

# The News - Banner

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

## Bluffton Regional ends labor and delivery services

**By HOLLY GASKILL**  
Bluffton Regional Medical Center will no longer offer inpatient labor and delivery services after Thursday, May 23. In a press release on Tuesday, Lutheran Health Network announced it has "begun work to wind down" labor and delivery services at both BRMC and Dukes Memorial Hospital in Peru, Indiana. The release stated this was a direct result of the declining number of births at the hospitals, which reportedly could not support the staff and specialized care needed. LHN reported births at the two hospitals had cumulatively declined by 30% from 2020-23, with BRMC currently averaging 11 or fewer deliveries per month.

"It has been a tremendous joy for our team to play a part in helping bring infants into the world," BRMC chief administrative officer Julie Thompson said in the release. "However, the smaller numbers of births occurring in the region and at our hospital have made it difficult to secure and retain the specialized staff and providers necessary to provide this service. Our childbirth programs have been high performing through the years, but with the impact of fewer and fewer births here, we are taking this action now — always keeping what is best for our patients front and center." This announcement follows just three months after BRMC (Continued on Page 2)

## Ossian Town Council forgives Economic Development loan

*Forgiven loan could also provide the RDA \$5.1 million to another project*

**By SYDNEY KENT**  
The town of Ossian may soon see much-needed housing and retail, as well as a more accessible entrance to Archbold-Wilson Park. The Ossian Town Council approved a request to forgive a \$50,000 loan to Wells County Economic Development for three spaces downtown last year, which includes the old NAPA building. Chad Kline, who recently resigned from his position as executive director with Wells County Economic Development, made the request. He said he wanted to see the redevelopment project though after nearly three years in the making. Kline explained that the initial plan was to pay the loan back — until the potential for a matching grant with the state arose. With the stipulation of the town forgiving the \$50,000 loan, the Regional Development Authority indicated they could provide 5.1 million dollars for the project. Council member Jeff Kemper voiced his support for the idea and suggested making a motion to approve. "It's going to be a focal point downtown," Kline said. "As well as a focal point to people who reside in this community."

Kody Kumfer with Ossian Revitalization attended the meeting to discuss the addition of an internal park access drive to the parking area of Archbold-Wilson Park. Kumfer announced that the Wells County Foundation has approved offering dollar-for-dollar matching funds up to \$100,000 for the project. He requested the town contribute \$100,000 in order to receive the funds. President Josh Barkley advised that they would come up with the money. Kumfer also requested \$14,500 for design services for the access drive, which would be completed by Jim Breckler with Engineering Resources. The council approved. Member Stephanie Tucker noted that a citizen in the area voiced their concern with the project. "It's going to free up a lot of congestion that happens during events," Park Board Vice President Jay Esparza said. "I think that spending the \$14,500 would let the Foundation know we are really serious about doing this," council member Glen Werling added. The council also: (Continued on Page 2)



**Roadway Refresh**  
ADA curb work is mostly completed for the construction crews, so the milling and paving process has begun in Bluffton. The milling work, which removes the surface of a road so paving crews don't elevate the roadway, is currently being done on Silver Street pictured. Crews are currently working on Townley Street, with Horton Street's paving close to completion. (Photos by Jonathan Snyder)



## Norwell construction gets good update

**By HOLLY GASKILL**  
Weigand Construction project manager Dylan Markley reported that all projects for Norwell Community Schools are moving ahead without issues. Markley told the district board Tuesday that substantial progress has been made on the middle school project, and demolition of the previous building will begin in mid-June. Meanwhile, the baseball team has been able to use their new building, but Markley said some finishing items are needed for that building and the new football building.

They've also made headway on the Ossian Elementary School renovation, with Markley crediting the teachers' flexibility toward the ongoing work. Construction will be completed before the upcoming school year. "The bones are going to look the same, but it's going to be quite a bit different," remarked Superintendent Mike Springer. The board also recognized the seven students who completed their certified nursing assistant certification in the high school's first year of offering the program. Several students spoke about the class

and their thankfulness to have an early footing in the nursing profession and early job experience. Following the conversation, Springer told the board he hoped to soon present a new module program through Area 18 CTE to expose students to possible career pathways earlier in their education. The board later approved new navy and gold signage for the middle school and heard plans to adjust the driver traffic flow through Ossian Elementary. The preschool curriculum (Continued on Page 2)

## BOW approves Economic Development job description

**By JONATHAN SNYDER**  
An official job description for the Wells County Economic Development Director position was approved by the Board of Public Works and Safety on Tuesday. The need comes after former Executive Director Chad Kline's resignation April 12. An offer has since been extended to an individual, but no hire has been made. Additionally, two nuisance dog items were discussed by the board.

A timeline of Brandy Singleton's nuisance dog order was presented by the Wells County Animal Shelter, which included Singleton neutering and microchipping her dog according to ordinance standards. Singleton, however, has not put in the required outdoor enclosure for her dog. Singleton responded that the wording of the ordinance was unclear to her, which is why the outdoor enclosure has not been made. Singleton stated that she has

an indoor enclosure, but the "or" clause in the ordinance made her believe that the enclosure could be indoor or outdoor. The exact wording of the ordinance, cited by Singleton, is as follows: "'Proper Enclosure' means a secure confinement indoors or, if outdoors, a secure confinement in a locked pen, fenced yard, or structure measuring at least 6 feet in width, 12 feet in length, and 6 feet in height." The issue has extended since

the initial aggressive call March 9, which the board took notice of when they decided to give a two week extension for Singleton to establish an outdoor enclosure. Singleton clarified that she is willing to comply, but her confusion over the ordinance wording is the reason why she is not in compliance. Furthermore, the board approved Wastewater Department Supervisor Tony Fey to look into buying a new truck for his person-

nel. Fey stated that they only have two vehicles for the wastewater plant, leading to his workers waiting for hours at a time for another truck to arrive if they need it. Fey stated that the expense for the truck has been in the department's capital improvement plan for about three years and that funds are available in their budget. While Fey requested a half-ton crew cab truck, Hunt advised Fey to look into options for double cab (Continued on Page 2)

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**Outside**  
  
More showers today, cloudy and cool tonight  

Today	Thursday	Friday
High 71	High 76	High 75
Low 52	Low 60	Low 58

  
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**WEDNESDAY**  
May 15, 2024

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## Bluffton Regional

(Continued from Page 1)

closed its RediMed location in northern Bluffton.

According to the release, hospital administrators are working with their teams to transition non-emergency deliveries to other network hospitals. LHN will continue to have birth services at their locations in Fort Wayne and Warsaw, and BRMC will continue

to serve obstetric emergencies.

On a larger scale, LHN attributed some of the declining rates to national trends in fertility.

The release reads: "According to the CDC National Center for Health Statistics, the 2023 general fertility rate in the United States decreased by 3% from 2022, reaching a historic low and marking the second consecu-

tive year of decline, following a brief 1% increase from 2020 to 2021. From 2014 to 2020, the rate consistently decreased by 2% annually. These downward trends have even greater impact in small community hospitals."

All personnel will be able to transition to other LHN positions.

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## Board of Works

(Continued from Page 1)

trucks, which are slightly smaller and potentially less expensive. Fey stated in his request that the truck would be primarily used for out of town expeditions, and for testing at sites with significant snow drifts. Fey accepted the board's suggestion and will look for options to bring to the board.

Additionally, the board approved Bluffton NOW!'s request to reserve parking spots for two events throughout the summer months. They reserved spaces for the Parlor City Market event, held on Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. and for Music On the Plaza concerts, held June 21, July 19, Aug. 8 and Sept. 5.

Audry Dudley, representing Bluffton NOW!, stated that they wish to block spaces on the north side of

the parlor city and courthouse plazas. Dudley stated that Bluffton NOW! will provide their own cones to block the spaces and that will block areas on an 'as needed' basis. Dudley also requested that Walnut Street be closed from 4:30 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. on concert days for public safety when they cross Walnut Street.

A water adjustment discussion was held for Wayne Monticue on 403 East Central St. Monticue's April bill saw an unexplained rise in usage. Utility Supervisor Jon Oman stated that they changed and tested the water meter and it passed tests. While there were no leaks detected, the water usage has inexplicably returned to normal rates for May.

Monticue stated that he does not know where the water went or even if it went. He accepted Oman's

statement that the meter passed testing and both of them agree they do not know how more water got used up. Board member Scott Mentzer stated that these mysterious circumstances are difficult to navigate, as the lack of information means they do not know how to keep treatment equal among everyone.

Mentzer stated that if there is no identifiable leak, there is no way to tell if the water was treated by the wastewater plant. Normally if there is a leak, the board gives the sewer upcharge back to the property owner as credit while also crediting half of the excess water bill beyond the normal monthly consumption.

Mentzer and the board gave Monticue the benefit of the doubt and decided to credit half of his water bill, but did not adjust any of his

increased sewer rates.

Water Treatment Plant Supervisor Todd Shady also presented his annual water quality and consumer confidence report to the board. Shady noted that this report, containing the regulated contaminants detected throughout the year, will be mailed out today to residents.

The board also approved the following personnel changes:

- Wastewater Department Assistant Plant Supervisor Bill Vaughn and Wastewater Department Lab Technician Erin Pezo was given a \$1 hourly raise.

- Kierstin Krueger has been hired as a summer intern at the Wells County Animal Shelter.

- Zack Turner has been hired by the Street Department as a truck driver and laborer.

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## Indiana hospital prices 8th-highest in nation

By WHITNEY DOWNARD  
Indiana Capital Chronicle

U.S. Sen. Mike Braun — the Republican nominee for Indiana governor — made a surprise appearance at the National Healthcare Price Transparency Conference Monday, earning recognition for his work on health care price transparency on the federal level.

Conference emcee Gloria Sachdev, the president and CEO of Employers' Forum of Indiana, presented both Braun and fellow U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont with an award recognizing them as "Champions of Healthcare Price Transparency." The two, at opposite ends of the political spectrum, worked together on a measure to tackle transparency for hospital and insurer pricing.

"This is reforming the system, not more government spending on it," Braun said. "I'll keep pushing hard for the five months or so that I've got left (in Congress). Hopefully we'll see that maybe cascade further. If not — and if I'm successful in November's general election) — I'm going to be the most entrepreneurial governor the country's ever seen on fixing health care."

Braun's appearance coincided with the release of the latest hospital prices study by the RAND Corp., a think tank, which found Indiana's hospital prices were 8th-highest in the nation. Also on Monday, the Employers' Forum of Indiana launched Sage Transparency 2.0, a dashboard providing cost breakdowns and revenue information for hospitals.

The Indianapolis conference drew nearly 200 in-person attendees and dozens more online, with speakers like entrepreneur and venture capitalist Mark Cuban, national accountant experts, state legislators and patient advocates. The forum, which hosts the conference, seeks to improve health care transparency, prices and quality with an emphasis on the value for employers.

Indiana's hospital lobbying organization continued to push back against the RAND analysis, pointing to its own data on thin — or even negative — hospital margins and saying the study's data provided a "distorted" view of prices in Indiana.

"We've been rather consistent (with

criticism) about the RAND reports in that they are presented, I think, without the proper context and usually with an agenda," Indiana Hospital Association President Brian Tabor told the Capital Chronicle. "When you look at the totality of what employers spend for medical services and health care services with our hospitals and health systems, you have to take into account that we have massive subsidies and financial losses associated with providing physicians."

Tabor said the study didn't include the entirety of spending on hospital and health system services, which would actually put Indiana in the middle of states in terms of costs nationwide.

He also said Monday's presentations "(beat) up on hospitals, particularly health systems," without providing solutions or acknowledging the full context of Indiana's low Medicaid reimbursement rates.

### Price data and information

The biggest takeaway from the RAND study was that employers paid, on average, two-and-a-half times more than Medicare prices — a federally set number that is supposed to be close to a "breakeven" number for providers giving care.

But Chris Whaley, one of the RAND researchers and a professor at Brown University, noted that there is a lot of variation between states and within states but Indiana's prices still ranked high even when compared with its neighbors. For example, Michigan's prices compared to Medicare hovered below 200% while Indiana was closer to 300%, on average.

"(We) collectively spend about \$1.5 trillion on health care, with the largest chunk of the pie — half a trillion dollars — going towards hospitals," Whaley said. "... hospital care, over the last few decades, has increased ... by over 200%."

Whaley said the purpose of the study was to give employers information on prices negotiated on their behalf. The analysis then compares prices at more than 4,000 hospitals and 4,000 ambulatory surgical centers with Medicare.

"Without both price transparency and market competition, it's not possible to have an efficient market-based health

care system. And so, if we're going to keep relying on markets in the United States for health care, we need to have both greater transparency and improved market competition," Whaley said.

The key driver to prices appeared to be the percentage of market share a hospital system had in its area, not its quality or payer mix. That means hospitals with high low-income populations on government insurance programs fared no better or worse than their counterparts.

The lack of market competition is a problem in nearly every corner of the country, according to Whaley's analysis, and state legislators have been interested in exploring the impacts of monopolies on Indiana's markets.

Braun said that "sooner or later the (Federal Trade Commission) will get involved" when it comes to monopolies, stressing that he "(doesn't) want the government meddling in anything other than keeping the markets competitive and fair."

"... It'll come apart," Braun told attendees. "I've told CEOs of drug companies and hospitals, 'You better start embracing (pushes for reform) or otherwise Bernie Sanders will run your business someday.'"

Hospitals, however, say they're struggling.

A recent analysis from Kaufman Hall promoted by the hospital association found that Indiana's hospitals had just a 1% operating margin in 2023, compared to national margins of 2.3%. Indiana hospital profits grew more sluggishly than their peers while expenses grew faster.

That directly contradicts what another Monday presentation from the National Academy for State Health Policy found. Its presentation, with a focus on its Hospital Cost Tool, found that Indiana's hospitals had higher median net profits than the national average.

Tabor said that presentation relied on information from Medicare cost reports, rather than audited financial data. But presenter Marilyn Bartlett with NASHP said the audited financial statements don't provide the same breakdown for each hospital like Medicare cost reports do.

## Weather

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

(24-hour observations at 10:19 p.m. Tuesday)

High: 70; Low: .59; Precipitation: 0.22 inches of rain  
Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 2.36 feet at 9:45 p.m. Tuesday

## Wells County forecast

**Today:** A 40% chance of showers before 2 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 71. Northeast wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

**Tonight:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 52. Northeast wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Thursday:** A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. Mostly sunny, with a high near 76. Northeast wind around 5 mph becoming southeast in the afternoon.

**Thursday Night:** A 50% chance of showers and thunderstorms, mainly after 8 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 60. South wind around 5 mph.

**Friday:** A chance of showers before 11 a.m., then a chance of showers and thunderstorms between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., then showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm after 2 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 75. Chance of precipitation is 60%. New rainfall amounts between a tenth and quarter of an inch, except higher amounts possible in thunderstorms.

**Friday Night:** Showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm before 8 p.m., then a chance of showers and thunderstorms after 8 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 58. Chance of precipitation is 60%.

**Saturday:** A chance of showers and thunderstorms before 8 a.m., then a chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. Mostly sunny, with a high near 78. Chance of precipitation is 30%.

**Saturday Night:** A chance of thunderstorms before 8 p.m. Partly cloudy, with a low around 59. Chance of precipitation is 30%.

**Sunday:** A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. Mostly sunny, with a high near 80.

**Sunday Night:** A 20% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 60.

**Monday:** A 30% chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly sunny, with a high near 79.

**Monday Night:** A chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 60.

## Ossian council

(Continued from Page 1)

- Awarded a contract to VTF Excavation for \$2,162,023.50. The project includes work on Mill Street, a clutching system and septic relief.

- Awarded a contract to VTF Excavation for the Baker Drive extension project in the amount of \$497,114.36.

- A \$13,450 proposal for a stainless steel overhead door on the Headworks building

- Approved pay application number seven to Ottenweller Contracting for work

in the town in the amount of \$8,740.

- Approved payment to the Ossian Police Department in the amount of \$948 for training, hotel and per diem for an officer to complete required defensive tactics training.

- Approved payment to WW Williams for a WWTP panel and battery replacement in the amount of \$9,934.26

- Approved a motion to pass Pena's Mechanical Contracting as a CF-1 property.

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## Norwell

(Continued from Page 1)

was also approved, and the board learned the preschools should qualify as an On My Way Pre-K by the fall. This state designation allows the school to receive preschool vouchers and funding.

Also during the meeting, the board:

- Declared Norwell Middle School timpani drums, teacher desks, student desks and lockers as "no value" items for the district.

- Recognized resignations from LES treasurer Crystal Payton, OES special education assistant Amanda Parkhill, OES teaching assistant Addison Berich, and Ashley Daub and Kim Sandstrom in food service.

- Approved employment recommendations for James LaRowe as NHS varsity wrestling coach, Mallory Falls as LES Bobcat Care

assistant, Shelby Schaufelberger as NHS teaching assistant, Cherie Harris as LES Title 1 teaching assistant beginning next school year and Elle Misch as NMS volunteer girls' volleyball coach.

- Accepted donations of \$5,000 from the Dr. Harry Brickley Farm Foundation for FFA scholarships, \$700 from Park Community Church for lunches, \$500 from the Wells County Foundation from the Norwell Community School Fund for a Kings Island trip and Nursing TV, \$300 gift card from Psi Iota Xi for NMS art, and \$300 from Psi Iota Xi for LES art room supplies.

- Approved a field trip request from NHS Cheer to stay at Great Wolf Lodge in Mason, Ohio, from July 8-11.

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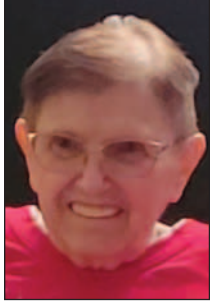


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OBITUARIES

Dolores "Dee" G. Hedrick, 77

Dolores "Dee" G. Hedrick, 77, of Bluffton, passed away Monday evening, May 13, 2024, at Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne.



Dee was born Jan. 5, 1947, in Bluffton to John R. and Madeline (Bowman) Mosure. She graduated from Lancaster High School in 1965. Dee had a lifelong career at Scott's grocery, working for many years in Bluffton, before retiring from Scott's in Coventry. She loved spending time with family and her grandchildren, who lovingly called her "Grandma Dee."

On March 19, 1965, Dee and Billy Hedrick were married in Uniondale. They celebrated 59 years of marriage together.

Survivors include her husband, Billy; and their two children, David (Tabitha) Hedrick and Patty (Kyle) Randall, all of Bluffton; along with her two grandchildren, Kadence (Dallas) Fyffe and Kollin Randall; and two great-grandchildren.

She is preceded in death by her parents.

Funeral services will take place at 10:30 a.m. Friday, May 17, 2024, at the Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton, with Dewey Randall officiating. Burial will follow at Six Mile Cemetery in Bluffton. Visitation will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday and for one hour prior to the service at the funeral home.

Memorials may be made to Heart to Heart Hospice and 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](http://www.thomarich.com).

Rochelle E. Walburn, 77

Rochelle E. Walburn, 77, of Bluffton, passed away Friday morning, May 10, 2024, at Coventry Meadows Assisted Living in Fort Wayne.

Rochelle was born in Huntington on Nov. 6, 1946, to Donald B. and Evelyn C. (Gordon) Lenwell. She married Ronald M. Walburn in Bluffton on Feb. 14, 1965. Ron preceded her in death on Nov. 25, 2019.

Survivors include a son, Kevin Walburn of Uniondale; a brother, Ron (Pam) Lenwell of Markle; two sisters, Rita Kovach of Bloomington and Robin (Brad) Shake of Goldengate, Fla.; a brother, Frank (Claudia) Lenwell of Germany; along with three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

In addition to her parents and husband, Rochelle was preceded in death by a son, Daniel B. Walburn; and a brother, Gary Lenwell.

Per Rochelle's request, there are no services planned at this time. Goodwin - Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton has been entrusted with the arrangements.

Online condolences may be made at [www.goodwin-calehamish.com](http://www.goodwin-calehamish.com).

Willis U. Prichard, 92

Willis U. Prichard, 92, passed away Monday evening, May 13, 2024, in Bluffton at his residence.

Funeral arrangements are pending with Goodwin - Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel 3220 East SR 124 Bluffton, IN.

Legion to host monthly dinner Friday

The American Post Legion 111 will hold its monthly dinner from 5-7 p.m. on Friday, May 17, at the Post home at 111 W. Washington St. in Bluffton.

The meal will be smoked Ossian pork chop with baked beans, cheesy potatoes and peaches. Tickets cost \$12 and are available the Post canteen. There will also be a bake sale to benefit veterans.

Interpretive programs at Ouabache

Ouabache State Park

4830 E SR 201, Bluffton, IN 46714, 260-724-0926

Interpretive Naturalist: Lydia Ade  
Friday, May 17: Adventure Packs—pick up one at the Park Office and explore what Ouabache has to offer. Prizes available for participants.

Saturday, May 18:

10 a.m. Weed Wrangle & Bison Feeding (meet at the Bison Pen).

Weed Wrangles are a fun way to learn to identify and remove invasive plants to beautify the park. Target Species are Bush Honeysuckle, Blunt Leaf Privet and Autumn Olive. Parking and registration will be at the Red Barn at the park entrance. Tools will be available or bring your favorite hand pruning tools (no chain saws). Dress for the weather wearing long sleeves, long pants and closed toed shoes. Hats, gloves, bug spray and sunscreen are advised.) Sponsored by Friends of Ouabache State Park, with more details available at [friendsofouabache@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofouabache@gmail.com)

2 p.m. Hiking Stick Decorating—meeting at the Campground Shelter to decorate a hiking stick to celebrate Kids to Parks Day. Sticks will be provided or bring your own. Hiking medallions available for purchase at the Park Office.

Sunday, May 18: 10 a.m.: Lake Hike meeting at the Lakeview Shelter for a hike around Kunkel Lake. Trail 4 is three miles long and will likely take about an hour and a half.

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

County:

Monday, 12:43 p.m., East 350 North and North S.R. 1, Bluffton. Report of an accident between postal truck and car.

Monday, 2:11 p.m., Wells County Jail. Report of electronic harassment.

Monday, 9:00 p.m., West S.R. 124 and North 100 West, Bluffton. Driver cited for speeding 70 in a 55 mph zone.

Monday, 11:50 p.m., 1000 West Hancock Street, Uniondale. Juvenile reported a needle out in front of house while walking. Officer disposed of needle and

cited the teen for being outside past curfew. Mother asked about weekend curfew hours, officer advised her to research the Indiana curfew statute before sending her son outside late at night.

Tuesday, 1:52 a.m., North Main Street and East 300 North, Bluffton. Driver arrested for driving while suspended.

Tuesday, 3:06 a.m., 2000 East 200 South, Bluffton. Officer conducted traffic stop on vehicle speeding, swerving, and failing to stop at several stop signs. Driver refused to exit vehicle initially and stated that it would

be bad if he did. SWAT team requested while driver contemplated writing a suicide note. Driver stated he wanted his meds and would step outside of the vehicle at 3:51 a.m. when he was then taken to Bluffton Regional Medical Center.

Monday, 9:27 a.m., Wells County Jail. Officer removed two .22s from residence at callers request.

Monday, 10:40 a.m., East 100 South and S.R. 201, Bluffton. Report of grass all over the road.

ACCIDENTS

County:  
Monday, 12:43 p.m., S.R. 1 and 350 North.

Penny Buzzard, 54, Warren, was attempting to make a right-hand turn while delivering mail when Kevin Romero, 30, Fort Wayne, collided with the rear end of her USPS truck with his Chevrolet Cruz. Damages did not exceed \$10,000.

ARRESTS

Matthew Lewis Cassenta, 40, Bluffton; domestic battery and strangulation, both Level 5 felonies, and intimidation, a Level 6 felony. No bond set.

Maria G. Diaz Guzman, 28, Bluffton; driving while suspended, a Class A misdemeanor.

Lawmakers to examine AI, Medicaid costs and more

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ  
Indiana Capital Chronicle

When Indiana lawmakers next converge upon the Statehouse for interim committee meetings, they'll take on artificial intelligence, Medicaid spending and more — but won't take another look at marijuana.

Hoosier legislative sessions start in January and run to March or April, depending on the year. In between, lawmakers spend time learning about specific topics, then deliver reports to their colleagues summarizing any findings or bill proposals.

"During the interim we look to our study committees to take deep dives into hot-button policy issues and determine what, if any, legislation should be pursued during the upcoming session," House Speaker Todd Huston said in a news release. "There are a broad range of topics on deck for the summer, and we'll keep our focus on doing what's right by Hoosier taxpayers and building on Indiana's tremendous economic momentum."

The Legislative Council released topics Tuesday.

Marijuana is not among them, unlike in prior interim lists. Bipartisan efforts to decriminalize and legalize marijuana have repeatedly failed to gain traction at the Statehouse, though in 2023 a House committee chose to hear testimony for the first time.

AI, however, will see more focus. Lawmakers made some related moves last session but they'll take a deeper dive in a dedicated committee over the interim.

Members will study the technology, assess benefits and risks to the state and how state AI use might affect Hoosiers. Then, they'll develop recommendations for how to use AI to "achieve greater operational perfor-

mance and efficiency of government services."

In an education committee — which, notably, was missing from the list last interim — members will examine the impact of absenteeism on students and school funding distributions, as well as "school discipline related to creating a safe environment and improving educational access."

In a child services committee, they'll review reports from state and local child fatality review teams, as well as from the Department of Child Services, about child safety.

They'll also begin preparing for the upcoming budget session in earnest, through the fiscal policy committee. That body is charged with reviewing tax expenditure reports "for preparation and consideration" of the budget, as well as multi-year reviews of tax incentives and workforce-related programs.

Other topics will also play into the budget.

Medicaid, for example, is taking up a growing chunk of the state's budget. Lawmakers have grown increasingly worried about rising Medicaid costs, particularly after the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration reported a \$1 billion forecasting error in December.

They reauthorized the Medicaid Oversight Committee last session, and it'll meet again to review, consider and make recommendations concerning the low-income government health care program.

Medicaid is an entitlement program, meaning that people who meet the eligibility requirements have the right to enroll in coverage. States pay part of the bill, though the federal government pays for the bulk of expenses, but state can also narrow coverage options to

cut costs.

Several ambitious, two-year efforts will also continue.

One is the State and Local Tax Review Task Force, which lawmakers hope to use to overhaul or even ditch some taxes. It's charged with examining the state's near- and long-term financial outlook, debt, pension funding, a lengthy list of tax types and more.

Another is the Funding Indiana's Roads for a Stronger, Safer Tomorrow Task Force, which was also reauthorized last session after a years-long retirement.

Indiana's road funding money comes largely from motor fuel taxes, but that revenue expected to drop as cars become more fuel efficient and Hoosiers opt for electric vehicles. Lawmakers and transportation experts will reconvene to figure out how to finance the state's future infrastructure needs.

Some lawmakers critiqued the interim topic list.

Sen. Shelli Yoder, D-Bloomington, said she was "extremely disappointed" the study topics didn't include environmental issues, and highlighted water resource management as a specific concern.

"When we talk about healthcare and health outcomes, jobs, affordable housing, infrastructure — these are all issues underpinned by the quality of our natural environment and the resources it provides us," Yoder said in a news release. "We cannot expect continued economic growth and prosperity for Hoosiers without protecting our natural resources — and we will continue to face poor qualities of place until Legislators give these topics the proper time and energy. An interim study committee on the environment is the least we could do."

Indiana tax changes drive General Fund expectation miss

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ  
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Tax revenue to Indiana's General Fund tumbled more than 12% below projections last month, according to the latest state revenue report.

The fund took in about \$2.7 billion during April, or \$393 million less than expected in a December state revenue forecast.

But the fund is still keeping pace year-to-date, with collections \$23 million or 0.1% greater than forecasted.

A decline in individual income tax collections contributed to the monthly miss. The state received \$1.5 billion instead of \$1.8 billion, falling \$300 million — or 17% — short of predictions.

In commentary, the State Budget Agency noted that taxpayers have for the

last year been adjusting to 2023 legal changes, resulting in "unusual payment timing."

"Various timing factors impact this month's withholdings and other individual income tax collections. The below-mentioned performance in withholdings and other individual income tax collections should be interpreted within the perspective of total individual income tax collections and within the fiscal year-to-date trend," the agency wrote. "These factors are projected to fully normalize over the coming months and month-to-month variations may still occur."

The state is still \$87 million, or 1%, ahead of individual income tax projections year-to-date.

Lower corporate tax collections also played a role.

The state took in about \$201 million, or about 33%, less than anticipated.

"Differences relative to monthly estimates are likely as various factors may impact monthly revenue activity including payment and refund timing, late payments, and more," the agency wrote. "Corporate tax collections should be interpreted within the fiscal year-

to-date trend."

But year-to-date, they're still down nearly 12% from expectations.

April is a key month for both individual income and corporate taxes because it's one of four quarterly deadline months. Year-over-year comparisons in both are complicated by a variety of legal changes, per the agency.

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## Well, I voted last Tuesday

I had been brooding about this for some time now and, in a particularly dark moment, determined to never vote again.

It may have been the better side of my nature that eventually overcame my psychological sturm und drang or it simply may have been intellect over emotion that resolved me.

I am not normally a negative or pessimistic person but my attitude could not withstand a barrage of negative advertising, the total lack of quality in the two presumptive major party nominees for president and the clown show performed daily in the halls of Congress. Even cheerful people can become depressed.

The primary ballot in Indiana and in my home county, Allen, offered several hotly contested races, if “contested” can be quantified by the number of candidates running. The Republican primary offered six options for governor and eight for third district congressman. Republicans certainly had a choice, several choices in fact.

Thus, the horrendous amount of negative advertising on TV and in the mail. I think I received at least one negative postcard every day and multiples each day as May 7 neared.

I learned, to my disgust, who was behind several of these attacking the presumed leader in one of the elections. Yes, it was an out-of-state organization and yes, it was funded by some powerful political interests. That was no surprise.

What I found interesting in a morbid way was the manner in which one of these postcards took a technically true fact and distorted its context to such an extent that it represented an outright lie. One who bases his or her entire knowledge of the candidate on this single postcard will think that the candidate believes the complete opposite of what he truly believes. To my simple way of thinking, that constitutes lying.

Why would these political action committees pour so much money into untruthful advertising? Do they have such a low opinion of the average voter to think this effective? Obviously the answer is yes. They have taken our measure and we have come up short. They view us as the “Animal Farm” sheep, obediently bleating on command. It must work or this amorphous “they” wouldn’t dump this much cash into this kind of advertising. That says more about us than about them.

It is no wonder that there are multiple grassroots reform groups springing up optimistically proposing changes in our election system. Some look to break the stranglehold of the two major parties by electoral changes that offer a real chance to third-party candidates. Others propose changes such as open primaries and ranked-choice voting to reduce the power of the extreme wings of both parties in the nomination process. And hopes spring eternal in the breast of the Convention of States movement which wants to amend the Constitution as a means of making the federal government more accountable.

The dishonest attacks on the candidate motivated me to go to the polls as my conscience insisted. Edmund Burke’s comment about what is necessary for the triumph of evil — that good men do nothing — may have been what pressed my conscience into action.

And so I voted again this year, just like I have voted in every primary and general election since I turned 21. It may seem like my vote doesn’t matter, which may be mathematically true but metaphysically wrong. Where is the tipping point if lots of us think that? And what moral authority do we as citizens have if we don’t vote, no matter how unappealing the choices presented?

Democracy depends on an informed and interested citizenry, which presents a conundrum. It seems to me at least that the informed have lost interest and the interested are becoming less informed. Perhaps we have made it too easy to be either uninformed or disinterested or both. I blame 24-hour cable news networks for our malaise, but that is too easy although still fair.

The primaries are past and I have six months to wallow in cynicism again. Then, come November, Edmund Burke will prick my conscience once more and I will dutifully drive to the neighborhood church where my precinct votes. I will arrive at 6 a.m. when the polls open, probably standing in a cold rain as is the weather’s wont on election days. That physical misery will actually work to confirm why I am standing in the rain in the dark — because it is my right as a citizen to do so, a right I intend to defend.

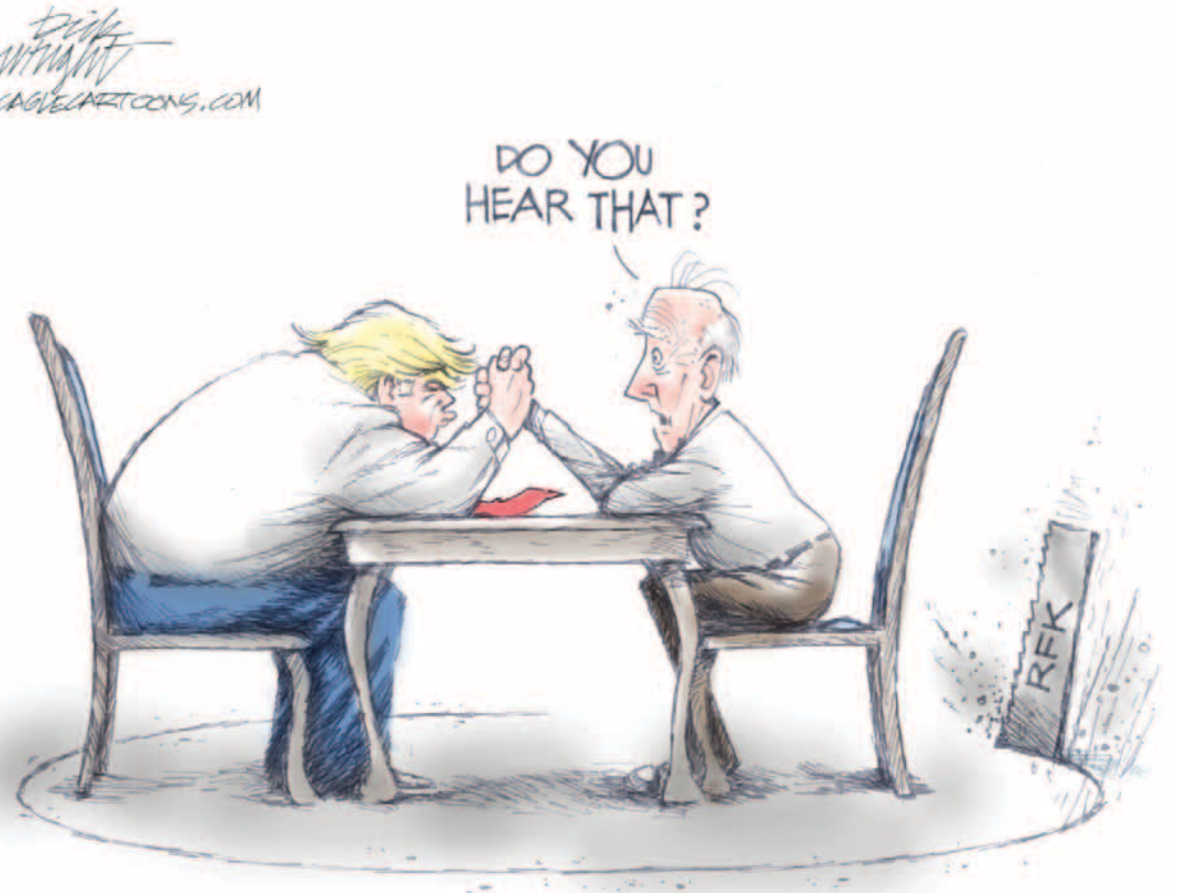
And how did that local race turn out, the one the out-of-state PAC spent hundreds of thousands to influence? Their targeted candidate won anyway. They wasted all that money which might have been used in a positive cause to elect a good candidate somewhere else. Too bad for them.

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



Mark Franke

## Hoosier Opinions



## In defense of not voting

Time was, presidential years featured solemn sermonettes about the citizen’s duty to vote, and the virtue of prodding the apathetic to plod, even if sullenly, to the polls. There has, however, always been a twofold difficulty with such civic piety: Even in normal times — remember those? — there was no such duty. And hectoring the uninterested and indifferent to express their opinions with ballots must lower the caliber of election results.

This is not a normal time. Granted, scores of millions of Americans normally — and reasonably — think their political options should be much better: The memory of man runneth not to a time when voters exclaimed, “What a divine presidential choice we have this year!” Still, 2024 is so abnormal, consider, without necessarily embracing, an argument in defense of principled non-voting. Plainly put, the argument is: Elections register opinions. Abstaining from voting can express a public-spirited and potentially consequential opinion.

Regarding the supposed duty to vote, the right and ability to ignore politics is an attribute of a good society. (Totalitarian societies forbid *not* participating in the enveloping politics.) As for the supposed duty to become satisfactorily informed:

Polls showed that in 1964, two years after the Cuban missile crisis, only 38 percent of Americans knew that the Soviet Union was not a NATO member. In 2006, only 42 percent could name the government’s three branches. The average American works harder at being informed when choosing a refrigerator than when picking a president.

Many nonvoters’ inertia reflects rational ignorance: The chance of any person’s vote affecting an election result is vanishingly small, so why bother? In most years, the disposition of most states’ electoral votes is not in doubt (this year, in perhaps at least 40 states), so why bother?

Writing in the Financial Times, Simon Kuper notes that the number of U.S. newspaper journalists has shrunk by two-thirds since 2005. That in 2023, for the first time, cable and broadcast TV combined accounted for less than half of U.S. television viewing. And that news is less than 3 percent of what users see on Facebook. Politicians are losing what Kuper calls the competition in “the attention economy”: “Why let journalists you don’t trust tell you about politicians you don’t trust?”

Still, voting gives the emotional satisfaction of



George Will

participation in a national moment of shared responsibility and common purpose. This is one reason to regret the transformation of Election Day into Election Month — or more. This year, however, some might consider forgoing the satisfaction of voting to send the parties a message.

Competing but complacent manufacturers of a particular product — think automobiles; think the late 1950s to the mid-1960s — sometimes ignore consumer preferences. Remember the mercifully short life (1957-1959) of the Ford Motor Co.’s Edsel? This clunky chrome-laden, more-of-the-same sedan arrived just as something radically different — the Volkswagen Beetle — began to find customers: In 1959, the year of the Edsel’s interment (sales: 44,891), 120,422 Beetles were sold in the United States, en route to a peak of 569,182 in 1970, by which time its success had produced competitive emulators.

This year, many millions of voters so intensely dislike one or the other of the two major candidates, fury will propel them to the polls. But suppose bipartisan disappointment propelled millions to boycott the election? Imagine a dramatic upsurge in nonvoting that was explainable as a principled protest.

This could not be measured in exit polls because nonvoters do not enter the polls. But talented psephologists should be able to find a way to measure, from the mass of eligible voters, the size of a cohort that abstained because of thoughtful disgust.

In 1948, the first presidential election after World War II and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s four elections, with the Cold War beginning, turnout might have soared. Actually, at 52.2 percent of eligible voters, it was the second-lowest of the past 80 years. (The lowest was 51.7 percent in the 1996 contest between President Bill Clinton and Sen. Robert Dole.) Much the highest turnout since World War II was 66.6 percent in 2020, the highest since 1904. It was 6.5 points above 2016, a result of pro- and anti-Donald Trump passions. High turnout is a more reliable indicator of national dyspepsia than of civic health.

It might be a constructive signal to both parties if, for the first time in a century, more than half the electorate would not vote. (Only 48.9 percent voted in 1924.) Voters’ eloquent abstention would say that they will return to the political marketplace when offered something better than a choice between two Edsels.

*georgewill@washpost.com*

## Trump outdoes himself with crude language

If you are the parent of young children, are you OK with your kids hearing former President Donald Trump’s language and put-downs, like the ones at his rally last Saturday in Wildwood, New Jersey?

One can hear a kid justifying his or her own swearing: “If Trump can talk like that, why can’t I?” Is this the way we want our children to be raised? They will learn swear words soon enough (and hopefully control their use of them or eschew them altogether).

There was a time when we were taught to respect those in authority and use acceptable language. I remember my grandmother once admonishing me when I said something “nice young men don’t say in public.” The words that offended her were “toilet paper.”

Trump’s cursing was the perfect finish to a week that included the salacious testimony by porn actress Stormy Daniels at his trial. I understand he is frustrated by a trial that seems to him, and many others, like a political hit, but that doesn’t justify a potty mouth.

On television, in movies, in certain mean and increasingly upscale streets, men and women are using language that in the words of Professor Henry Higgins “would make a sailor blush.” Where is what used to



Cal Thomas

be called decorum? Need a definition of decorum? It is “dignified propriety of behavior, speech, dress, etc.” Synonyms include politeness and dignity. None of these are reflected in Trump’s demeanor.

Decorum once included men who muted themselves in front of “ladies.” Now too many ladies are using curse words in public. Men and women chanted “bulls\*\*t” at the

Trump rally. Trump called President Biden a “moron” and mocked his way of walking. He said s\*\*t more than once. You stay classy, Donald.

Trump uses Hell as a curse word with increasing frequency. Does he believe in Hell? Does he believe in Heaven and know how to get there? His fervent evangelical supporters, some of whom bizarrely claim he shares their faith, should ask him.

The number of people who ignore, or justify his behavior is astounding. They have made a bargain with the political devils for whom power and results, not character, are supreme. Yes, President Biden occasionally uses bad language and has his own character flaws. He disobeys teachings of his Catholic church on abortion and other issues, but his “absolution” — largely from the media — is different from what Trump receives from his followers.

Trump probably sees the tens of thousands who attended his New Jersey rally as justification for his behavior. Trump said President Biden couldn’t draw anything close to that number, railed against his New York City trial, and questioned for the umpteenth time the 2020 election results. Trump’s fans appear willing to believe anything he says. That also goes for Biden, who lied numerous times during a recent CNN interview.

Maybe it’s generational, but isn’t behavior objectively and eternally right or wrong? We seem to be trying to have it both ways. Curse words are bad when used by a politician we dislike but are ignored, even praised, when one approves of a politician. Here’s a test: Try cursing in church if you want to know if all behavioral standards have been abandoned.

Perhaps Trump should consult the wisdom of our first president. George Washington said: “The foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing...is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it.”

According to the Association for Psychological Science, regular swearing “is a defining feature of a Type A personality. It is negatively correlated with conscientiousness, agreeableness, sexual anxiety, and religiosity.”

That seems to accurately define Donald Trump.

*tcaeditors@tribpub.com*

## Today in History

**By The Associated Press**  
Today is Wednesday, May 15, the 136th day of 2024. There are 230 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On May 15, 1948, hours after declaring its independence, the new state of Israel was attacked by Transjordan, Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

On this date:  
In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed an act establishing the Department of Agriculture.

In 1928, the Walt Disney cartoon character Mickey Mouse appeared for the first time in front of a public audience in a test screening of the short “Plane Crazy.” (Mickey made his formal screen debut with the

release of “Steamboat Willie” six months later.)

In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court, in its unanimous *In re Gault* decision, ruled that juveniles accused of crimes were entitled to the same due process afforded adults.

In 1970, just after midnight, Phillip Lafayette Gibbs and James Earl Green, two Black students at Jackson State College in Mississippi, were killed as police opened fire during student protests.

In 1972, Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace was shot and left paralyzed while campaigning for president in Laurel, Maryland, by Arthur H. Bremer, who served 35 years for attempted murder.

# For better or worse, it is all about me

## A Tale of Allegory

I decided some time ago to announce to my wife that in our relationship I am putting myself first. In other words, I would be securing my own position financially, socially and career wise without regard for her needs. I replied to her cold stare by explaining, quite logically, that a strong me only strengthens our marriage, and that I understand her needs anyway and will naturally look out for her.

Despite the pure intentions of my announcement, the cold stare intensified. Therefore, I felt it best to adjust my strategy to include my immediate family. I began calling each of our five children to explain that their mother and I have decided to put ourselves first to mutually benefit them, their families, and their futures. After all, at some point they each will likely inherit a small sum of money and for sure all the stuff we have in this house. I asked

that the grandkids, who are all lovely, please not ask for any more ice cream cones or other such ephemeral and unnecessary gifts. I explained, quite convincingly, how their families will ultimately benefit.

For reasons unknown, communication with my children seemed to stop altogether. I decided to drop this strategy and expand it to the neighborhood instead. I had big yard signs made that said, "Ballinger Family First", and posted them on all sides of our property. Curious and well-meaning neighbors asked sheepishly what this meant. Of course, I explained how we, the Ballingers, were enhancing their fortunes through most efficiently managing our own. While explaining this to neighbor Steve one sunny day, a very cute and young Girl Scout approached and asked if I would be so kind as to buy a box of thin mints to help support the local troop. I just pointed at the sign in the yard, and she slouched her way to a less sophisticated home across the street. The nerve! Steve didn't say much because he said he needed to get to church,



and, get this, he said he might even discuss my philosophy with members of his congregation. I think I made a difference.

So, I went to school where I work (it's just a story) and asked to speak at the next faculty meeting. As a courtesy to my valued work family, I asked their indulgence as I expanded my Me First philosophy to the workplace, ultimately, for the benefit of our students, after all. I thought I observed heads nodding as I went on to suggest that Bluffton First, Wells County First, and Indiana First initiatives might be in order.

### America First!

The inspiration for my "Me First" philosophy has been the many political ads that ran non-stop on television in the month preceding last week's primary election. The candidates were all Christians. I know this because they said so right before they stated their allegiance to Donald Trump and then added quite proudly that they were America First supporters.

I claim no standing as a historian, but I do know that America

First philosophy represents both isolationism and nationalism. Historically, America First was just such a movement in the years leading up to World War II. This ugly and anti-Semitic movement died out when the rest of the civilized world demanded that the United States, as a moral imperative, help defend the world from the despotic Nazis and the nationalist members of the Axis powers. Had we not responded to the needs of our allies and neighbors, the world would most likely be a much darker place today.

As the world's most powerful and richest nation, the world looks to the US for stability, protection, and as a defender of democracy. I do not understand this conflation of America First and Christianity. Putting oneself or one nation's needs first and above all others seems the antithesis of Christian behavior to me. But then again, I am not a theologian either. Maybe someone can explain it to me.

**Here's the thing:** I wrote a column last month that was quite critical of DT and his followers. I have been asked by many what the response to the piece has been. Although my report is only anecdotal, I can say that I have received overwhelmingly positive support through emails, text

messages, cards and especially, personal interactions. Still, I do not deceive myself into believing that those responding represent most of the community. I know where I live. Those in agreement are much more likely to comment. It is human nature. I received only two negative responses (both printed as letters in the NB), and I support their right and willingness to speak.

As a footnote, one letter writer, a self-professed "RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST" and current public office holder, suggested that I leave town. I want the author to know that I did duly consider his request. However, upon discussing the possibility of moving away with my wife, she replied, "Honey, I will miss you, and do you think you could finally fix that leaky toilet upstairs before you go?" Looks like I am staying.

ken.ballinger@yahoo.com

*Editor's Note: This is one of a series of articles and opinions written by a group of retired and current teachers — LaNae Abnet, Ken Ballinger, Billy Kreigh, Kathy Schwartz, and Anna Spalding. Their intent is to spur discussions at the dinner table and elsewhere. You may also voice your thoughts and reactions via The News-Banner's letters to editor.*

## Snippets class hears about the history of the American Legion

By BARBARA BARBIERI

At the most recent Wednesday morning park department's "Snippets" class at the Wells County Historical Museum the topic was the history of the county's American Legion.

Presenting the history lesson was Dewey Randall, the county's Veterans Service Officer. He began by telling of the beginning of World War I when it erupted with the shooting of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 and the eventual involvement of the United States in 1917.

This led to the Selective Service Act being passed in May of 1917, which required all males from age 21 to 30 to sign up.

Among the first men from Wells county to enter the service was Grover Sheets on March 29, 1918. He was, the first soldier from the county killed on Sept. 27, 1918. (The American Legion Post 111 is named after Sheets.)

American Legion groups came into being by an act of Congress on Sept. 10, 1919 and the national headquarters is located in Indianapolis. There are 55 departments—located in all 50 states and territories.

The post members here met at the Courthouse, beginning in 1919 with Dr. Fred Metz being the first commander. In 1923 the meeting site moved to rooms on the second floor of the McAfee building (where the former Snug Restaurant in the 100 block of West Market St. in Bluffton was located).

The group met there for 26 years. Then money was raised to build the current building at 111 West Washington St. in 1949. At the



Dewey Randall, Veterans Service Officer for Wells County speaks about the American Legion last week. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

time dues were \$4 per year (they now are \$50).

Randall shared information from the opening brochure for the building's dedication and the names of advertisers that no longer are in business in the area offering congratulations. (It was like a trip down memory lane trying to remember where each business had been located.)

Currently the Legion has 400 members and Bob Buehl is their Commander. Any veteran who has served at least one day of active duty since Dec. 7, 1941 is eligible to be a member. Among the wars they have served in are World War I, World War II, Korean War and the Viet Nam War.

Post 111 also has a Ladies Auxiliary and a Sons of the American Legion group. An Honor Guard also is available to play Taps for veteran's funerals.

The Post maintains a restaurant, which is open to the public. On the third Saturday of the month from 8 to 11 a.m. a fund-raising breakfast is held. (A popular event when the Farmer's Market season begins on the Parlor City Plaza by the Courthouse.)

Those attending also learned that Randall's office is located in the county's office building (the old Carnegie Library, across the street from the current library on West Washington St.)

## Mariah Jensen graduates from Cumberland

WILLIAMSBURG, KY - All members of the University of the Cumberland family wish to congratulate Mariah Jensen of Ossian on their graduation from the university.

University of the Cumberland is one of the largest

private universities in Kentucky. Located in Williamsburg, Kentucky, Cumberland is an institution of regional distinction offering quality undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, and online degree programs.

## LSM hosts 'Evening with Dr. Gary Chapman'

Loving Shepherd Ministries will host "An Evening with Dr. Gary Chapman" on Tuesday, June 25, at 5:30 p.m. at the LSM Event Center at 1935 North Main St. in Bluffton.

Chapman is the author of more than 50 books. He has been a family counselor for more than 40 years and recently retired after being a

senior associate for 50 years.

His talk here will be about how to strengthen families and vulnerable children through the Gospel. A freewill offering will be taken to further LSM's impact around the world.

Tickets are now available for purchase at \$50 per individual (\$350 for table for 8) by calling 260-824-9000.

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# Norwell wins Northeast 8 baseball outright title despite loss

By RYAN WALKER

The Northeast 8 baseball Conference came down to the wire and had a wild finish to say the least Tuesday night.

Norwell was in complete control entering the night, posting a 6-0 record in the conference and a win would lock them up as champions. But Columbia City (14-9, 5-2 NE8) foiled the plans, defeating the Knights (14-7, 6-1 NE8) and putting the trophy on hold.

“Like I told the guys, I don’t think its anything to discredit whether we share the title or win it outright, we’ve played really well conference-wise,” head coach Christian Bohata said after the game.

By that point, Norwell clinched at least a share of the title with East Noble’s (5-1) game with Belmont still in progress.

As the Norwell game finished, East Noble and Belmont were deadlocked at a 1-1 score in the sixth inning. Then, a massive sixth by the Braves, who were not even playing for anything, put the score at 7-1.

It looked as if the Knights were going to be bailed out by Belmont, East Noble came roaring back in the bottom of the seventh to score five runs to make it 7-6 Braves with two outs.

But the Braves came through, recording the final out and that made Norwell the outright champions.

This was the first time since 2007 that the Knights won an outright conference championship. That was when Norwell went a perfect 35-0 and won the state championship.

“Honestly, to me, to go 6-1 in how competitive this conference, that’s a great feat in itself,” Bohata said. “I told the guys ‘Hey, going into today, we weren’t content with sharing the title. But at the same time, we’ve got to be pretty dang proud of that.’”



Knights' third baseman Drew Jolley makes a sliding grab to record the third out of the fourth inning.

In the 3-1 Columbia City game, it was the Eagles’ pitching and defense that kept the Knights cold.

Starting pitcher Grayson Bradberry went seven innings and only allowed one passed ball to score among just three hits. He kept the bats quiet and the scoring threats short despite Norwell connecting for good contact on some pitches.

There were a few line drives out toward James Getts in centerfield that were no problem for him to swallow up. Another line drive and a diving effort by Coleman Clark kept runners off the bases again.

According to Bradberry’s Prep Baseball Report recruiting profile, he tops out at 90 miles per hour. He now is 3-1 with a 1.54 ERA. Plus, a nearly flawless fielding performance by his team was the perfect combination for a win.

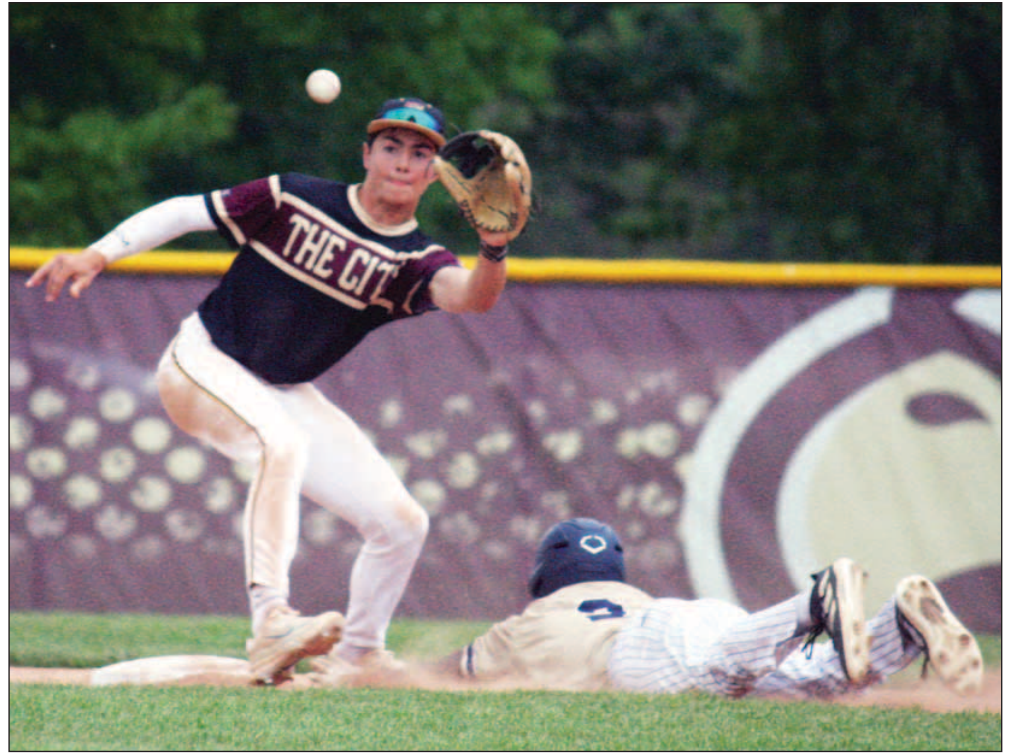
“We were getting hard contact, but (Bradberry) was getting a lot of ground balls and those are easy outs for him. He was ahead and filling up the strike zone,” Bohata said. “I told the guys all night to hunt fastball, and I thought they did a really good job and stayed off his off-speed, but he’s good at locating his fastball. Credit to him, he threw a heck of a game.”

In the seventh inning, Norwell’s Collin Burns hit a one-out single and Korben Neuen-schwander reached via an error in the infield to apply pressure on the Eagles. But a fielder’s choice play and a flyout to center ended the game.

The loss may have put a damper on winning the outright title, but as Bohata shared, the team earned its spot on top with wins over the rest of the field. It’s an accomplishment that no Norwell team has had since ‘07.

Norwell’s next contest will be at Northrop at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 15.

ryan@news-banner.com



Norwell’s Garry Riley (right) slides underneath Columbia City shortstop Trey Deckman during the sixth inning at Columbia City High School. The Eagles got the win, but the Knights got the last laugh as they became Northeast 8 Conference champions by the end of the night. (Photos by Ryan Walker)

## High School Calendar

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 15**  
**BASEBALL:** Norwell at Northrop, 5:30 p.m.  
**GIRLS TENNIS:** (Sectional) Norwell vs. Belmont 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.

# Knights finish third, Tigers fifth, Raiders 14th in girls’ track and field sectional

Norwell, Bluffton and Southern Wells had their biggest girls’ track and field night of the season at Marion on Tuesday.

The Knights, who were the defending champions and won five of the last six, finished in third place with 93.50 team points. They were behind Oak Hill and Eastbrook. The Tigers finished tied for fifth with 39 points, and Southern Wells 14th with four points.

Norwell’s Emerson Meredith was the only sectional champion, winning the pole vault with a 10-0 mark.

Several events though made it to the next round. To advance to the regional meet, an individual or event must place in the top three.

**Top-8 individuals for points were:**  
**Bluffton**  
 • Sophie Schwartz third in the 100m hurdles with a time of 16.88, moving on to the regional. Dakota Lee fifth with a time of 17.24.  
 • Maryn Schreiber fifth in the 400m with a time of 1:06.35.  
 • Lee fourth in the 30m hurdles with a time of 52.25.  
 • Addison Yates eighth in the 800m with a time of 2:41.78.  
 • The 4x400m relay team of Madelyn Funk, Yates, Schreiber and Lee with a time of 4:40.20.  
 • Corina Rader second in the discus at 94-10, moving on to the regional. Rori Drayer sixth at 84-3.  
 • Alexandria Koby third in the shot put at 30-6.50, moving on to the regional. Drayer eighth at 29-5.75.

**Norwell**  
 • The 4x800m relay team of Brooklyn Meyer, Ali Riley, Haleigh Reinard and Larkin Smith fourth with a time of 10:38.89.  
 • Ashley Waldman eighth in the 1600m with a time of 6:02.70.



Southern Wells’ Ashlie Needler unloads the shot put during Tuesday night’s Sectional Track meet in Marion. Needler finished fifth with a top throw of 30’-5.25”.

- The 4x100m relay team of Makenzie Fuess, Ryland Graft, Jillian Melcher and Haley Williamson third with a time of 52.81, moving on to the regional.
- Jada Dale second in the 400m with a time of 59.63 and Abigail Dale third at 1:03.20, moving on to the regional.
- Melcher fifth in the 300m hurdles with a time of 52.49 and Jaycie Grzych sixth at 52.49.
- Reinhard sixth in the 800m with a time of 2:35.96.
- Jada Dale seventh in the 200m with a time of 28.10.
- Waldman sixth in the 3200m with a time of 13:01.00.
- The 4x400m relay team of Dale, Dale, Fuess and Williamson third with a time of 4:23.10, moving on to the regional.
- Emerson Meredith first in the pole vault at 10-0 and Kendall Dunwiddie second at 7-6, moving on to the regional.
- Kaylee Eicher third in the discus at 92-8, moving on to the regional. Evelyn Davis eighth at 79-6.
- Williamson second in the high jump at 5-0, moving on to the regional. Grzych sixth at 4-6.
- Williamson seventh in the long jump at 14-6.
- Fuess sixth in the shot put at 30-4.25.

**Southern Wells**  
 • Ashlie Needler fifth in the shot put at 30-5.25.

**Team scores:**  
 1. Oak Hill (157.5 team points), 2. Eastbrook (108), 3. Norwell (93.5), 4. Marion (83.5), T5. Bluffton (39), T5. Wabash (39), 7. Southwood (31), 8. Mississinewa (19), 9. Frankton (14), 10. Blackford (12), 11. Alexandria Monroe (11), 12. Northfield (7.5), 13. Elwood (5), 14. Southern Wells (4).

Bluffton and Norwell’s events advancing to the regional will be at Carroll starting at 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 21.



Norwell’s Jada Dale, left, grabs the baton from her sister Abby Dale in the final leg of the 4x400 meter relay race in Sectional Track meet at Marion High School Tuesday night. The relay team finished third with a time of 4:23.10. (Photos by Chad Kline)

## Sports Roundup

### Girls’ tennis sectional postpones one day

Rain has struck again — this time, the girls’ tennis sectional’s first round. Due to the postponement, all matches at Bluffton High School will be bumped back one day. The first round will begin Wednesday, followed by the semi-final and final the next days. All games will start at 4:30 p.m.

### Tigers beat Raiders in non-conference baseball

Bluffton defeated Southern Wells at home in a nonconference game Tuesday night. The Tigers improved to 13-8 on the season, and the Raiders fell to 3-16. Bluffton tallied 11 hits in the game, three by Braxton Betancourt with two doubles and two

RBI. Axton Beste went 2-4 with a double and an RBI. Brody Lewis went 1-1 with a double, an RBI and three walks. Xavier Driscoll went 2-2 with an RBI, and Eli Garrett 1-1 with two RBI. Lewis got the win on the mound, going four innings, allowing one run on two hits and struck out five. Griffin Morgan threw the final inning and struck out three with no hits or runs. Bluffton will be at Huntington North at 6 p.m. Thursday, May 16. Southern Wells will host Anderson Prep at 5:30 p.m. Friday, May 17.

### Green Valley Golf results

The winning team this Tuesday in the green Valley Senior Golf League was Dick Crispin, Don Pettit, Bruce Warner and Greg Castilow. Steve Folk had the low gross of 36. Wayne Close had the low net. Rich Borrer had the closest to pin.

## Corrections and clarifications

Bluffton’s athletic department confirmed that the ACAC does not have co-champions, rather, a tiebreaker to determine the winner of the conference.

If there is a tie at the end of the regular

season, then head-to-head comes into play. Bluffton currently sits at 5-1, and Heritage sits at 4-1. If the Patriots defeat South Adams, they’ll win the ACAC outright. If Heritage loses, Bluffton wins outright.

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# Confronting the past: Facing old wounds at high school reunion

Dear Annie: I have my 20-year high school reunion coming up, and I'm planning to go, as it's a major milestone reunion and we've lost some people over the years. However, I will be running into some issues with it.

The biggest issue is that I am in ongoing therapy for sexual assaults that happened in high school back in the early 2000s, and the response from the school officials was quite firmly in the "boys will be boys, deal with it" era. In other words, they accused me of making up the situation the first time so I never bothered with reporting the second time, especially since both times it was by members of the football team.

One of the assaulters is in my graduating class, and his was the one I didn't report. I have to keep him blocked on social media, and an assault situation at a job by a client (I was working in a mental health care facility at the time) made me realize I needed therapy. These assaults still affect me to this day. I won't date or involve myself in romantic relationships, and the assaults severely affected my mental capacity for well-woman visits.

My one and only well-woman visit with a cancer check, in 2020, triggered the overt development of dissociative identity disorder, or DID, which at its core is extreme PTSD and is usually the result of childhood abuse. It seems I had this as a child, but it is meant to be a very covert protective device to survive trauma, and you aren't supposed to know you have it. With a lot of hard therapy work and daily meds, I can function without the amnesic events that DID is famous for. However, it has still affected my capacity to maintain gainful employment and be a properly functioning member of society.

It would be good to see everyone again, but how do I handle seeing my

assaulter? A handful of classmates I trust know about the DID and what caused it. I would like to think that him now being a father to a daughter has changed his attitude, but I don't know, especially since many times assaulters don't remember that they caused issues and/or hotly deny such. I just don't know what to do even though I would like to go to prove to myself things have changed, hopefully for the better, and to lessen the hold this situation has had on me over the years. — Timid in New York

*Dear Timid: Since you are in therapy, I don't want to interfere with any advice your therapist might give or any conclusions you reach after talking through this issue. But you are right not to expect your assaulter to remember, or to admit, what he did. If you can go to the reunion with that understanding, then it might be a good choice to go. However, if you are looking for an apology, you are almost certainly correct that you won't get one.*

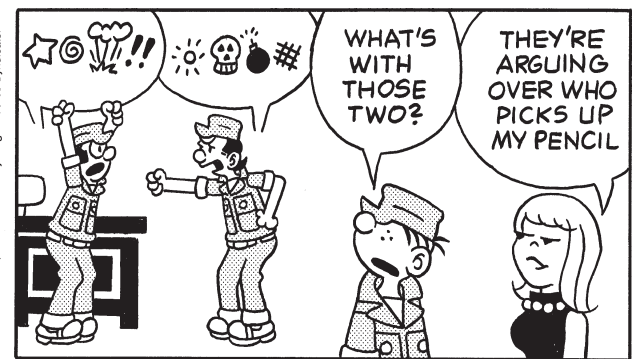
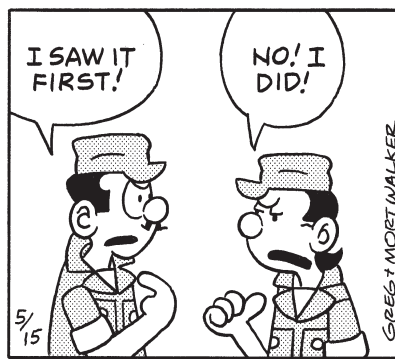
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## Dear Annie

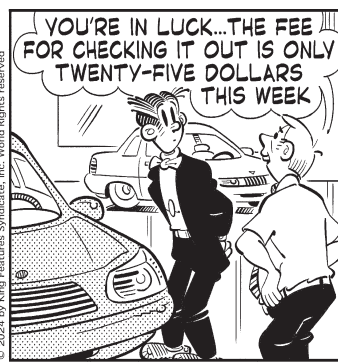
by Annie Lane



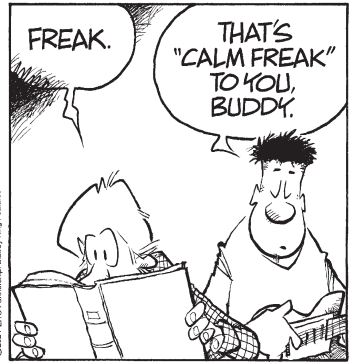
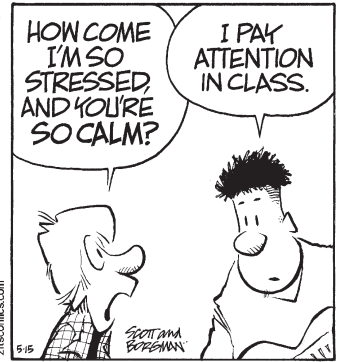
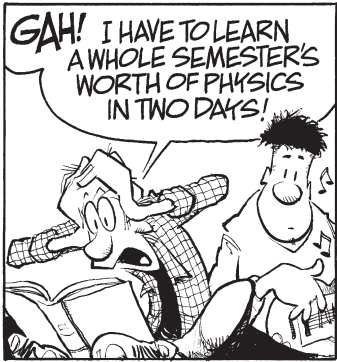
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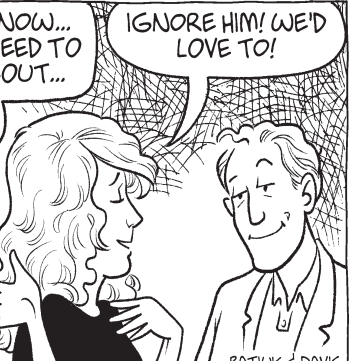
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## My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



# Worldliness speaks of the world system of evil

Question: As Christians we are called to go into the whole world with the good news of the Gospel; yet, some say (which I think is a bit out of date) that Christians should flee worldliness. What does this mean and does the Bible actually say this? — W.W.

Answer: Worldliness has been vastly misunderstood on the part of thousands of Christians. Too many times, we're concerned with how much, instead of how little, like this world we can become. We may act as if it doesn't matter how we live or what we think or say — we have moved in with the world, and have allowed the world to penetrate the way we live. As Christians, we are not to get

our worlds mixed up. We are not to mingle with the world, but we are to witness to the world.

The Bible says, "For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16, NKJV).

Worldliness speaks of the world system of evil, and we are to be separated from it. This system permeates the whole of life and human society, and it needs to be guarded against constantly and strenuously.

This then is our problem; to associate with and love those who are involved in the world without being contaminated, influenced, or swayed by them. How do we coun-

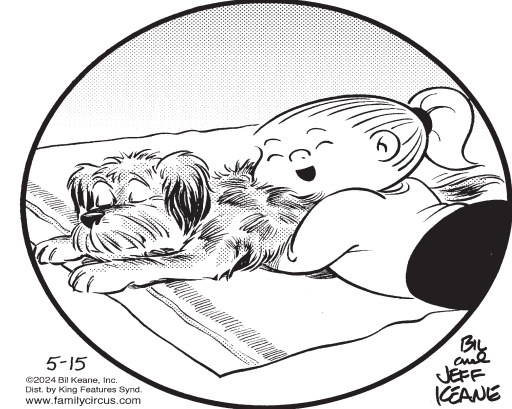
ter the trend of worldliness? We must saturate our minds, hearts, and souls with God's Word. The Bible says, "Train yourself to be godly" (1 Timothy 4:7, NLT). It is easy for Christians to allow themselves to be squeezed into the world's mold. When unbelievers see nothing different in the lifestyle of Christians, they wonder if our witness for Christ is sincere. Those who have actually experienced daily fellowship with Jesus know that it surpasses all worldly activities.

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

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## THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



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## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes solution time: 23 mins. and Yesterday's answer 5-15.

TV schedule grid with columns for time slots (5 PM to 12:30) and rows for channels (WIMN, CBS, etc.).

Continuation of the crossword puzzle grid from the previous block.

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		3						4
	1	6						9
	6			5				4
				7				
9				8	6			7
8	5		9				7	
	4							5
	2	5	7	3			8	

Difficulty: ★★★

5/15

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## This Week's Garage Sales



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## Lottery Numbers

**Tuesday's Drawings HOOSIER LOTTERY**  
Cash 5 — 04-10-13-21-22  
Cash4Life — 21-24-25-27-34, Cash Ball: 02  
Quick Draw Midday — 01-08-15-16-19-25-31-32-39-40-48-49-54-56-62-65-69-71-76-77, BE: 76  
Daily Three-Midday — 05-06-08, SB: 03  
Daily Three-Evening — 02-06-05, SB: 08  
Daily Four-Midday — 04-07-00-04, SB: 03  
Daily Four-Evening — 02-02-02-07, SB: 08  
Quick Draw Evening — 10-12-15-18-20-22-24-25-27-28-29-45-54-57-58-63-67-72-73-78, BE: 24  
Hoosier Lotto — Estimated jackpot (for Wednesday): \$12.2 million  
MEGA MILLIONS 13-19-43-62-64; Mega Ball: 06; Megaplier: 3X.  
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By virtue of a certified copy of a decree to me, directed from the Clerk of the Superior Court of Wells County, Indiana, in Cause No. 90D01-2203-MF-000009, wherein U.S. BANK TRUST NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, NOT IN ITS INDIVIDUAL CAPA CITY BUT SOLELY AS OWNER TRUSTEE FOR RCAF ACQUISITION TRUST was Plaintiff, and Mark A. Hogsett, Erica Scherrer, AKA Erica S. Scherrer, AKA Erica S. Hogsett, Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. and CommunityWide Federal Credit Union were Defendants, requiring me to make the sum as provided for in said Decree, with interest and cost, I will expose at public sale to the highest bidder on the 12th day of June, 2024, at the hour of 1:00 PM, or as soon thereafter as is possible, at Wells County Courthouse at 102 W Market St., Bluffton, IN 46714, the fee simple of the whole body of Real Estate in Wells County, Indiana.  
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Attorney for Plaintiff: Nicholas M. Smith  
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## Public Sale Calendar

**BIDDING ENDS MAY 19 - (Online Only Auction) - Phyllis Montgomery, Seller.** Major auction of fine antiques and collectables. "An Auction of the Year." Extensive cast iron skillet collection, early candy scales, primitives, salesman samples, early rare gum dispenser, De Laval signs, beer signs, firearms, butter churns, large Westmorland glass collection, much more. Preview: May 16 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 1556 Shadow Run Trail, Bluffton. Steffen Group, 824-3006, [www.steffengrp.com](http://www.steffengrp.com), Pat Carter, sale manager.

**MAY 19 - 4 p.m. - Multiple consignors, owners.** Online only consignment auction. 1,000+ lots! Furniture, oak kitchen table, large assortment of household items, tools, 100+ lots of collectible glass including Fostoria, Fenton, Candlewick, Pyrex and much more! Preview May 16, 3-5 p.m., 812 Elm Street, Decatur. Pick up May 20, 1-6 p.m. & May 21, 9 a.m.-noon. *Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC*, 260-724-7402, [kjauction.com](http://kjauction.com).

**MAY 21 - 6 p.m. - Patricia Mossburg & Joyce Shady, owners.** Wells County 4-H Park, 1240 4-H Rd., Bluffton. Property location: 100S & 200W, Bluffton. 90+/-A, Zoned Agricultural, Liberty Township, Wells County. To be sold in individual tracts or any combination. Tract 1: 54+/-A tillable, frontage on both CR 100S & CR 200W. Tract 2: 12+/-A, 8+/-A tillable, 4+/-A woods, frontage on 100S & 200W. Tract 3: 24+/-A, mostly woods, 6+/-A tillable, frontage on CR 200W. *Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC*, 260-724-7402, [kjauction.com](http://kjauction.com).

**MAY 26-JUNE 2 - (Online Only Auction) - The Estate of John F. Holbrook, seller.** 200+ pcs. Roseville, Rookwood, Hull, McCoy, VanBriggle, antique & modern furniture, 1950 Ford Sedan, Coca Cola vintage signs & collectibles, antique tools, 2-pc. Oak kitchen cabinet, JFK political buttons and advertising, vintage toys. Auction preview: May 23 from 3-6 p.m. and May 30 from 3-6 p.m., 10421 W. Yoder Rd., Roanoke, IN. Patrick Carter, sale manager. *The Steffen Group Inc.*, 260-824-3006, [www.steffengrp.com](http://www.steffengrp.com).

**JUNE 1 - 8:30 a.m. - E & M Blacksmith Shop.** 2404 W 350 S, Berne, IN. 13th annual consignment auction. Horses, ponies, horse-drawn machinery, produce equipment, buggies, harness, carts, new tack, saddles, shop tools, lawn &

garden tools, sausage grinders & stuffers, new & used furniture, washing machines, hay, straw & firewood. Accepting consignments every evening that week from 4-8 p.m., all day May 30, and May 31 from 7 a.m.-8 p.m. *Troyer Auctions, LLC*, 260-768-7246, ext. 3.

**JUNE 1 - 11:30 a.m. - Ardith Smith estate, Cheryl Heral estate & Sonja Bartlett, sellers.** 320 Sparks St., Markle, IN. Live on-site. One story, two bedroom home on 1.6 acres, 1,144 sq. ft., 10x18 detached garage. Open houses: May 16, 5-6 p.m., May 19, 1-2 p.m. Steve Ness, auction manager, 260-417-6556, SteveNess@NessBros.com, [Ness Bros. Realtors & Auctioneers, www.NessBros.com](http://NessBros.com).

**JUNE 4 - (Online Only Auction) - Bidding Opens at 9 a.m. and will close at 6 p.m. - The Estate of John F. Holbrook, seller.** 300 W. Markle, IN. Northern Wells containing 6.79 acres in Union Township of vacant agricultural land, outstanding opportunity for potential building site with excellent location. Patrick Carter, sale manager, *The Steffen Group Inc.*, [www.steffengrp.com](http://www.steffengrp.com), 260-824-3006.

**BIDDING STARTS CLOSING JUNE 9 - 6 p.m. EST - Berry estate, owner.** Online only real estate & personal property! 6 p.m. real estate: 1 1/2 story craftsman style home w/covered porch, 1,700+/- square ft. w/ornate woodwork throughout, partial basement, 3-4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 bath, detached 24x24 two-car garage, several older outbuildings all sitting on 6+/- acres, Adams Central School District. 6:30 p.m. personal property: Antique tractors, farm machinery, tools, antiques, primitives, vehicles, furniture, household items, more! Preview May 30, 5-6 p.m., 4854 N 400 W, Decatur. Pick up June 10, 2-6 p.m. *Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC*, 260-724-7402, [kjauction.com](http://kjauction.com).

## SUDOKU ANSWER

S1/S2	S3/S4	S5/S6	S7/S8	S9/S10	S11/S12	S13/S14	S15/S16
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
2	9	6	9	1	8	1	8
8	1	1	7	6	2	9	8
1	2	9	8	8	1	7	9
9	6	8	1	9	7	8	1
7	1	8	9	2	6	9	8
6	8	9	2	8	9	1	7
8	7	1	1	9	8	2	6
1	9	2	6	7	1	8	9

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