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BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection

\$1.00

Ossian, Jefferson Township continue fire budget talks

By SYDNEY KENT
“The fire department does a very good job,” Ossian Town Council President Josh Barkley said during Monday’s council meeting. “Quite frankly, I think it is disrespectful to the firefighters that (Jefferson Township) will not pay compensation for the firefight-

ers.” Barkley was referencing the ongoing contention between the town of Ossian and the Jefferson Township Advisory Board in recent months. The township, which utilizes half of the services of the Ossian Fire Department, does not pay an equal share of the

budget. Fire Chief Ben Fenstermaker opened his portion of the meeting with a detailed budget report for fire services from both the town and the township. The budget detailed the costs required to provide fire protection from both parties. According to

the report, the town of Ossian paid \$99,282.91 more than the township in 2021, \$59,460.57 more in 2022, \$85,325 in 2023, and will pay \$75,143 more in 2024 — despite an equal share of services provided. Fenstermaker also addressed a letter written to the editor of The

News-Banner by Jefferson Township President Tim Baker last month. “It is being misrepresented that the township does not want to pay their share,” Baker wrote in the letter. “If there is not enough equipment, fuel, insurance, and
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Hitting the track ... and field
Southern Wells hosted its track and field day for grades four through six on Monday. Above left, Aiden Lemons throws the shot put. Above right, Holly Pearson (left) and June Maul run a relay. At right, Ramon Blanco participates in the long jump. Below, Wyatt Beavans jumps over the bar for the high jump. (Photos by Jonathan Snyder)



County RSD address questions on Tocsin project

By JONATHAN SYNDER
In a public meeting at the Wells County Public Library, the Regional Sewer District fielded questions and gave an update on the timeline for the Tocsin project. In the public meeting portion of the RSD proceedings, Ryan LeFeld of Choice One Engineering presented the Tocsin Project area, located north of the intersection of State Route 224 and State Road North 600 East in Tocsin. LeFeld gave a presentation on what will happen with Tocsin, the timeline for the projects completion, the project cost for the RSD and what payment for the property owners will look like. LeFeld stated that the project is estimated between \$4,500,000 and \$5,000,000. LeFeld also noted that if things go smoothly then construction could start next spring at the earliest, and next summer at the latest. RSD Attorney Mark Burry stated that the RSD has submitted an application for grant funding for the project. Originally, the Tocsin project was lumped into the Craigville and Kingsland projects in their grant application, but there were too little funds to justify putting all three areas into one funding cycle. The Tocsin project was delayed twice due to
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Murray will not seek re-election, BHMSD board reviews policies

By CHET BAUMGARTNER
Bluffton-Harrison school board member Mike Murray announced Monday that he will not seek re-election, leaving his district 1 seat open starting next year. Murray announced his departure at the end of the district’s regular school board meeting. He said he wants to dedicate more time to family commitments, particularly as his grandchildren age. He also said he wanted to announce it now to ensure people could file in time. Anyone interested can file for candidacy starting Tuesday, May 21. But before Murray makes his final vote in December, he must consider several rounds of policy updates and implementations, including those Superintendent Brad Yates introduced Monday. During their March meeting, board members started reviewing district policies — and considering new ones — and each month, board members will review eight to 10 policies, such as new policies concerning “civility and decorum” and student homework. These particular policies do not address student behavior or expectations, Yates said; the district already addresses these through various handbooks. Instead, the policies the board considered Monday address general principles to help define, for instance, the objective of homework, which schools can use to establish
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Russian assault opens new front, diverting Ukraine forces

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian troops were locked in intense battles with Ukrainian soldiers around the embattled town of Vovchansk in northeast Ukraine on Monday, pushing ahead with a ground offensive that opened a new front and put more pressure on overstretched Ukrainian forces. Moscow’s renewed northeast offensive, launched late last week, was the most significant border incursion since the full-scale invasion began.

In just two days, Moscow has captured from 38 to 47 square miles that include at least seven villages, most of them already depopulated, according to two open source monitoring analysts. Vovchansk, among the largest towns in the area whose pre-war population of 17,000 had dwindled to just 2,500 before Russia renewed its ground assault last week, has emerged as a key focus

of the pitched battles engulfing the Kharkiv region. By Monday, only 200 to 300 residents remained, said Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Syniehubov, as Russian forces closed in from three sides. Poorly built fortifications and long-term ammunition shortages enabled Russia’s sweeping advance in the area since Friday, local officials and soldiers said. The Kremlin’s forces were seeking to divert and distract Ukrainian troops across the 620-mile front line until a big batch of new military aid for Kyiv from the U.S. and European partners arrives on the battlefield in the coming weeks and months, Ukrainian commanders and analysts said. That makes this period a window of opportunity for Moscow and one of the most dangerous for Kyiv in the two-year war, they said. By intensifying offensive operations, Russia seeks to stretch

Ukraine’s forces thin and forge breakthroughs. Russian forces claimed to have taken an additional 35 square miles, which has not been independently confirmed. Opening a new front from two points along the border with the Russian region of Belgorod was the easiest tactic to pin down and divert Ukrainian forces from heavy battles raging in the
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Ossian, Jefferson Township

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maintenance bills that we can use our \$79,000 budgeted money, then maybe we can consider rewriting part of the fire contract. But, the first thing that the township needs is to be repaid for the hydrant rental."

Township Trustee Larry Heckber paid the town \$29,133 for the hydrant with the money owed to the town for fire services. The contract between the parties, last updated in 2017, does not allow for money to be spent for this purpose.

The contract further restricts the town from charging the township for manpower. Because of this, there was no method for the township to fulfill its obligated portion of the 2024 budget without the hydrant rental.

"It was wrong on my part," Heckber said. "I shouldn't have done it. At

the time, we had no way to spend the \$79,000 we owed."

The council approved a motion to refund the \$29,133 to Jefferson Township at the meeting. They also approved an updated contract between the parties. If approved by the advisory board, the contract would ultimately allow for the money to be used for manpower.

Heckber said he consulted the matter with the town lawyer, township lawyer, an insurance agent and the board. He has not heard any feedback from the board. Barkley asked board member David Haiflich if he had any thoughts on the matter.

"If you want to know what we think, come to the meeting tomorrow night at 5:30," Haiflich quipped. He refused to answer questions or discuss the topic further.

In the budget report, Fenstermaker emphasized that the township has publicly stated that they will not pay for manpower. He also said the township will only pay for equipment of "value" to retain as collateral.

"Staffing is critically low nationwide," Fenstermaker wrote. "This affects the Ossian Fire Department weekly ... If no one is there to use those cool tools, they just sit at the station and do not move."

A firefighter from the department finished Barkley's thought with the following sentiment: "You're not going to move the trucks without us."

The Jefferson Township Advisory Board is today at 5:30 p.m. at 1645 Hillcrest Drive in Ossian in the Trustee conference room.

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RSD answers questions

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the funding issues.

Burry noted that any additional money not covered by grants will be taken out as a low interest loan from the State Revolving Fund. The RSD can finance that expense out over 30 years to help pay that loan back. Burry calculated that each property owner would be paying a \$93.30 charge per month at minimum to pay the loan back.

Burry also stated that once funding is available for the project, notices will be sent out to property owners that they should connect to the system. Statutes state that any sewage discharging structure within 300 feet of a RSD line must be connected. There are exemptions for people on septic systems, but the systems must be less than 20 years old and inspected by the Health Department.

Tocsin homeowners will only be held responsible for maintenance of the sewer line from their house to any installed grinder stations. RSD Superintendent Lewis Brown stated that an easement would be needed so the RSD can access the grinder station for maintenance. Brown acknowledged that in the past people have had concerns over these easements, but assured the public they only need access from the main road to

the grinder station.

The majority of public comments and questions centered around the details of grinder installations, any potential relief funding for low income and nonprofit properties, the longevity of the system, potential drainage tile problems and the interim rate fee for people not connected yet.

Brown stated that the contractors use directional boring, a process where a drill is pushed underground and steered to where it needs to go, to install grinders. Brown noted that the contractors who use directional boring will have to mark any gas lines, or other public utilities so they can avoid hitting those.

Brown noted that green RSD flags will be placed in the Tocsin project area once the RSD is ready to start off construction. Brown urged anybody with that RSD flag should call their phone number if they have questions about what's being done.

Grinders will be placed wherever the property owner wishes, according to Brown and LeFeld, but the cost of connecting electricity to the system and to the main sewer line will be on the homeowner.

RSD board member Leon Berning addressed the potential relief funding, stating that funds are available to cover the connection cost,

not to ease the monthly bill. Berning stated that property owners would have to fill out an application, which needs approval in order to get the funds.

When the life cycle of the new sewer system was questioned, Brown said that documents force the RSD to maintain that system for its life cycle, which is estimated at 35 years. Burry also noted that costs could theoretically lower when the loan is paid off, but maintenance bills and inflation could keep the rate steady in 30 years time.

Brown also addressed the need for the interim rate for customers, comparing it to an up-front fee for a contractor. Brown also noted that SRF requires that all the billing must be in order if they want to secure the low interest rates on their loans. Brown also warned that contractor's could accidentally damage any drainage tile property owners have. Brown stated that if they can prove the contractor damaged the tile it would be the contractor's responsibility, but warned that proving fault can be extremely difficult.

In the business portion of the meeting, held before public comments, which saw the RSD pay SRF Disbursement requests to Wessler Engineering, Miller Burry and Brown, and Choice One Engineering. \$15,297.60 went to Wessler,

\$28,650 to MBB and \$1,653 to Choice One.

Brown noted that everyone in Kingsland has received a notice to connect. Two connections were added since the RSD's last meeting, with contractors hired for the others. Brown also announced that three connections will be paid for by the RSD due to those property owners granting them easement access to the main sewer line to build lift stations.

LeFeld stated that the only thing left for the Kingsland project is to restore the land and finish the punch list items. Brown also said that Craigville residents are still making connections in their project area. Brown commented that the new license plates for the RSD's new truck have come in and are on the truck.

Two resolutions were also passed by the RSD, which put into writing that the preliminary engineering report was presented to the public and that the funding application was sent to the state.

The RSD also renewed their insurance policy. Tom Neuenschwander of Amstutz Insurance presented a policy that did not see any significant changes, according to Berning. The bills for the RSD this month totaled \$13,013.14.

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BHMSD board reviews policies

(Continued from Page 1)

any more specific standards, Yates said.

Similarly, the policy on civility and decorum establishes general standards for the community as well as responses the district might take if people do not act civilly.

Board members will discuss these and other policies again in June, when they'll also discuss a policy on student absenteeism, discipline, and cell phone use.

This policy does not propose any substantive changes to current standards, Yates said, but it will officially align the district with standards state legislators have mandated through legislation they passed this year.

Yates said he would like the board to pass the policy on first and second readings at their June meeting to ensure the district complies when the law takes effect July 1.

In other business, board members Julie Thompson, Murray, Bruce Holland, Trent White, and Angie Sheets:

- Approved selling two buses through a public auction. Yates said the district would place a reserve price to ensure revenue exceeds trade-in value and auction costs.
- Approved the district's teacher evaluation and development plan. The committee that reviewed the

plan recommended it remain unchanged.

- Approved summer work schedules for the district's 12-month personnel.
- Approved an updated 2024-2025 school-year calendar to include flexibility waiver professional development days on Tuesday, Oct. 15; Friday, Dec. 20; Monday, Jan. 20; and Thursday, March 13.
- Approved the retirement request of Julee Frauhiger, the district's payroll specialist for the past 28 years.
- Approved four resignations and almost 40 employment recommendations, including hiring Celeste Lewis as the Area 18 Career and Technical Education director.
- Approved two Family & Medical Leave Act requests.
- Accepted 25 donations totaling more than \$7,000. Many of the donations were for the annual MS Color Run.
- Approved a number of policies on second reading.
- Approved discontinuing the rental agreement with Wells County HeadStart. Yates said staff recommended the action because of declining enrollment in the HeadStart program and increasing enrollment in the district-run On My Way PreK program.
- Approved applying for the Purple Star School Recommendation, which the Indiana Department of Edu-

cation uses to honor schools with "significant commitment to service members, veterans, and students and families connected to our nation's military."

• Approved the district's "belief statement," a summary of the district's "guiding principles" that help define a "quality education." Board members reviewed a draft of the statement last month, and with their approval Monday, district staff will now develop standard practices and expectations to create building-level statements.

During the meeting, board members and staff also made several announcements:

- Holland announced that the middle school academic teams were recognized as a top 10 team in its division. Furthermore, Holland said, the high school e-sports team competed in state finals, with one team securing a championship and another securing the runner-up

spot. Student Sam Holloway won the state championship in his individual competition.

- Bluffton-Harrison Elementary Principal Schlaura Linderwell said the IDOE issued a proficient certification to the elementary school through "Family Friendly Schools Designation" recognition. This is the first year the school earned this status, Linderwell said.
- Yates presented several updates on renovations and building projects. Yates specifically said the district is "exploring cost options" to renovate the fifth- and sixth-grade bathrooms and the seventh- and eighth-grade bathrooms. Furthermore, Yates said Minnich's Lawn Care will complete foundational work for the "Our Town" safety village in June or July if all goes as scheduled.

The school board will meet again at 6 p.m. Tuesday, June 17, at the central office.

newsroom@news-banner.com

Weather

Tuesday, May 15, 2024

(24-hour observations at 11:06 p.m. Monday)

High: 81; Low: 59; Precipitation: None

Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 2.47 feet at 10:45 p.m. Monday

Wells County forecast

Today: A chance of showers, then showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm after 11 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 70. Southeast wind 5 to 10 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70%. New rainfall amounts between a tenth and quarter of an inch, except higher amounts possible in thunderstorms.

Tonight: A 50% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Cloudy, with a low around 54. Northeast wind around 10 mph.

Wednesday: A 20% chance of showers before 2 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 71. Northeast wind 10 to 15 mph.

Wednesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 51. Northeast wind 5 to 10 mph.

Thursday: A 20% chance of showers after 2 p.m. Mostly sunny, with a high near 76.

Thursday Night: A slight chance of showers and thunderstorms before 8 p.m., then showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm between 8 p.m. and 2 a.m., then a chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 59. Chance of precipitation is 60%.

Friday: A chance of showers and thunderstorms, then showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm after 2 p.m. Partly sunny, with a high near 75. Chance of precipitation is 60%.

Friday Night: Showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm before 8 p.m., then a slight chance of showers and thunderstorms between 8 p.m. and 2 a.m. Partly cloudy, with a low around 57. Chance of precipitation is 60%.

Saturday: A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. Mostly sunny, with a high near 79.

Saturday Night: A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 59.

Sunday: A 30% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly sunny, with a high near 83.

Sunday Night: A chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 61.

Russian assault

(Continued from Page 1)

Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Russia's most sought-after prize.

"The enemy identified the most geographically convenient place ... the state border line," said Yurii Federenko, commander of the ACHILLES battalion of the 92nd brigade. His unit was among others rotated into the northeast from the Donetsk region to stabilize the northeast front, he said.

He fears a similar front may be opened in the Sumy region, which also shares a border with Russia.

The string of villages captured along the contested gray zone, where enemy shelling precludes the building of fortifications, were also the easiest for Moscow's forces to nab. Their momentum will likely slow as they approach better fortified settlements, Ukrainian commanders said.

Small batches of U.S. military aid have started trickle into the front line in the form of much needed artillery, said Federenko, whose unit received some of the aid. But it will take at least two months before incoming supplies will meet Kyiv's needs to hold the line, he said. Until they arrive, Ukraine won't be able to seize the battlefield initiative, he said.

"They now have an opportunity to attack us while we cannot properly reply," he said.

Russia's offensive seeks to take advantage of this window of time. "In order to achieve success, in my opinion, in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the enemy needed to spread ... our defense forces. Accordingly, the enemy started the campaign in Kharkiv region specifically," Federenko said.

Top Biden administration officials and Ukrainian national security officials held a 90-minute call on Monday to discuss the situation on the ground in Ukraine as Russia intensifies its bombardment around Kharkiv.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, and Gen. CQ Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff spoke with Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, and head of the office the president Andriy Yermak, according to Sullivan.

"It was a detailed conversation about the situation on the front, about the capabilities that they are most in need of, and a real triage effort to say, 'Get us this stuff this fast so that we can be in a position to effectively defend against the Russian onslaught,'" Sullivan told reporters at a White House briefing.

Sullivan added that a new influx of U.S. weaponry for Kyiv was expected to be announced by the U.S. administration in the coming days.

The Kharkiv incursion has effectively pinned Ukrainian forces in the region, while potentially drawing precious reserves away from heavy battles in the Avdiivka and Chasiv Yar areas of the Donetsk region, where Russia's advance has been far more significant and strategically important.

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OBITUARIES

Carly Ann Scott, 32

Carly Ann Scott, 32, of Bluffton passed away Friday afternoon, May 10, 2024, in Bluffton.

Carly was born Oct. 4, 1991, in Bluffton, to Duane and Kathy (Bates) Scott.

Carly loved most animals growing up, but especially her goats, was a 10 year 4-H member, enjoyed showing rabbits and goats. She showed rabbits locally and regionally, and especially enjoyed her annual trips to the Indiana State Fair to compete with her rabbits. The annual trips were a mini vacation with the highlight of going on school clothes shopping trips with her sister and mother.

She graduated from Bluffton High School in 2010, earning an academic honors diploma, honor society member, and was a B.H. Tri-Star athlete letter winner, in cross country, swimming and track, in her freshman year. When training for cross county at home, Carly would often practice with her goats running at her side.

After graduating high school, she was off to college at UIndy to study nursing, then transferred to Ivy Tech, earning a AS degree as a certified medical assistant, then worked at BRMC in family practice. She was a long time Bummies employee and worked at Perfect Pet.

Her pride and joy, and best friend was her beloved dog, Phinley, which she traveled with on her vacation trips. In 2017, she was proud to purchase her first home in Bluffton.

Carly loved to spend time with her first cousins, traveling on vacations, having Father's Day cookouts, and especially extended Christmas Holidays together. Recently Carly had added her niece to her life priorities, and loved Addilyn, lighting up with joy, when spending time with her.

Survivors include her parents; brother, Trenton of Bluffton; and sister Jennifer (Todd) Stauffer and niece Addilyn of Greenwood; along with uncles, Michael (Beth) Bates, David (Nancy) Bates, Steven Bates, and Del (Sylvia) Scott; and aunts, Karen (Michael) Holsinger, Delora (Ed) Hartssock, Diane (Steve) Michael; and 12 first cousins.

She is preceded in death by her grandparents, Robert and Rose Marie Bates, Avon and Peggy Scott; and step-grandmother, Marge Crill Scott.

Visitation will be held from noon to 6 p.m. Sunday, May 19, 2024, at the Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton and for one hour prior to the service.

Funeral services will take place at 10:30 a.m. Monday, May 20, 2024, at the funeral home with Barry Crosby officiating. Burial will follow at Gearmand Cemetery.

Memorials to Wells Co. 4-H Goat /Rabbit program or to Brianna's Hope, for their Meal Fund, and can be directed to the funeral home.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the care of the Lemler family of Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton. Friends can send online condolences to the family at www.thomarich.com.



INCIDENTS

County:

Friday, 12:08 p.m., S.R. 218 and South 600 East, Bluffton. Report of a trailer off a truck into a fence.

Friday, 3:02 p.m., 1000 West 900 South, Marion. Caller reported subject burnt flags from fathers funeral.

Friday, 5:47 p.m., 3000 West Scott Street, Zanesville. Report of two subjects arguing over civil matters.

Saturday, 11:55 a.m., Wells County Jail. Warrant served to Cash Smith at the jail.

Saturday, 7:22 p.m., North 450 East and East 200 North, Bluffton. Report of suspicious subject in orange shirt.

Saturday, 11:58 p.m., 2100 West 400 North, Markle. Report of suspicious vehicles possibly impersonating police officers, trucks described as pickup trucks with siren and PA system.

Sunday, 12:20 a.m., 100 East and East 300 North, Bluffton. Subjects corrected license plate expiration date with a Sharpie, also had a no contact order from out of state in active DCS case. Joshua Norman charged with one count of invasion of privacy.

Sunday, 7:39 a.m., 3900

Police Notebook

West 1100 North, Markle. Caller reported ring camera captured a male walking up to his car and trying and failing to get inside.

Sunday, 7:56 a.m., South Hoosier Highway and East 350 South, Bluffton. Report of a pig running from neighbor's yard.

Sunday, 1:49 p.m., 10000 North 300 West, Markle. Caller advised their dog was picked up by animal shelter earlier in the week. Dog turned to owners.

Sunday, 5:57 p.m., 2600 South Main Street, Liberty Center. Report of dog that went after caller's husband.

Monday, 9:22 a.m., Lancaster Elementary School. Officer stood by at the request of the school to ensure unwelcome parent did not show up.

Ossian: Friday, 6:35 p.m., Silo Farms, Ossian. Report of a tan and white dog that bit callers daughter.

Saturday, 12:35 a.m., West 1200 North and North 100 West, Ossian. Report of argument, woman advised her boyfriend was cheating on her. Man advised they broke up some time ago, he had a new girlfriend now, and they were just roommates.

Saturday, 10:48 a.m.,

S.R. 1 and U.S. 224, Ossian. Report of dog in roadway, returned to owner on tag.

Sunday, 12:41 p.m., 100 block of East 1100 North, Ossian. Report of theft from vehicle.

Sunday, 11:04 p.m., 900 block of Prairie Lane, Ossian. Report of verbal argument between family members.

Sunday, 11:12 p.m., Ossian Deli. Report of subject who wouldn't leave after he asked for free food, drinks, and to charge his phone.

ARRESTS

Joshua Alan Gabehart, 42, Bluffton; rape, a Level 1 felony, strangulation, a Level 6 felony, possession of cocaine, a Level 6 felony, and possession of marijuana, a Class B misdemeanor. No bond set.

Shaletta Rochelle Lynne Blanton, 36, Bluffton; disorderly conduct, a Class B misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,000.

Casey Lee Huntley, 43, Bluffton; probation violation, a Level 6 felony. No bond set.

Jaden Bensen Puckett, 23, Bluffton; provide alcoholic beverage to a minor, a Class B misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,000.

Andrea Danielle Rambo,

24, Bluffton; driving while suspended — prior, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

Joel B. Ladig, 53, Bluffton; domestic battery and intimidation, both Level 6 felonies, and domestic battery, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$31,600.

Case James Michael Smith, 23, Bluffton; disorderly conduct, a Class B misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,000.

William Alden West, 30, Warren; residing law enforcement using vehicle, a Level 6 felony, and habitual traffic violator, a Level 6 felony. Bond set at \$10,000.

Donald Duane Mahon II, 47, Bluffton; possession of methamphetamine, a Level 5 felony, and possession of paraphernalia, a Class C misdemeanor.

Andrew Jathon Bailey, 36, Portland; possession of marijuana and disorderly conduct, both Class B misdemeanors.

Santos Coj-Quixan, 22, Bluffton; driving while suspended, a Class C misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,000.

Douglas James Amstutz, 63, Bluffton; possession of cocaine, a Level 6 felony, and possession of marijuana, a Class B misdemeanor. Bond set at \$6,000.

Delta-8 legal clarification unlikely as Indiana Statehouse stalemate persists

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ Indiana Capital Chronicle

In the nearly six years since a federal law appeared to open the doors to delta-8, the marijuana-like drug has grown into a billion-dollar Hoosier industry.

But it's done so on shaky legal ground, leaving retailers and law enforcement officials alike seeking legislative clarification: is delta-8 allowed in Indiana?

"The legislature needs to act to provide regulatory certainty for businesses and legal certainty for both law enforcement and prosecutors," Rep. Jake Teshka, R-North Liberty, told the Capital Chronicle.

"In the absence of us doing anything, there's just this huge legal gray area, and it breeds a ton of problems," said Teshka, who authored an unsuccessful attempt to regulate delta-8 last session.

Lawmakers, however, indicate a Senate-House stalemate is unlikely to give — even with the state on the hook for a year-old lawsuit over the hemp-derived psychoactive's status.

Hemp frenzy Congress revived the industrial hemp industry in 2018's agriculture-focused farm bill by removing the plant and its seeds from the definition of marijuana.

It's generally considered legal as long as it contains less than 0.3% delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol — or THC, the major psychoactive component in the plant — by dry weight. Above that, it's considered banned marijuana.

Indiana promptly followed suit. Lawmakers in 2018 legislation used the same delta-9 cutoff in legalizing low-THC hemp extracts, and added more hemp-related regulations in another law the following year.

The state's delta-8 industry has boomed, as an apparently legal alternative to marijuana.

About 540 Indiana retail stores and nearly 1,400 gas stations have sold about \$637 million worth of hemp-based cannabinoid products, according to a 2023 study by hemp-cannabis data firm Whitney Economics. Those sales made a total economic impact of about \$1.8 billion, the company found.

But concerns over delta-8's legality have dogged the industry's growth.

The Indiana State Police, for instance, has long held that Indiana Code classifies all THC types — both naturally occurring and synthetic — as Schedule I controlled substances, according to comments spokesman Capt. Ron Galaviz made to Indiana Public Media in 2021. The designation means a

substance has no accepted medical use but does have a high potential for abuse.

Stuck at the Statehouse

Within a year of legalization, lawmakers like Sen. Liz Brown, R-Fort Wayne, began filing unsuccessful attempts to walk back the state's freshly inked stance on certain hemp products, such as cannabidiol.

Then, they turned to delta-8. Sen. Mike Young, R-Indianapolis, repeatedly proposed editing the 0.3% delta-9 cutoff to include all THC types. Bills in 2021 and 2022 would've banned most delta-8 products.

Proposals regulating the substance haven't survived the legislative process either.

The contention escalated into a lawsuit last June, when the state's top attorney opined that delta-8 is illicit. The advisory came in response to an ISP and Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council request for guidance.

Retailers sued, alleging raids and other repercussions. Some on both sides of the equation still want answers from the Statehouse.

"This is absolutely a public policy question," said Justin Swanson, co-founder and president of the Midwest Hemp Council. The trade organization, which is a plaintiff in the lawsuit, has dozens of members.

Vanderburgh County Sheriff Noah Robinson said he agreed with Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita's legal interpretation, but still directed his deputies to back off on enforcement in a February special order.

He reaffirmed a policy of issuing citations instead of making physical arrests for

simple possession of marijuana, and halted raids of retailers for the sole purpose of investigating delta-8.

"I like knowing the law that I'm enforcing has solid

ground underneath it," said Robinson, who is not involved in the legal battle. He thinks delta-8's legal status is "up in the air" and "in flux."

Ossian Rotary to hear from Kody Kumfer of Ossian Revitalization

At its regular weekly meeting Thursday, May 16, Ossian Rotary will host Kody Kumfer, president of Ossian Revitalization. After spending 11 years working with business owners and farmers through the banking industry as a commercial and ag banker, Kumfer stepped into the role of associate executive director with Forgotten Children Worldwide. Kumfer is passionate about generosity, advocating for vulnerable people around the world, and finding new ways to partner with the indigenous people in the countries where Forgotten Children Worldwide serves as an orphan care ministry, which is based in Bluffton.

Kumfer is also president of Ossian Revitalization, as well as a member of Wells County Chamber Ambassadors, Wells County Economic Development, Wells County Revitalization, Norwell FFA and a graduate of Level 1 and 2 of Wells County Leadership Academy.

Kumfer first got involved in Ossian Revitalization 15 years ago, an organization that believes a well-designed and well-maintained downtown is vital to our future progress, and that the growth and development of Ossian include the parks and trail systems around the town that connects the community in which we live. Through this endeavor, it is their desire to make Ossian an inviting place for people to live, work, play and raise a family. Large initiatives that Ossian Revitalization has taken the lead on have been: development of the Archbold-Wilson Park Amphitheater, playground, memorial area and nature area. Along with partnering with local businesses to extend sidewalks and lights, install welcome signs, plant and care for the flowers in downtown, the reading room, etc. It consists of 12 passionate and dedicated volunteers that spend their energy to benefit the community of Ossian.

May 16 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. the Ossian Revitalization is doing a Nelson's Chicken Fundraiser to raise money to invest back into the community of Ossian. The sale will be located at the Shelton Financial building in Ossian. Tickets are \$10. You can purchase tickets at the Town Hall, Ossian Do-It Best Hardware, Farmers & Merchants State Bank, Napa Auto Parts and Welch's Auto Repair.

Anyone is welcome to attend Ossian Rotary this Thursday morning, at 7:30 at First Baptist Church of Ossian, 1001 Dehner Drive for this program.

Next week's speaker will be Megan Jinnings of the Adams Wells Crisis Center.

For more information, please contact Jeremy Penrod, Ossian Rotary President, at jeremy.penrod@edwardjones.com.

Please note that Ossian Rotary will cancel when Norwell Community Schools has a delay or cancellation due to weather.

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.



Kody Kumfer

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Still on a mission to see the Northern Lights

It seems that my bucket list grows by a few lines each year — a bit faster than I can keep up with it at this stage in life.

One item that has been on that list since I was in middle school is to one day see the Aurora Borealis.

I remember watching a movie on TV when I was in eighth grade in which the Northern Lights played a key part in the plot. It was a two-part series called “The Langoliers” based off a Stephen King novella.

It was the first time I remember learning about the Aurora Borealis — the stunning ribbons of green, pink, dark red, blue and purple light that so many saw in northeast Indiana this past weekend.

My parents had recently bought us our first PC; I remember getting online with our dial-up modem and going to a search engine (probably Yahoo back then) to learn more about the Northern Lights.

Seeing the Aurora went on my bucket list that night back in 1995.

When I woke around 4:30 a.m. Saturday and started my daily check of the headlines, I was shocked to see news accounts of so many Hoosiers who saw the Northern Lights Friday night. When I opened social media, my feed was full of stunning photographs that my Facebook and Instagram friends had posted.

“I can’t believe that I missed it again,” I must have yelled, as my wife woke startled and confused about what I was trying to tell her before 5 a.m. on a Saturday morning.

“The Northern Lights — we could have seen them Friday night! I missed them again.” Let’s just say that she wasn’t as disappointed as yours truly.

I lost count of how many social media friends had posted their magnificent images from all around northeast Indiana as early as 11 p.m. Friday. If only I had stayed up a bit longer perhaps we could have seen them.

It was the second time I was so close to seeing the Northern Lights but missed them by going to bed too early.

After college, some friends and I made a two-month road trip from Arizona to Alaska and back. We spent nearly 60 days visiting a myriad of state and national parks in both the western United States and Canada as we drove to Alaska. We camped for two months in tents and made our meals on backpacker stoves.

One of my hopes on that 2004 trip was that we would see the Northern Lights, as we drove as far north as Fairbanks, Alaska. A month into the trip, however, we still had not seen them as we started our journey back to Arizona.

On our way home, we decided to take a ferry from Juneau, Alaska, to Prince Rupert in Canada. We spent two nights sleeping on lawn chairs on the ferry’s deck as we admired the beautiful sky and stars.

I was certain we might see the Northern Lights as we made our way south toward Canada.

We tried to sleep in shifts but the ferry’s comfortable lawn chairs (aka our beds) were the closest thing to a mattress we had been on for more than a month and we quickly dozed off that first night. When we woke the next morning, however, several of the other passengers asked if we had seen the amazing lights last night.

“Didn’t you hear the captain make an announcement about the Northern Lights being visible?” someone asked us. We had slept right through his announcement and the Aurora Borealis.

Twenty years later, I missed them again because of falling asleep too early Friday night.

When I saw there was a good chance of seeing them again Saturday, I reached out to a friend who is a professional photographer to see if he was interested in trying to observe them Saturday night. We drove to rural Leo-Cedarville around 10:30 p.m. Saturday to one of his friend’s house in the country and started out Northern Lights stake out.

We waited.

We drove to a new spot and then decided to come back to where we started.

We waited some more.

We saw beautiful stars, the Big Dipper and several planes. We heard frogs, the occasional Canada geese and some fish in the near-by pond.

We saw some occasional headlights from cars but we didn’t see any ribbons of light that even resembled the Aurora Borealis.

We returned home early Sunday morning disappointed but satisfied that we at least tried to catch a glimpse of such a beautiful phenomenon.

Looks like I’ll have to cross that item off my bucket list another day.

jdpeeper2@hotmail.com

Letters to the Editor

Boucher appreciates support

I am writing to say a hearty “thank you” to everyone who supported me throughout the primary election.

I set out to give the voters of Wells County a choice and did just that. When we don’t have choices, we are robbed of one of the aspects that separates our constitutional republic from other forms of government. We had many choices in this election, from strong candidates in our Governor and Congressional District races to choices in some county-level races. While none of us enjoyed all of the mail and the unsolicited text messages that come along with political campaigns, I think we need to appreciate that we have the right and freedom to choose our elected officials.

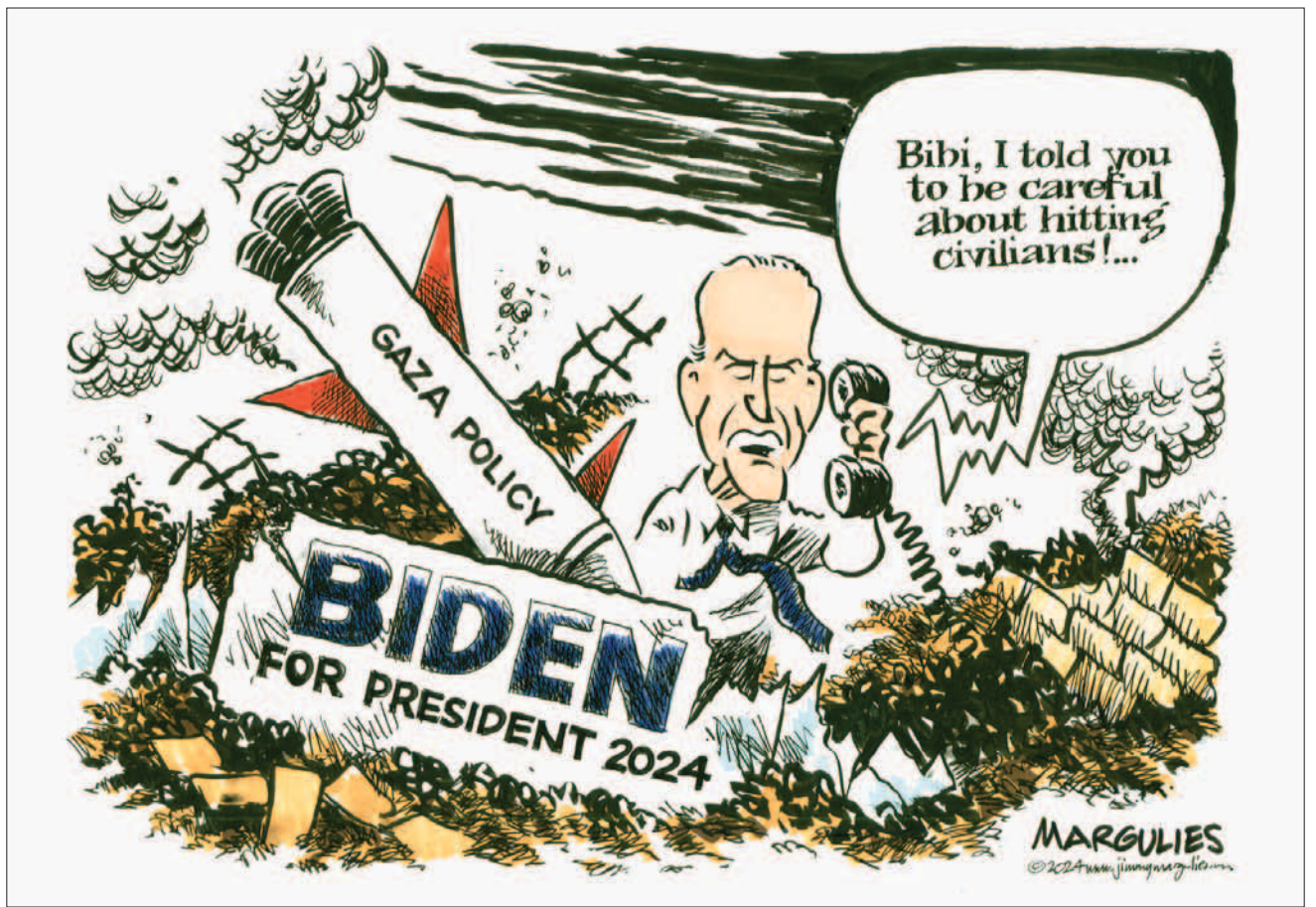
No one puts themselves out there for an election without an intention and desire to win. So, obviously, I am disappointed. It has been, quite frankly, a stressful season. However, I wouldn’t go back to February and change my decision to run for anything! I am so blessed for the interactions and conversations during this time. The opportunity to connect with people whom I haven’t seen for quite some time and to meet new people was worth all of the stress, the work and the sleepless nights.

As I have for the past 20 plus years, I will continue to serve and support our community proudly. Thanks again, Wells County for your support!

TAMRA BOUCHER
Markle



Justin Peeper



Trump can win as the anti-chaos candidate

In 2016, Donald Trump won the White House by running as a disrupter who would come to Washington and shake things up. That was the right message eight years ago. But today, the last thing Americans want is disruption. To win in 2024, Trump needs to run on the opposite message: as the candidate who can end the chaos and restore normalcy in the United States.

Trump as the candidate of normalcy? I know, I know — but hear me out.

Joe Biden won the White House by painting Trump as “an incumbent president who makes things worse, not better ... who sows chaos rather than providing order.” But today, on Biden’s watch, college campuses across the country are in chaos. Our southern border is in chaos. The world is in chaos, with wars raging on two continents.

This creates an opportunity for Trump to seize the mantle as the anti-chaos candidate. His winning message is not to promise “retribution” against those he believes wronged him. It is to tell Americans: Maybe you didn’t like the way I talked, but the border was secure, the economy was strong (before the pandemic hit), inflation was low and the world was largely at peace. What do you care more about: my mouth or your pocketbook? My behavior, or the behavior of Russia, Iran and Hamas? My insults, or illegal immigrants pouring across our border and overwhelming our communities?

A lot of Americans will answer by saying (deep breath): Okay, fine, bring back Trump.

Many voters’ memories of his actions on Jan. 6, 2021, and the numerous other reasons they disliked him have faded. An April New York Times-Siena College poll asked: Has Donald Trump ever said anything that you found offensive? Six in 10 said either no or not recently. Among voters ages 18 to 29, a remarkable 77 percent said no or not recently. And the Times reports that some voters “said that while they disapproved of Mr. Trump’s inflammatory style, they wondered whether they had placed too much emphasis on his personality in past elections.”

What most people do remember, however, is that their lives were better under Trump. Almost two-thirds say they approve of Trump’s handling of the economy when he was president. By contrast, a February Times-Siena poll found a 43 percent plurality said Biden’s policies have hurt them personally (only 18 percent said they helped). And a recent CNN poll finds that a 55 percent majority consider Trump’s

presidency a success (compared with 55 percent who called it a failure three years ago), while 61 percent see Biden’s presidency as a failure.

In other words, Biden is such a disaster that he has made Americans nostalgic for Trump.

Like most former presidents, Trump is benefiting from a bump in public approval after leaving office. But unlike most former presidents, he is running to reclaim that office.

His challenge, therefore, is to harness Trump nostalgia by a) not saying things that remind voters why they disliked him, and b) reminding them what they liked about his presidency (his policies) and what they don’t like about Biden’s (the panoply of calamities he has unleashed at home and abroad).

This means Trump needs to avoid complaining about a stolen election and focus on the future. With many Americans apparently willing to forgive (or at least look past) his conduct on Jan. 6, he needs to stop referring to the Capitol rioters as “patriots” and “hostages.” He needs to choose a running mate who signals stability, not disruption. He needs to persuade voters that electing him will not empower his party’s lunatic fringe — such as Marjorie Taylor Greene, Matt Gaetz and the other GOP legislative arsonists — and simply replace left-wing chaos with right-wing chaos. (Trump’s strong backing of House Speaker Mike Johnson against Greene’s efforts to oust him is a good sign.) He needs to focus less on energizing his base, which remains solidly behind him, and more on winning over swing voters.

If Trump had received just 43,000 more votes in a few key states, the 2020 election might have had a different outcome. Such a marginal shift could be the difference between defeat and victory in 2024. He needs to court Americans who liked his policies but are uncertain about bringing him back to the White House — and behave in a way that gives them permission to vote in their self-interest.

Does Trump have the discipline to do this? The election hinges on that question. Because if voters have to choose between two chaos candidates, Trump will lose. But if Trump can paint Biden as the chaos candidate — and himself as a return to normalcy — he can win.

Follow Marc A. Thiessen @marcthiessen on X



Marc Thiessen

Add Sen. Tom Cotton to VP shortlist

Headlines are now filled with names reported to be on Donald Trump’s “shortlist” of possible VP candidates.

These individuals, some of whom I know, indeed have serious qualifications and experience and are appropriate to be considered for the No. 2 position in the executive branch of the nation’s government.

This vetting process is, as they say, par for the course. It’s exactly what we expect the presidential candidate to be doing.

However, in my view, these are not “par for the course” times. The domestic and international challenges we face are without precedent.

Trump will not be running for reelection in 2028, and so whoever holds the vice presidency will almost certainly be on the shortlist to be the Republican candidate for the presidency then.

Given all of this, there is one name I have not seen among those that Trump is considering that I think would be a superb addition.

It is Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton. Cotton is young, 46 years old, but with a resume packed with experience, all on target and relevant to the kind of leadership that our country needs to restore our national vitality and international leadership.

At home, we are fiscally and culturally bankrupt.

The Congressional Budget Office is projecting federal spending to continue to wastefully gush, mostly



Star Parker

financed by borrowing. CBO shows debt held by the public reaching 116% of GDP by 2034, 139% by 2044 and 166% by 2054.

For this entire period, CBO shows real GDP growth less than 2%.

A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Health Statistics shows that our fertility rate — the rate at which we are bringing babies into the world — is at an all-time low.

The state of marriage, family, children — the pillars of a healthy society — are dismal.

Globally, the forces of evil — Iran, Russia, China — move forward with impunity.

Our country needs leadership that can change all this. We need leadership that has the strength and courage to turn our pathetic fiscal situation around and that can restore the USA to its appropriate role as leader of the free world.

With undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard, Cotton was elected to the Senate at age 37, already having had a distinguished military career.

Cotton served as an Army officer in Iraq and Afghanistan, winning a Bronze Star medal.

He is a fiscal and social conservative, ready to hold the line on our massive wasteful spending while bolstering our faltering defense budget, which is now dangerously hovering at a historical low as a percent of GDP.

Cotton has earned an A+ score from the pro-life Susan B. Anthony organization.

He pushed back on the Defense Department initiative to pay for women soldiers to travel to other states to get an abortion when they are stationed where abortion is not available.

Most timely now is Cotton’s bold, courageous and correct aggressive stand against the chaos that has taken over so many of our universities.

Cotton called for the immediate use of police force to stop the disruptions and has challenged the pro-Hamas, pro-terrorist, antisemitic rhetoric and tone of these demonstrations.

Cotton has been courageously clear that the First Amendment is there to protect freedom, not to protect antisemitism or the disruption of education and interference with the lives of those at universities to learn.

His zero tolerance for the prevailing moral chaos is the kind of leadership our country badly needs.

The unwavering stance of Cotton for American values — commitment to limited government, protection of property, recognizing the sanctity of life and clarity that national defense includes being engaged around the world — is exactly on target.

The vice presidency, a heartbeat from the presidency, is where this outstanding American belongs.

Cotton would be a great addition to the outstanding list Trump is already considering.

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Visiting a get-away cabin and the memories that come with it

We are packing up to leave. Sister Mary has a little cabin on a hilltop tucked in among the pines. It is a perfect little get-away. My earliest memory of the cabin was when I was 16 years old and my family visited Daniel's family in Danville, Ohio. That trip happens to be the first time I learned who Daniel was. Oh my, I had no idea how many amazing things were still to be discovered about him in years to come! I couldn't help but be impressed with this Godly young man but would not dare dream that he would one day ask me to establish a friendship with him and later to become his wife.

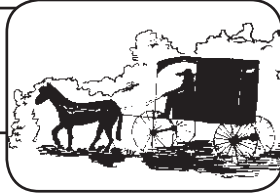
I smile as I think of that day. The cabin was in the final stages of being built and the pines had not been planted yet. On my short walk from the cabin to the van I grabbed a couple of wild flowers and pinned them on my seat belt. On the seven-hour trip home, the flowers brought back warm memories of a time spent with Mary and her family.

A couple of years later I was back in that same cabin, only this time it was with Daniel for a Sunday afternoon date. I marveled. Could this be for real? We had a blessed time together as we read a passage in the Bible, prayed, and chatted.

Several years passed, we were back in the cabin again, this time to be with Daniel's brother and his

The Amish Cook

by Gloria Yoder



young family who had moved into the cabin.

Ten years down the line of time, Daniel and I were back in the cabin once more. This time we went with our six precious children over our Christmas vacation while we visited Ohio family. The quiet corner was no longer occupied on a daily basis. It was back to being a guest cabin and get away.

It was one of those perfect white Christmases. Arriving at our destination, we rounded the corner on top of the long lane with pines on either side, there was the cabin, nestled among snow covered trees. It was a winter wonderland in reality. The cabin was warm and inviting as we unloaded our belongings and settled in for a couple of days. It was good for Daniel to be back on home stomping grounds, especially with all his memories of helping his dad, brothers, and sister on this special event, nonetheless, we praise God for this opportunity to be there and trust it will be well despite the empty spot.

The children are all excited about going back to the cabin again and plan to take their soft balls, gloves, and volleyball. Little Joshua takes his Daddy shirt with him whenever he travels. This black nightshirt was given to Daniel by his brother Tobias; Joshua now

in making something so beautiful out of what used to be nothing, but annoyance is motivating. What all will God be able to do with the areas in our lives which used to be filled with only irritations or things difficult to get rid of?

Things keep changing, Daniel passed on to glory, still the cabin is there waiting to welcome friends or family. This spring I just got this strong urge that we need to go to Ohio again and spend time with Daniel's grandparents who are in their 90s, then of course see my grandma in Walnut Creek, and be with many other friends and family in Danville.

Thanks to Mary for getting everything ready in the cabin for us once more. We will miss Daniel on this special event, nonetheless, we praise God for this opportunity to be there and trust it will be well despite the empty spot.

The children are all excited about going back to the cabin again and plan to take their soft balls, gloves, and volleyball. Little Joshua takes his Daddy shirt with him whenever he travels. This black nightshirt was given to Daniel by his brother Tobias; Joshua now



takes great comfort in it and wipes his tears with it.

We hope to keep our forenoons open for ample time together as a family, having practice sessions, singing, and so on. The afternoons and evenings will probably have more events such as visiting others or hopefully having friends at the cabin with us. My list of people I want to see keeps stretching longer, we'll see if two weeks will get it or if we'll need to stay longer. I'm not fond of the thought of not seeing our church family for so long, but then who can be two people at once?

Mary's lattes, baked goods, and authentic dishes have a way of making all of us feel extra loved when we miss Daddy on our visits to Ohio. I'll pass her Rhubarb bars on for you to try. She is the one who introduced it to me this spring.

SOUR CREAM RHUBARB BARS

- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups quick oats
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- Filling:**
- 4 eggs yolks
- 3 cups rhubarb
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons clear gel
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 cups sour cream

Boil filling for a couple minutes or until thickened. Pat 2/3 of crumbs into the bottom of 9 X 13 inch pan. Bake at 350 for 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and spread the filling over the baked crumbs. Then spread rest of the crumb topping on top and bake for an addition 20 minutes.

A kayaking adventure on the Wabash River with the Abnets

By BARBARA BARBIERI

A "bursting at the seams" crowd was on hand at the most recent Lunch and Learn gathering at Ouabache State Park as LaNae and John Abnet shared their adventures of "Kayaking the Wabash and Beyond" with those attending.

They began their program by John playing the guitar as LaNae led the audience in the daily song (DoWaDiddy) they sang as they began each day of their three and a half month, 1,591 mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico in 2015.

The adventure had begun in May of 2014 as the husband and wife did

a year of preparation for the adventure. They were determined to eat healthy which led them to growing their own food on their 32 acre farm (Dead Orchard Ranch near Geneva) and LaNae learning to dehydrate food for the 720 meals she prepared. And John worked at assembling the kayaks and the gear they would need.

The dehydrated food packages were put into boxes by John to be mailed by a friend weekly to a post office along their route.

Their trip began in Ohio by a Turkey Farm's drainage pipe on April 1, 2015 as they hiked the first day until the water became wide and deep enough for the kayaks. One of their early stops was

at Bluffton's Kehoe Park where at a chance meeting they were invited to be the dinner guests of then Bluffton's Mayor Ted Ellis and his wife Marge. (Marge is a kayaker.) Also near this area of the Wabash they encountered the Herons Rookery between Bluffton and Markle.

They continued showing slides of the various stops on the journey down the Wabash river to the Ohio River to the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. Each day they traveled from 15 to 35 miles, starting early in the morning to avoid the heat during the day. Getting started in the morning would take about two hours to reload the kayaks after daily devo-

tions, checking of the weather radar and the eating of breakfast.

LaNae has written two books about their adventures Titled "Paddling Edna" Part I and Part II, which were offered for sale with autographs.

Corner Depot Catering provided the cake desserts for the gathering. Park Naturalist Lydia Ade told of park events including the coming Weed Wrangle on Saturday, May 18, from 10 a.m. until noon.

Next Lunch & Learn event will be held on Thursday, June 13th, when Dian Jorday from the National Wild Turkey Federation will tell "All About Turkeys." The programs are free but gate fees apply.



LaNae and John Abnet were program presenters at the Ouabache State Park Lunch & Learn event Thursday as they took those attending on a Kayaking Journey down the Wabash River, via a slide presentation. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

Psi Iota Xi sorority gifts art supplies to Wells County teachers

Members of Bluffton's Psi Iota Xi have gifted each of the county's art teachers with a check for \$300 to be used in their classrooms for supplies.

A total of \$3,000 was awarded. The art teachers at Bluffton Harrison Elementary, Middle and High School; Lancaster and Ossian Elementary; Northern Wells Middle and High School; Southern Wells Elementary and Middle School; and Bethlehem Lutheran Elementary School were presented the checks.

Psi Ote members Jacie Moser and Liz, Moser, at left, are shown presenting a \$300 check for art supplies to Lancaster Elementary School art teacher Mrs. Nunley and Principle Mrs. Butcher, at right. Approving of the transaction were 3rd grader Aubrey Moser and registered kindergarten Asher Moser, in front. (Photo provided)



May festivals around Indiana

With the weather warming the list of festivals increases and the 500 Festival in Indianapolis leads the list for events through May 25th.

There are events at both the Speedway and in downtown Indianapolis. More information at 500festival.com.

Tri State Gas Engine & Tractor Association 42nd Swap & Sell Meet: May 15-18, Portland by Jay County Fairgrounds, admission charged, tristategasenginetractor.com.

Redbud Quilt Show: May 17-18, Anderson Museum of Art, admission charged, 765-354-4691.

Art of Wine (Carmel): May 18, Carmel Arts & Design District, food vendors, wine-related art, live entertainment, free wine tasting for those 21 and over, carmelartanddesign.com

Indiana Peony Festival (Noblesville's Seminary Park): May 18, over 50 vendors with peony inspired products, free, indianapeonyfestival.com

Fairy, Gnome & Troll Festival (Kendallville): May 18, storytime with Tinkerbell, arts, crafts and food vendors, circus acts, free, kendallvillechamber.com

Fort Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival: May 19, Walb Student Union, PFW, noon-6 p.m., Japanese music, dance, tea ceremony, free, cherryblossomfw.com

Tri State Bluegrass Festival (Kendallville): May 23-26, Noble County Fairgrounds, Bluegrass and Ole Timey bands performing, admission charged, bluegrassusa.net.

Round the Fountain Art Fair (Lafayette): May 25, 50th annual event, juried art sale, free, roundthefountain.org.

Events at Promenade Park in Fort Wayne

During the month of May the following events will be happening at Fort Wayne's Promenade Park.

Firefly Tour: Wednesday, May 15, 7 p.m., free, dancers from the Fort Wayne School of Ballet.

An information session about **Dragon Boat Racing** will be held on Thursday, May 23, 6-7 p.m. at the Park Foundation Pavilion. RSVP to Sarah.umbdenstock@cityoffortwayne.org.

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Knights smash three homers to beat Eagles in NE8 Conference play

By RYAN WALKER

Norwell picked up a potential momentum-shifting victory in softball Monday night.

The Knights (10-7, 4-3 NE8) were carried by three home runs in a 7-6 win over the visiting Columbia City Eagles (13-5, 4-3 NE8). The win finishes the Northeast 8 Conference season for the Knights at 4-3, one game better than last year. That ties them with the Eagles and Belmont in third.

A five-run rally in the bottom of the fifth inning put the Knights in the driver's seat, but the Eagles roared back on Aleighya Noe's two-run homer. That threat was deemed just one run too late as Kayla Watkins earned the save for the win.

"Honestly, I take it one game at a time," Norwell head coach Kevin Baird said. "We're coming out here and just trying to put the best team on the field each game and just battle. The one thing I want our kids to know is the DNA of our team, our MO, I want us to be a team that fights to the first inning to the seventh inning."

It's been a frustratingly up-and-down year for the Knights. Weather has postponed eight total games — four of which were all right in a row to start the season. The 2024 campaign was supposed to begin with South Adams on April 4, but Norwell didn't play its first game until April 13.

While playing catch up with other experienced teams, the Knights have struggled to find an identity, according to Baird. But as the team plays consistent softball, they might have started to find a groove.

In Monday night's contest, the Knights had five extra-base hits in the game. Sami Lemler drilled two home runs, while Jordan Markley got a solo shot for run No. 7 in the sixth inning — one that turned out to be important.

Last year, the Knights had 51 extra-base hits in 26 games. In 2024, the team has 46 in 17 games. Perhaps, the team's pop could be Norwell's identity.



Norwell shortstop Reese Frauhiger gears up to fire a ground ball to the Knights' first baseman Nevada Lenwell.

has huge upside, and when she gets going or any one of our sophomores get a big hit, for whatever reason, that kind of starts sparking that energy. I think it gets all the young kids that are their buddies or friends — it kind of becomes energetic for the whole team."

The three bombs gave the team its 11 on the year. Kara Brown leads the field with four of them.

On the mound, Lemler picked up her sixth win of the season. Kara Brown and Watkins also threw.

Norwell has five games remaining on its schedule before traveling to Oak Hill to face Peru. The Knights will host Woodlan at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 15.

ryan@news-banner.com

"The sky's the limit for this team if they believe," Baird said. "We have a ton of power. I have seven kids that can take the ball out of the ballpark."

Out of all five hits, Reese Frauhiger's double that scored two runs in the fifth inning could have set the fire. Her hit put the team back within striking distance, as Eagle starting pitcher Emma Hiss, who had a 8-2 record and 1.43 ERA entering the game, began to settle in on the mound.

Hiss struck out the side in the fourth inning, with only Lemler's solo shot in the second frame being the only damage. But Frauhiger's double got the Knights within a 4-3 score and tied the game on Kaydance Clark's RBI single.

Then, Lemler stepped up to the plate and mashed a two-run home run to left centerfield — a no-doubter.

Baird said that Frauhiger's double might have been the sparkplug the team needed.

"I think the energy of our dugout when somebody gets an extra-base hit, it immediately takes the energy up a little bit," Baird said. "Reese is one of those kids that's just a sophomore and



At top, Norwell's Sami Lemler smokes the ball to dead centerfield for the first of her two home runs against Columbia City at home Monday night. Above, Lemler rounds third and slaps fives with head coach Kevin Baird after hitting the ball in the above photo. Her two blasts helped lead the Knights to a 7-6 victory over the Eagles. (Photos by Ryan Walker)



Norwell's Quentauris Jones (middle) signs with Taylor University Monday morning at the high school. Pictured with him are from left to right: front row, Noah Jones, Taylor head track and field coach Derek Gay, Jalen Jones, Quentauris Jones, Taresa Jones and Ishiah Jones. Back row, Norwell assistant coach Josh Gerber, coach Deidre Stoppenhagen, Saion Sandifer and coach Wendy Bailey. (Photo by Ryan Walker)

Norwell's Quentauris Jones signs with Taylor for track and field

By RYAN WALKER

Norwell's Quentauris Jones signed to run track at Taylor University Monday morning at the high school.

The Knights' senior will be joining the Trojans for sprints, including the 100m, 200m and the 4x100m relay.

Jones was surrounded by a large crowd of friends and several members of his family to watch him go to the next level. Norwell coaches Deidre Stoppenhagen and Josh Gerber, along with Taylor track and field head coach Derek Gay (also the sprints and hurdles coach), were in attendance.

Norwell's community might have inspired Jones to want to join another strong one at his new school, as he values the community.

"I choose Taylor because they have a great community," Jones said. "One thing I look for in a college is new people and how intentional they are in what they do and the

impact they want on others. Personally, I feel like if I go there, I can have a big impact on the community."

Not only did Gay recruit Jones, but so did 2023 Norwell graduate, and now hurdler at Taylor, Jake Parker. Parker pushed for Jones to join the team and his sales pitch was enough to bring him over.

"Jake Parker had a lot to do with it," Jones laughed. "He spoke some words to me and he gave me an opportunity to say 'Come on, slide and let's get you here.' I'm thankful for that guy. I'm thankful for Jake Parker for a great influence."

In Jones' senior year thus far, he was a part of the first-place 4x100m relay team at the Northeast 8 Conference meet last week. He will compete in the sectional on Thursday.

Jones will study business management at Taylor.

ryan@news-banner.com

High School Calendar

TUESDAY, MAY 14
BASEBALL: Norwell at Columbia City, 5:30 p.m.; Southern Wells at Bluffton, 5 p.m. (non-conference)

BOYS GOLF: Belmont/East Noble at Norwell, 4 p.m.; Adams Central at Southern Wells, 4:30 p.m.

GIRLS TENNIS: (Sectional) Adams Central at Bluffton, 4:30 p.m.

SOFTBALL: North Side at Southern Wells, 5:30 p.m.

TRACK & FIELD: (Girls sectional,) Bluffton, Norwell, Southern Wells at Marion, 5:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

BASEBALL: Norwell at Northrop, 5:30 p.m.

GIRLS TENNIS: (Sectional) Norwell vs. Bluffton at Bluffton, 4:30 p.m.

SOFTBALL: Woodlan at Norwell, 5:30 p.m.; Fremont at Bluffton, 5:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAY 16

BASEBALL: Norwell at Carroll, 6 p.m.; Bluffton at Huntington North, 6 p.m.

BOYS GOLF: Eastbrook at Bluffton 4:30 p.m.; Madison-Grant at Southern Wells, 4:30 p.m.

GIRLS TENNIS: (Sectional) Bluffton, Norwell at Bluffton vs. TBD, 4:30 p.m.

TRACK & FIELD: (Boys sectional,) Bluffton, Norwell, Southern Wells at Marion, 5:30 p.m.

SOFTBALL: North Side at Norwell, 5:30 p.m.; Winchester at Bluffton, 5 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 17

BASEBALL: Anderson Prep at Southern Wells, 5:30 p.m.

SOFTBALL: Bluffton at Norwell, 5 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 18

BASEBALL: Bluffton at Southwood, 10 a.m.

BOYS GOLF: Norwell's NE8 Meet at Cobblestone Golf Course, 9 a.m.; Bluffton, Southern Wells' ACAC meet at Celina Linx Golf Course, 9 a.m.

SOFTBALL: Norwell at Whitko (double-header), 10 a.m.

MONDAY, MAY 20

SOFTBALL: Liberty Christian at Southern Wells, 6:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, MAY 21

BOYS GOLF: South Adams at Norwell, 4:30 p.m.; Bluffton at Huntington North, 4:30 p.m.; Southern Wells at Northfield, 4:30 p.m.

SOFTBALL: (Sectional) Norwell vs. Peru at Oak Hill, 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22

BASEBALL: (Sectional) Peru at Norwell, 7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAY 23

BASEBALL: (Sectional) Bluffton at South Adams, 5:30 p.m.

Sports Roundup

Tigers earn share of ACAC baseball title, but falls in season game against Braves

Bluffton earned at least a share of the ACAC Conference baseball championship Monday night.

The Tigers accomplished the feat without any work done on their own on Monday, but in the hands of the Adams Central Flying Jets, who defeated undefeated Heritage 8-0 on Monday. Because of Bluffton's finished 5-1 conference record and Heritage losing a game, the Tigers clinched the share.

Heritage has one more game left to go to determine if it will share with Bluffton. They're set to face South Adams Tuesday night.

Against Blackhawk Christain, Bluffton lost 2-1 at home Monday night.

With the loss, the Tigers fall to 12-8 on the season.

Bluffton had three hits, one each by Braxton Betancourt (double), Axton Beste and Eli Garrett. Nobody had an RBI.

Garrett pitched on the mound for the Tigers and got the loss, throwing five innings and allowed two runs and struck out five.

Colton Arnold threw two innings in relief and allowed no runs, hits or walks.

Bluffton will host Southern Wells in a non-conference game at 5 p.m. Tuesday, May 14.

Girls' tennis sectional pairings released

The girls' tennis sectional pairings have been released by the IHSAA.

In Round 1 of Sectional 30 at Bluffton High School, the Bluffton Tigers will square off with Adams Central. The Jets defeated the Tigers earlier in the season 3-2. All sectional matches will start at 4:30 p.m. for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Teams will play simultaneously on both ends of the court.

The winner of that game will face South Adams.

On the other side of the bracket, Norwell will face Belmont. The Knights defeated the Braves 4-1 earlier in the season.

Raiders top the Panthers in softball game

Southern Wells went on the road and defeated Lakewood Park Christian 8-3 in softball Monday night.

The Raiders boosted their record to 6-14 on the season.

Of the eight hits, the Raiders were led by Gracie Reeve's three-hit night with two doubles. Kenzie Paxton went 2-4 with a double and four RBI, while Kyah Thomas went 1-3 with three RBI.

Kaylea Coffel threw a complete three-run game, with only one being earned. She struck out five and allowed five hits.

Southern Wells will host North Side for its final regular season game at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 14.

Tigers rout Warriors in nonconference softball

Bluffton defeated Wes-Del on the road in softball 13-2 Monday night.

The Tigers improved to a 10-10 record with the win.

Bluffton tallied 15 hits, led by the 5-5 night for Averi Petty, who had five singles and five runs scored. Madyson Sonnigsen, Konley Ault and Madison Smith had two hit nights and

RBI. Sonnigsen had a triple and Smith a double. Kayla Kiefer also had a hit and two RBI.

Sonnigsen got the win, throwing seven complete innings, allowing only three hits, two unearned runs and struck out nine.

Bluffton hosts Fremont at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 15.

Tigers top Starfires in golf

Bluffton won on the road against South Adams in golf Monday at Wabash Valley.

The Tigers shot a 168 and the Starfires 178.

Leading the Tigers and the medalist was Declan Grieser with a score of 38, followed by Connor Klopfenstein (41), Kade Abbett (42), Max White (47) and Anthony Hartman (49).

Bluffton fell in the junior varsity match 199-212.

The Tigers were led by Kyler Potter with a score of 46, followed by Chris Castaneda (53), Will Ault (56), Hutch Craighead (57) and Landon Crist (62). Connor Collins (55) and Graham Linderwell (62) also participated.

Bluffton will host Eastbrook at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, May 16.

Knights fall to Chargers in final girls' tennis match

Norwell fell 4-1 at Carroll in its final girls' tennis regular season match of the year.

The Knights finish with a 13-3 record.

Individual results:

- Jana Beier (C) defeated Addy Heyerly 6-1, 6-2 at No. 1 singles.

- Kenna Shoup (C) defeated Delaney Hoover 6-4, 7-5 at No. 2 singles.

- Macie Saalfrank (N) defeated Megan McMillen 7-5, 6-2 at No. 3 singles.

- Riley Glassley and Chloe Ceresa (C) Annabelle Johnson and Macy Felger 6-3, 6-4 at No. 1 doubles.

- Julianna Ounsonbath and Bianca Yaney (C) defeated Jordyn Xayyachack and Ciera Hiester 6-2, 6-2 at No. 2 doubles.

Norwell won the junior varsity match 4-2.

Results for JV:

- Aubrey Meyer (N) defeated Brenna Bulock 8-5.

- Gabbi Hoepfner (N) defeated Grace Widenhofer 8-6.

- Lucy Gerbers (N) defeated Katie Gosheff 8-1.

- Nadja Smolorich (C) defeated Sam Evans 6-2.

- JJ Kokonaing and Christina Pulcini (C) defeated Hope Mitchell and Emmaline Johnson 8-4.

- Sam Evans and Aubryn Keller (N) defeated Amarah Trulock and Abbie Johnson 8-0.

Norwell will play Belmont at Bluffton High School in Round 2 of the sectional tournament at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 15.

Tigers play Patriots in middle school tennis

Bluffton played Jay County in middle school tennis Monday night.

The team plays its matches in a round-by-round format, playing for 20 minutes at a time.

Round winners:

Round 1: Parker Christal and Bear Sprunger.

Round 2: None

Round 3: Ethan Ribich and Dane Fieechter and Cooper Dunnuck and Heath Gerber.

Round 4: Ribich and Eli Seago.

Varsity round winners: Fiechter, Jordan Simpson-Barkley, Christal and Ribich and

Ithan Rinkenberger and Seago.

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Monday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY Cash 5 — 07-14-24-33-37

Cash4Life — 01-08-19-22-40, Cash Ball: 01

Quick Draw Midday — 02-03-04-07-22-25-30-32-39-40-41-47-53-54-55-58-69-72-78-79, BE: 79

Daily Three-Midday — 02-06-07, SB: 04

Daily Three-Evening — 04-07-07, SB: 09

Daily Four-Midday — 06-06-08-07, SB: 04

Daily Four-Evening — 05-03-08-06, SB: 06

Quick Draw Evening — 03-10-13-16-17-19-26-30-33-34-39-46-60-64-68-69-70-71-75-80, BE: 33

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MEGA MILLIONS Estimated jackpot (for Tuesday): \$363 million

POWERBALL 05-14-29-38-66 Powerball: 01; Power Play: 2X

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90C01-2403-EU-000010
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COUNTY OF WELLS) SS:
IN THE WELLS)
CIRCUIT COURT)
PROBATE DIVISION)
IN RE: THE ESTATE OF)
FERN E. GOULD, deceased.)
NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION
Notice is hereby given that Vicki L. Hoffmaster was on the 6th day of March 2024, appointed Personal Representative of the estate of Fern E. Gould, deceased, who died on the 11th day of February, 2024.

All persons who have claims against this estate, whether or not now due, must file the claim in the office of the Clerk of this Court within three (3) months from the date of the first publication of this notice, or within nine (9) months after the decedent's death, whichever is earlier, or the claims will be forever barred.

Dated at Bluffton, Indiana, this 6th day of March, 2024.
Attorney for the Estate:
Michael D. Harmeyer,
HARMEYER LAW FIRM LLC
200 East Main Street, Suite 550
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802-1914
(260) 423-4565
Attorney #14258-02
Beth Davis
Clerk, Wells Circuit Court
nb 5/14, 5/21
hspaxlp

90C01-2404-EU-000014
STATE OF INDIANA)
COUNTY OF WELLS) SS:
IN THE WELLS)
CIRCUIT COURT)
IN THE MATTER OF THE)
UNSUPERVISED ESTATE OF)
PATRICIA A. MADEJ,)
Deceased)
NOTICE OF UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION
Notice is given that CHRISTOPHER M. MADEJ, on May 3, 2024 was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of PATRICIA A. MADEJ, deceased, who died on March 1, 2024. The Personal Representative is authorized to administer the estate without Court supervision.

All persons who have claims against this estate, whether or not now due, must file the claim in the office of the Clerk of this Court within three (3) months from the date of the first publication of this notice, or within nine (9) months after the decedent's death, whichever is earlier, or the claims will be forever barred.

Dated May 3rd, 2024
BETH DAVIS
Clerk, Wells County Court
Natalie J. Boocher
Schwarz Law Office, PC
310 N. Chicago St., PO Box 637
Royal Center, Indiana 46978
574/643-9999
Supreme Court I.D. No. 33965-71
Attorney for the Estate
nb 5/7, 5/14
hspaxlp

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COUNTY OF WELLS) SS:
IN THE WELLS)
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PROBATE DIVISION)
IN RE: THE ESTATE OF)
RICHARD W. STULTZ,)
DECEASED.)
NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION
(For Publication in Newspaper)
Notice is hereby given that David W. Stultz, on the 3rd day of May, 2024, was appointed Personal Representative of the estate of Richard W. Stultz, deceased, who died on the 12th day of April, 2024.

All persons who have claims against this estate, whether or not now due, must file the claim in the office of the Clerk of this Court within three (3) months from the date of the first publication of this notice, or within nine (9) months after the decedent's death, whichever is earlier, or the claims will be forever barred.

Dated at Bluffton, Indiana, this 3rd day of May, 2024.
Beth Davis
Clerk, Wells Circuit Court
Andrew P. Simmons (Atty No. 27349-49)
ROTHBERG LOGAN WARSCO LLP
505 E. Washington Blvd.
Fort Wayne, IN 46802
Phone: (260) 422-9454
Fax: (260) 422-1622
Attorneys for the Personal Representative
nb 5/7, 5/14
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May GOODS & SERVICES DIRECTORY

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Setting boundaries and seeking balance

Dear Annie by Annie Lane



Dear Annie: I have a younger co-worker who I met at a work social event, and we started talking a bit about novels we are writing as a hobby.

home caregiver, taking care of him 24/7, 365 days a year. I live a normal, happy life with no interference.

Lately, I've been stuck in a rut of sorts, and I cannot figure it out. I am a Type 2 Diabetic who maintains and watches my health very well and carefully.

I don't know if it's a midlife crisis kind of thing or something else. I've been feeling a little sluggish and down and out, but I don't feel anything else out of the ordinary.

I never married and don't have children, so I am not sure what this could possibly be. I don't have any outbursts or PTSD. All I'm feeling is like life is slowing me down and I haven't a clue as to why.

I don't know if it's a midlife crisis kind of thing or something else. I've been feeling a little sluggish and down and out, but I don't feel anything else out of the ordinary.

It's clear that he never has a specific question for me and will grasp at straws or ask awkward questions just to keep conversation going beyond a normal or considerate time.

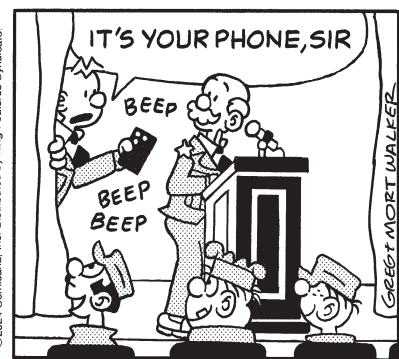
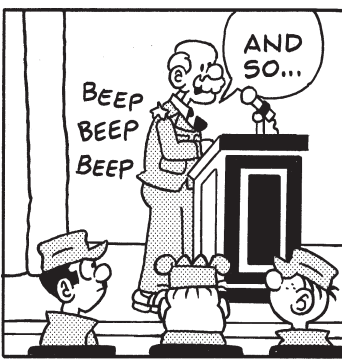
I have no interest in this, and he clearly is not getting the message. I'm finding myself getting anxious over the looming potential of these random, unwanted visits.

Dear Unwanted: You mentioned that he is young. Maybe this is his first job and he is treating it more like he is still in college.

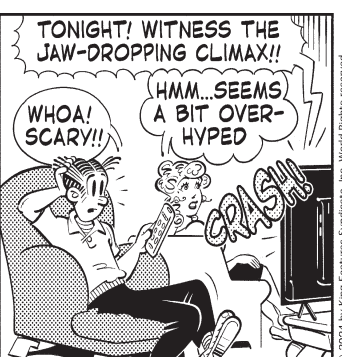
Dear Annie: I'm a single 52-year-old male who needs your advice, please. I come from a close-knit family of four.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com © 2024 CREATORS.COM

BEETLE BAILEY



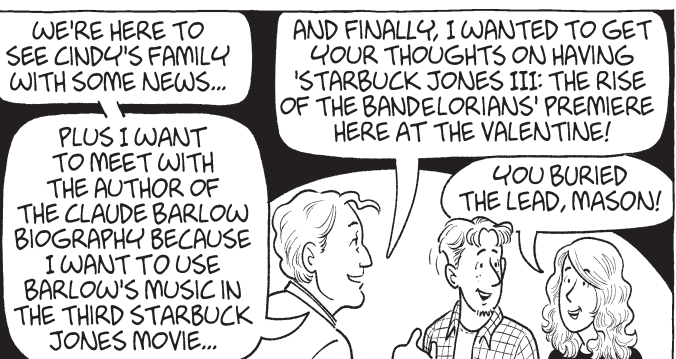
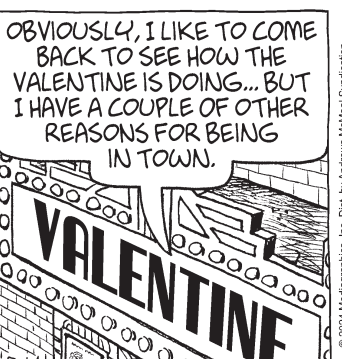
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My Answer



We should never cease proclaiming God's truths

Question: There's a weekly ecumenical Bible study that happens at my place of employment during the lunch hour, with space provided by the large secular corporation where I work.

sake of unity? If not, for the sake of truth, how can I be assured that I am not stepping out of bounds? - T.T.

Answer: The very power of our conviction sometimes inclines us toward feeling that we are right and that other people are wrong, based on our own ideas rather than Scripture.

But we should never cease proclaiming God's truths as the Bible records them. As Christians, we should pray that God will

give us a gracious spirit as we share the greatest news ever announced to the world. Exhibiting grace is one of the most important of Christian virtues.

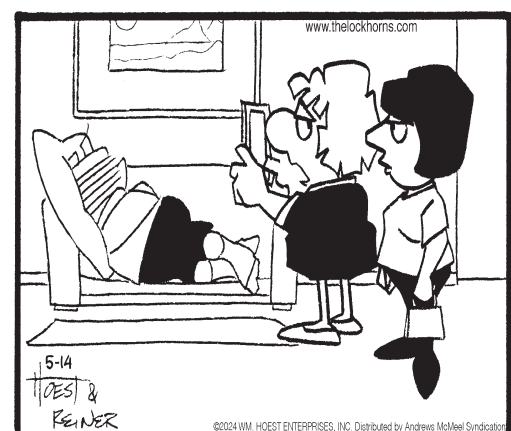
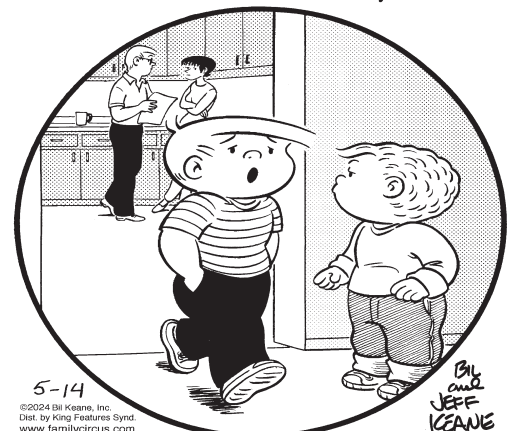
Stick to the Bible and its principles and teachings, and let God's Word speak for itself—it has an impact of its own.

(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.) ©2024 Billy Graham Literary Trust. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

The LOCKHORNS



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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solution time: 22 mins.

Grid for yesterday's crossword answer 5-14

TV schedule grid for 05/14 with channels and program listings.

Bluffton's Alex Neuenschwander to serve as Indy 500 Veteran Milk Presenter

By C.J. Miller
Hoosier Ag Today
The 108th Running of the Indianapolis 500 is fast approaching—and so is the tradition of having an Indiana Dairy producer hand an

ice-cold glass bottle of milk to the winning driver of "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing."

This year's Indy 500 Veteran Milk Presenter is Alex Neuenschwander, a fourth-

generation Indiana Dairy producer from the Bluffton area. He co-owns Neu Dairy with his brother Kip near Bluffton in Wells County.

"A couple of years ago

I brought my son to the Indy 500 and it was it was an electric atmosphere," said Neuenschwander. "We could feel the cars as they're going around, and it was just an exciting time. My son was like, 'Hey Dad, you got to be the one to hand off that milk to the winner,' so I threw my through my name in and they asked me to, so I am beyond thrilled to be doing this."

He'll be handing off the traditional glass bottle of milk to this year's winning driver, while Abbie Herr of Herr Dairy in Noble County, is this year's Indy 500 Rookie Milk Presenter and will hand another glass bottle of milk to this year's winning chief mechanic.

Last year, Neuenschwander learned a great deal while serving as the "Rookie Milk Presenter" and got a front-row seat to watch the exciting exchange between the 2023 "Veteran Milk Presenter" Kerry Estes and 2023 Indy 500 champion Josef Newgarden. While shooting a promotional video for American Dairy Association Indiana in 2022, Josef Newgarden had visited Estes' dairy farm near New Palestine, so the two had already met and

had gotten to know each other prior to Newgarden's 2023 celebration in Victory Circle.

"That was epic. I don't know that it would be possible to replicate that because it just was absolutely perfect. There was definitely a bond and a little bit of a chemistry between Kerry and Josef. I think Kerry may have been a little bit more excited than Josef when he won that race," he says.

Neuenschwander adds that he's not only proud to

represent Indiana's nearly 700 dairy producers as part of the celebration in Victory Circle at the end of this year's Indy 500, but he's also proud to represent the thousands of dairy producers throughout the U.S.

"As dairy farmers, we work really hard to produce high-quality milk. We just love it. It's our passion—and it has to be a passion. I'm so excited to be part of that this year, and excited to see all my hard work coming into that moment," he says.



Alex Neuenschwander with a young calf at his dairy farm in Bluffton. (Photo taken from Hoosier Ag Today)

USDA: Up to \$28K per farm to help dairies with H5N1

By AGDAILY
Since the official detection of H5N1 in dairy cattle in the Texas panhandle on March 25, producers and agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Services have been working to mitigate and understand the potential impacts of the disease on both cattle and humans.

Samples of the disease, testing to confirm meat and milk safety, and tracing in cattle have already taken effect.

Now, the USDA has announced further steps to help reduce the impact of H5N1 on producers.

"Care for farm workers and animals is critical for milk producers, as is protecting against potential human health risks and reassuring the public," the National Milk Producers Federation responded to the recent updates. "We look forward to continued collaboration and consultation with USDA and other federal agencies as we monitor, understand, and contain this outbreak, and we will do what we can to help dairy farmers understand and benefit from these initiatives as swift implementation is put into motion."

USDA to assist with improved biosecurity

Assistance for producers with H5N1-affected premises to improve on-site biosecurity to reduce the spread is available. In addition, the USDA is taking steps to make available financial tools for the production of lost milk in herds affected by H5N1.

"Building on the Federal Order addressing pre-

movement testing, these steps will further equip producers with tools they can use to keep their affected herds and workers healthy and reduce the risk of the virus spreading to additional herds," reads a press release by the department.

Financial support for producers. Financial support (up to \$2,000 per affected premises per month) will be available to producers who supply PPE to employees and/or provide outerwear uniform laundering for producers of affected herds who facilitate the participation of their workers in USDA/CDC workplace and farmworker study.

Complementary to USDA's new financial support for producers, workers participating in the study are also eligible for financial incentives to compensate them for their time, regardless of whether the study is led by federal, state, or local public health professionals.

Biosecurity planning and implementation. The USDA says that they will provide support (up to \$1,500 per affected premises) to develop biosecurity plans based on existing secure milk supply plans.

This includes recommended enhanced biosecurity for individuals that frequently move between dairy farms — milk haulers, veterinarians, feed trucks, AI technicians, etc. In addition, USDA will provide a \$100 payment to producers who purchase and use an inline sampler for their milk system.

Funding for heat treatment to dispose of milk in a biosecure fashion will

provide producers with a safe option for the disposal of milk. Heat treatment performed according to FDA standards is the only currently available method to effectively inactivate the virus in milk. If a producer establishes a system to heat treat all waste milk before disposal, USDA will pay the producer up to \$2,000 per monthly affected premises.

Reimburse producers for veterinarian costs associated with confirmed positive H5N1 premises. This supports producers in covering the veterinary costs necessary for treating cattle infected with H5N1 and fees for veterinarians to collect samples for testing. This can include veterinary expenses and/or specific supplies needed for treatment and sample collection. Veterinary costs can be covered from the initial date of positive confirmation at NVSL for that farm, up to \$10,000 per affected premises.

Offset shipping costs for influenza A testing at laboratories in the National Animal Health Laboratory Network. USDA will pay for shipping samples to NAHLN labs for testing. USDA will pay actual shipping costs, not to exceed \$50 per shipment for up to 2 shipments per month for each affected premises. Testing at NAHLN laboratories for samples associated with this event (e.g., pre-movement, testing of sick/suspect animals, and samples from concerned producers) is already being conducted at no cost to the producer.

Together, these tools

represent a value of up to \$28,000 per premises to support increased biosecurity activities over the next 120 days.

Compensate producers for loss of milk production. USDA is taking steps to make funding available from the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-raised Fish Program to compensate eligible producers with positive herds who experience loss of milk production. While dairy cows that have been infected with H5N1 generally recover well, and there is little mortality associated with the disease, it does dramatically limit milk production, causing economic losses for producers with affected premises. USDA can support farmers with the ELAP program to offset some of these losses. This compensation program is distinct from the strategy to contain the spread.

Work with states to limit the movement of lactating cattle. Additionally, USDA will work with and support the actions of states with affected herds as they consider movement restrictions within their borders to further limit the spread of H5N1 between herds and reduce the further spread of this virus.

USDA will make \$98 million in existing funds available to APHIS to fund these initiatives. If needed, USDA has the authority, with Congressional notification, to make additional funds available.

Additional details on how producers can access and apply for the financial tools are forthcoming.

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Purdue University: farmer sentiment declines to lowest level since June 2022

By AGDAILY
In April, farmer sentiment took a significant hit, as shown by the Purdue University/CME Group Ag Economy Barometer, which plummeted by 15 points from March to a score of 99.

Both components of the barometer saw declines: The Current Condition Index fell by 18 points to 83, and the Future Expectations Index dropped by 14 points to 106. This April marked the lowest sentiment reading since June 2022 and was just 3 points above the April 2020 score.

Additionally, the current condition rating for April hit its lowest point since May 2020. The downturn in sentiment stemmed from concerns about current financial conditions on farms and anticipated financial difficulties in the coming year.

The survey for the April Ag Economy Barometer

was conducted from April 8 to 12, 2024.

The decline in farmer sentiment in April mirrored broader worries about financial performance and farmland values. The Farm Financial Performance Index fell to 76 in April, down 7 points from the previous month and 21 points from its peak last fall at 97. This decline reflects growing concerns among farmers about the financial outlook for the upcoming year, with fewer expecting improved or similar financial performance compared to last year.

In April's survey, farmers' expectations regarding interest rates and farmland values underwent changes. Only 24% of respondents predicted interest rates to rise over the next year, down from 32% in March. Despite this slight improvement in their outlook on

interest rates, fewer farmers anticipated an increase in farmland values, with more expecting values to remain steady.

In the April survey, only 29% of producers anticipated an increase in farmland values in the upcoming year, compared to 38% in March, while 17% anticipated a decrease, up from 14% in March. These shifts reflect farmers' concerns about farm financial performance in 2024, overshadowing their more positive outlook on interest rates.

There is a growing interest in utilizing farmland for solar energy production, and it appears that solar lease rates are on the rise. This month's survey indicated a 7-point increase in respondents reporting discussions with companies about solar energy leases, reaching 19% in April compared to 12% in March.

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