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BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection

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Commissioners receive death threats with decisions on solar

By HOLLY GASKILL

According to multiple reports, Wells County Commissioners have received threats of violence regarding how they vote on solar energy issues.

Commissioners Jeff Stringer and Mike Vanover declined to comment on the specific claim. Asked directly if he had received death threats, Vanover replied, "I have received every kind of communication that you can imagine and they were all handled with the attention they deserved."

Paul Mills, Bluffton, told The News-Banner that in a group conversa-

tion in early September, Stringer stated he had received death threats regarding solar energy development in Wells County.

The group had reportedly met to discuss solar issues — Mills has signed a solar land lease for approximately 330 acres in northern Wells County with AES Solar. Also present were Mills' son, Tony Mills, who lives on the family farm, Don Avey of Ossian, who has leased about 1,300 acres, and Ben Vollmer, representing AES. Tony Mills and Don Avey both recounted the same details of the conversation.

The three men independently recalled Stringer mentioning a phone call in which his life had been threatened. He reportedly did not identify the caller but said it was someone the men wouldn't have expected.

"We all (were) surprised and astonished, and he really didn't go on any more," Tony Mills recalled. "We asked if he pursued it as far as with the authorities. And no. That's about all that was said."

Paul and Tony Mills stated that Vollmer reported having a similar (Continued on Page 2)

Is there a future for solar energy in Wells County?

By HOLLY GASKILL

Immense public opposition prompted the rejection of a zoning petition from Paddlefish Solar in March, effectively stopping the project from moving forward.

Since then, the Wells County Council unanimously approved a moratorium on property tax abatements, explicitly hoping to dissuade future projects.

"It'd be safe to speculate that there isn't a path forward," Area Plan Commission Executive Director (Continued on Page 2)



The city of Bluffton celebrated the completion of Lancaster Park Friday morning along with many of its community partners. Pictured, Mayor John Whicker cuts the ceremonial ribbon with the group in front of the park pavilion. (Photo by Holly Gaskill)

Bluffton celebrates Lancaster Park with official ribbon cutting

By HOLLY GASKILL

After years of work and planning from the city of Bluffton and its partners, the new Lancaster Park was celebrated with an official ribbon cutting on Friday.

The park, located across from Lancaster Elementary School, features many amenities, including a pavilion and restrooms, pickleball courts, a football and soccer field, a lighted basketball court, a playground, a giant human football court, Gaga ball court, sand volleyball courts, disc golf/foot golf course and more.

A half-mile walking path around the park extends 1.06 miles to the Interurban Trail, connecting the Rivergreenway

and Ouabache State Park to the new park.

The park itself was made possible through an over \$600,000 grant from the Land Water Conservation Fund, land donation from Norwell Community Schools, and numerous community partners. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources also awarded a \$408,035 Next Level Trails grant for the trail extension, which will eventually be a part of the greater Poka-Bache Trail connecting Ouabache to Pokagon State Park.

"Overall, \$2.156 million in value was added to our community as local donors joined in the excitement of the (Continued on Page 2)

U.S. adds 254K jobs, and unemployment drops down to 4.1%

By PAUL WISEMAN, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's employers added a surprisingly strong 254,000 jobs in September, easing concerns about a weakening labor market and suggesting that the pace of hiring is still solid enough to support a growing economy.

Last month's gain was far more than economists had expected, and it was up sharply from the 159,000 jobs that were added in August. And after rising for most of 2024, the unemployment rate dropped for a second straight month, from 4.2% in August to 4.1% in September, the Labor Department said Friday.

The latest figures suggest that many companies are still confident enough to fill jobs despite the continued pressure of high interest rates.

In an encouraging sign, the Labor Department also revised up its estimate of job growth in July and August by a combined 72,000. Including those revisions, September's job gain — forecasters had predicted only around 140,000 — means that job growth has averaged a solid 186,000 over the past three months. In August, the three-month average was only 140,000.

"There's still more momentum than we had given it credit for," Stephen Stanley, chief economist at the banking company Santander, said of the job market. "I would call it (Continued on Page 6)

Monday is last day to register to vote and early voting begins Tuesday

Citizens must register to vote by the end of the Monday, Oct. 7, to vote in the November election. To register or check voter registration status, visit indianavoters.in.gov.

Local Elections

There is only one contested race at the county level, where incumbents Vicki Andrews, Scott Elzey and Seth Whicker, all Republicans, are challenged by Scott Burke (I) and Brian Hollingsworth (D). A "Meet the Candidate" forum for the race will be 7 p.m. Oct. 7 at the Wells County Chamber of Commerce, 211 Water St. in Bluffton.

There are two contested races in Wells County school boards.

For Bluffton-Harrison Metropolitan Schools, Peter (Chris) Koiner challenges incumbent Trent White for the board's District 3 seat.

Cathie Peterson and Jeremiah Tomlin are both running for the open Lancaster Township seat on the board of trustees for Norwell Community Schools. Todd Nash is unopposed for the Jefferson Township seat. All candidates are expected to share their views in a forum, at 6:30 p.m. Oct. 15 in the Norwell High School auditorium.

Voter Information

Early voting begins on Oct. 8 at the Wells

County Clerk's Office, and is available from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays through Nov. 1, as well as 8 a.m. to noon on Nov. 4. Absentee or early voting is also available 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 26 and Nov. 2 at the Clerk's Office, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 26 and Nov. 2 at Presbyterian Church, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Oct. 28 and 29 at the Wells County 4-H Park, and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 at Lighted Gardens.

Applications for absentee ballots must be received by the Wells County Clerk's Office by Oct. 24.

Election Day voting will be available from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Nov. 5 at the 4-H Park, Presbyterian Church, Lighted Gardens, Zanesville Tower Life Center and Southern Wells Community Church.

Ballot Information

- County
• Commissioner, District 2: Blake Gerber (R).
• Commissioner, District 3: Jeff Stringer (R).
• Coroner: Cliff Thomas (R).
• Council, 3 At-Large: Vicki Andrews (R), Scott Burke (I), Scott Elzey (R), Brian Hollingsworth (D) and Seth Whicker (R).
• Recorder: Rina Stuck (R).

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Norwell royalty

Norwell seniors Max Babcock, left, and Karrigan Melcher were crowned the 2024 Homecoming King and Queen at halftime of the football game against DeKalb. The Barons spoiled the win for the Knights 47-21. (Photo by Chad Kline)

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Clear nights ahead to see the Northern Lights

Weather forecast table with columns for Today, Sunday, Monday and rows for High/Low temperatures.

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Tigers get gut-punched by Patriots in ACAC contest

By RYAN WALKER

Heritage came into Bluffton with something to prove, and it did.

The Patriots (6-1, 3-1 ACAC) demolished the hosting Tigers (6-1, 4-1 ACAC) 51-20 with conference complications on the line. Bluffton was seeking a chance at a winner-take-all ACAC showdown at Adams Central next week, but that won't be the case any longer.

Right from the start, Heritage used its lethal weapons on offense and shut down Bluffton's on the other end.

Four different names were called on the five touchdowns scored by the Patriots in the first half. Eli Tigulis quarterbacked three of them — one was for 34 yards with a Tigers' defensive hand in his face, and miraculously dropping a dime to tight end Zeke Litchfield in the end-zone. Then, Tigulis threw a 27-yarder to backup runningback Lucas Weber for 27 yards. The third connected to Braden Walter on a screen for 13 yards.

Weber ran for two yards and Walter for 60 to finish the scoring drives in the first half. It was a rude awaken-

ing for the packed Bluffton crowd.

The Tigers tried to respond, as Eli Bertsch returned a 75-yard kickoff to the six-yard line and quarterback Axton Beste snuck in on a run to pick up six points. Toward the end of the half, Beste scrambled for a 16-yard score and eased the blow to a 14-point deficit hopefully into halftime. But that was when Walter scorched the Tigers' defense for 60 yards to the house.

"All credit in the world goes to heritage coach (Jeremy) Hullinger, his staff, their players," Bluffton head coach Brent Kunkel said. "They came out and they were highly motivated. They were sharp, they were fast, they were physical. They punched us in the gut repeatedly."

Heritage scored twice more and began a shocking running clock against the fifth-ranked team in 2A in the recent poll by the Associated Press.

Cooper Craig found the end zone on a six-yard carry late in the fourth quarter, but other than that, the Tigers were stalled out in the second half.

Total yardage favored

Heritage with 462 total yards to Bluffton's 183 — and 354 of those were credited to the run game behind by a strong offensive line. Up front, the line is headlined by Charlie Riddle, who has Division I interest, that helps the ACAC's leading rusher Nasir Martin and Weber.

Beste, the Tigers' leading passer and rusher, was forced to make plays with his arm all night. The strong Patriots' defense contained his legs in the pocket and the secondary held A.J. Strevler, Bertsch and Trey Bustos. Beste finished with just 145 total yards and was picked off three times.

"I will ride or die with Axton Beste for the next two and a half years, but this was a 3A defense that he saw tonight," Kunkel said. "There's a difference in the level of competition, and he'll learn from it. He'll probably watch this film more than I will tonight to get better. We'll study and get back, we'll both get better."

On the ground, Bluffton has averaged 192 yards. It had 100 yards less than that Friday night, and held Craig

(Continued on Page A2)



Bluffton quarterback Axton Beste slips the tackle of Heritage's Greyson Mullins and tries to use the block of teammate Easton Blair to pick up yardage in the third quarter Friday night at Fred F. Park Field. (Photo by Glen Werling)

Knights fall to Barons in long, sloppy game

By ANDREW FEEBACK

Penalties and special teams plays were the difference in Friday night's game between the Norwell Knights and the visiting DeKalb Barons.

The Knights lost 47-21 largely due to some costly mistakes on special teams and a barrage of penalties throughout the contest.

DeKalb (3-4, 2-3 NE8) scored four touchdowns on special teams: two punt returns, a kickoff return and another touchdown on a fake punt.

Norwell (2-5, 2-3 NE8) also fumbled two punt returns that both resulted in touchdowns for DeKalb.

"I've never seen a game with four special teams touchdowns," coach Josh Gerber said. "That stuff killed, and penalty yards were awful. We've got to be more disciplined with what we're doing."

The Barons got on the board just two plays into the game when Xavier Bell eluded two tacklers in the backfield and sprinted 39 yards for a score.

The Knights took a 7-6 lead when Drew Graft threw a halfback pass to Brady Smith for a 39-yard touchdown.

Norwell seemed to have some momentum when the defense forced a three-and-out, but the first of two fumbled punt returns gave the ball right back to DeKalb, and a 54-yard run by Caiden Hinkle had the Barons up 12-7.

DeKalb took control with four second quarter touchdowns, the first of which came when Bell returned a punt 89 yards.

Norwell's second fumbled punt return later resulted in a 12-yard score from Brady Culler.

Connor Schmidt took a punt 65 yards for a Baron touchdown, and it was 33-7.

Then, seemingly just for fun at that point, DeKalb ran a fake punt with only seconds left in the first half. The punter pretended the snap was high and over his head, while it actually went to Drake Hall, whose 58 yard touchdown run

(Continued on Page A2)



Norwell's Gary Riley, (right) tries to break free of a DeKalb defender following a kick return in the first half of Friday night's conference game at Norwell. The Barons knocked off the Knight's 47-21. (Photo by Chad Kline)

No. 7 Jets flex over Raiders in an ACAC battle

By RICK SPRUNGER

MONROE — It was all Adams Central at Monroe Friday night.

The Class 2A No. 7 Jets scored early and often in running up a 55-0 win over Southern Wells in an Allen County Athletic Conference tussle on the winners' home turf.

Adams Central improved to 6-1 in all games and a perfect 4-0 in the conference with Bluffton and Woodlan left. Southern Wells fell to 0-7.

Adams Central took charge early.

The Jets rolled up a staggering 48-0 lead after one quarter, and the teams agreed to start the running clock with still 10:09 left in the second period.

Adams Central ran nine offensive plays in the first quarter and scored touchdowns on six of them, including five in a row at one point.

In fact, it scored a remarkable three touchdowns in the span of just 1:12 of game clock.

The Jets got a 43-yard touchdown run on a keeper by quarterback Jamison Roach on a one-play drive. They then recovered a Southern Wells fumble on the Raider six on the ensuing kickoff and again scored on just one play, a six-yard dash up the middle by Joey Everett.

On Southern Wells' first play after that, Adams Central's Jaret Smith picked off a pass and returned it 44 yards to the house.

"We gave them a lot," said a disgusted Southern Wells coach Blake Blaker after the game. "Don't get me wrong. They've got a really good team and a lot of good players. They have a system in place. And you've got to remember that we only have two returning starters; no one else on our team has ever played varsity football before. But on their first five touchdowns, we had kids in position to make a tackle, and we just didn't."

That flurry of three Adams Central scores built



Southern Wells quarterback Trey Slusher (middle) keeps the ball for a three-yard gain in the first quarter Friday night at Adams Central. (Photo by Glen Werling)

the margin to 28-0 with still 7:54 left in the first quarter.

And the Jets still had time left in the period to put up two more one-play scoring drives and a two-play score, getting a 53-yard run by Aaron Hirschy, a 33-yard pass from Roach to Bray-

lend Reber, and a 19-yard run by Matt Heiser.

Following a Southern Wells three-and-out to start the second quarter, the coaches held a brief conference in the center of the field and decided to run the clock earlier than the cus-

tomary halftime.

"You're not actually supposed to do that," conceded Blaker later, "but it was a situation where no one was going to object, and no one wanted to see them put up a hundred."

Adams Central got its

final score on a 38-yard run by Heiser moments later, and it very nearly scored again on the final play of the first half.

Southern Wells had reached the Jet 41 and called timeout with 0:01 left to

(Continued on Page A2)

My husband won't respect my privacy

Dear Annie: I have had a few health issues recently. During tests, my doctor incidentally found a mass on my spleen. I asked my husband not to tell anyone, except our kids who are 24 and 33.

I found out he told the neighbor down the street. I am upset. I haven't said anything yet to the rest of my family or friends. He argued (yes, argued) that I didn't say that and that I had said not to tell the family. I explained to him that he betrayed my trust. It was my story to tell when I was ready. He became belligerent and argued with me some more. I was still keeping my composure and said, "Even if I said I don't want you saying anything to our families about it, wouldn't it be implied that I certainly didn't want my neighbors knowing?"

At this point, we are in a big argument. I told him I was going to remove him from my next of kin and anything else that would allow him to know my business since he has some issues with keeping my business out of his mouth (and I did, by the way). He told me I was the untrustworthy one. Again, still trying to have an adult conversation, I asked him to give me examples. He couldn't and was deflecting.

We've had similar issues in the past where I think, "Gee, we are having an adult conversation — a give-and-take, compromising, coming-to-an-agreement conversation" — only to find out I was the only one present in the adult conversation and he's gone against everything we agreed to. I am married to a man-child. He literally argues, "I know you are, but what am I?"

As of now, I have decided to keep my health issues to myself. Apparently, I am in this by myself, and his intentions are to seek sympathy for himself (I have suspected for some time he has narcissistic tendencies). I have so much going on, on top of everyday life. I just

don't have it in me to include him anymore. I get that he may have been frustrated and needed to vent. I offered to ask my doctor for a support group he could attend if he needed to vent. We are not speaking, and I am OK with that. It's less to deal with. I think for the time being, I need to take care of myself and just let the chips fall where they may with him. Any advice? — Husband Has a Big Mouth

Dear Big Mouth: Your frustration with your husband is completely valid. Patterns of behavior like his — being careless with information, argumentative and immature — are exhausting and unacceptable.

Your decision to protect your peace and maintain your boundaries is the right one. But you two clearly need to put some serious work into your marriage if anything is to improve (after all, what does it say about your relationship that you can't lean on your own husband while you're battling health issues?). Couples therapy should be your next stop, both to work through this incident and to tackle the underlying issue of feeling like you can't trust your husband.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit <http://www.creatorspublishing.com> for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

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Dear Annie

by Annie Lane



BEETLE BAILEY



BLONDIE



ZITS



CRANKSHAFT



THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

The LOCKHORNS



My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



We are born with the sin of covetousness

Question: We're taught that reaching our goals is what life is all about and that if we don't check off our wish list, we haven't been successful. I've done everything I set out to do — and I'm in great despair. I have a lot of money, and even after retirement I'm young enough to do whatever I want. But my wife divorced me, my children rebelled and left home as teenagers, and my friends don't really include me in anything. I have reason to believe instead of being successful, I've become a total failure. Where is the truth? — S.L.

Answer: Greed seeks more than its own in life. It cheats, robs, and slanders to achieve its desires.

The Bible teaches that we are born with the sin of covetousness (see Jeremiah 6:13). Greed is an intense and selfish desire for something, often something belonging to another. The Bible speaks of greed as covetousness, as in the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:17).

Charles Kingsley, a historian, once said, "If you wish to be miserable, think about yourself: about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you — and then to you, nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch. You will make misery for yourself out of everything good. You will be as wretched as you choose."

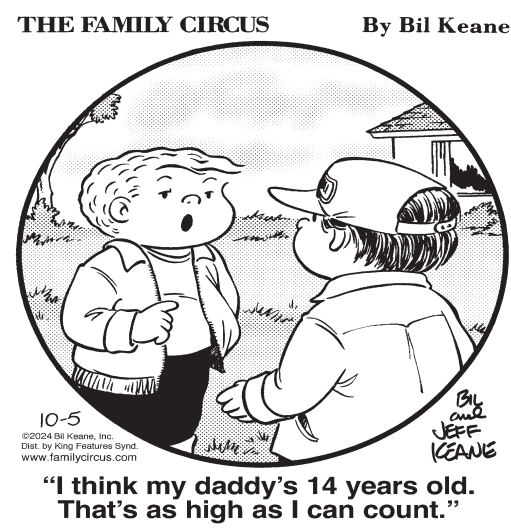
Greed is rated with other sins like wicked-

ness and maliciousness in Romans 1:29. Greed is idolatry and not to be confused with riches, if riches have been earned honestly. But if riches choke out spiritual life, then it is sin.

Many people have been blessed by the story of Zacchaeus and challenged to turn from a life of greed to a life of giving — and God's blessing falls on them when they live according to the attributes of Christ. Everything that we see about us that we count as our possessions only comprises a loan from God.

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

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes a solution time of 26 mins and a section for yesterday's answer.

Table with columns for time slots (10:05 to 12:30) and rows for various TV channels (WIMN, CBS, Antenna, ABC, NBC, MNT, FOX, etc.) listing program titles and times.

