

The News - Banner

www.News-Banner.com

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2024

BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection

\$1.00

Campbell honored as IPRA's Distinguished Citizen of the Year

By JONATHAN SNYDER

Susan Campbell has won the Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award from the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association.

Campbell has served on the Bluffton Park Board for approximately 22 years. During her tenure, she has overseen the addition of five new parks, including Pickett's Run, Kehoe and Lancaster Parks. Campbell has also been a major factor in promoting the department's events. Campbell said that she hopes her abilities can drive people towards the "phenomenal" park properties.

Campbell's win marks the third current Bluffton Park Board member to win the award, with Rick McEvoy and John Gerber also being awarded. Campbell said she was honored to receive the award, and promoted the park board and other department employees as the main factor into the parks department's continued success.

"It warms my heart that our com-

munity is so involved in volunteering and maintaining our beautiful parks," Campbell said. "From the police department to individuals that call when things aren't the way they're supposed to be ... we live in a wonderful community. We have a phenomenal parks department, and park properties, and I want to get as many people as we can involved in them."

Before she was involved in parks, she helped out in local Junior Girl Scout and high school band programs. While volunteering at Washington Park one year, former superintendent Pam Vanderkolk asked Campbell if she wanted to serve on the board, as one member was unable to fulfill their term. Campbell accepted, with a desire to ensure park properties were maintained well.

"She's the eyes and ears for us in the community," current Parks Department Superintendent Brandy

(Continued on Page 2)



Susan Campbell, left, and her husband, Rick, at the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association awards. (Photo provided)

Report finds state energy costs continue to grow

By WHITNEY DOWNARD
Indiana Capital Chronicle

In one year's time, the state's biggest utility companies disconnected 174,015 Hoosier households, turning off the lights and heat at a time when energy costs are growing faster than Hoosier paychecks.

The numbers come from a new report released by the Community Action Poverty Institute and Citizens Action Coalition earlier this month with a focus on electricity needs, a component of overall energy consumption, and investor-owned utilities.

The report's authors were highly critical of CEO compensation packages and "lucrative profit margins" at the state's five biggest utility providers, including: Indiana Michigan Power Company, AES Indiana, Northern Indiana Public Service Company, Duke Energy Indiana and CenterPoint Energy Indiana.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration reported that the combined profits of these investor-owned companies was \$3.8 billion from residential electricity in 2022, while the average CEO compensation package was \$18 million, according to the report.

At the same time, low-income households dedicate 7% or more of their income toward electric costs, on average, and are six times more likely to have their utilities disconnected. In all, just over 13% of Hoosier households were disconnected at least once every year and nearly half, or 48%, of households earning less than \$20,000 annually forgo other household needs to pay for electricity.

Additionally, women-led or minority households are more likely to be electricity burdened, meaning they're more likely to spend a greater portion of their income on utilities.

"We all need a home for our families that can be a safe temperature in summers and winters, and where we can cook and refrigerate food as part of our daily routine. High electricity costs threaten these essential functions by forcing consumers to choose between food, healthcare, and electricity

(Continued on Page 2)

Why retailers still revere Black Friday shopping

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After weeks of plugging increasingly inviting discounts, retailers in the United States and several other countries are preparing for prime time: Black Friday, the bargain bonanza that still reigns as the unofficial kickoff of the holiday shopping season even if it's lost some luster.

Department stores, shopping malls and merchants — big and small — see the day after Thanksgiving as a way to energize shoppers and to get them into physical stores at a time when many gift-seekers are content to do their browsing online. There are enough traditionalists that Black Friday remains the biggest day of the year for retail foot traffic.

"I'm excited about it," Texas resident Emily Phillips said while visiting the Galleria Dallas last week. "I save up all the things that I want all year and usually try and get them around Black Friday. I prefer to shop in person because then I can try stuff on. It's a better experience."

In the U.S., analysts envision a solid holiday shopping season, though perhaps not as robust as last year's, with many shoppers under financial pressure and cautious with their discretionary spending despite the easing of

inflation.

Retailers will be even more under the gun to get shoppers in to buy early and in bulk since there are five fewer days between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year.

Mall of America, in Bloomington, Minnesota, is giving the first 200 people in line at the center's north entrance a \$25 gift card. Target is offering an exclusive book devoted to Taylor Swift's Eras Tour and a bonus edition of her "The Tortured Poets Department: The Anthology" album that only will be available in stores on Black Friday before customers can buy them online starting Saturday.

Best Buy has introduced an extended-release version of the doorbuster, the limited-time daily discounts that for years were all the rage — and sometimes the spark for actual brawls — before the coronavirus pandemic. The nation's largest consumer electronics chain has released doorbuster deals on its app, online and in stores every Friday since Nov. 8 and plans to continue the weekly promotion through Dec. 20.

"(Stores) are very hungry for Black Friday to do well," Marshal Cohen, chief retail advisor at market research firm Circana, said. "They recognize that they're not going to clobber and win big

(Continued on Page 2)

U.S. consumer price increases accelerated with inflation pressures

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Consumer price increases accelerated last month, the latest sign that inflation's steady decline over the past two years has stalled in recent months.

According to the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge, consumer prices rose 2.3% in October from a year earlier, the Commerce Department said Wednesday. That is up from just 2.1% in September, though it is still only modestly above the Fed's 2% target.

Yet excluding the volatile food and energy categories, so-called "core" prices also picked up, climbing 2.8% last month from a year earlier, up from 2.7% in September, according to Commerce's personal consumption expenditures price index. Economists closely watch core prices because they typically provide a better read on where inflation is headed.

Inflation has fallen sharply since it peaked at 7% in mid-2022, according to the Fed's preferred measure. Yet yearly core inflation has fluctuated between 2.6% and 2.8% since February. Price increases have remained elevated in services, including apartment rents, restaurant meals, and car and home insurance.

The elevated reading could make the Federal Reserve less likely to cut its key rate at the next meeting in December. Next month's inflation data, some of which will be issued a week before the meeting, may play a key role in the Fed's decision.

"This report will likely provide further ammo to Fed officials who prefer to lower rates gradually," Omair Sharif, chief econo-

(Continued on Page 2)

Displaced Lebanese returning home from Syria face piles of rubble

By BASSEM MROUE
Associated Press

HANOUIYEH, Lebanon (AP) — During their 37 years of marriage, Mariam Kourani and her husband ran a butcher shop in southern Lebanon, started a business selling serving containers and opened a small restaurant.

An Israeli airstrike in late September destroyed it all.

Walking through the rubble of what used to be her house and restaurant in the village of Hanouiyeh, Kourani, 56, watched as her

son-in-law picked up some of his young daughter's clothes and toys from the ruins.

"This was my house, my dreams and my hard work," she said, holding back tears. She pointed to one of the serving containers she used to sell, and estimated her family's total losses at \$120,000.

Kourani is among the tens of thousands of residents who have started streaming back into southern Lebanon to check on their homes after the U.S.-mediated ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah went

into effect early Wednesday. Intense Israeli airstrikes over the past two months leveled entire neighborhoods in eastern and southern Lebanon, and in the southern suburbs of Beirut, which are predominantly Shiite areas of Lebanon where Hezbollah has a strong base of support. Nearly 1.2 million people have been displaced.

Like Kourani, many are returning home to find that their homes are gone.

The World Bank said earlier this month that housing has been

the hardest hit sector with almost 100,000 units partially or fully damaged during the 14-month war, which intensified in late September. It estimated the damage at \$3.2 billion.

Who will pay for the reconstruction is unclear. Iran has offered to help, but it's under Western sanctions and its economy has suffered. Kourani said Hezbollah members have told her those who lost a house during the war will be given a place to stay until their homes are rebuilt. After

spending thousands of dollars in rent for the two months the family was displaced in the village of Qarnayel in Mount Lebanon, Kourani said her priority is to fix their butcher shop across the street so they can start earning money.

"We are starting from below zero," she said.

A history of loss

Ali Saleh lost his home in 2006, during the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah. He was able to rebuild when the gulf nation

(Continued on Page 2)

Inside

Local/Area
Fort Wayne News . . . 3
Indiana News 3

Opinion
Michael Hicks 4

Also...
Sports 6
Classifieds 7
Diversions 5

Outside

Winter weather in with cold and windy weather

Today	Saturday	Sunday
High 29	High 29	High 28
Low 15	Low 15	Low 15

More Weather on Page 2

Online

Follow us on Facebook!
Go to www.facebook.com/newsbanner

Place Your Classified Ads 24/7

Vol. 96 No. 23

FRIDAY
November 29, 2024

CALL US ABOUT ANNUAL OPEN ENROLLMENT!

Jerry Flack & Associates

Oct. 15th - Dec. 7th MARKETPLACE MEDICARE PROGRAMS

Nov. 1st - Dec. 15th Annual Enrollment

TAKING APPOINTMENTS • 101 North Main Street, Bluffton, IN

CALL 260-824-1618 OR 820-0896

How to contact us:

Call us: **824-0224**
or **1-800-579-7476**
email@news-banner.com

On the Web:
www.news-banner.com

Follow us at:
twitter.com/newsbanner

Campbell honored

(Continued from Page 1)

Fiechter said. "So if she sees something that could be fixed, she's quick to bring it to me so I can handle things like that." Fiechter noted that Campbell's background in construction also helps with connecting the parks department with relevant experts on different projects. Campbell's work with record keeping and statistical data has also been invaluable for Fiechter and the board's decisions.

"She has all kinds of past data and stats that help me to guide the way that our department's going to move," Fiechter said. "I really appreciate her keeping that history for us at her fin-

gertips, because it's definitely something I wouldn't know in my four years of transitioning here. She's got a lot of knowledge for how things were."

Campbell's ability to find out what the community wants from its parks has been a key factor for the department as well. Campbell has collected community feedback for multiple park properties and helped the department find designs that will be effective for the whole community.

"She is somebody who will consider the pros and cons of everything," Fiechter said. "She's good at listening to the community. She can say that there's a concern amongst this group

for these items."

Campbell's ability to motivate and be a mentor has been important to Fiechter. In a nomination letter, Fiechter said that Campbell's encouragement has given Fiechter confidence in her role.

"There are a lot of challenges in the job that I have, a lot of pressures and weights," Fiechter said. "I feel like when I communicate with her, my burdens are divided, and when I share something that's great, my joys are doubled. Sometimes things seem overwhelming, and she's somebody that would believe in me before I believed in myself."

jonathan@news-banner.com

Hoosier energy costs

(Continued from Page 1)

in the midst of both a cost of living crisis and climate change," said Zia Saylor, a researcher at the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute. "This publication highlights how high electricity costs exacerbate energy burden and draws attention to policy solutions including statewide affordability assistance and limitations on disconnections."

Such solutions include expanding energy assistance program funds as well as a state-implemented cap on energy bills at 6% of a household's net annual income.

A growing concern

Last week, lawmakers listed reducing energy costs as one of their key priorities ahead of the 2025 session, which is set to begin in January.

Senate Majority Leader Rodric Bray, R-Martinsville, praised the work of his colleagues in previous sessions but identified ongoing frustrations in regards to energy policy.

"We've seen the cost of that power continue to creep up — which we need to keep a very, very close eye

on — because we need to make sure Hoosiers can pay their gas bills and their electric bills," Bray told reporters.

Bray said legislators needed to also keep future power demands in mind.

In May, the U.S. Energy Information Administration ranked Indiana 29th in the nation for its utility expenses, putting it below neighboring states like Ohio and Illinois. Overall, energy costs in the Hoosier State have grown by 33% between 2012 and 2022, compared to the national average of 19%.

Three of the investor-owned companies at the center of the report — CenterPoint, Duke and NIPSCO — have submitted petitions to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission for rate increases in 2023 and 2024.

While utility companies are prohibited from disconnecting homes if temperatures dip below freezing, that protection doesn't apply to during excessive heat events, which can be deadly. Due to changing climate conditions, extreme weather is becoming more common.

Heating and cooling

accounts for just under one-third, or 31%, of electricity consumption, according to the report.

While the federal government offers a program to offset energy costs, only an estimated 16% of eligible homes — or 109,750 households — receive support from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program due to funding restrictions. Some utilities may also offer their own crisis funding to consumers, with varying qualifying criteria.

Potential solutions and recommendations

The burden of such expenses varies by county — an additional concern for lawmakers seeking to address costs, according to the executive director of the Citizens Action Coalition.

"Guaranteeing uninterrupted access to utility services for all Hoosiers, regardless of income or zip code, is a moral imperative for our State. We should strive to adopt policies that lift people up and afford everyone the opportunity to live a dignified life and participate in society in a meaningful way," said Kerwin Olson in a release. "As

this report displays, Indiana has a long way to go. We are hopeful that policy makers will use this report as a roadmap to begin crafting public policy that ensures the most vulnerable amongst us are protected from loss of these essential services."

The report recommends expanding the federal energy assistance fund, including reforming the financial eligibility guidelines to capture more energy burdened Hoosiers. State intervention could come in the form of a payment cap at 6% of a household's net annual income.

Researchers said coupling such a state initiative with existing poverty reduction programming, such as food assistance, would reduce administrative costs and pointed to other states that have already implemented such efforts.

Another initiative adopted by other states: expanding disconnection moratoriums to include other inclement weather. The report concluded by acknowledging the need for further research into energy costs and poverty, including health impacts.

Consumer price increases

(Continued from Page 1)

mist at Inflation Insights, wrote in a client note, "and may strengthen the argument for a pause at the December FOMC meeting."

Many economists, however, expect that the Fed will reduce its rate by a quarter-point in December, then delay further cuts while gauging the impact of the reductions they've made so far.

"The momentum in inflation toward the Fed's 2% target has sputtered recently but not enough, in our view, to prevent the Fed from cutting interest rates in December," Ryan Sweet, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics,

wrote in a client note.

Last month, grocery prices barely rose and gas costs fell, providing some relief to household budgets. Prices at the pump have continued to decline since October, reaching a nationwide average of \$3.07 a gallon Wednesday, down six cents from a month earlier, according to AAA.

Used car and truck prices, however, shot up 2.8% from September to October, though they are still 5% lower than a year ago. Air fares jumped 1.5% just last month and have risen 5.1% from a year earlier, while hotel room prices rose 0.5% from September to October.

Restaurant prices moved up 0.3% in October and 3.6% from a year earlier. All the yearly increases are higher than they were pre-pandemic.

Wednesday's report also underscored that Americans' incomes and spending remained healthy, a key reason the economy has kept growing this year despite widespread fears of a slowdown. Incomes grew 0.6% from September to October, faster than economists had expected, while consumer spending rose by a solid 0.4% last month.

The Fed had signaled it would cut rates four times next year, but financial markets now expect just two reductions.

Displaced Lebanese

(Continued from Page 1)

of Qatar funded the reconstruction of several areas in southern Lebanon.

On Wednesday, Saleh drove to his hometown near the border with Israel, only to find that it had happened again: his two-story home was destroyed.

The 59-year-old man drove back with his wife and three of his six children hoping to find a place to stay close to his hometown of Aita al-Shaab, a village that witnessed some of the most intense fighting.

In the ancient city of Baalbek in eastern Lebanon, 34-year-old Souad al-Outa walked around what was left of her home, shocked.

She knew her neighborhood had been badly hit

like many other parts of this city, a designated UNESCO World Heritage site famous for its ancient Roman ruins. She was not prepared for the devastation she saw when she went back on Thursday.

A strike earlier this month killed multiple people in the street nearby, she said, including several of her husband's relatives.

"I feel like my heart has come out of its place," she said as she looked around what used to be her children's bedroom. "We had a beautiful life here."

Homes can be rebuilt

About 105 miles southwest of there, in the village of Qana near the port city of Tyre, Abu Ahmad Salameh stood in what was left of several buildings that

belonged to his family. He was able to pull two carpets from under the rubble.

"All this damage can be rebuilt. This is our land and we will stay here no matter what," Salameh said. "It is painful to see the destruction. These are the homes of my parents, grandparents, daughter and my house."

He said that when the area was struck about two weeks ago, Hezbollah fighters found a safe full of jewelry and cash in the rubble of his house, and returned it to his family.

Back in Hanouiyeh, Kourani said the family left their home in the early afternoon on Sept. 23, the day the war intensified, and moved in with relatives a few miles away.

Shortly after they got there, they received a call saying that their house had been destroyed.

As the Israeli airstrikes increased, they fled north to Qarnayel, where they rented an apartment for 1,000 a month in addition to \$250 for electricity and water.

Once the ceasefire went into effect, she drove back home with her husband, son and her daughter's family. They spent the night with relatives.

Despite everything, Kourani said she is embarrassed to speak about her material losses at a time when thousands of people have been killed.

"Israel has filled our land with blood. Our big loss is our men," she said.

Weather

Friday, November 29, 2024

(24-hour observations at 9:21 p.m. Thursday)

High: 39; **Low:** 29; **Precipitation:** 0.03 inches of rain
Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.22 feet at 8:45 p.m. Thursday

Wells County forecast

Today: Partly sunny, with a high near 28. West wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Tonight: Mostly clear, with a low around 15. West wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Saturday: Sunny, with a high near 29. West wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Saturday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 15. West wind around 5 mph.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 28.

Sunday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 15.

Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 31.

Monday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 17.

Tuesday: Partly sunny, with a high near 32.

Tuesday Night: A 30% chance of snow showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 22.

Wednesday: A 30% chance of snow showers. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 38.

Wednesday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 25.

Thursday: Mostly cloudy, with a high near 41.

Black Friday

(Continued from Page 1)

growth in online because the pie has gotten so competitive. They have to find a way to win in the stores."

Impulse purchases and self-gifting are a potential area for big sales growth, and business isn't going to increase without them, Cohen said. Shoppers are three times more likely to buy on impulse at a physical store than online, according to Circana research.

Shoppers stepped up their spending at American retailers in October, the Commerce Department said. Although sales at auto dealers drove much of the gain, electronics and appliance stores, and bars and restaurants also saw increased purchases, a sign of healthy consumer spending.

The latest quarterly results from Best Buy, Target and other retailers, however, underscored that some will have an easier time than others getting customers to part with their cash.

Walmart, the nation's largest retailer, is heading into the holidays with strong momentum after ratcheting up better-than-expected fiscal third-quarter sales for toys, home goods and groceries. But Target reported sluggish quarterly sales as cautious consumers curtailed their spending on apparel and other non-essential items.

Many retailers pushed holiday sales earlier in October than they did last year to help shoppers spread out their spending.

Shoppers were distracted heading into this month's U.S. presidential election. Sales of general merchandise dropped 9% the two weeks ended Nov. 9, according to Circana, but have been rebounding since the election.

The National Retail Federation predicted that shoppers would increase their spending in November and December by between 2.5% and 3.5% over the same period a year ago. During the 2023 holiday shopping season, spending increased 3.9% over 2022.

So far this holiday sea-

son, online sales have beaten expectations, according to Adobe Digital Insights, a division of software company Adobe. U.S. consumers spent \$77.4 billion online from Nov. 1 to Nov. 24, 9.6% more than during the same period last year. Adobe predicted an 8.4% increase for the full season.

Despite the early sales, better bargains are coming with Black Friday, according to Adobe. Analysts consider the five-day Black Friday weekend, which includes Cyber Monday, a key barometer of shoppers' willingness to spend for the rest of the season.

Vivek Pandya, the lead analyst at Adobe Digital Insights, said shoppers are paying more attention to discounts than last year, and their focus on bargain-hunting will drive what sells and when.

For example, Thanksgiving Day is the best time to shop online to get the deepest discount on sporting goods, toys, furniture and appliances, according to Adobe's analysis. But Black Friday is the best time to buy TVs online. People shopping for televisions earlier in the season found discounts that averaged 10.8%, while waiting until this Friday is expected to yield 24% discounts, Adobe Digital Insights said.

Cyber Monday, however, is expected to be the best time to buy clothing and gadgets like phones and computers online. Electronics discounts peaked at 10.9% off the suggested manufacturer's price between Nov. 1 and Nov. 24 but are expected to hit 30% off on Cyber Monday, Adobe said.

Across the board, Black Friday weekend discounts should peak at 30% on Cyber Monday and then go down to around 15%, according to Adobe's research.

For physical stores, the day after Thanksgiving is slated to again mark the busiest single shopping day of the season, according to retail technology company Sensoromatic Solutions, which tracks retail foot traffic.

Finest Wine In Wells County!

Think Holiday!



HOURS
Thursday - Friday 3:00 - 8:00pm • Saturday 12:00 - 8:00pm

(765) 727-1027

www.dash90wines.com • zane@dash90wines.com

6750 W 900 S-90 Warren, IN 46792

Here's the deal. You switch. You save.



The right insurance at the right price is available now. On average, you'll save \$597*! All you need to do is make the switch. It's easy. Just call me today.

Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there.™

State Farm

Average annual per household savings based on a 2021 national survey by State Farm of new policyholders who reported savings by switching to State Farm.

Erin Daugherty, Agent
1085 N Main Street Suite B
Bluffton, IN 46714
Bus: 260-827-0527
erin@myblufftonsfagent.com

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company
State Farm Indemnity Company
Bloomington, IL

State Farm County Mutual Insurance Company
of Texas
Richardson, TX
2001310

FORT WAYNE

Box Drop

Mattress & Furniture
260-227-2145




Family Owned & Operated

Amy & Tracy Houtz
260-227-2145

7824 Bluffton Rd.
Fort Wayne, IN

Best Selection Incredible Savings

By Appointment:
Tues - Wed - Thurs

Showroom Open:
Fri & Sat 11am - 4pm

Ratepayer advocates hail 'landmark' settlement with data centers, utility company

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Ratepayer advocates are celebrating a Friday settlement with three of the state's largest incoming data centers and Indiana Michigan Power — touting new protections for Hoosier bills and the state's electricity supply.

Amazon Web Services plans to spend \$11 billion on a data center near New Carlisle, while Google is working on a \$2 billion data center in Fort Wayne — and both need plenty of power from I&M.

Also included in the settlement was Microsoft, which has announced a \$1 billion data center project in La Porte. That's in Northern Indiana Public Service Company territory.

The three data center signatories agreed to each provide \$500,000 annually for five years to the Indiana Community Action Association. The money will support low-income Hoosier customers, like weatherization efforts.

"I&M looks forward to working with some of the leading technology companies in the world that have chosen to locate in northeast Indiana. It is an exciting time for our region and I&M is committed to doing our part to support these customers as they bring investments and jobs to Indiana," President and CEO Stever Baker said in a news release.

The agreement sets out new contract, payment and other requirements. But its terms don't stop there.

If state regulators approve the nondiscriminatory settlement, it'll also apply to new industrial customers with large electric loads.

Indiana Utility Consumer Counselor Bill Fine — whose agency advocates for all utility customers — said data centers will have a "critical role" in Indiana's future economic development, but require "substantial increases" in power generation and transmission infrastructure.

"The terms in this agreement will ensure a balanced approach as those investments are made," he said in a news release. "(They'll) protect residential, commercial, and industrial customers from bearing the costs of new infrastructure necessary to serve new, large-volume customers."

Kerwin Olson, leader of utility watchdog Citizens Action Coalition, highlighted the agreement's "significant protections" and transparency provisions. Program Director Ben Inskeep, meanwhile, lauded the "landmark" arrangement on X.

An industry membership organization, the Data Center Coalition, was another party to the accord.

Timelines, minimums and collateral

The terms applies to industrial customers that need a lot of electricity from I&M to power their efforts: contract capacity of at least 70 megawatts at an individual plant or 150 megawatts in aggregate. They're dubbed "large load customers."

The settlement starts by stretching out contract timelines. The minimum for a large load customer on I&M's Tariff Industrial Power would be 12 years. They could choose to add an additional "load ramp period" of up to five years.

That's much longer than the current minimum of two years, according to Inskeep. He wrote that the change provides greater certainty that big users will stay longer and pay for costs.

The companies also agreed to several payment-related changes.

Monthly billing demands are taken monthly, as the energy consumed during the single-highest 15-minute peak demand period. But monthly billing demand can't go under 80% of the large load customer's contract capacity or 80% of the company's highest monthly billing demand from the last 11 months. That's up from the current 60%, Inskeep said.

Big users also face higher minimum charges monthly.

Inskeep said that a "very large" data center demanding 1,000 megawatts would expect to pay \$492 million for power annually. Under the settlement's formula, he estimated that they'd pay a minimum of \$332 million, regardless of electricity usage — versus the current minimum of \$173 million.

The boosted minimum ensures that data centers and other big users "will be paying back the costs of the very large investments I&M is making to serve them, even if (they) use much less power than originally planned," Inskeep wrote.

The settlement goes on to establish collateral requirements.

The money is proof that big customers can pay their bills, and acts like insurance for I&M in case one can't.

During a contract's first year, large load customers would have to hand over 24 times their maximum expected monthly non-fuel bill. After year one, it would be 24 times the previous maximum.

Collateral would get recalculated annually, and customers would have to supply the updated amount if it's 10% — or more — higher than the current amount held by I&M.

They'd have three ways to provide collateral:

- A guarantee from the customer's parent company or corporate affiliate for the full amount, as long as the entity has high credit ratings and lots of money — at least 10 times the collateral requirement.
- A standby irrevocable letter of credit for the full amount, issued for at least a year by a bank with high credit writings. The customer would need to renew it at least 30 days before expiration.
- The full amount, in cash.

Large load customers with high credit ratings and lots of money are exempt. Those without the credit ratings but enough liquidity are half-exempt — up to \$250 million off the requirement.

Downsizing, exit fees and more

The settlement does let big users reduce their contract capacity after five years — without facing penalties.

Large load customers would have to give I&M at least 41 months written notice prior to the delivery year in which the reduction would occur. They'd be capped at a 20% reduction unless they and I&M agree on something higher.

There's room for more extreme actions, but at a cost.

A large load customer could end its contract after five years, or reduce its contract capacity by more than 20% as long as it gives 42 months written notice and pays potentially hefty exit fees.

The settlement also includes smaller provisions:

A prospective big user would cover the costs of a full planning study necessitated by its addition to the grid.

Collaboration on a potential "clean transition" tariff letting participants support investment in carbon-free electricity resources. It would be covered by participants themselves.

At least one meeting on I&M's emergency response procedures — like last-resort power cuts — and if the utility needs to make changes to its procedures because of big users.

Semi-annual reports from I&M to state regulators with information on how much the utility has spent to serve big users, contract termination fees, notices of reduction to contract capacity, and so on. Some data would be confidential, but the settlement parties agreed to collaborate on public versions of the reports.

I&M is set to conduct a study evaluating the potential of technologies that maximize electricity transmission.

I&M will meet with stakeholders to talk about interconnecting its large load customers.

How much is a Thanksgiving meal in Indiana? This year, not as much, per new report

Hoosiers are expected to see slight savings compared to 2023 — and pay less than the U.S. average for the meal

By CASEY SMITH
Indiana Capital Chronicle

A Thanksgiving meal in the Hoosier state is expected to cost a little less than last year — averaging about \$53.31 for a 10-person spread — according to the Indiana Farm Bureau's annual "market basket survey."

Shopping for the spread costs about 2% less — that's \$1.33 less than a Thanksgiving meal cost Hoosiers in 2023, and \$4.77 less than the average American will pay at the grocery store this year.

The calculation accounts for a 16-pound turkey; a 14-ounce package of stuffing mix; three pounds of sweet potatoes; one pound of frozen peas; a dozen rolls; a one-pound carrot and celery veggie tray; a pound of fresh cranberries; a half-pint of whipping cream; a gallon of whole milk; and ingredients for a pumpkin pie, according to the survey.

It also included costs for several miscellaneous baking items like coffee, butter, onions, eggs, sugar and flour.

The market survey is conducted each year by volunteer shoppers across Indiana who search for the best prices while not using coupons or special promotions.

Indiana production lowers some costs

Hoosiers get a cost break on some of the major meal ingredients because they're produced in the state, according to INFB.

Indiana ranks third in turkey production, with more than 8.4 million turkeys in the state, according to the latest U.S. Department of

Agriculture's Census of Agriculture.

INFB Chief Economist Todd Davis added that the turkey itself accounts for about 44% of the Thanksgiving dinner. "so with Indiana in the heart of turkey production and with retail turkey prices down, it isn't surprising that the turkey is more affordable this year, specifically in the Midwest."

Hoosier shoppers can expect to pay about \$1.33 per pound for a whole turkey, or \$21.22 for a 16-pound bird. That's roughly 17% less expensive than the national average of \$25.67.

Pumpkin pie filling expenses are also lower than in 2023.

The cost for a 14-ounce package of pumpkin pie filling in Indiana is \$3.78, about 22% down from last year, according to the survey.

Pumpkin pie filling in Indiana is about 9% less expensive than the 2024 U.S. average. The USDA indicates that Indiana ranks second in pumpkin production in the country.

Thanksgiving prices still track higher

Even so, some items increased in price.

The retail prices of cranberries, whipping cream, sweet potatoes, stuffing and items for the veggie tray all went up, per the INFB survey.

Sweet potatoes, cranberries and items for the veggie tray are more pricier in Indiana this year than they are, on average, across the

country.

Sweet potatoes, specifically, cost about 18% more than the U.S. average, which Davis said could be due to sweet potato production in the southern and western regions, along with the impact of transportation costs.

Overall, Indiana consumers are paying about 8% — or 48 cents — less per person to shop for ingredients for the meal than others across the country. The INFB noted the average cost of a Thanksgiving Day meal in the U.S. to be \$58.08, or \$5.81 per person.

Still, a Thanksgiving meal in Indiana costs 25% more than it did five years ago, reflecting a trend of post-pandemic inflation that's still affecting grocery prices, the INFB said.

A meal cost \$42.66 in 2019, compared to \$53.31 today.

But costs are trending downward; a Thanksgiving meal today costs 27 cents less than it did in 2021, INFB officials emphasized.

"Nevertheless, Hoosier farmers find ways to streamline their operations and decrease costs of production," said INFB Vice President Janis Highley. "Many people don't realize that Indiana is a top-producing state for turkey and pumpkins, so we have many local farmers to thank for our holiday meal this year. Turkeys also consume a significant amount of soybean and corn meal, top Hoosier farm commodities, so they're important to our state's economy too."

Man sentenced to 5 years in prison for cocaine distribution

FORT WAYNE — Alejandro Lagunas Penalzoa, also known as Jose Alfredo Castro Reyes, 47 years old, of Michoacan, Mexico, was sentenced by United States District Court Chief Judge Holly A. Brady after pleading guilty to distributing 500 grams or more of cocaine, announced United States Attorney Clifford D. Johnson.

Lagunas Penalzoa was sentenced to 60 months in prison followed by 4 years of supervised release.

According to documents in the case, Lagunas Penalzoa sold a kilogram of cocaine to an undercover law enforcement agent on March 7, 2023. Lagunas Penalzoa was illegally present in the United States.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Allen County Drug Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Fort Wayne Safe Streets Gang Task Force, consisting of the FBI, the

Indiana State Police, the Allen County Police Department, and the Fort Wayne Police Department. The

case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Anthony W. Geller.

Obituary Policy

The News-Banner and Ossian Journal publishes "basic" obituaries free of charge for "local" deaths. "Basic" obituaries will include the deceased's name, age, community of record, date and place of death, basic genealogical information, the date, time and location of calling hours and services and the name of the funeral home handling arrangements.

If additional information and/or a photo is desired to be included, or if the deceased does not meet the definitions of a "local" person, there is a charge.

Area funeral homes will provide details on the policy and will coordinate obituary publication.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!
www.news-banner.com
or www.facebook.com/newsbanner

WE HELP YOU GET SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE AND MEDICAID READY!



Jerry Flack & Associates

WE REPRESENT MANY - MANY - MANY INSURANCE COMPANIES

WE HAVE ALL THE MEDICARE AND MEDICAID OPTIONS AVAILABLE

MARKETPLACE ANNUAL ENROLLMENT IS NOV 1ST - DEC 15TH

The Price Tag is the Same Everywhere Consider Local for Better Service

MEDICARE ANNUAL ENROLLMENT OCT 15 TO DEC 7 CALL US

WHEN YOU HAVE PROBLEMS AND YOU WILL HAVE PROBLEMS YOU WILL HAVE US TO COUNT ON

MEDICARE SUPPLEMENTS - MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS - PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLANS.

Life Insurance - Long Term Care Insurance - Investments - Individual and Small Group Health - Dental - Vision - Hearing - Cancer Insurance

Folks on Medicare A and B and Diabetic can get **FREE** Nice Looking Diabetic Shoes Every Year from Us | We Do **FREE** Information/ Education Seminars In Your Business (Again Former Teachers)

WE CAN MEET: IN OUR OFFICE - IN YOUR HOME - IN A FAVORED LOCATION

In the 1882 Building at Main & Market with the mural on the outside wall • 260-824-1618



OPEN NOVEMBER 29

Holiday Season - FRESH CUT CHRISTMAS TREES WREATHS NATURAL GARLAND



HOURS: Mon & Thurs 1pm - 8pm • Fri & Sat 10am - 8pm • Sun 12pm - 6pm

260-758-3357 • 3584 NW ST RD 116 • MARKLE, IN

Small Business Saturday November 30 • 9am-2pm

BLUFFTON DOWNTOWN SHOPPING PASSPORT

Small Business Saturday Saturday, November 30, 2024 9 am - 2 pm



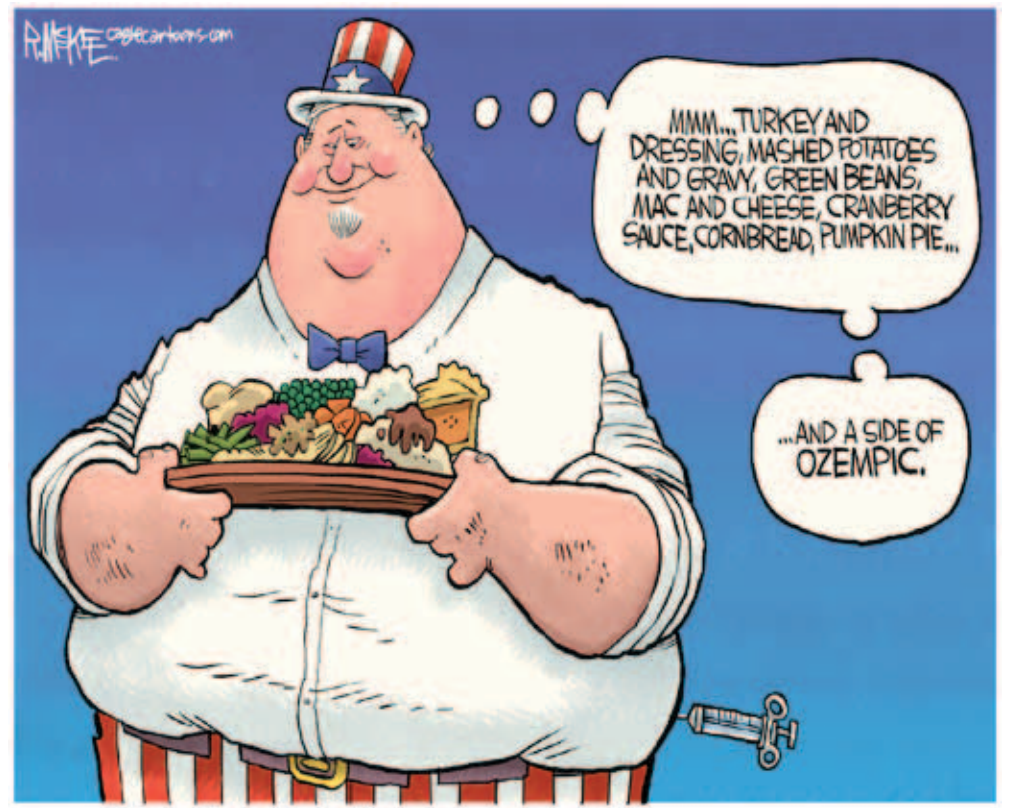
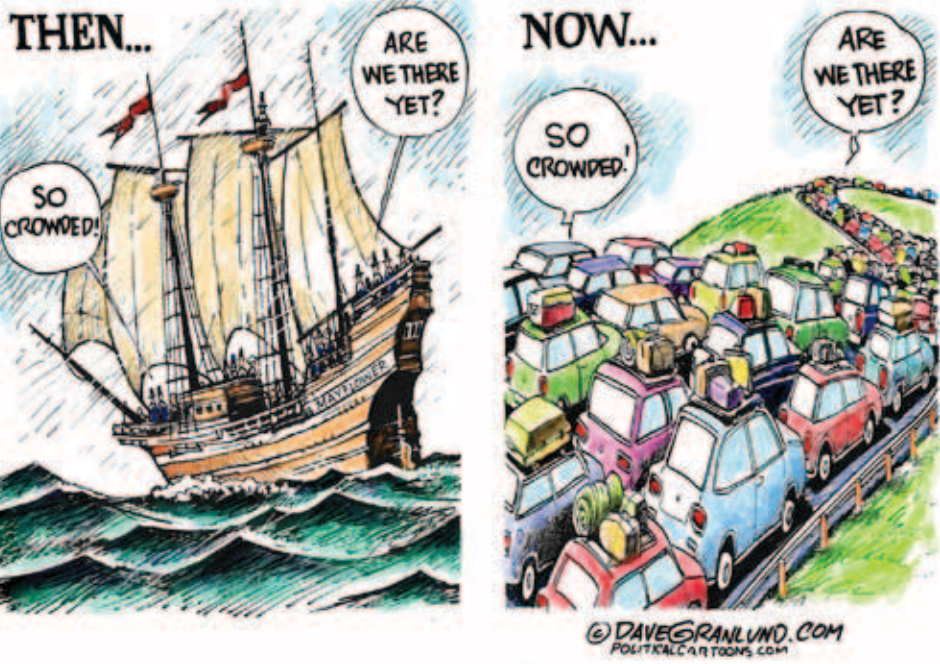
Visit the 12 Downtown Bluffton Participating Businesses, get your passport stamped for great savings, multiple chances to win gift certificates and a Grand Prize Basket!

Brought to you by:

SHOP LOCAL

Thanksgiving 2024 - a look through cartoonists' eyes...

THANKSGIVING



Letters to the Editor

Where was pre-election ROI?

The damage is still coming from this administration. Due to Zelenski / Ukraine's dirt / stronghold they have on the Biden "crime" family, we could be forced into World War III during his final days of office. We need to realize we have witnessed the greatest measure of "Grace and Mercy," this election, our Creator has ever bestowed upon our Nation! Seriously folks, the current political administration has created a catastrophic MESS of our country, primarily because of the crazy delusional "dreamers." Now is the time to open our eyes, face

reality before us, and get to work! We have been given another chance, and it graciously may be our last. Here's the Thing: What is and has been "Going on in America" is what brought the November 5th election results. The majority of hard-working, knowledgeable U.S. citizens do want "ROI." They just do not want insane ideas like gender neutral bathrooms in our public schools or being forced to pay for other people's granddaughters college education, etc.... and then some... SHAWN COLLIER Bluffton

Submit your Letters to the Editor via:
 • Our website link (Submit your Letter)
 • E-Mail: email@news-banner.com
 • Mail: PO Box 436, Bluffton IN 46714
 • Drop-off: 125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton
 All letters must be signed and must include a phone number or address in case verification is desired. Letters are edited for brevity and clarity. Letters must be no more than 500 words. Please mark your correspondence as a "Letter to the Editor," or if you wish to express an opinion to us but do not want it published, please mark as "Not for Publication."

Today in History

By The Associated Press
 Today is Friday, Nov. 29, the 334th day of 2024. There are 32 days left in the year.
 Today's highlight in history: On Nov. 29, 1864, a Colorado militia launched an unprovoked attack on an encampment of Cheyenne and Arapahoe tribal members, killing an estimated 230 people.
 Also on this date:
 In 1929, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Richard E. Byrd, pilot Bernt Balchen, radio operator Harold June and photographer Ashley McKinney made the first airplane flight over the South Pole.
 In 1961, Enos the chimp was launched from Cape Canaveral aboard the Mercury-Atlas 5 spacecraft, which orbited earth twice before returning.
 In 1981, film star Natalie Wood drowned at age 43 while boating off California's Santa Catalina Island with her husband Robert Wagner and actor Christopher Walken.
 In 1987, a Korean Air 707 jetliner en route from Abu Dhabi to Bangkok

was destroyed by a bomb planted by North Korean agents, killing all 115 people aboard.
 In 2001, former Beatle George Harrison died in Los Angeles following a battle with cancer; he was 58.
 In 2012, the United Nations voted overwhelmingly to grant Palestine non-observer member state status, a vote that came exactly 65 years after the General Assembly adopted a plan to divide Palestine into separate states for Jews and Arabs. (The 2012 vote was 138 in favor; nine members, including the United States, voted against and 41 abstained.)
 In 2018, in a surprise guilty plea, former Trump lawyer Michael Cohen confessed that he lied to Congress about a Moscow real estate deal he pursued on Trump's behalf during the 2016 campaign.
 Today's Birthdays: Actor Diane Ladd is 89. Musician Chuck Mangione is 84. Filmmaker Joel Coen is 70. Actor-TV personality Howie Mandel is 69. Actor Cathy Moriarty is 64.

The blessings of Thanksgiving 2024

Faithful readers of this column will recall that Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. It is uniquely American and focuses on that most simple and important act of gratitude.

When I was a soldier, Thanksgiving was held in special regard. After all, it was in the dark days of the Civil War, in October 1863, when Abraham Lincoln offered a proclamation: "I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea, and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer."

When deployed, every effort was made to deliver turkey, dressing, and all the fixings to the field. Thanksgiving 1990 saw me in the Saudi Arabian desert readying myself for an attack into Iraq. The holiday marked my second hot meal in three months. I was especially grateful for the hard work that delivered that meal to me.

When soldiering in the U.S., every effort was made to allow soldiers to take leave or pass. For those of us who remained on post, the meal itself was served by officers in dress blue uniforms. In many units, officers filled wine glasses in mess halls, with captains and colonels waiting on privates.

I'm past that now and instead looking forward to welcoming one of my kids home from a challenging year in college, and two from very tough training in the Army and the Air Force. If fortune continues to smile upon me, I'll get to spend some time with some of their close friends who will join us over the holiday weekend, along with extended family. Being in the company of young people committed to serve their country and community is a superb gift, for which I am enormously grateful.

I'll be praying for all the young people with me over the holidays and wish them Godspeed with their duties over the coming year. I'll also take up the wine pouring duties with extra zest, minus the dress uniform.

We Americans are enormously blessed on this Thanksgiving 2024.

In the years since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, our economic recovery has outpaced every other developed nation. We've seen the strongest labor markets in more than 50 years, bringing unusually strong wage growth for the bottom 90 percent of American households. Job growth has been robust, with nearly all the growth in full-time jobs. As evidence of this, the number of workers who hold more than one job are now below 2019 levels.

Inflation is now within the Federal Reserve's target of 2.0-2.5 percent, allowing the Fed to cut interest rates. This means mortgage rates have been in decline for more than a year, as has cost of borrowing for autos, appliances and other consumer items. At the same time, household debt as a share of income is now near record lows.

Inflation-adjusted GDP growth has averaged 3.1 percent since the COVID vaccines were introduced. That is a full percentage point better than any comparable period of the Trump or Obama presidencies. In fact, we've only had four equal stretches of GDP growth like that since 1970.

Wealth held by the poorest half of Americans, which might be the most salient measure, has grown more since 2001 than it did in the previous two decades. For Americans, particularly poorer Americans, the current economy has never been stronger.

Older and more affluent Americans have just been through the longest and largest increase in equity valuations in American history. Stock market portfolios for the most affluent 60 percent of Americans who hold stock or mutual funds just exploded in ways we've not seen before. So, everything from teacher to public safety officer retirement funds to flush 401(K) accounts have boomed like never before. As I write this, the stock exchanges are all at or near record levels.

Of course, abundance is measured in more than economic performance. Life expectancy for Americans in the top 90 percent of educational attainment continue to rise. The root cause of declining lifespan for the other 10 percent of Americans—drug overdoses—appear to be lessening substantially. This will be welcomed by families across our blessed nation.

Crime rates, which rose in the summer of 2020, are back to pre-COVID levels, and currently at levels not seen since the mid-1960s. This is true for all types of crimes, violent and nonviolent. Our streets have never been safer.

We have never enjoyed so much freedom. We remain free to express our opinions, marry who wish, worship where we wish, go to school where we wish and build a family as we wish. Few occupations are restricted from our choice. Of all the times and places to be alive, we are in the best.

All is not perfect, of course. I write often of the many challenges before us, from a huge federal debt, ill-considered economic policy proposals and evil foreign enemies who reek of malice. Some in our country do not share in the opportunity that is the broad marker of our Republic. Many are angry that the world is different than before, and uncomfortable with the freedoms others may enjoy. For all of this, I will pray for peace and acceptance.

But, in writing about that, I am thankful for the most important of our gifts.

The American experiment, of which we remain a vital and living part, gives us the tool to remedy those problems. We call that tool our Constitution, the clarion words of our Republic. It codified the God-given right to speak freely, to worship as we wish and assemble. When Lincoln called for Thanksgiving, it was because it was clear to him, only in late 1863, that our Constitution would survive the crises of our Civil War.

On this Thanksgiving weekend, let us pray that the coming years continue to bless us with a strong Constitution and robust economy. Without it, we can expect none of the freedom and little of the prosperity that has so amply blessed us.

Michael Hicks is the George and Frances Ball Distinguished Professor of Economics and the director of the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University. • cberdirector@bsu.edu



Michael Hicks

Hoosier Opinions

When friendly favors go too far

Dear Annie: Last week, my good friend "Jess" called me at 6 a.m. to ask if I could drive her to an appointment that same morning, even though I had to be at work by 8. This kind of last-minute favor is becoming a pattern. I've been tempted to say no, but she will always guilt me with something like, "You're the only one I can count on!"

I really do value our friendship, but I feel drained by her constant needs. How can I let her know I need some firmer boundaries without making her feel like I'm abandoning her? — Feeling Drained

Dear Feeling Drained: You're going to have to do what you've been avoiding: say no.

Tell her you want to be there for her, but you simply don't have the time or energy to drop everything at a moment's notice. It might be awkward at first, but a true friend will respect your limits.

Dear Annie: I have been married to my husband for well over three decades. We have two sons, one in his early 30s and the other in his early 20s. My husband "Gus" hates his sons with every fiber of his being. Gus destroyed their childhood by wanting nothing to do with them. To this day, Gus ignores them or does whatever he can to hurt their feelings.

I am at a point where I can't take it any longer. My oldest has moved out and created a good life for himself. My youngest is still at home and desperately wants a relationship with his dad. What would make a man hate his sons so much? My husband will absolutely not go to counseling as he doesn't think this is a problem. Please

offer some advice. My heart can't take much more. — Brokenhearted Mom

Dear Brokenhearted: In addition to the way he treats your boys, your letter also begs the question — how does Gus treat YOU? Without his cooperation or openness to improving his relationships with his sons, I'm afraid we'll never truly know the underlying reasons for your husband's lack of love or paternal instinct.

Instead of trying to force Gus into being the father your sons deserve and likely disappointing them even more, focus on making sure they know how much you love and support them, especially your youngest still under your roof. I strongly suggest counseling, for yourself and your kids, to help you all start to heal from this unfortunate trauma and learn how to create boundaries that protect you from Gus' emotional abuse.

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

© 2024 CREATORS.COM

Dear Annie

by Annie Lane



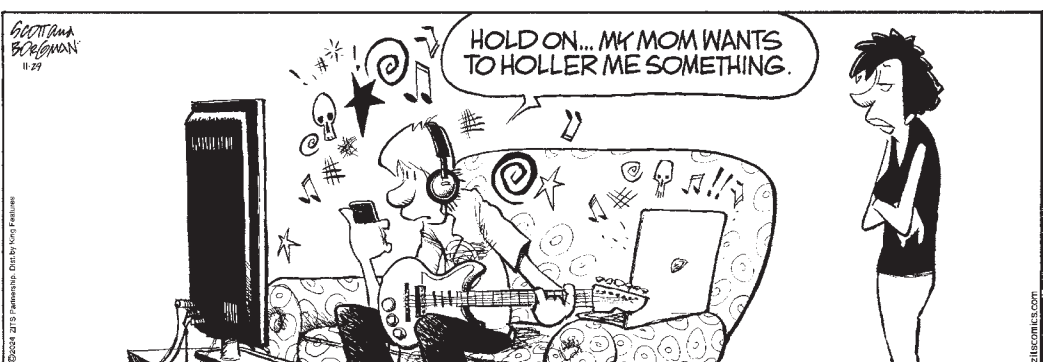
BEETLE BAILEY



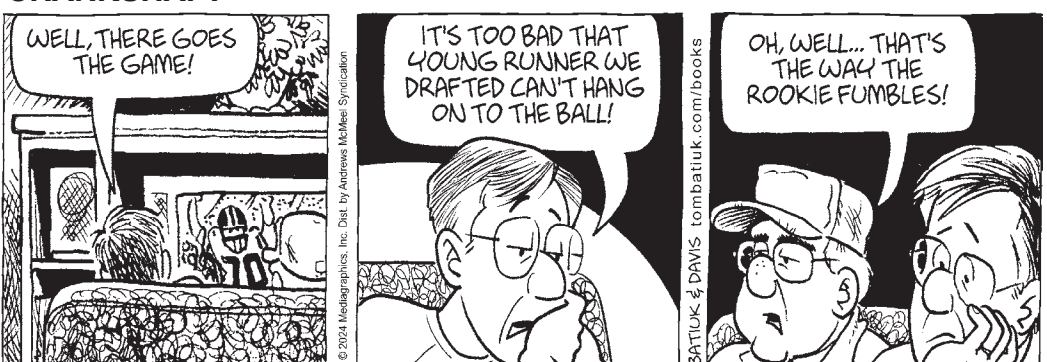
BLONDIE



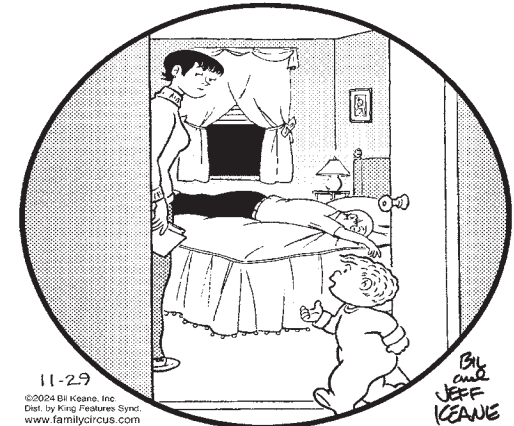
ZITS



CRANKSHAFT

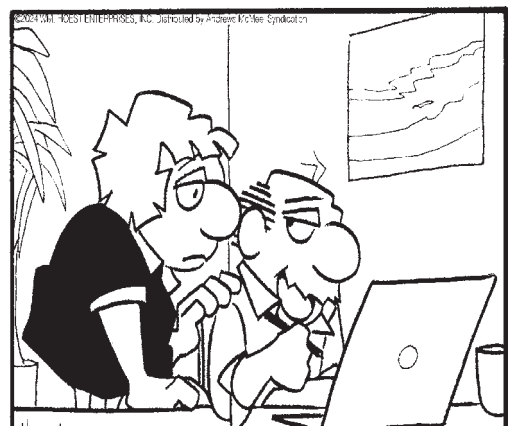


THE FAMILY CIRCUS



By Bil Keane

The LOCKHORNS



My Answer



By Dr. Billy Graham

Confusion is the work of the deceiver

Question: It's becoming difficult to communicate with younger generations — even some my own age (I'm a baby boomer). Words that have had a particular meaning have been changed and an online dictionary has to be consulted. I'm having to learn English all over again. The word *bad* now means good; church now means community. What's behind all of this? Isn't the church supposed to be made up of God's special people, and unified not with the world, but with Christ? — C.L.

Answer: Confusion is the work of the deceiver — the devil. The Bible clearly warns that a time will come when right is wrong and wrong is right (see Isaiah 5:20). "The time will come when

they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires" (2 Timothy 4:3, NKJV).

While the church should open its doors to surrounding communities, the word community in today's society has expanded its reach. Phrases associated with this idea of community are "having similar likes and dislikes" and identifying with specific "thoughts and ideas that unify." At first glance, it sounds cozy — perhaps too cozy — especially when applied to Christ's church. Paul said, "[Christ] gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people" (Titus 2:14, KJV). This word peculiar is not thought of as favorable anymore, not even by Christians. This word

has gotten a bad rap.

People slip into modern-day vocabulary words giving them a new expressive personality. A generation or two ago the word bad had a negative connotation. Today it means great. This is the case with the word peculiar. When most people hear the word, they cringe, thinking it means odd. But the word describes what Christ expects His church to be — a distinctive people. When Jesus prayed for the unity of the brethren, this is the group of which He was speaking (see John 17).

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

©2024 Billy Graham Literary Trust. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

11/29	M	A	D1	D2	5 PM	5:30	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30	12 AM	12:30	
WINM (12)	11	26	63		Washington Watch With Tony Perkins	News-at-5	News-at-6	Creflo Dollar	Joseph Prince	Turning Point	TCT Today	Joyce Meyer	Jewish Life Today	Life Today with Robert Jeffress	Truths That	Andrew Womack	Ask the Pastor			Prop. Com	
CBS WANE (15)	2	2	15	15	News (N)	Inside Edition (N)	News at 6 (N)	TBA	Wheel of Fortune (N)	Jeopardy! (N)	S.W.A.T. "SNAFU" (N)	Fire Country "This Storm Will Pass" (N)			Blue Bloods	Nightcast	(35) The Late Show With Stephen Colbert	(35) After Midnight			
Antenna WANE-2 (35.2)	106	20			(4:00) A Prince and Pauper Christmas	(4:00) A Christmas Witness	(2021, Romance) Colin Egglesfield, Miranda Arpin, Arielle Kebbel.				(2021, Mystery) Vivica A. Fox, Michelle Borth.				(Mys) Allen Williamson, William Baldwin, Kelly Dely.			(35) Secret Santa			
ABC WPTA (21)	4	3	21	21	(3:30) College Football State at Ole Miss (L) (N)	Mississippi State (L) (N)	Studio (L) (N)	Studio (L) (N)	College Football Georgia Tech at Georgia From Sanford Stadium in Athens, Ga. (L) (N)						ABC21 (N)	(35) Jimmy Kimmel Live!	(35) Nightline				
NBC WPTA-2 (21.2)	7	8		14	Family Feud	25 Words or Less	News (N)	NBC News (N)	Family Feud	College Football Nebraska at Iowa From Kinnick Stadium in Iowa City, Iowa. (L) (N)					News (N)	(35) Tonight Show (N)	(35) Seth Meyers (N)				
MNT WPTA-3 (21.3)	10	9	56	34	Bob Hearts Abishola	Bob Hearts Abishola	Modern Family	News (N)	Last Man Standing	Chicago Fire	Chicago Fire	Chicago Fire	Chicago Fire	Chicago Fire	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	The Conners	The Conners	The Goldbergs	The Goldbergs	
CW WISE (33)	8	4	33	33	The Steve Wilkos Show	TMZ Live (N)			TMZ (N)	True Crime News	Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer	Children Ruin (N)	Children Ruin (N)	Friends	Friends	TMZ (N)	Dish Nation (N)	True Crime News	Chicago P.D.	Chicago P.D.	
PBS WFVA (39)	13	5	39	39	Creations "On a Wing and a Prayer"		PBS News Hour (N)		BBC News America	PrimeTime Live!	Washington Wk (N)	Firing-Hoover (N)	Perform. The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra celebrates the centennial birthday of Henry Mancini. (L) (N)			Amanpour and Company (N)	Washington Wk	Firing-Hoover			
PBS WFPB (49)	3	6			Creations "On a Wing and a Prayer"		PBS News Hour (N)		Washington Wk (N)	Firing-Hoover (N)	Perform. The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra celebrates the centennial birthday of Henry Mancini. (L) (N)				Amanpour and Company (N)	Washington Wk	Firing-Hoover				
FOX WFTT (55)	6	6	55	55	Hoops (L) Basketball (N)		College Basketball from LionTree Arena in La Jolla, Calif.		College Football Utah at UCF From FBC Mortgage Stadium in Orlando, Fla. (L) (N)												To Be Announced
CABLE CHANNELS																					
LIFE	23	113	108	252	(4:00) Holiday in Happy Hollow	(4:00) The Holiday Fix Up (2021, Romance) McPartlin, Steve Vinovich, Jana Kramer.	(21) Dwayne Johnson.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.
FX	24	132	136	148	(4:00) *** Jungle Cruise	(21) Dwayne Johnson.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.	(16) Voices of Dwayne Johnson, Auli'i Cravalho.
TVLAND	25		106	304	Andy Griffith	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens	The King of Queens
E!	26	142	114	236	(4:00) *** Little Fockers	(2010) Robert De Niro.	Yellowstone "Going Back to Cali"	Yellowstone "Cowboys and Dreamers"	Yellowstone "All for Nothing"	Yellowstone "The Beating"	Yellowstone "I Killed a Man Today"	Yellowstone "Meaner Than Evil"	Yellowstone "The World Is Purple"	Yellowstone "The Shawshank Redemption"							
ESPN	31	50	140	206	Basketball	College Basketball from Nassau, Bahamas.	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball	College Basketball
ESPN2	32	54	143	209	Basketball (L) (N)																
FDMW	33		418	671	(4:00) Football MHSAA Division 6 Championship: Teams TBA (L) (N)																
USA	34	133	105	242	(4:00) *** Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2	(2011, Fantasy) Rupert Grint, Emma Watson, Daniel Radcliffe.															
DISC	35	72	182	278	The Last Woodsman	Gold Rush "My Father's Enemy"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"	Gold Rush "Miners vs. Mother Nature"
TLC	36	73	183	280	Love a Mama's Boy	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé	90 Day Fiancé
A&E	38	77	120	269	Ancient Aliens	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"	Unbelievable "Strange Experiments"
HST	39	134	118	265	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48
HALL	40	117	185	312	(4:00) *** One Royal Holiday	(2024, Romance) Massey, Alex Hook, Eva Bourne. (P)															
SYFY	41	135	122	244	(4:00) *** The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies	(2014, Fantasy) Martin Freeman, Richard Armitage, Ian McKellen.															
TBS	43	130	139	247	(4:00) National Lampoon's Christmas V...																
TNT	44	131	138	245	(4:00) NHL Hockey Pittsburgh Penguins at Boston Bruins (03) James Caan, Will Ferrell.																
AMC	45	131	125	254	(4:00) *** Sixteen Candles	(1984, Comedy) Anthony Michael Hall, Michael Schoeffling, Molly Ringwald.															
COM	47	107	149	249	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office
FS1	48	64	150	219	(3:30) College Football from Soomy Lubick Field at Campus Stadium in Fort Collins, Colo.																
WGN	53		307	499	Vargas Report (L) (N)	The Hill (L) (N)															
WE	57		128	260	(4:00) *** The Nutty Professor																
FOOD	59	153	110	231	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners
BRavo	60	140	129	237	Movie	*** Back to the Future (85) Michael J. Fox.															
NICK	68		170	299	SpongeBob SquarePants																
DISH	69	30	172	290	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City	Big City
FREEFORM	70	32	180	311	(3:00) *** Santa Clause 2	(2002, Children) Elizabeth Mitchell, David Krumholtz, Tim Allen.															
HBO	301		300	501	(4:50) Dune: Prophecy	(2024) To Be Announced															
MAX	325		318	515	(8:55) *** Paranormal Activity 4	(2012, Horror) Matt Shively, Kyle Newton.															
PARSHO	351	851	318	545	(4:30) *** Casino Royale	(2006, Action) Eva Green, Mads Mikkelsen, Daniel Craig.															
TMC	375	859	327	553	(4:30) *** Bad News Bears	(2005, Comedy) Greg Kinnear, Marcia Gay Harden, Billy Bob Thornton.															

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Karaoke prop, for short

4 Comedian Andy's boy

12 "CSI" find

13 PC picture

14 Scoundrels

15 Pulitzer-winning poet Carl

17 Field yield

18 Greek war god

19 Strapping Anwar

20 Egypt's H.S. lab class

24 Landed

25 Bunker

29 "Today" rival, briefly

30 Tie the knot

31 Outback bird

32 Desert formation

34 "Frozen" reindeer

DOWN

16 "Phoey!"

19 Physique

20 Droops

21 Mater lead-in

22 Rural buildings

23 Concerning

25 Biblical king

26 Day-dreams

27 "So be it"

28 Bits

30 Caesar

33 Tinker

34 Cabbage salad

36 Pious

37 Fire-cracker sound

38 Bailiwick

39 Postal delivery

40 Hose woe

42 Bando of baseball

43 "I love," in Latin

44 French vineyard

45 Chinese dynasty

Solution time: 24 mins.

Yesterday's answer 11-29

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13				14			
15		16					17			
		18					19			
20	21				22	23				
24				25				26	27	28
29				30					31	
				32					33	
				34					35	
				36					37	
				38					39	
				40					41	
				42	43				44	45

Offense struggles for Knights in season-opening loss

By ANDREW FEEBACK
HUNTERTOWN —

Points were hard to come by for the Norwell boys basketball team in its season opener Wednesday night, as they fell to the host Carroll Chargers 58-30.

The Knights finished 10 of 39 from the floor, including 7 of 24 beyond the arc. They shot just seven free throws, making only three.

The Chargers made only 8 of 21 from the field in the first half, but the Knights were only 3 of 20 and found themselves down 24-8 at the break.

“When you look at the first half, I thought defensively we actually did a lot of things pretty well, as far as trying to take away their big guys,” coach Mike McBride said. “We were definitely undersized, that was obvious. I thought our kids really competed.”

Carroll’s frontline featured 6-7 Paxton Crane and 6-6 Brody Fisher, which was a matchup problem for a Norwell team that started no one over 6-2.

Early on, the Knights were able to keep the Chargers from getting the ball into the post, but Carroll used the three-point shooting of Miles Hering to jump out to a 13-6 lead.

While Norwell managed only two points in the sec-

ond quarter, Carroll scored just seven.

“I thought we were taking good shots early,” McBride said. “Then when we got down, we couldn’t be patient enough to work for a good shot. We got a little bit over-aggressive, and I think that’s something that we’ll grow with.”

Carroll opened the second half with three straight deep ones to stretch its lead to 33-8. Norwell finally saw some shots start to drop as Nick McBride knocked down three from long-range and Josh McBride got his first career points on a triple as well.

That 14-6 run to end the third quarter was probably Norwell’s best stretch of the game. Another three from Josh McBride brought the Knights within 41-25 early in the fourth, but the Chargers scored nine straight to put it out of reach.

The size of Crane and Fisher began to take its toll by then, with the duo scoring all but three of Carroll’s fourth quarter points.

“They have a pretty good inside presence with both of those guys,” McBride said. “That allows them to play inside-out, and they showed pretty good patience offensively and got good shots.”

“We have a lot of inexperience with this group,”

he continued. “It’s going to take some time. I thought our kids really competed hard.”

Adam McBride led the Knights with 11 points, while Josh McBride had nine, Nick McBride had eight and Owen Wallis had two.

Crane’s 20 led the Chargers, while Fisher added 11 and Van Order had 10.

Norwell will host Mississinewa next Tuesday night.

Carroll took the JV game 48-25. Noah Comer scored nine points, while Trey Privett and Cade Thornton both had five.

sports@news-banner.com

CARROLL 58, NORWELL 30

At Carroll
NORWELL (0-1): Owen Wallis 1-5 0-1-2, Garry Riley 0-0 0-0 0, Brady Smith 0-0 0-0 0, Adam McBride 3-15 3-4 11, Josh McBride 3-10 0-2-8, Nick McBride 3-8 0-0 9, Ryne Thornton 0-1 0-0 0. TOTALS: 10-39 3-7 30.
CARROLL (1-0): Josiah Morales 0-0 0-0 0, Logan Heath 1-1 3-4 5, Jack Van Order 4-8 0-0 9, Monzer Omar 0-0 0-0 0, Cole Lambert 0-0 0-0 0, Tyler Morris 2-3 0-0 6, Miles Hering 2-6 0-0 6, Dominic Keferl 0-0 0-0 0, Paxton Crane 8-10 4-4 20, Brody Fisher 5-6 0-2 11. TOTALS: 22-34 7-10 58.
Norwell 6 2 14 8-30
Carroll 17 7 15 19-58
Three-point Goals: Norwell 7-24 (Nick McBride 3-6, Josh McBride 2-8, Adam McBride 2-8, Wallis 0-2), Carroll 7-14 (Hering 2-4, Morris 2-3, Van Order 2-5, Fisher 1-2). Rebounds: Norwell 5 (Adam McBride 2, Wallis 1, Thornton 1, Josh McBride 1), Carroll 33 (Crane 15, Fisher 6, Van Order 4, Morris 3, Hering 3, Morales 1, Omar 1). Turnovers: Norwell 6, Carroll 11. Fouls: Norwell 9, Carroll 11. Fouled out: None. Technicals: None. JV: Carroll 48, Norwell 25.



Above: Norwell’s Nick McBride, center, dumps the ball off to a teammate as Carroll’s Miles Hering, left, and Brody Fisher close in during the first half of Wednesday night’s season opener in Fort Wayne. The Knights fell to the Chargers 58-30 in the non-conference game.

At right: Norwell senior Adam McBride, left, attempts a layup against Carroll’s Paxton Crane in the first half of Wednesday night’s season opening game in Fort Wayne. The Knights dropped the non-conference meeting 58-30. (Photos by Chad Kline)



Poor clock management on final drive costly for Bears in 23-20 loss to Lions

By DAVE HOGG
Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — The Chicago Bears could have celebrated a huge comeback and an upset win on Thursday.

Instead, poor clock management on their final drive ended their bid and extended their losing streak to six games after a 23-20 loss to the Detroit Lions.

The Bears drove into position for a tying field goal or winning touchdown, only to have a sack and questionable clock management end the game before they got a chance at either one.

The confusion started after Caleb Williams hit Keenan Allen for a 12-yard completion to the Lions 13 in the final minute.

That would have given the Bears plenty of time to try for the win before attempting the field goal, but guard Tevin Jenkins was called for illegal hands to the face, moving the ball back to the 35.

On second down, the Bears called a draw play for Williams, hoping he could get the first down and set up the field goal. However, backup tackle Larry Borom didn’t move as Za’Darius Smith came in unblocked to sack Williams for a 6-yard loss.

“It got loud, and I don’t think Larry heard the count,” Williams said. “Once I saw Za’Darius coming free, I didn’t want to risk trying to throw the ball away in case he got a chance to get his hands on

it. I took the sack and tried to get everybody lined up for the final play.”

As Williams tried to get the play off, Bears coach Matt Eberflus didn’t call Chicago’s last timeout. He said he was conserving it to set up a field-goal attempt.

“The hope was we could re-rack the play, snap it with about 18 seconds left, throw it into field-goal range and call the timeout,” he said.

The clock, though, ran beyond 18 seconds and beyond Eberflus’ other benchmarks.

“Once it gets under 12, we can’t throw a pass to the sideline, and once it gets under seven, you have to throw the ball to the end zone,” he said. “At that point, if you call a timeout, it is to throw it to the end

zone.”
When Williams realized no timeout was coming, he hurriedly changed the play call to a deep pass to Rome Odunze, but it fell incomplete just short of the end zone.

Purdue wins, IU doesn’t. Twice

Purdue 63, NC State 50

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Trey Kaufman-Renn scored 15 of his 22 points in the second half and Camden Heide added 15 for No. 13 Purdue, which beat N.C. State 71-61 in the opening game of the Rady Children’s Invitational.

It was a rematch of last season’s Final Four game, which Purdue won 63-50 before losing to UConn in the championship game. Braden Smith had 11 points and Fletcher Loyer 10 for Purdue, which improved to 6-1.

Louisville 89, Indiana 61

NASSAU, Bahamas (AP) — Chucky Hepburn

had 16 points, 10 assists and seven steals, Noah Waterman also had 16 points as Louisville beat No. 14 Indiana 89-61 Wednesday in the opening game of the Battle 4 Atlantis.

Louisville (4-1) beat a ranked team for the first time since topping Virginia Tech 73-71 in January 2021.

Kasean Pryor scored 10 of his 14 points in the second half and Reyne Smith added 12 points for Louisville. Malik Reneau scored 21 points and Oumar Ballo added 11 for Indiana (4-1). The Cardinals led 37-29 at the break after making 7 of 17 from 3-point range and shooting 57% overall. Lou-

isville exploded for 52 second-half points.

Gonzaga 89, Indiana 73

Khalif Battle led a balanced attack with 16 points, Ryan Nembhard had a double-double as No. 3 Gonzaga used a first-half blitz to beat Indiana 89-73 in a consolation round game of the Battle 4 Atlantis Thursday.

The Bulldogs led by two with under eight minutes to go in the first half when five players scored in a 16-0 run in less than 4 1/2 minutes and the Hoosiers never got closer than 15 points the rest of the way.

Omar Ballo had 25 points for Indiana, which lost its second straight.



Female racing pioneer ‘Motorcycle Mary’ McGee dies a day before documentary on her is released

GARDNERVILLE, Nev. (AP) — Mary McGee, a female racing pioneer and subject profiled in an Oscar-contending documentary “Motorcycle Mary,” has died, her family said. She was 87.

“McGee’s unparalleled achievements in off-road racing and motorcycle racing have inspired generations of athletes that followed in her footsteps,” her family said in a statement.

The family said McGee died of complications from a stroke at her home in Gardnerville, Nevada, on Wednesday, the day before the release of the short documentary “Motorcycle Mary” on ESPN’s YouTube channel. Seven-time Formula 1 champion Lewis Hamilton was an executive producer on the film, which became available globally on Thursday. Its premiere was at the Tribeca Festival in June.

“Mary embodied resilience, grace, and optimism,” McGee’s family wrote on social media. “She was a historic athlete and a motorsports pioneer who embraced life’s challenges, cared deeply for others, and made time to brighten the lives of those around her. While we are deeply saddened by this loss, we are comforted knowing that her light will continue to shine in everyone she touched.”

McGee had an accomplished racing resume, first in auto racing and later in motorcycle racing. She became the

first person — man or woman — to complete the grueling Baja 500 off-road race in Mexico solo, which she did in 1975.

The film about her was directed by Haley Watson. Two-time Oscar winner Ben Proudfoot also was an executive producer.

“I’m deeply saddened by this news, but I am comforted

to know that Mary was surrounded by friends and family at the time of her passing,” Watson said. “In early 2022, I was researching stories when I came across Mary’s. That discovery marked the tipping point into uncovering a much larger and truly incredible career in motorsports and life journey.”

Shortly after her family announced her death, Hamilton paid tribute on his Instagram account: “I’m deeply saddened to hear that Mary McGee, the first woman to road race motorcycles in the U.S. and the first person to solo the Baja 500 has passed on,” Hamilton wrote. “My condolences to her family and everyone who she’s inspired. Her legacy will live on as a trailblazer in the world of motorsports and beyond.”

Born in Juneau, Alaska, during World War II, McGee and her older brother were sent to Iowa to live with their grandparents. Her brother became a race car driver and encouraged his sister to take up the sport, even though it was almost unprecedented for women at that time.

Sports Roundup

FOOTBALL

NFL
Thursday’s Games
Detroit 23, Chicago 20
Dallas 27, NY Giants 20
Green Bay 30, Miami 17

BASKETBALL

High School
Wednesday Boys’ Scores
Bloomfield 52, Owen Valley 32
Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory Academy 59, Indpls Ritter 58
Bremen 65, Argos 43
Carroll (Ft. Wayne) 58, Norwell 30
Centerville 64, Eastern Hancock 39
Clinton Prairie 77, Frankfort 37
Columbia City 63, Whitko 29
Columbus East 77, Whiteland 67
DeKalb 47, Ft. Wayne Northrop 46
Forest Park 64, Crawford Co. 32
FW Canterbury 51, C Noble 48, 2OT
Garrett 51, Heritage 45
Guerin Catholic High School 63, Ind Hobart 71, Boone Grove 42
Homestead 42, Tippecanoe Valley 31
Huntington North 62, Northfield 44
Indpls Attucks 62, Burroughs, Mo. 49
Indpls Cathedral 75, Warren

Central 40
Indpls Soccina 90, Indpls Irvington 41
LaVille 55, Westville 47
Lafayette Central Cath 57, Seeger 54
Lebanon 54, Greenwood Christian 45
Leo 57, Ft. Wayne Concordia 42
Marion 68, Mississinewa 49
Monrovia 55, Eminence 31
Munster 74, Hammond Noll 48
Noblesville 76, Hamilton Hts. 38
Northeastern 74, Seton Catholic 50
Oak Hill 59, Wabash 45
Perry Central 48, Tell City 37
Peru 71, Logansport 42
Plainfield 47, Avon 41
Plymouth 66, Glenn 34
River Forest 64, Tri-Township 29
Rochester 55, Culver 12

Rossville 66, Delphi 62
S. Spencer 67, Tecumseh 62
Scottsburg 60, Austin 56
Shelbyville 54, Rushville 29
Shenandoah 60, Daleville 33
Southwestern 56, Madison 51
Sullivan 46, South Knox 36
Terre Haute North 71, Mooresville 65
Tri 75, Knightstown 56
Triton 61, Oregon-Dorris 13
Triton Central 64, Morriston 45
Valparaiso 87, Gary West 82
Vincennes 66, Pike Central 34
W. Washington 64, Salem 58
Washington 50, Barr-Reeve 42
Wes-Del 75, Cambridge City Linc 63
White River Valley 54, N. Knox 42
Yorktown 60, Hagerstown 51

High School Calendar

FRIDAY, NOV 29
GIRLS BASKETBALL:
Bluffton at South Adams, 7:30 p.m.
SATURDAY, NOV 30
BOYS BASKETBALL:
Blackford at Bluffton, 7:30 p.m.; Southwood at Southern

Wells, 7:30 p.m.
GIRLS BASKETBALL:
Norwell at Angola, 12:30 p.m.; Southern Wells at Adams Central, 7:30 p.m.
WRESTLING: Southern Wells at Super Duals (Homestead High School), 9 a.m.

INNOVATIVE CONCEPTS AUDIO VIDEO SECURITY NETWORKING

Be Summer Ready

The Best On The Water. Loud & Clear!
• Sound Systems for boats

Powerful Sound For OFF-Road Adventure
• RV’s • Golf Carts • ATV’s

(260) 724-2276
1421 Manchester St., Decatur
1/2 block west of U.S. 27 North
www.icav.us

PRECISION SERVICE
Family, Farm and Fleet Vehicle Repair
FLEET ACCOUNTS AVAILABLE
0520 S. Decker Dr. Bluffton
“The Quality Service You Deserve!”
260-824-9149 FREE ESTIMATES

Bluffton Tire Inc.
1308 S. Main St. Bluffton

10% OFF Discontinued Closeout Tires
1-260-824-0418

FREEDOM
Chevrolet, Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, RAM
FORMALY HIDAAY AUTOMOTIVE
NEW NAME, SAME GREAT SERVICE!
Chevrolet 260-824-0900 Chrysler, Dodge Jeep, RAM 260-824-1931
WWW.FREEDOMCHEVROLETBLUFFTON.COM
WWW.FREEDOMCHRYSLERDODGEJEEPBLUFFTON.COM

EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted

COUNTY BUILDING INSPECTOR

Wells County Government is accepting resumes for a County Building Inspector. The Wells County Commissioners as the county executive are seeking to employ a full-time county building inspector. This person is responsible for planning and overseeing county construction and final inspection, under the direction of the county executive. The county building inspector shall, subject to the policies of the county executive, perform the following functions and have related experience:

Coordinates the preparation and presentation of an annual budget for the Building Department; directs the implementation of the department's budget; plans for and reviews specifications for new or replaced equipment. Construct and establish a local building code based off state code requirements and needs of the county. Controls the expenditure of departmental appropriations. Receives complaints, investigates, and issues unsafe building violations, nuisance violations and minimum housing standards violations, as appropriate. Completes continuing education classes on building codes and practices, as needed. Reviews the building plan for the County. Approves the building permits, issues permits, and collects the fees for the permits, as necessary. Issues certificates of occupancy, as needed. Maintains an effective communication process with the Commissioners. Bachelor's degree (B.A./B.S.) from a four-year college or university; and five years related experience and/or training; or equivalent combination of education and experience. CBO Certification is required. Previous experience in building construction or related field is required. Previous supervisory experience is required.

Starting salary for this position is up to \$70,000/yr. plus all county benefits. Interested applicants can send their resumes to Wells County Auditor, 102 W Market, Suite 205, Bluffton, IN 46714 or auditor@wellscounty.org. Resumes will be accepted until December 16, 2024.

The Classifieds

Place Your Ad 24/7: GO TO www.news-banner.com AND CLICK ON "Classifieds"

OR CALL 824-0224 MON-FRI 8-5 • TOLLFREE 800-579-7476 • FAX 824-0700



Plus! SEE your ad published every day in Wells County homes ... All ads are searchable at classifieds.news-banner.com...

Help Wanted

WELLS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE is currently seeking applicants for the position of Full Time Deputy Sheriff. Applicants must be a US Citizen, at least 21 years of age upon graduation from police academy, possess a high school diploma or equivalent as well as a valid Indiana Operators License. Applicant can't have any felony convictions. Applicants must pass all aspects of the hiring process including physical agility testing, written examination, background investigation, oral interview, polygraph and psychological evaluation. Selected applicant must be able to graduate from the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy. ILEA certified applicants do not have to attend the physical agility and written examination portion of the process. 20-year matrix salary range for a Deputy Sheriff (no rank) is \$58,300 - \$70,500. Years of service and experience will be honored for a starting salary up to five years in the pay matrix. Application can be found on our website at www.wellscountysheriff.com. Once application is completed, details on the testing date and location will be emailed to the applicant. The application must be completed by December 27, 2024.

NOW HIRING

THE NEWS-BANNER IS looking to hire an individual for fast pace jobs including labeling, inserting and delivering bundles of newspapers. Must be willing to work from 4 a.m.-9 a.m. Monday-Saturday. Some heavy lifting, and an Indiana drivers license required. Mail resume, or fill out an application, to News-Banner, P.O. Box 436, 125 N. Johnson St., Bluffton, IN 46714.

Read & recycle

FOR SALE

Miscellaneous



MICHIGAN CHRISTMAS TREES! Tim Murray's Fresh Cut Christmas Trees, Wreaths, Grave Blankets and Boughs! Also Michigan Maple Syrup. Located at Bummies Root Beer Stand, 1263 S. Main Street., Bluffton. Open Daily at 10am beginning Saturday, Nov. 30. Phone: 231-920-6194.

VEHICLES

Campers/RV's

2018 THOR HURRICANE, Model 31Z, Class A RV, \$79,000, 260-307-3225.

SERVICES

Services

WESLEY FINANCIAL GROUP, LLC Timeshare Cancellation Experts Over \$50,000,000 in timeshare debt and fees cancelled in 2019. Get free informational package and learn how to get rid of your timeshare! Free consultations. Over 450 positive reviews. Call 877-329-1207 (I)

PREPARE FOR POWER outages with Briggs & Stratton® PowerProtect(TM) standby generators - the most powerful home standby generators available. Industry-leading comprehensive warranty - 7 years (\$849 value.) Proudly made in the U.S.A. Call Briggs & Stratton 1-877-798-0270. (I)

GET A BREAK on your taxes! Donate your car, truck, or SUV to assist the blind and visually impaired. Arrange a swift, no-cost vehicle pickup and secure a generous tax credit for 2025. Call Heritage for the Blind Today at 1-833-587-2145 today! (I)

Services

MARV'S CONSTRUCTION Room additions, fix old saggy floors, all types remodeling. Redo bathrooms, old foundation repairs. Marv Schwartz: 260-525-8877.

HANDYMAN SERVICES, NO job too big or too small, 260-353-9339.

ADVERTISE YOUR SERVICES!

A 20 word, line classified in the Bluffton News-Banner for two months is \$97. Contact the office at 125 N. Johnson St., 260-824-0224 or submit online to www.news-banner.com and click on classifieds.

DENTAL INSURANCE FROM Physicians Mutual Insurance Company. Coverage for 400 plus procedures. Real dental insurance - NOT just a discount plan. Do not wait! Call now! Get your FREE Dental Information Kit with all the details! 1-844-244-7025 www.dental50plus.com/hoosier6258 (I)

JACUZZI BATH REMODEL can install a new, custom bath or shower in as little as one day. For a limited time, waving ALL installation costs! (Additional terms apply. Subject to change and vary by dealer. Offer ends 8/25/24.) Call 1-866-937-1159 (I)

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

King Classic Sudoku

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

Difficulty: ★★ ★ ★

11/29

LINE CLASSIFIED AD DEADLINES:

Monday editions: Friday by 4 p.m.; Tuesday-Friday editions: day-before by 3:30 p.m.; Saturdays: Friday by 11:30 a.m.

November

GOODS & SERVICES DIRECTORY

Jerry Flack & Associates
Jerry Flack & Julie Myers
 Retirement Advisors
 A Senior Citizen Answers Our Phone!
 OFFICE 260-824-1618 • Corner of Main & Market • Bluffton, IN

ASSISTING IN:
 • FREE Medicare Supplement Comparison
 • Life Planning
 • Safe Money Ideas
 • Dental - Vision - Hearing

As a resident of the Wells County community for decades, Attorney, Gerret J. Swearingen, has devoted his legal practice to assisting clients in preserving the family assets from the high cost of Nursing Home and In-Home Healthcare.

As your guide through the "Medicaid Planning" process, Swearingen Elder Law will provide the right path to both protect your life savings and receive the quality of care we all deserve.

-OSSIAN-
 1645 Hillcrest Dr., Suite 2A
 Ossian, IN 46777

SWEARINGEN ELDER LAW

- Medicaid Planning
- Durable Power of Attorney
- Estate Planning & Deeds
- Special Needs Trusts
- Long Term Care Planning
- In-Home Healthcare Planning
- Wills, Living Wills, & Advance Healthcare Directives

(260) 888-9256
 FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION!

STOR-N-GO STORAGE UNITS
 2740 E. 200 N. • Bluffton, IN • 260.273.8345
 with Security Cameras

Home Remodel and Repair
 Locally Owned

Repair Bowled Basement Walls
 Foundations repaired
 Floor joist repair or replaced
 Concrete - Doors
 Windows - Painting
 Tile - Small Jobs Welcome

Text me at 260-301-1269
Jim Baker

AMISH CREW
 will do roofing, siding, remodeling, pole barns. Specializing in redoing old barns. Free estimates. Call 260-438-2508

The HIDEAWAY BEER & BOURBON
THURSDAY - Dollar Off Drinks (Excludes Pop)
WEDNESDAY - KARAOKE
FRI. & SAT. - Live Music
 Follow us on Facebook for our Events.
 123 S JOHNSON ST. • 824-0455

JC'S GARAGE DOOR SALES & SERVICE
 All makes & models • broken springs & cables
 Owner: James Fisher • Sales: Carl Fisher
 "50 Years of Combined Experience"
 Call us at 824-3262

Primary Contracting, LLC
 Specializing in Building & Remodeling
 OWNER: Edwin Wickey
 Call for Spring Scheduling Today!
 Free Estimates - 260-223-4276

- Pole Barns
- Garages
- Vinyl Siding
- Metal Roofing
- Poly Decks
- Storm Damage

LAWN CARE

- MOWING
- YARD CLEANUP
- LANDSCAPING
- STONE / GRAVEL
- WEED CONTROL

SCHEDULE TODAY!
 FREE ESTIMATES
 260-223-5884

Zap Electric, Inc.
 260-824-2927
 Commercial-Industrial-Residential
 24 Hr. Emergency Service
 Charles Miller-Electrical
 1233 W. Cherry St., Bluffton
 FREE Estimates

Sure-Flo Seamless Gutters
 5" & 6" Continuous Gutters
 Leaf Protection Systems
 Large Color Selection - FREE Estimates
 260-888-5062
www.seamlessgutter.net

LANCASTER Senior Apartments
 1800 S. Wayne St. | Bluffton

- 1 & 2 Bedrooms
- Maintenance Free
- All Ground-level
- Private Entrances
- Water Included

260 824-5280
 TDD: 7-1-1
 For those 62+ or disabled, regardless of age.

A-1 U-Stor
 Safe & Secure Self Storage
824-1846
 • Safety Lighting • Clean Units
 • 24 Hr. Access
 • Video Cameras
www.a1-ustor.com
 After hours & Saturdays
 Call 273-9678 or 824-4782
 In Monroe at corner of U.S. 27 and S.R. 124
 Office at 1180 N. Main, Bluffton

We Carry Prevagen and CBD Oil!
R Warren Pharmacy
 (260)375-2135
Nature's Sunshine Distributor
 Terry Daniels, Pharmacist • Melinda Daniels, RN

For as little as ... \$187 PER ISSUE
YOUR BUSINESS IN THE NEWS-BANNER Every Day!
 Call 824-0224 or 622-4108
 Nov. deadline is Tues. Oct. 22

Public Sale Calendar

BIDDING ENDS DECEMBER 1 - (Online Only) - Estate of Eldrid Tinkel. 1995 Ford XLT 1/2 ton pickup truck, Komatsu PC10-6 mini excavator, antique tractors, farm implements, livestock feeder and waters, Amish buggy, horse drawn sleighs, pioneer covered wagon, horse driving equipment, farm primitives, power and hand tools, garden equipment, engine stand, Craftsman snowblower, chain saws, scrap metal, vintage Coleman lanterns, vintage stop sign, antiques. Open house Nov. 29, 10 a.m.-noon, 1910 N Meridian St., Marion, IN. Brandon Steffen, sale manager, 260-710-5684, TheSteffenGroup.com, 260-426-0633, www.steffengrp.com.

BIDDING NOW OPEN AND STARTS CLOSING DECEMBER 1 STARTING AT 4 p.m. EST - Various consignors, owners. Online only Elm Street consignment auction! Name brand woodworking tools, camping supplies, like new 24" Craftsman lawn vac, lawn & garden tools, weight lifting equipment, household furniture, Craftsman snow blower, antiques, collectibles, kitchen items, and much more! Pick up Dec. 2, 2-6 p.m., Dec. 3, 9 a.m.-noon, 812 Elm Street, Decatur, IN. **Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC**, 260-724-7402, Kjauction.com.

DECEMBER 3 - Starts at 6 p.m. - Blackford Golf Club (Lort Services, Inc.), owner. Held at Blackford County Fairgrounds, Hartford City, IN. Online bidding available. 105+/- acres offered in 7 tracts or any combination. Currently a golf course, potential farmland, recreational land, development potential, personal property available, Blackford Co. Auction mgr. Al Pfister, 260-760-8922, SchraderRealEstate.com, SchraderAuction.com, 800-451-2709.

DECEMBER 4 - 3 p.m. - Online - Dusty Roach, Bankruptcy Trustee, sellers. 6,142 sq. ft. modern commercial building. Key features: 5 rental units w/4 office suites, 1 currently leased, 600 sq. ft. heated garage w/16'x12' overhead door, independently controlled heating and cooling for units, expansion potential w/additional land available for future. Kurt Ness, auction mgr., 260-417-1545, NessBros.Realtors.com, 260-459-3911.

DECEMBER 5 & 6 - 9 a.m. - Secured creditors & various consignors, owners. 815 Adams, St., Decatur. Day 1: Online bidding only. Over 300+ lots including skid loader attachments, tool boxes, workbenches, iron gates, chains & binders, 1 trip 40' high side shipping container w/side doors, dome shelter contain-

ers, much more! Day 2 truck & equipment auction! Onsite and online bidding offering 600+ lots! Cars, SUV, 1/2 ton & 3/4 ton pickup trucks, cargo & passenger vans, dump trucks, large group of box trucks, day cabs, sleepers, utility trucks, bucket trucks, utility & semi trailers, SUV's pickup trucks, various skid steer attachments, much more! Accepting consignments! **Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC**, 260-724-7402, Kjauction.com.

DECEMBER 8-15 - 2 p.m. - (Online only personal property) - Thomas B. & Mary Lou Woodward, seller. 2016 JD 1025R diesel utility tractor, Frontier RT1149 tiller, 2016 Grasshopper zero turn mower, 2020 Club Car Carryall 1700, mowers, lawn & garden, patio furniture, antique & modern furniture, vintage framed art work, lithograph prints, vintage pickle castors, glassware, collectibles, more. Preview Dec. 1, 8, 2-5 p.m., Dec. 12, 3-6 p.m., 301 N. Highland Ave., Ossian. Patrick Carter, sale manager, 260-824-3006, TheSteffenGroup.com, 260-824-3006.

DECEMBER 9 - 4 p.m. - 6 p.m. ET - (Online) - Crandall Farm, seller. Property location: Two miles northeast of Gas, IN, near intersection of E 300 S and S 550 E, Mill Township, Grant County. 81.59+/- total acres, tillable, woods, recreational land, potential building sites. Tract 1: 27.59+/- acres, 18.4+/- tillable, 8+/- woods, 1.19+/- non-tillable. Tract 2: 54+/- acres, 28.91+/- tillable, 23.34+/- woods, 1.75+/- non-tillable. Rick Johnloz, 260-827-8181, Emma Barr, 260-494-0992, Jason Johnloz, 260-273-9177, HaldermanRealEstate.com, 800-424-2324, Halderman.com.

DECEMBER 14-DECEMBER 21 - Bidding starts closing at 1 p.m. - Private collection, seller. 20 Marolf Ct., Fremont, IN. Extensive collection of exotic mounts (over 140) including zebras, black bears, antelope, water buffalo and more, antique boat motors, bows, hunting equipment, vintage fishing lures, watches and fine jewelry, tools, vintage nautical items, much more. [The Steffen Group Inc.](http://TheSteffenGroup.com), 260-824-3006, www.steffengrp.com.

BIDDING CLOSES DECEMBER 15 - 6 p.m. - Online Only - Jim Baker, owner. AIR-PLACO Pumpmaster MJ-16 concrete slab jacking pump system including pump, mixer and tandem trailer, concrete hole drill, Campbell Hausfeld stationary air compressor, smoker grill, handmade rustic furniture, beautiful antique furniture, Husqvarna garden tractor, 2 table saws, hand tools, power tools, building supplies, TV, modern furniture and much

more! Preview Dec. 4, 5-6 p.m. & Dec. 7, 9-10 a.m., 5388 SW State Road 116-1, Bluffton, IN. Pick up Dec. 17, 12-6 p.m. Full list at Towncountryauctions.com, click Fliers. **Town and Country Auctioneers/Realtors**, 260-223-7352, [Shaw Real Estate & Auction, Inc.](http://ShawRealEstate.com), 260-824-2116.

DECEMBER 17 - 9 a.m.-6 p.m. - (Online Only) - Thomas B. & Mary Lou Woodward, seller. One of a kind picturesque real estate offering. Outstanding 4,014 SF on 8.45 acres, 4 bedroom, 3 bath home with a 2 car detached garage. Scenic backyard with multiple utility sheds and gazebo, Wells County. Open houses Dec. 1 and 8 from 2-5 p.m., and Dec. 12 from 3-6 p.m., 301 N. Highland Ave., Ossian, IN. Pat Carter, sale manager, 260-273-8294, [The Steffen Group Inc.](http://TheSteffenGroup.com), www.steffengrp.com, 260-426-0633.

DECEMBER 22-DECEMBER 31 - Bidding starts closing at 2 p.m. - Estate of Richard Gerken and others, sellers. "Outstanding year end auction." Very high quality art deco, mid century modern and Art Nouveau home furnishings, International Harvester collection, 2011 Platinum Ford F150 in pristine condition, 3,500 record albums, vintage Schwinn bicycles, advertising memorabilia, antique gas pump, country primitives and more. Open house Dec. 26 and Dec. 30 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., 102 S. Jefferson St., Ossian, IN. [The Steffen Group Inc.](http://TheSteffenGroup.com), steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006.

DECEMBER 29-JANUARY 5 - Bidding starts closing at 2 p.m. - The Estate of Eldrid Tinkel, seller. Large antique and collectible auction including country primitives, vintage farm toys, vintage toy trucks, early cast iron, brass cash register, large antique and rare collection of vintage granite-ware, Fenton, Marion advertising, vintage beer signs, long guns, coins. Open house Dec. 29 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and Jan. 4 from 10 a.m. to noon, 1910 N Meridian St., Marion, IN. [The Steffen Group Inc.](http://TheSteffenGroup.com), Steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006.

SUDOKU ANSWER

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

U.S. presses Ukraine to draft 18-year-olds so it has enough troops

By AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration is urging Ukraine to quickly increase the size of its military by drafting more troops and revamping its mobilization laws to allow for the conscription of those as young as 18.

A senior Biden administration official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private consultations, said Wednesday that the outgoing Democratic administration wants Ukraine to lower the mobilization age to 18 from the current age of 25 to expand the pool of fighting-age men available to help a badly outnumbered Ukraine in its nearly three-year-old war with Russia.

The official said "the pure math" of Ukraine's situation now is that it needs more troops in the fight. Currently Ukraine is not mobilizing or training enough soldiers to replace its battlefield losses while keeping pace with Russia's growing military, the official added.

The White House has pushed more than \$56 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the start of Russia's February 2022 invasion and expects to send billions more to Kyiv before Biden leaves office in less than months.

But with time running out, the Biden White House is also sharpening its viewpoint that Ukraine has the weaponry it needs and now must dramatically increase its troop levels if it's going to stay in the fight with Russia.

White House National Security Council spokesman Sean Savett in a statement said the administration will continue sending Ukraine weaponry but believes "manpower is the most vital need" Ukraine has at the moment.

"So, we're also ready to ramp up our training capacity if they take appropriate steps to fill out their ranks," Savett said.

The Ukrainians have said they need about 160,000 additional troops to keep up with its battlefield needs, but the U.S. administration believes they probably will need more than that.

More than 1 million Ukrainians are now in uniform, including the National Guard and other units.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been hearing concerns from allies in other Western capitals as well that Ukraine has a troop level problem and not an arms problem, according to European officials who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive diplomatic conversations.

The European allies have stressed that the lack of depth means that it may soon become untenable for Ukraine to continue to operate in Russia's Kursk border region. The situation in Kursk has become further complicated by the arrival of thousands of North Korean troops, who have come to help Moscow try to claw back the land seized in a Ukrainian incursion this year.

The stepped-up push on Ukraine to strengthen its fighting ranks comes as Ukraine braces for President-elect Donald Trump to take office on Jan. 20. The Republican said he would bring about a swift end to the war and has raised uncertainty about whether his administration would continue the vital U.S. military support for Ukraine.

"There are no easy answers to Ukraine's serious manpower shortage, but lowering the draft age would help," said Bradley Bowman, senior director of the Center on Military and Political

Power at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "These are obviously difficult decisions for a government and society that has already endured so much due to Russia's invasion."

Ukraine has taken steps to broaden the pool of draft-eligible men, but the efforts have only scratched the surface against a much larger Russian military.

In April, Ukraine's parliament passed a series of laws, including one lowering its draft-eligible age for men from 27 to 25, aimed at broadening the universe of men who could be called on to join the grinding war.

Those laws also did away with some draft exemptions and created an online registry for recruits. They were expected to add about 50,000 troops, far short of what Zelenskyy said at the time was needed.

Zelenskyy has consistently stated that he has no plans to lower the mobilization age. A senior Ukrainian official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Ukraine does not have enough equipment to match the scale of its ongoing mobilization efforts.

The official said Ukrainian officials see the push to the lower the draft age as part of an effort by some Western partners to deflect attention from their own delays in providing equipment or belated decisions. The official cited as an example the delay in giving Ukraine permission to use longer-range weapons to strike deeper into Russian territory.

The Ukrainians do not see lowering the draft age to recruit more soldiers as a substitute for countering Russia's advantage in equipment and weaponry, the official said.

Trump selects longtime adviser Keith Kellogg as special envoy for Ukraine and Russia

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump said Wednesday that he has chosen Keith Kellogg, a highly decorated retired three-star general, to serve as his special envoy for Ukraine and Russia.

Kellogg, who is one of the architects of a staunchly conservative policy book that lays out an "America First" national security agenda for the incoming administration, will come into the role as Russia's invasion of Ukraine enters its third year in February.

Trump, making the announcement on his Truth Social account, said, "He was with me right from the beginning! Together, we will secure PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH, and Make America, and the World, SAFE AGAIN!"

Kellogg, an 80-year-old retired Army lieutenant general who has long been Trump's top adviser on defense issues, served as national security adviser to Vice President Mike Pence, was chief of staff of the National Security Council and then stepped in as an acting security adviser for Trump after Michael Flynn resigned.

As special envoy for Ukraine and Russia, Kellogg will have to navigate an increasingly untenable war between the two nations.

The Biden administration has begun urging Ukraine to quickly increase the size of its military by drafting more troops and revamping its mobilization laws to allow for the conscription of those as young as 18.

The White House has pushed more than \$56 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since the start of Russia's February 2022 invasion and expects to send billions more before Biden leaves office in less than two months. The U.S. has recently stepped up weapons shipments and has forgiven billions in loans provided to Kyiv.

Conscription has been a sensitive matter in Ukraine throughout the war. Russia's own problems with adequate troop levels and planning early in the war prevented Moscow from taking full advantage of its edge. But the tide has shifted and the U.S. says the Ukrainian shortage can no longer be overlooked.

Some Ukrainians have expressed worry that further low-

ering the minimum conscription age and taking more young adults out of the workforce could backfire by further harming the war-ravaged economy.

The senior Biden administration official added that the administration believes that Ukraine can also optimize its current force by more aggressively dealing with soldiers who desert or go absent without leave.

China releases 3 Americans, Beijing says U.S. returned 4 to China

By ERIC TUCKER,
AAMER MADHANI
and MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three American citizens imprisoned for years by China arrived back in the United States late Wednesday. Their release, announced earlier by the White House, was the result of a rare diplomatic agreement with Beijing in the final months of the Biden administration.

The Chinese government also announced Thursday that the U.S. had returned four people to China, including at least three Chinese citizens who it said had been held for "political purposes," and a person who had been sought by Beijing for crimes and had been living in the United States. It did not identify the four.

The three Americans released by Beijing are Mark Swidan, Kai Li and John Leung, all of whom had been designated by the U.S. government as wrongfully detained by China. Swidan had been facing a death sentence on drug charges while Li and Leung were imprisoned on espionage charges.

A plane carrying the three men landed late Wednesday night at a military base in San Antonio, Texas.

Biden told reporters on Thursday morning that he has spoken to all of them and "I'm really happy they are home."

The release comes just two months after China freed David Lin, a Christian pastor from California who had spent nearly 20 years behind bars after being convicted of contract fraud.

U.S.-China relations have been roiled for years over major disagreements between the world's two largest economies on trade, human rights, the production of fentanyl precursors, security issues that include espionage and hacking, China's aggressiveness toward Taiwan and its smaller neighbors in the South China Sea, and Beijing's support for Russia's military-industrial sector.

The release of Americans deemed wrongfully detained in China has been a top agenda item in each con-

versation between the U.S. and China, and Wednesday's development suggests a willingness by Beijing to engage with the outgoing Democratic administration before Republican President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House in January.

Trump took significant actions against China on trade and diplomacy during his first term. He has pledged to continue those policies in his second term, leading to unease among many who fear that an all-out trade war will greatly affect the international economy and could spur potential Chinese military action against Taiwan.

Still, the two countries have maintained a dialogue that has included a partial restoration of military-to-military contacts. President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping met this month to discuss potential improvements.

In a separate but related move, the State Department on Wednesday lowered its travel warning to China to "level two," advising U.S. citizens to "exercise increased caution" from the norm when traveling to the mainland. The alert had previously been at "level three," telling Americans they should "reconsider travel" to China in part because of the "risk of wrongful detention" of Americans.

The new alert removes that wording but retains a warning that the Chinese government "arbitrarily enforces local laws, including exit bans on U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries, without fair and transparent process under the law."

The Biden administration had raised the cases of the detained Americans with China in multiple meetings over the past several years, including this month when Biden spoke to Xi on during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru.

Politico was first to report the men's release, which it said was part of a prisoner swap with the U.S. The White House did not immediately confirm that any Chinese citizens in American custody had been

returned home.

However, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning announced in Beijing on Thursday that "three Chinese citizens have returned to the motherland safe and sound."

"China always firmly opposes U.S. suppression and persecution of Chinese nationals out of political purposes, and we will continue taking necessary measures to defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese nationals," she said.

She added that a fourth person, "a fugitive who escaped to the U.S. many years ago, has also been repatriated to China."

The fourth person's nationality was not identified. Mao said "this shows

that there will be no safe haven forever for criminals. The Chinese government will continue our efforts to repatriate the fugitives and recover criminals and illegal possessions until every fugitive is held accountable."

Senators from both U.S. political parties praised the release of the Americans. Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas said he was "overjoyed" — Swidan's mother lives in Texas — and credited senior Biden administration officials with having "worked tirelessly to secure this achievement."

Li, a Chinese immigrant who started an export business in the U.S. and lived in New York, was detained in September 2016 after flying into Shanghai. He was

placed under surveillance, interrogated without a lawyer and accused of providing state secrets to the FBI. A U.N. working group called his 10-year prison sentence arbitrary and his family has said the charges were politically motivated.

Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who said he had worked for years to try to secure Li's release, welcomed the news.

"Even when it felt like there was no hope, we never stopped believing that one day Mr. Li would return home," Schumer said in a statement.

Leung was sentenced last year to life in prison on spying charges. He was detained in 2021, by

the local bureau of China's counterintelligence agency in the southeastern city of Suzhou after China had closed its borders and imposed tight domestic travel restrictions and social controls to fight the spread of COVID-19.

After Leung's sentencing, the U.S. recommended — though without citing specific cases — that Americans reconsider traveling to China because of arbitrary law enforcement and exit bans and the risk of wrongful detentions.

Swidan had been jailed for the last 12 years on a drug charge and, along with Li and Leung, was considered by the State Department to be wrongfully detained.

Jerry Flack & Associates

101 N. Main St. • Bluffton, IN
Corner of Main & Market

ATTENTION!

We are NOW certified to Sell
Market Place Health Insurance
Products for People Under 65!

260.824.1618

ONE-ON-ONE PRIVATE CONSULTATION
Life Insurance, Annuities and Long-term Care
Call to Set an Appointment

You Can Buy an Annuity at Age 90 to 99!
ASK US HOW!

SUPERIOR PRODUCTS SERVICE SOLUTIONS

99.98% CLEANER AIR

Clean air starts with better airflow.
Ask us about installing AccuClean™,
Humidifiers, Dehumidifiers, or UV Lights.

American Standard

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

MOSER & SON

Heating & Air Conditioning

824-0228

219 E. Perry St. Bluffton

260*824*0228 • www.moserandsonheatingandair.com

WE'RE THANKFUL FOR YOU!

At this time of Thanksgiving Celebration
our thoughts turn gratefully to you with appreciation for the
friendship and confidence you have shown in us.

WISHING YOU A...

Happy Thanksgiving

DB

Decatur • Berne • Bluffton • Geneva • Warren

"Gladly Accepting New Patients"

www.decaturdentalin.com

Decatur Dental Services, Inc.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

www.news-banner.com or www.facebook.com/newsbanner