022, but as Purdue University agriculture economist Michael Langemeier wrote in October, those prices won't fall below the historical averages. So breakeven costs per acre for some crops may fall this year, but farmers could still wind up netting less due to falling prices and an increased cost of financing.

### What's in store down the road?

With the potential of declining commodity prices and increased financing and equipment costs potentially overtaking the drop in fertilizer, smaller ag producers are more likely to be

impacted than larger groups, meaning farm management is more important than ever.

Litz from Terre Haute Savings Bank said the good news is that as a whole, producers have had two really good, record-setting years in terms of profitability, and that should help. The real squeeze will, as usual, be felt by smaller producers — those with less than 400 acres. The cost of new, and even used equipment, is getting to the point that smaller producers just can't justify it.

With new equipment financing at the bank running between 7.5 percent and 8 percent, the cost of even a used combine may be out of reach, as those are running between \$150,000 and \$200,000. To that extent, the impact of inflation isn't just being felt at the seed dealership, but with all things tool and vehicle related. Back in 2019, the prime lending rate was about 4 percent, he said, noting how big a differ-

ence that makes to producers with smaller numbers of acres and thus lower gross returns.

This is leading more and more landowners to shift from full-time production and into cash-renting positions, with some even accepting contract pay from the larger farm corporations to help farm their own ground, he said. For many farmers in this category, off-farm employment is already a given, and it just makes more sense to lease out their land for cash and accept the part-time pay from the tenant company to help do what they've always done.

In the big picture though, Litz said this is the fourth time he's seen this type of phenomenon in the last 20 years, and the good news is, people are still farming onward. If producers are looking for any indication of what's yet to come, they would do well to remember the lessons learned the past in terms of cycles.

## USDA finds tolypyralate herbicide has surprising effect on some corn varieties

By AGDAILY

A team of Agricultural Research Service, university, and industry scientists has spotted a new genetic vulnerability to tolypyralate herbicide in 49 varieties of corn, marking the first report of weed control posing a danger to the staple crop.

The finding, reported in the journal Pest Management Science, will enable farmers to avoid crop losses, such as by choosing a tolypyralate-tolerant variety or by using a different herbicide product.

According to Marty Williams, an ecologist with the ARS Global Change and Photosynthesis Research Unit in Urbana, Illinois, tolypyralate was registered in 2017 and labeled for use in fallow fields and on all types of field-, pop- and- sweet corn. It belongs to a class of herbicides known as HPPD (4-Hydroxyphenylpyruvate dioxygenase) inhibitors.

When applied as a post-emergent herbicide, tolypyralate triggers a biochemical chain of events in targeted weeds that initially causes bleached-appearing leaves and then ultimately plant death.

Normally, corn plants can quickly metabolize HPPD inhibitor herbicides before they inflict the same kind of harm. The process depends on the presence or absence of certain types of alleles (alternate gene copies) in a region of their genome known as NSF1.

One way that corn breeders check for the alleles during evaluations of new candidate varieties is to spray them with nicosulfuron. It is an acetolactate synthase enzyme-inhibiting herbicide that can also serve as a reliable indicator of a variety's sensitivity to several types of post-emergent herbicides, including most ALS and HPPD inhibitors. As it turns out, however, spraying nicosulfuron isn't a reliable indicator of corn tolerance to tolypyralate.

That's what Williams and his collaborators from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Illinois Foundation Seed Inc. learned after conducting a series of greenhouse, field, and laboratory tests using genetic mapping techniques. They began their investigation in late summer 2021 after

a corn breeder's report that spraying tolypyralate onto a sweet corn inbred line called XSEN187 had severely damaged all plants.

But instead of the alleles they expected to see, the team traced the sweet corn inbred line's tolypyralate sensitivity to a cluster of genes residing on a unique region of chromosome 5. This was confirmed by the alleles' association with visible tolypyralate damage in two populations of offspring plants that were derived from crosses between the sweet corn inbred and two tolerant corn lines.

The researchers expanded the scope of their investigation, ultimately identifying tolypyralate sensitivity in a total of six types of field corn and 43 types of sweet corn. Additional screening is likely to detect the trait in other varieties as well. Consider the case of the inbred line IL677a, which was used to introduce the widely popular sugary enhancer gene to sweet corn. In tests, the line proved severely sensitive to tolypyralate, raising the possibility that this sensitivity was also widely introduced into sweet corn along with the sugar enhancer trait.

Importantly, the researchers also showed that tolypyralate sensitivity in the corn lines they evaluated is contingent upon exposure to oil-based adjuvants, additives that are mixed into herbicide tanks before application. However, removing them isn't an option, Williams noted. The adjuvants are key to ensuring the herbicide is absorbed into the leaves of targeted weeds, killing them more effectively.

How exactly the newly identified gene or genes on chromosome 5 make these varieties vulnerable to harm from tolypyralate hasn't been figured out yet. "We need a greater understanding of the physiological mechanism so that the manufacturer and seed companies can reduce the risk of crop injury, such as by improving crop tolerance to the herbicide," Williams said. "Moreover, the research may have application beyond tolypyralate, because several new HPPD-inhibiting herbicides are being developed from the same pyrazole ring scaffold as tolypyralate."

## Andrew Kuehnert on the growth of family's Fort Wayne dairy farm

By CJ MILLER  
Hoosier Ag Today

2024 is shaping up to be a very big year for one Indiana farm family as they plan to greatly expand their dairy operation.

"Dairy farming has been our blood forever and we've always had this goal and passion to be able to process our own milk on-farm and make products here," says Andrew Kuehnert, one of the co-owners of Kuehnert Dairy in Fort Wayne.

The sixth-generation dairy farm is expanding and opening a brand-new Milk House and retail shop in Allen County.

"We've been working on this so over a year now, so we are getting very close," according to Kuehnert. "We are hopefully going to be up and operational towards the end of January or early February. We plan on having a full line of milk products coming out, including glass-bottle milk, cheese curds, butter, and ice cream. Hopefully the cheese curds are up and ready to go. If you come up to our retail store right on the farm, you can look through a big picture window see where our cheese curds are being made."

Their new cheese curd manufacturing facility is being made possible through a \$100,000 grant that Kuehnert Dairy has received from the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance.

"With that grant, it's going to allow us to purchase the equipment that we need to make farm fresh cheese curds right in our milk plant," says Kuehnert. "It's also going to help with packaging. Our cheese curds

are going to come in pouches that are resealable, so I am very confident that our flavor and our quality of product can be second to none."

The new Kuehnert Milk House is also part of the plan to continue growing the farm's agritourism business.

"For the past 11 years, we've opened our farm in the fall for seven weekends during our Kuehnert Dairy Fall Festival and invited the public to come out see what we do on a daily basis," he says. "It's always been very important for everybody in our family to tell our side of the story and show people what dairy farmers do each and every day for 365 days a year. That's been a great opportunity for agritourism to show people what we do. We feel like we have built respect and trust with our local community by just being honest and showing what we do each and every day."

Even though Andrew's father, Al Kuehnert, passed away in 2021, he says his dad's memory will continue to live on through as the family farm continues to grow.

"With losing my dad unexpectedly, it was challenging. We had to figure out a new norm for our dairy farm and what we were doing. After losing my dad, that kind of put us on a delay with this Milk House. I think it'll make him very proud that we get it up and running. We know he's always up watching over us and taking care of us, so we know we're trying to live on his legacy."

For more information, visit [kuehnert-dairy.com](http://kuehnert-dairy.com).

HIGH QUALITY FARMLAND
MOSTLY TILLABLE

## ONLINE at [halderman.com](http://halderman.com)

# AUCTION

**Tuesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm ET**

**PROPERTY LOCATION:** 3 miles southeast of Markle, IN and Wells Co, Rockcreek Twp

**TRACTS 1 & 2:** located on both sides of 200 N between 200 W and 300 W.

**TRACT 3:** located at the intersection of 300 N and 500 W.

## 207.3<sup>+/-</sup> total acres

Tract 1: 19.83<sup>+/-</sup> Acres

Tract 2: 110<sup>+/-</sup> Acres

Tract 3: 77.47<sup>+/-</sup> Acres





**Rick Johnloz: 260.827.8181**

Auctioneer: Russell D. Harmeyer IN Auct. Lic. #AU1000277, HRES IN Auct. Lic. #AC69200019, HLS# RAJ-12975, Farm: Susan Dunn Estate

HIGH QUALITY FARMLAND | WELLS CO, INDIANA

## ONLINE at [halderman.com](http://halderman.com)

# AUCTION

**Tuesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm ET**


**PROPERTY LOCATION:** 3 miles northwest of Craigville, IN; 1/4 mile south of US 224 along 500 E in Lancaster Township, Wells County


**SOIL TYPES:** Pewamo silty clay loam, Bount Del-Rey silt loam; WAPI: 140.6 bu corn, 43.8 bu soybeans

Additional information including a drone flight and photos are available at [halderman.com](http://halderman.com).

34.5<sup>+/-</sup> Tillable • 2.25<sup>+/-</sup> Non-Tillable

## 36.75<sup>+/-</sup> total acres






**Rick Johnloz: 260.827.8181 | Neal Wolhete: 260.336.2219**

Auctioneer: Russell D. Harmeyer IN Auct. Lic. #AU1000277, HRES IN Auct. Lic. #AC69200019, HLS# RAJ-12972, Farm: Mann Farm


## Agricultural Services Guide

**Prompt Delivery ...**  
To Your Home - Farm - Business

Gasolines - Heating Oils • Pure 1-K Kerosene • Super Diesel Fuel - Oils  
**Bio - Soy Diesel - Ethanol • Competitive Prices!**



**NATIONAL OIL & GAS, INC.**  
409 North Main Street Bluffton Indiana 46714  
260-824-2220



**Do you have a service or product for area farmers?**

Call 824-0224 or 622-4108 and find out how affordable our **AG SERVICES DIRECTORY** can be!



Couple is worlds apart before tying the knot

Dear Annie: My fiancée and I have been together for six years, and I am having a hard time understanding where I fit in her life.

She still has contact with her ex-husband, who, after we got together, asked her to send him inappropriate pictures of herself.

Her daughter who is 30 just had her fourth child, and my fiancée devotes time and money to her.

I just feel like I am being used and taken advantage of. We bought a car together last summer, and she put it solely in her name.

Dear Scared and Confused: Actions speak louder than words, and it sounds like she is being selfish and entitled.

I suggest you both go to counseling

before you tie the knot. Best of luck to you.

Dear Annie: The information you gave regarding the National Domestic Abuse Hotline is wonderful.

Dear Nurse Practitioner: Thank you for your letter. Reaching out to your primary care provider is a wonderful suggestion for those suffering domestic abuse.

"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.

Dear Annie by Annie Lane



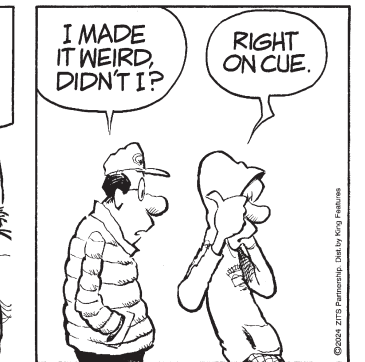
BEEBLE BAILEY



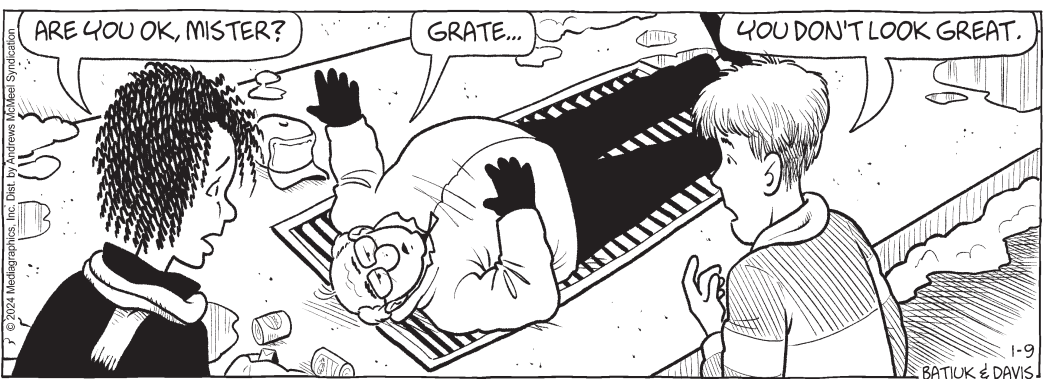
BLONDIE



ZITS



CRANKSHAFT



My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



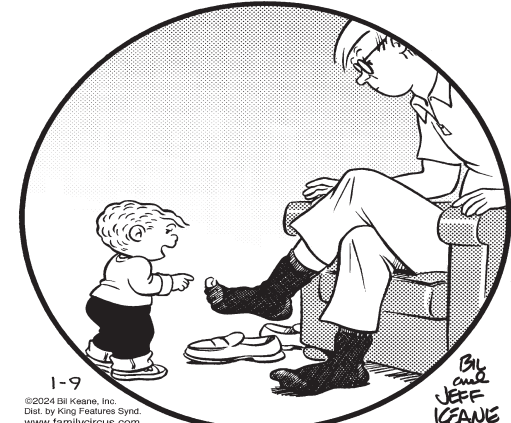
Boredom is not a minor matter

at times, this dangerous apathy creeps over the land and into minds and hearts. Man is the only one of God's creatures who is capable of being bored.

education, and pleasure, but the world is filled with nations of empty people. Why are we so empty? Because God, the Creator of life, made mankind for Himself, and we will never find completeness and fullness apart from fellowship with Almighty God.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



The LOCKHORNS



Q: I've exhausted every way to entertain my family. We've seen every movie, explored every amusement park, toured the great parks and cities of the world and cruised the oceans.

A: America is said to have the highest per capita boredom of any spot on Earth! We have the greatest variety of artificial amusements. People have become so empty that we can't even entertain ourselves.

Boredom is not a minor matter. While everyone may experience boredom

BUY IT SELL IT RENT IT FIND IT FILL IT GET IT DO IT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS! Place Your Ad 24/7/365! www.news-banner.com

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes solution time: 22 mins.

Table with columns for date, channel, and program name. Includes programs like 'Amazing Love', 'Chicago Fire', 'The King of the Queens', etc.

Table with columns for date, channel, and program name. Includes programs like 'The Office', 'The Simpsons', 'The Bachelor', etc.

# Moon landing attempt by U.S. company appears doomed after fuel leak

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The first U.S. moon landing attempt in more than 50 years appeared to be doomed after a private company's spacecraft developed a "critical" fuel leak just hours after Monday's launch.

Pittsburgh-based Astrobot Technology managed to orient its lander toward the sun so the solar panel could collect sunlight and charge its battery, as a special team assessed the status of what was termed "a failure in the propulsion system."

It soon became apparent, however, that there was "a critical loss of fuel," further dimming hope for what had been a planned moon landing on Feb. 23.

"We are currently assessing what alternative mission profiles may be feasible at this time," the company said in a statement.

The problem was reported about seven hours after Monday's pre-dawn liftoff from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. United Launch Alliance's Vulcan rocket provided the lift for Astrobot's lander, named Peregrine, putting it on a long, roundabout path to the moon.

A propulsion system problem "threatens the ability of the spacecraft to soft land

on the moon," the company said. The lander is equipped with engines and thrusters for maneuvering, not only during the cruise to the moon but for lunar descent.

Late Monday, Astrobot released a photo taken from a lander-mounted camera. The company said it showed a "disturbance" in a section of thermal insulation, and that aligns with what is known so far of the problem.

Astrobot was aiming to be the first private business to successfully land on the moon, something only four countries have accomplished. A second lander from a Houston company is due to launch next month. NASA gave the two companies millions to build and fly their own lunar landers.

The space agency wants the privately owned landers to scope out the place before astronauts arrive while delivering tech and science experiments for the space agency, other countries and universities as well as odds and ends for other customers. Astrobot's contract with NASA for the Peregrine lander was \$108 million and it has more in the pipeline.

Before the flight, NASA's Joel Kearns, deputy associate administrator for

exploration, noted that while using private companies to make deliveries to the moon will be cheaper and quicker than going the usual government route, there will be added risk. He stressed that the space agency was willing to accept that risk, noting Monday: "Each success and setback are opportunities to learn and grow."

The last time the U.S. launched a moon-landing mission was in December 1972. Apollo 17's Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt became the 11th and 12th men to walk on the moon, closing out an era that has remained NASA's pinnacle.

The space agency's new Artemis program — named after the twin sister of Apollo in Greek mythology — looks to return astronauts to the moon's surface within the next few years. First will be a lunar fly-around with four astronauts, possibly before the end of the year.

Highlighting Monday's moonshot was the long-delayed initial test flight of the Vulcan rocket from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. The 202-foot rocket is essentially an upgraded version of ULA's hugely successful work-

horse Atlas V, which is being phased out along with the company's Delta IV. Jeff Bezos' rocket company, Blue Origin, provided the Vulcan's two main engines.

ULA declared success once the lander was free of the rocket's upper stage, nearly an hour into the flight and before the spacecraft's propulsion system malfunctioned and prevented the solar panel from properly pointing toward the sun.

Landing on the moon has long been a series of hits and misses. The Soviet Union and the U.S. racked up a string of successful moon landings in the 1960s and 70s, before putting touch-downs on pause. China joined the elite club in 2013 and India in 2023. But last year also saw landers from Russia and a private Japanese company slam into the moon. An Israeli nonprofit crashed in 2019.

Next month, SpaceX will provide the lift for a lander from Intuitive Machines. The Nova-C lander's more direct one-week route could see both spacecraft attempting to land within days or even hours of one another.

Besides flying experiments for NASA, Astrobot drummed up its own

freight business, packing the 6-foot-tall Peregrine lander with everything from a chip of rock from Mount Everest and toy-size cars from Mexico that will catapult to the lunar surface and cruise around, to the ashes and DNA of deceased space enthusiasts, including "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry and science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke.

The Navajo Nation recently sought to have the launch delayed because of the human remains, saying it would be a "profound desecration" of a celestial body revered by Native Ameri-

cans. Astrobot chief executive John Thornton said the December objections came too late but promised to try to find "a good path forward" with the Navajo for future missions.

One of the spaceflight memorial companies that bought room on the lander, Celestis, said in a statement that no single culture or religion owns the moon and should not be able to veto a mission. More remains are on the rocket's upper stage, which was boosted into a perpetual orbit around the sun reaching as far out as Mars.

# White House, Pentagon to review Defense Secretary's lack of disclosure on hospital stay

WASHINGTON (AP) — Both the White House and Pentagon said Monday they would look into why President Joe Biden and other top officials weren't informed for days that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had been hospitalized. A Pentagon spokesman pointed to one reason: A key staffer was out sick with the flu.

Even as the Biden administration pledged to look into what rules or procedures weren't followed, it maintained its silence about why Austin has been hospitalized for a week. Late Monday, the Pentagon issued an update saying Austin "is recovering well."

Some Republicans have demanded Austin's resignation, but the Pentagon said he has no plans to step down.

Austin, 70, went to the hospital on Dec. 22 for what the Pentagon press secretary called an "elective procedure" but one serious enough that Austin temporarily transferred some of his authorities to his deputy, without telling her or other U.S. leaders why. He went home the following day.

He also transferred some

of his authorities after experiencing severe pain and being taken back to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center by ambulance and put into intensive care on Jan. 1. The White House was not informed until Jan. 4.

Austin, who resumed his duties on Jan. 5, is no longer in intensive care. Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said his prognosis is "good" but it is not known when he will be released from the hospital.

The Pentagon said Austin has continued to receive briefings and make calls to senior leaders. On Monday, he spoke to national security adviser Jake Sullivan and got briefings from Gen. Erik Kurilla, his top general in the Middle East; his deputy, Kathleen Hicks; and the Joint Chiefs chairman, Gen. CQ Brown Jr.

The failure to properly inform government and defense leaders will be the subject of what John Kirby, the National Security Council spokesman, called a "hotwash" to see if procedures need to be changed.

Kirby, speaking to reporters on Air Force One as

Biden traveled to South Carolina, said there is an "expectation" among members of Biden's Cabinet that if one of them is hospitalized, "that will be notified up the chain of command."

Ryder acknowledged that he and other public affairs and defense aides were told Jan. 2 that Austin had been hospitalized but did not make it public and did not tell the military service leaders or the National Security Council until Jan. 4.

"I want to offer my apologies and my pledge to learn from this experience, and I will do everything I can to meet the standard that you expect from us," he said.

Ryder said staff in Austin's front office will review notification procedures, including whether regulations, rules or laws were broken, and will take steps to improve the notification process. Those staff members, however, are among those who did not disclose the secretary's hospitalization.

In a statement issued Saturday evening, Austin took responsibility for the delays in notification.

"I recognize I could have

done a better job ensuring the public was appropriately informed. I commit to doing better," he said, acknowledging the concerns about transparency. "But this is important to say: this was my medical procedure, and I take full responsibility for my decisions about disclosure."

Ryder provided some more detail on who knew about the hospitalization and when they were told.

He said when Austin was taken back to the hospital on Jan. 1 he "was conscious but in quite a bit of pain." He spent that evening undergoing tests and evaluation. The next day, "due to the secretary's condition and on the basis of medical advice," some authorities were transferred to Hicks through a standard email notification that often does not provide the reason for transfer, Ryder said.

# Explosion at historic Texas hotel injures 21, scatters debris in Fort Worth

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — An explosion at a historic Texas hotel in Fort Worth on Monday blew out windows, littered downtown streets with large sections of debris from the building and injured 21 people, including one who was in critical condition, authorities said.

The blast flung doors and entire sections of wall onto the road in front of the 20-story hotel, where rescue crews found several people trapped in the basement, said Craig Trojacek, a spokesman for the Fort Worth Fire Department.

More than two dozen rooms were occupied at the Sandman Signature Hotel when the blast took place, Trojacek said. Authorities said they believe a gas leak caused the explosion and said the hotel had been undergoing construction.

Rebecca Martinez was among those in nearby buildings who recalled hearing a loud crack that sounded like thunder Monday afternoon, and then seeing a wall of dust and debris sweep through the city streets. Stepping outside to see what happened, she came upon a man and a woman leaned up against a fire hydrant.

"The man was all bloody, his face was all bloody," Martinez said. "Then I started smelling natural gas, real intense and I thought, 'I might need to get away from here.'"

Moments later, she said, authorities evacuated her building and some of the surrounding neighborhood.

The blast left four people with serious injuries and the others taken to hospitals with minor wounds, officials said at a news conference.

The Sandman Signature Hotel is in a busy area of downtown about one block from the Fort Worth Convention Center. Footage from news helicopters showed firefighters picking their way through the piles of drywall, shattered glass and mangled metal that coated the street outside the hotel. Authorities urged people to avoid the area.

Trojacek said a restaurant in the building had been under construction but said it was not definitive that is where the blast occurred.

Video posted to social media showed a man sitting on a street corner across from the explosion site and holding a woman at his chest. The man appeared to have blood on his forehead, and a medical technician knelt in front of him to tend to his wounds.

A grey haze covered normally busy streets of downtown Fort Worth as firefighters walked through layers of debris. Remnants of the building lay scattered across the street and over parked vehicles, and gaping holes could be seen on the ground.

"There was debris. There was insulation. There was office furniture," Charlie Collier, 31, told The Associated Press. "Everything that was in the first couple floors of the building was blown out all over the street."

Trojacek said investigators were working with federal investigators to determine the cause of the blast. The scene had left rescue teams unable to immediately reach some parts of the building.

"We had reports of people trapped down in the basement, and because of the explosion that took place, some of those access areas were either covered up or it didn't feel safe at that point to get people down into," Trojacek said.

Technicians from Atmos Energy, a Dallas-based natural gas distributor, were examining the blast site Monday. A spokesperson for the Railroad Commission of Texas, the state's oil and gas regulator, said an agency inspector was also on the scene and working with local authorities.

According to the hotel website, the Sandman Signature Fort Worth Downtown Hotel has 245 rooms and was built in 1920 as the "Waggoner Building," named after cattle rancher and oilman William Thomas Waggoner. The building has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1979.



**You CAN Cancel Your Timeshare**

We have helped over 30,000 American families save over \$450,000,000 in timeshare debt and maintenance fees. We can help you too.

Get your free information kit and see if you qualify:

**Call 1.877.329.1207**

This is an Advertisement. Wesley Financial Group, LLC ("WFG") and/or its affiliates, successors, or assigns are not lawyers and/or a law firm and does not engage in the practice of law or provide legal advice or legal representation. Actual results depend on each client's distinct case and no specific outcome is guaranteed.

**Connect Anywhere, Anytime.**

**Enjoy Free Internet Data on Your Mobile Devices with ACP**

You qualify today for the Government Free Internet Program if a household of two has an income of less than \$39,440, or if you receive:

- Medicaid
- SNAP
- SSI
- WIC
- Veterans Pension
- Survivors or Lifeline Benefits
- Tribal Assistance Program
- Housing Assistance



maxsip

Get a subsidized 4G Android Tablet for \$20

**CALL TODAY (866) 981-3302**

# SMALL BUSINESS Spotlight

**SUPPORT Local BUSINESSES**

**Thanks for voting me #1 Travel Agency! Let me help you plan your next adventure!**



**MVP**  
MAGICAL VACATION PLANNER

Specializing in:  
• Theme Parks  
• Cruise Lines  
• All Inclusive Resorts

Complimentary concierge services for all of your travel planning needs.

s.hiday@magicalvacationplanner.com

**Stephanie Hiday**  
Travel Specialist  
260-417-7656

**LIN'S LOCK & KEY, INC.**

**Commercial - Business Home - Industrial**

Electronic Locks - Keypads  
Safes • Handicap openers  
Camera Surveillance

1132 S. Clark Ave. - Bluffton  
Lin Harrold, CML • (260)824-3533  
Cell 827-7632  
CERTIFIED MASTER LOCKSMITH

**Put your business in the SPOTLIGHT**

**Call 824-0224**