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Paws and Claus

Mr. and Mrs. Claus came to the city gym Wednesday, with the gym allowing dogs to roam around. Various organizations also gave out goodies and treats for the dogs and their handlers. Above, Tory Smith sits on Santa's lap, along with the family dog Oatie. At right, Erin Schantz pets Max, with Grace Fromm handling the dog. (Photos by Jonathan Snyder)

Markle RDC purchases land for housing addition

By JONATHAN SNYDER

Forest Cove's housing subdivision is set to be expanded with the Markle Redevelopment Commission approving the purchase of 23.42 acres of land east of the current subdivision Wednesday. A verbal agreement between the RDC and JMLL Group, the current landowner, will allow the RDC to purchase the acreage for \$425,000. The land is located east of Cottonwood Court in Markle, along Morse Street. An official purchase agreement between the RDC and JMLL needs to be drafted before any purchase is made. RDC member Nicolas Lund said that this verbal agreement still allows them to officially apply with financing to purchase. Additionally, the RDC committed \$7,218.31 of its own funds to help cover shipping costs for new playground equipment, targeted for middle school aged kids, at the Walking Park. The rest of the playground and installation costs, totaling over \$146,000, has been covered through various grants and donations from local (Continued on Page 2)

Education officials OK high school diploma overhaul

Despite concerns, the final redesign plan earned widespread support – including from colleges and universities

By CASEY SMITH, Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana's high school diploma came one step closer to a total revamp on Wednesday after state education officials approved a redesign plan that has been months in the making. Paramount to the new plan is maximized "flexibility" for students to personalize learning pathways and experiences, including with college courses taken while still in high school, as well as the ability to count internships, apprenticeships, military experience and other work-based learning toward their graduation requirements. A first draft of the diploma model was made public in March. Input from Hoosier educators, parents, students, higher education institutions, business officials and other stakeholders helped drive the several other iterations of the plan that followed since. Indiana's State Board of Education approved the latest version of the redesign during its December meeting in Indianapolis. The diploma rule now heads to the state attorney general for final sign-off. "This has been, gosh, an all-hands-in-the-circle effort to get to this place," Indiana Secretary of Education Katie Jenner said at Wednesday's board meeting. "This has certainly been a long time coming for the board. We have spent hours and hours and hours listening to the many comments and ideas and solutions, from many Hoosiers around our state. We were absolutely able to improve the draft from the end of March ... to today. On behalf of the board, we cannot thank Hoosiers around the state enough for joining ... for really helping us get to a great place today for the future of Indiana students." Under a law passed by Indiana legislators in 2023, the state must adopt new diploma requirements by December. Schools could choose to opt in and start offering the new diplomas as early as the 2025-26 academic year. The new diplomas will take effect for all Hoosier students beginning with the Class of 2029, who are entering eighth grade this fall. But there have been bumps in the road. Earlier redesign drafts faced multiple rounds of critiques from Hoosier educators, who worried that the model would broadly exclude certain course requirements, like those in history, foreign language and fine arts. Officials at multiple Indiana colleges and universities had also warned that the previously proposed high school diplomas would not meet university admission requirements. Jenner emphasized that the state board took those criticisms to heart and made adjustments to the diploma plan, accordingly. More than 9,400 online public comments were submitted during the drafting process. Hundreds more attended in-person feedback forums. In doing so, many of the concerns have since been reversed. The final model approved by the board is supported by all of Indiana's public colleges and universities, as well as more than a dozen state education associations. "This was really hard, messy, sometimes unpopular (Continued on Page 2)

Teacher pay, public school funding remain top asks of state's largest teachers union

The Indiana State Teachers Association on Tuesday unveiled a slew of legislative priorities ahead of the 2025 session

By CASEY SMITH
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana's largest teachers union listed educator pay boosts, increased public school funding and consolidated training requirements among its top asks for the 2025 legislative session. The Indiana State Teachers Association, which represents roughly 40,000 Hoosier educators, released a priority agenda on Tuesday — just weeks

before state lawmakers are set to return to the Statehouse. Jennifer Smith-Margraf, ISTA's vice president, emphasized that "equitable funding for Indiana's public schools" is of highest concern to the union. The 2025 session will see state legislators craft the state's next biennial budget, about half of which has historically been earmarked for education.

In recent years, however, Indiana's Republican-dominated legislature has opted to grow the state's private school voucher system at a faster rate — a shift ISTA has long opposed. "We're here to speak for educators and every student whose future depends on a fair, safe and supportive learning environment," Smith-Margraf said during a Tuesday news conference. "Hoosiers value strong public schools that provide equal opportunities for all students. Whether Black or white, Latino, Asian, Native (American) (Continued on Page 2)

U.S. inflation ticked up last month as some price pressures remain persistent

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fueled by pricier used cars, hotel rooms and groceries, inflation in the United States moved slightly higher last month in the latest sign that some price pressures remain elevated. Consumer prices rose 2.7% in November from a year earlier, up from a yearly figure of 2.6% in October. Excluding volatile food and energy

costs, so-called core prices increased 3.3%, the same as in the previous month. Measured month to month, prices climbed 0.3% from October to November, the biggest such increase since April. Core prices also rose 0.3% for a fourth straight month. Wednesday's inflation figures from the Labor Department are the final major piece of data that Federal Reserve officials will consider before they meet next week to decide on inter-

est rates. The relatively mild November increase won't likely be enough to discourage the officials from cutting their key rate by a quarter-point. The probability of a rate cut next week, as envisioned by Wall Street traders, rose to 98% after Wednesday's inflation report was released, according to futures pricing tracked by CME FedWatch. "It's generally in the ballpark of (Continued on Page 3)

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OBITUARIES

Sue Manning, 78

Sue A. Manning, 78, of Fort Wayne, passed away on Friday morning, Dec. 6, 2024, at Ashton Creek Health Care in Fort Wayne. Sue was born on Aug. 30, 1946, in Bluffton to Robert and Roma "Frankie" (Frankland) McFarren. She graduated from Bluffton High School in 1964 and furthered her education to graduate from Lutheran Hospital School of Nursing in 1967. She worked as a Registered Nurse in Fort Wayne before retiring from Parkview Hospital as a Practice Manager in 2013.



Sue is survived by her children, George (Jennifer) Manning and Meredith (Elbert) Starks, all of Fort Wayne; her grandchildren, Gabriel Starks and Nathan Starks; and her siblings, Diana "Danny" (Joe) Hibner of Indianapolis and Gary (Rhonda) McFarren of Keystone.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Robert and Frankie McFarren.

A memorial service will take place at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2024, at the Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home in Bluffton with Sue's brother, Gary McFarren, officiating.

Memorials may be made in Sue's memory to The Literacy Alliance and may be directed through the funeral home.

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

U.S. inflation

(Continued from Page 1)

what the Fed would like to see," said Jason Pride, chief investment strategist at Glenmede, a wealth management firm.

Though sharp increases for such items as groceries and hotel rooms increased overall inflation last month, those categories are often volatile. Pride noted that the cost of services, such as rents, car insurance, and airline fares, cooled in November.

Last week, Fed Chair Jerome Powell suggested that with the economy generally healthy, the Fed could reduce its key rate slowly.

"We're not quite there on inflation, but we're making progress," Powell said. "We can afford to be a little more cautious."

With the job market cooling, growth in Americans' paychecks has slowed from a nearly 6% annual pace in 2022 to about 4% now, a rate nearly consistent with inflation at the Fed's 2% target. Powell has said he doesn't think the current job market is a driver of higher prices.

Randy Carr, CEO of World Emblem, a maker of patches, labels and badges for companies, universities and law enforcement agencies, said he is providing smaller wage increases, in the 3% to 5% range, than his company did during the height of inflation.

Carr's customers, which include the company that makes UPS uniforms, generally won't accept price hikes much more than 2% a year. So World Emblem aims to offset the cost of its higher wages through greater efficiencies in manufacturing.

In September, the Fed slashed its benchmark rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, by a sizable half-point. It followed that move with a quarter-point rate cut in November. Those cuts lowered the central bank's key rate to 4.6%, down from a four-decade high of 5.3%.

Though inflation is now way below its peak of 9.1% in June 2022, average prices are still about 20% higher than they were three years ago — a major source of public discontent that helped drive President-elect Donald Trump's victory over Vice President Kamala Harris in November.

Grocery prices jumped last month, an uncomfortable reminder for consumers that food prices remain a big drag on households' budgets. Beef prices leapt 3.1% just from October to November and are up 5% from a year earlier.

Egg prices, which have been volatile for more than two years, in part because of outbreaks of bird flu, soared 8.2% just last month. They are nearly 38% higher than a year ago.

Gas prices ticked up 0.6% from October to November, ending a string of declines. Still, gas is down more than 8% from a year earlier. Hotel prices leapt 3.2% from October to November and are 3.7% higher than a year ago.

Used-car prices jumped 2% from October to November; new cars rose 0.6%. Those increases might have been fueled by a surge in demand after Hurricane Helene's destruction of existing cars in places like North Carolina.

But one key category that has been pushing prices up showed welcome signs of cooling in November: Rental prices ticked up just 0.2%, the smallest increase since July 2021. A measure of housing costs also rose by just 0.2%, the mildest rise since April 2021.

Fed officials have made clear that they expect inflation to fluctuate along a bumpy path even as it gradually cools toward their target level. In speeches last week, several of the central bank's policymakers stressed their belief that with inflation having already fallen so far, it was no longer necessary to keep their benchmark rate quite as high.

Typically, the Fed cuts rates to try to stimulate the economy enough to maximize employment yet not so much as to drive inflation high. But the U.S. economy appears to be in solid shape. It grew at a brisk 2.8% annual pace in the July-September quarter, bolstered by healthy consumer spending. That has led some Wall Street analysts to suggest that the Fed doesn't actually need to cut its key rate further.

But Powell has said that the central bank is seeking to "recalibrate" its rate to a lower setting, one more in line with tamer inflation.

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

City:

Tuesday, 2:47 p.m., Wayne Street and Tiger Trail. Rear-end collision, report to follow.

Tuesday, 6:02 p.m., Pak-A-Sak North. Man wearing Santa hat threatening employee. Warned for trespassing.

Tuesday, 6:25 p.m., News-Banner. Man attempted entry on front and back doors. Suspect from prior incident, arrested.

Tuesday, 7:41 p.m., Main Street and Dustman Road. Rear-end collision, report to follow.

Tuesday, 8:57 p.m., Walmart. Two drivers arguing over a parking spot, refused to park in any of the many nearby spots. After mediating, subjects agreed the matter was trivial and parking in different spots.

Tuesday, 10:21 p.m., 700 block of West Wiley Avenue. Report of people knocking on windows and honking

outside residence, ongoing harassment issue.

Wednesday, 11:02 a.m., Resource Maintenance. Crash, report to follow.

County: Tuesday, 2:49 p.m., 7800 N.S.R. 1, Ossian. Report of a stolen license plate.

Tuesday, 3:38 p.m., 2100 E 500 N, Ossian. Pony loose.

Tuesday, 4:36 p.m., 3700 E 1200 N, Ossian. Report of a dog bite.

ACCIDENTS

County:

Wednesday, 5:28 a.m., S.R. 116 at C.R. 200 N, Bluffton. Troy Bulick, 54, Markle, was driving a 2014 Chevrolet Silverado southbound on S.R. 116 and struck a deer. Damage exceeded \$2,500.

ARRESTS

Trenton Lee Puterbaugh, 29, Ossian; breaking and entering, a Level 6 felony, criminal trespassing, a Class A misdemeanor, and public intoxication by drugs, a Class B misdemeanor. Bond set at \$12,500.



Pictured cutting the ribbon are Alisa Felke and Tammy Trout, surrounded by Parkview staff, Chamber members and Chamber ambassadors. (Photo submitted)

Chamber celebrates the grand opening of Parkview Health in Bluffton

The Wells County Chamber of Commerce and its Ambassadors gathered recently to celebrate the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for Parkview Health's newest clinic, located at 1980 N Main Street in Bluffton. This state-of-the-art facility marks a significant step forward in Parkview's mission to provide high-quality, patient-centered care in rural and underserved areas.

"This clinic represents our commitment to the health and well-being of the communities we serve," said Keith Cruise, Senior Vice President for Primary Care at Parkview Health. "By combining family medicine and OB/GYN services under one roof, we're ensuring that residents of Bluffton and nearby areas have convenient access to comprehensive, expert care close to home."

The celebration drew community leaders, residents, and members of the Parkview team. During the event, Tracy McClellan, the clinic's practice manager, introduced the healthcare team that will lead operations at the facility. Among them is Tammy Trout,

a Bluffton native and experienced physician assistant, who will lead the family medicine services with support from a team of skilled medical assistants.

For Trout, returning to her hometown to provide care has been deeply meaningful. "I'm thrilled to bring my experience back to Bluffton, where I grew up and still have family," she said. "Building relationships with patients here and helping them make informed decisions about their health is incredibly rewarding."

Trout's journey into healthcare began in high school, inspired by a shadowing opportunity with local Physician Assistant Juanita Bryan. After earning her degree at Butler University, Tammy practiced medicine in Fort Wayne and Markle before returning to Bluffton. Initially, she worked at Parkview's temporary location at 1169 N Main Street, which was established while waiting for the new facility to open.

The new clinic also features OB/GYN services led by certified nurse midwife Alisa Felke, who brings more

than a decade of experience to the team. "I'm committed to supporting women throughout every stage of life," Felke said. "This new clinic allows us to deliver personalized and compassionate care to our patients in a welcoming, community-focused environment."

Parkview Health's leadership is proud of the organization's broader efforts to enhance healthcare in rural communities. "Our recent recognitions for innovation and excellence in rural healthcare reflect the dedication of our entire team," Keith Cruise added. "This new Bluffton facility is another example of how we are making a meaningful impact in the areas we serve."

The clinic is already open to patients, with family medicine appointments available Monday through Friday and OB/GYN services offered on Tuesdays. Same day appointments are also available. For scheduling or questions, residents can call 260-353-1954 (Family Medicine) or 260-355-3960 (OB/GYN).

Investigation into Indiana house fire that killed 6 siblings fails to determine what caused blaze

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP) — An investigation into a northern Indiana house fire that killed six siblings in January failed to determine what caused the deadly blaze, although electrical items were identified as "potential ignition sources," the state fire marshal said Wednesday.

The probe of the South Bend fire ended with the "cause undetermined," said State Fire Marshal Steve Jones, calling that a common determination in fires "when a definitive cause cannot be established despite exhaustive efforts."

He said at a news conference that investigators found "no evidence of criminal activity or arson" but the fire's precise cause could not be determined

even though they left "no stone unturned in the quest for answers."

"In short, this cause determination reflects the fact that the evidence does not point definitively in one direction or another as to what exactly ignited the fire," Jones said, adding that there was "simply not enough scientific data to identify a single ignition source."

He said electrical items in the home were identified as "potential ignition sources" but investigators could not prove definitively that any of those started the fire.

Jones said the investigation involving his office, the South Bend Fire Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives found that

the fire began shortly after 6 p.m. on Jan. 21 in the home's first-floor family room/dining room when the six children and their father were upstairs on the second floor.

Although smoke detectors were found in the home, he said it could not be determined if any of those alarms sounded during the fire. Jones said no witnesses heard a smoke alarm sounding and neither did the children's father, who was the fire's sole survivor.

The Smith siblings — 11-year-old Angel, 10-year-

old Demetris, 9-year-old Davida, 5-year-old Deontay, 4-year-old D'Angelo and 17-month-old Faith — died after a fire engulfed the home in the city of over 100,000 just south of the Michigan state line, with Angel succumbing in a hospital days after the blaze.

Their father escaped by jumping out of a second-floor window before he tried to enter the home's first floor to save his children, Jones said. The injured father told firefighters he was forced back by heavy smoke and wind-driven flames.

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Indiana (that's us) is again preparing to kill a man

It's been 15 years since the state of Indiana violated the sixth commandment, "you shall not kill," from Exodus 20:13. The translation of the original text to "you shall not murder" in the last century by many churches is not without controversy. Professor Wilma Ann Bailey of the Christian Theological Seminary devoted an entire book to the debate in 2005.



Michael Leppert

Hoosier Opinions

Either way, Indiana is scheduled to kill Joseph Corcoran on December 18th. His sentence for murdering four men in 1997 was upheld last week by the Indiana Supreme Court.

It's a sad truth in a modern society that 60% of Americans support this barbaric practice, according to Pew Research. Their research shows minor ebbs and flows of support and opposition over time, which indicates to me that some dramatic change in the national perspective on the matter is unlikely anytime soon.

Twenty-two states use the death penalty as a legal criminal sentence, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Take a look at that map of states. Now, take a look at the state map from The Guttmacher Institute showing the new restrictive laws on abortion access. It's not a perfect match, but it's close. Life is so precious in these states that an embryo is worth statutorily protecting, to the detriment of a woman. In primarily the same places, an adult can be destroyed,

It's a sad truth in a modern society that 60% of Americans support this barbaric practice.

specifically by the state's government, because the people of that state are mad at them.

Yes, the reasons states and the federal government sentence people to death is almost always officially for murder,

but not every murder, only the really bad ones. I often wonder why this killing qualifies and that one doesn't, even though deep down I know the answer. Some horrific killing happened in a state and the people responded angrily by adding that type of act to the list of acts worthy of a death sentence. The anger is the key.

I went to social media over the weekend to ask what people thought about the practice, and the second response nailed the sentiment I expected. I briefly explained Corcoran's crime and the debate about his mental fitness, and the responder wrote: "I do have feelings about the mental health disorders, but I may feel differently if it were my family he killed."

She's telling me that "justice," in her view, changes based on her feelings. I imagine that sentiment is common. I also cannot state how deeply I disagree with that being a consideration at all, again, in a modern society.

The Indiana Capital Chronicle reported last week that Indiana State Rep. Bob Morris sent a letter to Gov. Eric Holcomb requesting that he block the execution. He wrote, "The recent Supreme Court decision to return the matter of abortion to each state and Indiana's Special Session thereafter resulted in tremendous upheaval in my heart regarding the value of every human life..." This is heartening, not because of his conclusion, but because of his process.

What is disheartening, however, is the apparent permission structure that is growing to approve of other killings.

UnitedHealthcare CEO, Brian Thompson, was gunned down outside a hotel in New York on Wednesday. It was an assassination that continues to be a mystery in two ways. First, the killer was at large for days even though the shooting was caught on camera, along with other video documentation of his movements that day. Second, the motive is unknown.

Any murder is disturbing, but the reaction to this one is morbidly shameful.

For example, Saturday Night Live's Colin Hanks addressed on Weekend Update over the weekend: "The manhunt continues for the assassin who gunned down the CEO of UnitedHealthcare on Wednesday, and it really says something about America that a guy was murdered in cold blood and the two main reactions were, 'Yeah, well healthcare stinks!' And also, 'Girl, that shooter hot.'"

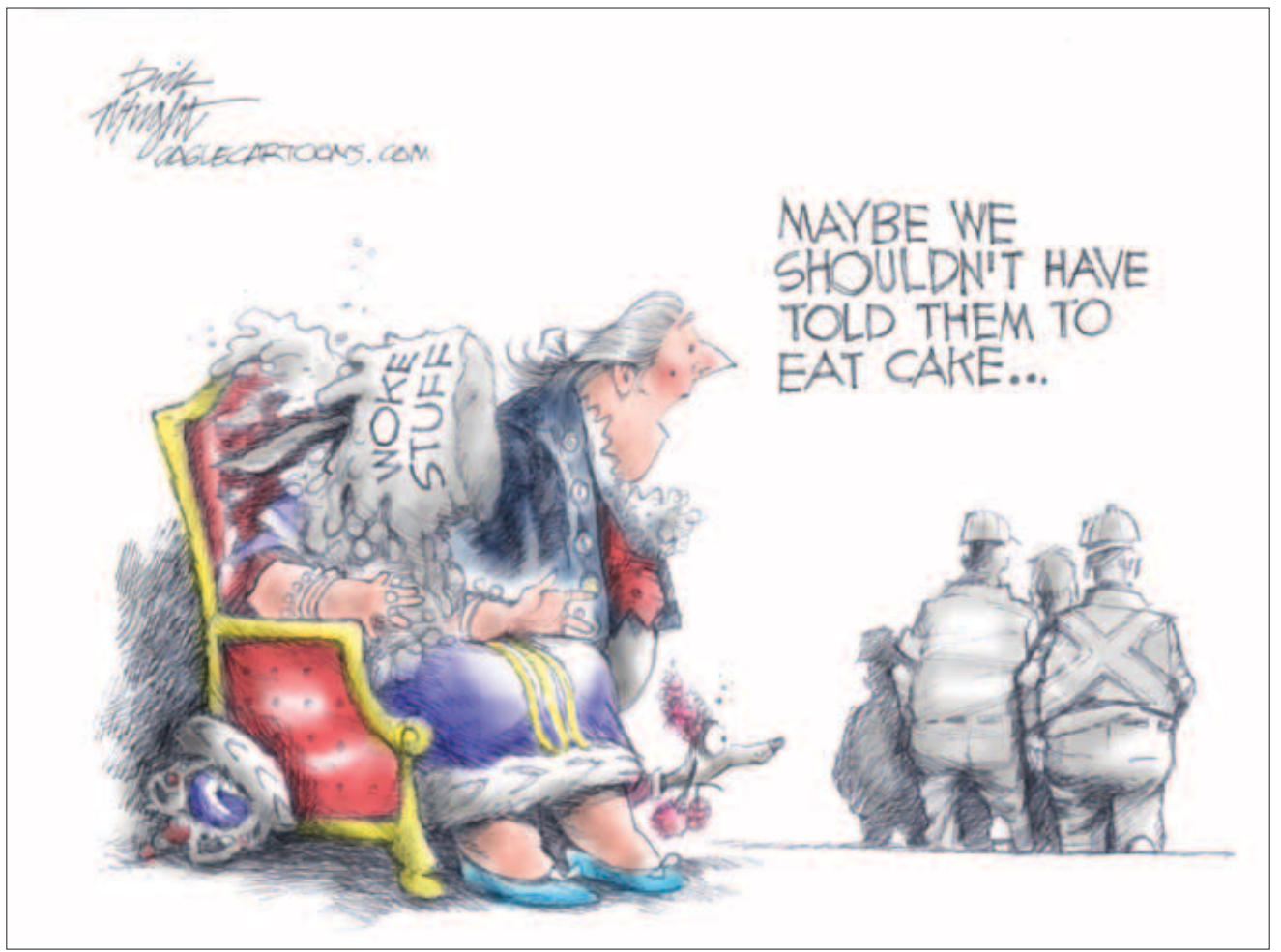
Yes, health care stinks for a long list of reasons. Also yes, UnitedHealthcare is the health insurer that is most expert at denying claims and refusing care options. But does that justify the celebration of Thompson's killing? Not to me it doesn't.

Americans are mad at him though. Most Americans didn't know who he was before last week, but it didn't take long for that to evolve into a "he had it comin'" sort of response by many.

I wish we could get off this merry-go-round. The value of the government executing people has always been negligible. Once we remove the function of it serving as revenge, the value drops to lower than zero, given the expense of the act.

Justice requires objectivity, or as the adage goes, blindness. The "eye for an eye" type we're living with now is a relic of the past.

Michael Leppert is an author, educator and a communication consultant in Indianapolis. He writes about government, politics and culture at MichaelLeppert.com.



Trump can deliver immediately for working-class voters. Here's how.

Donald Trump won over millions of new working-class voters with his promises to eliminate taxes on tips, overtime pay and Social Security income, and to create a new tax credit for family caregivers. He does not have to wait months to pass a major tax overhaul to deliver on those promises. He can do so immediately on taking office. Here's how:

With Republicans in control of the Senate, the House and the White House, they can make good on these vows with simple majority votes in both chambers using the budget reconciliation process. Every year, the House and Senate are supposed to adopt a budget resolution to establish an overall budget. Both houses then pass a budget reconciliation bill that makes changes to tax and spending policy — and is voted on in the Senate using expedited rules that prevent the minority from delaying or filibustering it. This is how Trump passed his 2017 tax reform with only Republican votes, and how President Joe Biden passed his American Rescue Plan and Inflation Reduction acts with only Democratic votes.

But next year, Trump will have an extraordinary opportunity to pass not one, but two budget reconciliation bills. That's because the Republican House and Democratic Senate could not agree on a 2025 budget resolution. This means that when the new Republican Congress is seated in January, it can enact two budget resolutions during Trump's first year in office — one for fiscal 2025 and a second for fiscal 2026. That will allow Congress to pass, and Trump to sign, two budget reconciliation bills related to tax policy with only Republican votes next year.

Because Trump gets two bites at the apple in 2025, he does not have to wait until a major tax overhaul is ready to deliver on his promised tax cuts. He can pass them immediately using the first budget reconciliation bill, and then use the second bill to enact more complicated tax reform, which will take many months to prepare and negotiate, later in the year.

How would this work? When the new Congress is seated on Jan. 4, it can immediately enact a 2025 budget resolution, even before Trump is inaugurated. Then, as soon as Trump takes the oath of office, Congress can send him a budget reconciliation bill that eliminates taxes on tips, overtime and Social Security income and creates his promised caregiver tax credit.

Those tax cuts could be paid for by repealing the climate spending in Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, eliminating the \$80 billion Biden gave the Internal Revenue Service, and enacting JD Vance's College Endowment Accountability Act, which would raise the excise tax on college and university endowment

investment income from 1.4 percent to 35 percent. There would be poetic justice in cutting taxes for working-class Americans and making elite universities such as Harvard, Columbia and MIT pay for it.

Trump could also use that first reconciliation bill to fund his border wall and add thousands of U.S. Border Patrol officers and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to carry out another major campaign promise — the mass deportation of illegal migrants.

If Republican leaders in Congress and Trump's transition team start working now, the president could sign such a bill into law in a matter of weeks. Imagine the momentum it would give his new presidency if he could immediately deliver on his promises to so many new voters who cast ballots for him. Rarely in American history have voters gotten such near-instantaneous results for their votes.

Once that first reconciliation bill is enacted, Congress can pass a second budget resolution for the 2026 fiscal year and get to work on a major tax overhaul. Trump can use that bill to extend his 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act [irs.gov] for another 10 years and enact major tax reform, delivering on other campaign promises such as reducing the corporate tax rate.

And he doesn't have to stop there. Because in 2026 he will get a third bite at the apple. As of Jan. 1, 2026, Congress can pass a budget resolution for fiscal 2027. That will give Trump a third Republican-votes-only reconciliation bill, which could be used to implement all the spending cuts and government reforms recommended by Trump's new "Department of Government Efficiency."

If Trump follows this strategy, he will have signed at least three major bills before voters go to the polls in the 2026 midterms — one fulfilling his promises to cut taxes for working Americans; a second delivering major tax reform to boost economic growth and competitiveness; and a third streamlining government and eliminating wasteful spending.

That would be a trifecta of unprecedented achievements that voters would almost certainly reward.

Knowing that he can pass three different budget reconciliation bills in two years, it would be foolhardy of Trump to wait to act until a major tax overhaul bill is ready. Polls show that six in 10 Americans approve of his transition. The best way to maintain and build on that approval is to quickly pay back his new voters by delivering on his vows to make their lives better.

Follow Marc A. Thiessen on X, @marcthiessen.



Marc Thiessen

Cloudless Sulphur, Angelkeep's pre-Christmas gift

Angelkeep could be considered Christmas-blessed every day of the year. Santa can take no credit for creating and gifting the daily abundance of nature that excites the senses throughout the entire year. Only the Creator could continue to bring on the unexpected.

Such again became the case when a late season butterfly emerged on the flowers potted at the far end of the patio. The arrival, so perfectly timed, involved a human sitting on a patio rocker at the very time the airborne visitor appeared.

Certain factors added to the excitement of the fall encounter. The summer had been nearly void of butterfly happenstances. No large butterfly had been digitally captured. This rarity certainly wasn't the norm for the Angelkeep. Large swallowtails at least three varieties and colors had been spotted. Short chases resulted in zero pics. Posed landings never occurred. At least none witnessed by a human.

To zoom in on a swallowtail with a camera to the point of seeing individual scales of the colorful designs is unique. It's exciting. It's magnificent. In 2024 it simply didn't happen.

Cloudless Sulphur arrived. It was considered a medium sized butterfly, but on the larger end of the middle gamut. It circled like an aircraft awaiting permission to land at the airport. It chose the whiskey barrel planter filled with red impatiens as its destination. It appeared to enjoy the fast food found freely in the depths of the blooms' throats.

It was recognized only as a yellow butterfly, the largest landed this year

Angelkeep Journals

at Angelkeep. The yellow appeared bold. Once it had been researched, a name emerged.

Lust for red blooms had also been learned among the descriptions. Its extraordinarily long proboscis, or tongue, had been noted by those describing this unusual butterfly.

So many unique features on one single butterfly truly made it the winged gift of the year. It seemed appropriate to save it as an Angelkeep Journals' feature for the holiday gift-giving season. Thus Angelkeep presents its newest yellow fluttering friend ten days prior to winter, and with only a dozen more shopping days remaining.

In size it averaged about the wingspan of a human adult finger, 2-3". The color mimicked a ripe banana. Females differ from males due to a small darker marking near the center of each forward wing. Angelkeep had been visited by one such female.

Angelkeep's butterfly flew off once the camera focused on the bloom of which the yellow visitor chose to obtain a healthy slurp. One could not miss the exotically long tongue uncurling deep into the bloom's throat. The butterfly drank quickly and fluttered off. It circled an area of about thirty feet. It returned to another blossom. Another set of photos were obtained. The circling



Alan Daugherty

and return continued for a number of visits, like a continuous line at a drive-thru window.

The scientific name, *Phoebis sennae*, referred to Phoebe the sister of Apollo, a god of Greek and Roman mythology. It again seemed Christmastime appropriate when the internet provided a photo of this butterfly's egg which looked very much like a yellow-orange LED Christmas bulb on a strand of tree lights. The pupa stage continued the Christmas theme. Pupae come in varieties of green or a rosy pink which looks an adequate shade of subdued Christmas red.

Don't forget, this butterfly has a significant inclination to dine only on bright red flowers. Ho, ho, ho. They crave red so much some have been seen flying directly into red automobile taillight lenses. Oh, oh, oh.

That doesn't seem terribly smart, but this butterfly is intelligent enough to select yellow blooming plants when desiring to simply stop for a rest. They seem to understand camouflage.

The late sighting of Cloudless Sulphur truly had been a gift. Although they can appear near Canada, after the breeding season they migrate to the low southern part of the country. Angelkeep's visitor may have been grabbing a drink from the red Angelkeep flowers during a quick stop while in route to Gainesville, Florida. Or even Mexico.

Sightings in northern United States diminish. Cloudless Sulphur's visit truly may have been an Angelkeep butterfly gift of a lifetime.

Mr. Daugherty is a Wells County resident who, along with his wife Gwen, enjoy their backyard and have named it "Angelkeep."

The News-Banner

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Holly Gaskill, Editor
Mark Miller, Opinion Page Editor

Balancing family tension and personal peace

Dear Annie: My son is in a relationship with a young woman who had three children prior to meeting. They have had two additional children 11 months apart. "Jordan," his girlfriend, grew up in foster care. She went through some rough stuff. When she became pregnant with my son's first child, I vowed that I would treat her children like they were part of my family. My other children also agreed that that would be the only way to move forward.

It wasn't long, however, that Jordan said things to me like threatening to keep the kids from me. Additionally, both she and the kids are very motivated by material items. They pretty much value visits based on what they'll receive from it. Because Jordan grew up in foster care, I understand that she places value on "things" and receiving gifts, but I am single, trying to save for retirement and also trying to get by in a challenging economy.

Because that relationship has become very strained and because Jordan exhibits a lot of negative behaviors, my other kids don't want to be around her or her kids. I feel really uncomfortable with things that she has said to me. I don't know how to get past it. This unfortunately means that I don't see a lot of my son or his children. I'm afraid to do anything special for them or buy them toys or books because their mom and the other kids would resent it.

My son recently complained that he feels isolated from us. I told him that we love him very much, but that we don't know how to navigate that relationship.

I've been very troubled by the situation. I feel like I should have the grace to manage this situation. I feel selfish. On the other hand, at age 61 and after a late-in-life divorce, I'm working harder than I ever have in my life. My job is very socially demanding, and I don't have much social energy to expend outside of work. I am very, very protective of my personal time and don't want to spend it with unpleasantness. I don't want to be

around rude adults or kids who are unruly and need gifts to feel validated.

I should add that I recently moved to an apartment in the urban core from a house in the suburbs. My apartment is not large, and five visiting children would make it feel very small. My complex is lovely and very secure, but it is very urban — and homelessness and crime are part of the deal. There is no place for children to play outdoors. I love it here. I love the diversity. I respect the hard things that are part of living in a city. I've wanted this most of my adult life, and I feel that I've finally earned this life and hold it precious.

How can I manage to make my son feel less isolated and balance my time and well-being? — Trying to Figure it All Out

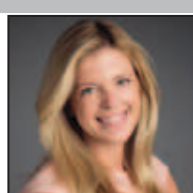
Dear Trying: It sounds like Jordan's childhood was tainted by trauma, which means some of her behaviors in adulthood may be strange or upsetting to you. Though it's not your job to accommodate her insults, it might help to try to understand where she is coming from — and the best way to learn more is to ask.

If you feel comfortable, reach out to her for lunch or coffee and try to learn a bit more about what her unusual and offensive comments might be motivated by. If that's not possible, have a conversation with your son about her, and make it clear that you are trying to understand her better rather than just complaining.

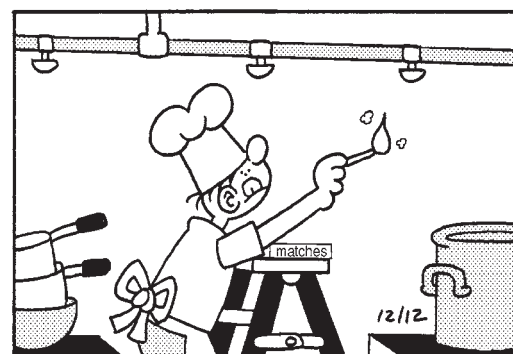
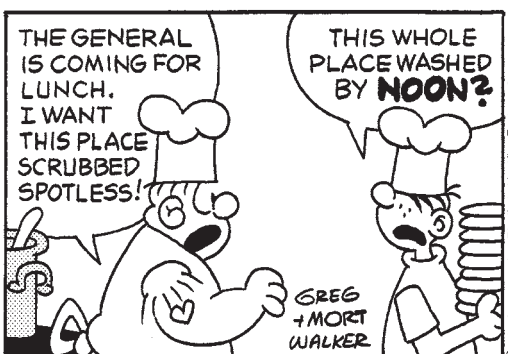
In terms of hosting them at your new apartment, there are plenty of alternatives. Offer to come to them instead, or meet at a neutral place like a park or a restaurant. You have worked hard for a peaceful home, and you have every right to keep it that way.

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

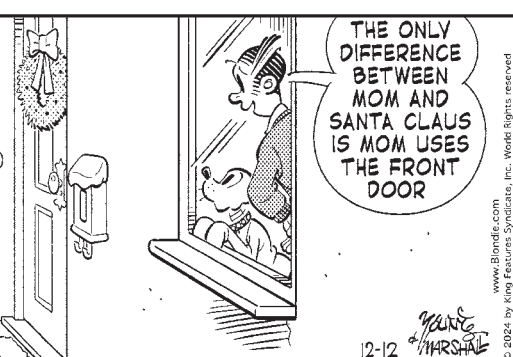
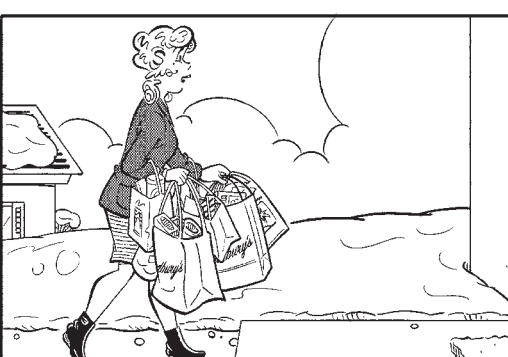
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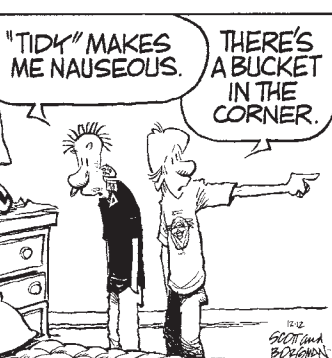
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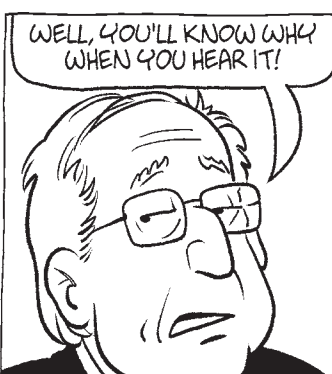
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My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



Christ works through His people

Some people have difficulty with reading, but how wonderful it is that there are many outlets that deliver God's Word. In Bible times, people heard the Word of God through His prophets who read the Scripture from the scrolls. People would listen for hours, sometimes days. It was generations before people had their own copy of the Bible. How we should thank God for this wonderful gift! Today God's Word is proclaimed on radio, television, and through the internet.

He has made it possible for people to hear and know His Word. When we pray and ask Him to open our understanding, He will. Then He gives us the capacity to share what we've learned with others.

We find ourselves growing. Christ does work through His people as He leads along life's pathway. Many struggle because they want Christ to walk with them, but believers are instructed to leave their own pathways and walk with Christ. He comes into a person's life with transformation, making us new creations in Him. God is busy conforming His children to the image of His Son. Salvation is the most important step anyone can take in life.

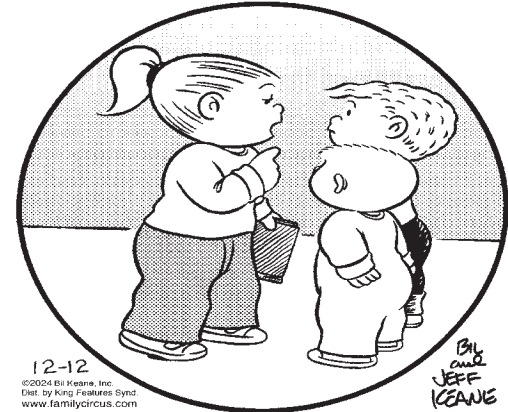
(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)

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THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane

The LOCKHORNS



Question: How can I have a desire to read the Bible? It's hard for me to keep my mind on what I'm reading. Reading is not something I'm good at. Is this the only way to get God to walk with me? — R.B.

Answer: When a person is saved, it's of utmost importance to have a desire to be nourished from God's Word. We must bring everything in life to God in prayer and watch how He answers through the Scriptures. This is how God's children have fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. God gives us His Holy Spirit to help us understand what we are reading.

"But if you're not good, all Santa will give you is a COLD in your stocking."

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS 42 Rain makers? 2 Actress Jessica critter 24 Belfry 1 Bath powder 45 Maidens of myth 3 Canal feature 25 British verb 5 Snoop of myth 4 Autumnal ending 8 Has 49 Erstwhile drinks 26 "I heard Time Machine" star — 5 Samoan you the first port 6 Num-bered rd. 28 At once 13 Chowded veggie 7 Cry of pain 29 Mork's sign-off down 53 Latin 101 word 8 Fish-eating hawk mon-arch 15 Starting quartet 54 Cam-paigned 11 Relaxing resorts 37 Flop 16 Logical begin-ning? 55 Farm measure 9 "Oho!" 31 Turf 10 Must have harshly 36 Awakens 56 Sets (down) 11 Relaxing resorts 38 Brazilian dances 17 Entreaty 57 — Dhabi 19 Opposite of nyet 41 "Heav-ens!" 18 Get by 58 Distort 21 Lennon's partner 42 Furnace fuel 22 Knock 23 Fresh DOWN 1 Squad partner 43 Tibetan monk 27 Nudniks 32 Request 33 — long way 34 Brit's restroom 35 Raze 38 Lost traction 39 One of us 40 Actress Thurman 43 Tibetan monk 44 Country singer 45 Evans 46 Quick kiss 47 "Pres-ent!" 48 Hearty dish 51 Poke

Yesterday's answer 12-12

Grid for crossword puzzle with numbers 1-51.

TV schedule table with columns for time slots (12:12, 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) and rows for various channels (WIMN, CBS WANE, Antenna WANE-2, ABC WPTA, NBC WPTA-2, MNT WPTA-3, CW WISE, PBS WFVA, PBS WFPB, FOX WFFT, LIFE, FX, TVLAND, E!, PARMY, ESPN, ESPN2, FDMW, USA, DISC, TLC, HIST, A&E, HALL, SYFY, TBS, TNT, AMC, COM, FSN, WGN, WE, FOOD, BRAVO, NICK, DISN, FREEFORM, HBO, MAX, PARSHO, TMC).

Raiders draw Jets, Tigers pick up road date with Warriors in ACAC tourney

By RYAN WALKER

DECATUR — The ACAC hosted its in-season tournament drawing at the Back 40 Junction Wednesday afternoon.

The longest-tenured conference tournament in the state will play for the 102nd time for the boys and 51st time for the girls.

Athletic directors, principals and boys' and girls' coaches joined ACAC President Steve Thompson for a lunch and a brief history of the tournament before drawing names from seven envelopes. Last year's champs did the honors in drawing names. This year, it was Jay County girls' coach Sherri McIntire and Adams Centrals boys' coach Aaron McClure.

The names drawn on the bracket will mirror one another for the girls and boys with the bottom school hosting. The boys' games will follow the host of the girls' side.

The names were drawn in order of the bracket:

- Adams Central at Southern Wells. Winner to host Heritage, who received the only bye.
- Jay County at South Adams.
- Bluffton at Woodlan.

The quarterfinals will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 14, with the semifinal that Friday and the championship on Saturday at South Adams High School. The girls' games will be first, starting at 6 p.m. The boys will follow with a 20-minute warmup after the girls' game.

The only school in the county that was perhaps satisfied with the draw was Southern Wells' girls.

The Raiders will play host to Adams Central. On Nov. 30, the Raiders dismantled the Jets 56-39.

Head coach Kyle Penrod, who has played and coached on the boys' side in the past, understands that anything can happen in the tournament. He said that he's glad to have film on the Jets with his own players and can compare what went well and what didn't from their experience.

"Obviously, you don't want to be overconfident," Penrod said. "But with the girls, just having that confidence that they know they can win. If they start to expect to win, that's a big thing ... I'm pretty happy that we get to host it. We've had a lot of road games getting the host around, potentially host two rounds. That's pretty good draw for us."

The Raider boys, however, did not have as good of a result the first time around. They opened conference play with the Jets and fell 68-27.

First-year boys' head coach Doug Smith

was honored to be a part of the event Wednesday afternoon, and he was rewarded with the reigning tournament and regular season champion.

Smith understood the tough assignment, though was optimistic with a group of new players playing basketball this season.

"We played them once, and they just physically out-manned us, so we'll be better prepared for that this time, but tall order for us," Smith said. "Particularly being so inexperienced as we are, and facing their pressure. It's been nice though, that every team we play plays full-court pressure since then. So, we're more practiced at it than we were the first go around."

Bluffton boys' head coach Craig Teagle was unable to attend the draw, but if he was, he and Doug Curtis on the girls' side may have been grumbling together. The Tigers drew a road game with the girls' tournament runner-up and the boys got the regular season runner-up.

"Well, I'd much rather be home against anybody than traveling," Curtis said.

Curtis would rather have played at home, but getting another shot at the Woodlan Warriors has to be a dream scenario for the girls.

Last season, Bluffton lost by 10 to Woodlan after defeating them earlier in the season. That was their ticket to the championship game.

There are key players all across the ACAC that graduated from last season, but Bluffton returned most of its production and is ready at another crack in the ACAC

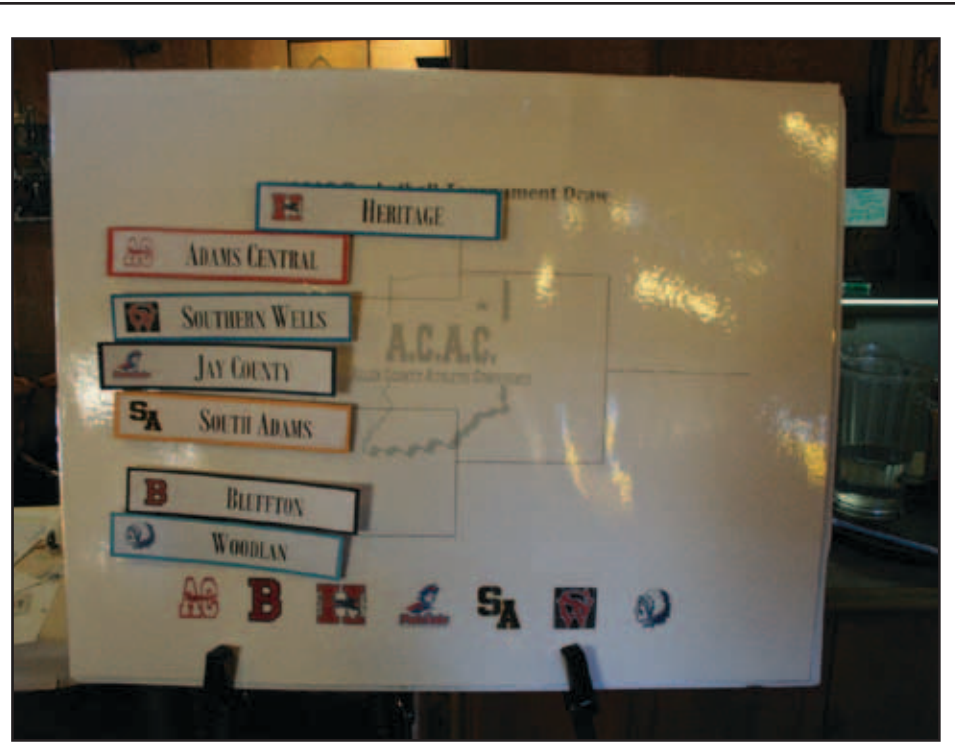
Curtis said the motivation stems from not having any seasons listed on the ACAC Tournament in recent history, but also that they've leveled up in terms of their play.

"The way we play, we should make a difference what the adjustments (other) people make. We're going to play our way we're going to play. This year's a little different than last year. Kids are better offensively and we're going to be super aggressive and go after people."

Last year, the Tigers took down Southern Wells in the opening round at the Raider Dome. They then fell on a controversial buzzer-beater at Heritage, where the Patriots shooter took a shot with no time left on the clock.

Now, Bluffton will take its quest on the road.

ryan@news-banner.com



Tournament time

The longest-tenured high school basketball tournament in Indiana, the ACAC Tournament, had its drawing at the Back 40 Junction in Decatur Wednesday afternoon. At left, ACAC President Steve Thompson speaks to the audience with members from each school before the selections. Above, the official bracket is revealed at the end of the event. This is the 102nd time the ACAC has done its boys' tournament, while the girls will have their 51st. (Photos by Ryan Walker)

High School Calendar

THURSDAY, DEC 12
SWIMMING & DIVING (co-ed): Blackford at Bluffton, 5:30 p.m.; Norwell at Jay County, 6 p.m.

FRIDAY, DEC 13
BOYS BASKETBALL: Bluffton at Lakeland Christian, 7:30 p.m.
GIRLS BASKETBALL: Woodlan at Bluffton, 7:30 p.m.; Columbia City at Norwell, 7:30 p.m.; Southern Wells at Heritage, 7 p.m.
WRESTLING: Norwell at Northeast 8 Conference Duals at Columbia City, 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, DEC 14
BOYS BASKETBALL: Elwood at Bluffton, 1:30 p.m.; Norwell at Blackhawk Christian, 7:30 p.m.
SWIMMING & DIVING (co-ed): Norwell boys invitational, 9 a.m.
WRESTLING: ACAC Team Duals at Adams Central, 9 a.m.; Norwell at Northeast 8 Conference Duals at Columbia City 9 a.m.

MONDAY, DEC 16
No events scheduled.

TUESDAY, DEC 17
BOYS BASKETBALL: Southern Wells at Northfield, 7:30 p.m.
GIRLS BASKETBALL: Bluffton at Southwood, 7:45 p.m.; Norwell at Woodlan, 7:30 p.m.
SWIMMING & DIVING (co-ed): Elwood at Bluffton, 6 p.m.; Snider/Wayne at Norwell, 6 p.m.
WRESTLING: Norwell at Jay County, 6 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, DEC 18
WRESTLING: Bluffton at Churubusco, 6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, DEC 19
GIRLS BASKETBALL: Woodlan at Southern Wells, 7:30 p.m.



Southern Wells' Malaki Capper (top) nailed North Side's Elijah Rouch into position in the 166 bout Wednesday night at the Raider Dome. The Raiders took the match 42-21 over the Legends. (Photo by Ryan Walker)

Raiders take revenge on Legends in wrestling, shows signs of growth

By RYAN WALKER

PONETO — The Southern Wells wrestling club got an unexpected chance at revenge Wednesday night.

A last-second scheduling with North Side brought the two teams together after a 42-30 victory for the Legends in the Homestead Thanksgiving Duals. This time around, the Raiders came to pack a punch.

The Raiders won 42-21 in this battle, a 32-point swing that happened in just two weeks is a sign of growth from Jacob Duncan's young group.

"Absolutely," Duncan said when asked if the team has seen growth this season. "Every single kid out here has only been wrestling for two years. Considering we're all sophomores and freshmen right now, it makes me feel good that we're putting the pieces together and we're making the turnaround like we're supposed to."

The Legends got off to a quick start, winning by decision in both the 175 and 190 bouts. They extended the lead to 15-0.

Southern Wells got its first points by forfeit in the 106 and 113 weights. The first earned points of the night came from Aiden Carroll, who pinned his man at 126. Then, North Side and Southern Wells traded a forfeit for a pin in the next two. The next three weights were Southern Wells' final chances to pick up steam.

It began with Lyrik Maddox, who won by fall at 150. Jonathan Perez-Torres won by fall in his match. Finally, Malaki Capper capped the night off with an emphatic pin.

Southern Wells got four straight six-point outcomes to finish the match, which separat-

ed the two schools by 21 by the end of it. It was much needed to come out with a victory.

"Definitely where I always want it to go," Duncan said. "Wrestled very solid. It's what I've been expecting from these kids all season long. We actually wrestled these guys a couple of weeks ago and it did not go in our favor, and I'm glad that we could turn it around."

Southern Wells will be at the ACAC team duals at Adams Central beginning at 9 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 14.

ryan@news-banner.com

Individual results:

- Briggs Fiechter (SW) won by forfeit at 106.
- Kaleb Boots (SW) won by forfeit at 113.
- 120 was forfeited by both teams.
- Aiden Carroll (SW) won by fall over Juan Villegas at 126.
- 132 was forfeited by both teams.
- Jameer Harrison (NS) won over Lane Dollar by fall at 138.
- Jarin Frauhiger (SW) won by forfeit at 144.
- Lyrik Maddox (SW) won over Bobby Baca by fall at 150.
- Jonathan Perez Torres (SW) won over Marvellous Vic-Anurioha by fall at 157.
- Malaki Capper (SW) won over Elijah Rouch by fall at 165.
- Eh Soe (NS) won over Bryson Williams by decision 15-10 at 175.
- Demetrios Simpson (NS) won over Blyden Schomber by decision 19-13 at 190.
- Sahsovion Harris (NS) won over Ian James-McCarty by fall at 215.
- Marion Ingol (NS) won over Cale Craig by decision 11-9 at 285.



FORMULA 1
Abu Dhabi Grand Prix
Site: Yas Island, Abu Dhabi.
Schedule: Friday, practice, 4:30 a.m., and 8 a.m.; Saturday, practice, 5:30 a.m., and qualifying, 9 a.m.; Sunday, race, 8 a.m. (ESPN).
Track: Yas Marina Circuit.
Race distance: 58 laps, 190.253 miles.
Last race: Verstappen, already crowned the season champion for the fourth straight year, won in Qatar for his second victory in three races and ninth of the season.
Next race: March 16, Melbourne, Australia.

NASCAR Cup Series
Last race: Joey Logano led 107 laps to dominate the winner-take-all finale at Phoenix Raceway on Nov. 10, earning his third championship and completing a remarkable turnaround after initially missing the second-round cut before earning a reprieve with another driver's disqualification. Team Penske clinched its third motorsports crown in less than a month.
Next race: Feb. 16, 2025, Daytona Beach, Florida.

NASCAR Xfinity Series
Last race: Justin Allgaier took his first series title. Allgaier overcame a flat tire and consecutive penalties that dropped him in the grid, then withstood another caution that forced a double-overtime restart to give JR Motorsports the crown.
Next race: Feb. 15, 2025, Daytona Beach, Florida.

NASCAR Truck Series
Last race: Ty Majeski dominated from the pole in a Ford to earn his first championship, holding off playoff drivers Corey Heim and Christian Eckes in the 150-mile finale at Phoenix Raceway. Majeski led 132 laps, Heim 16 and championship finalist Grant Enfinger two while finishing fifth.
Fast facts: Majeski clinched a series-high sixth title for ThorSport Racing. He raced in his second championship four in just his third full-time season.
Next race: Feb. 14, 2025, Daytona Beach, Florida.

IndyCar
Last race: Alex Palou claimed his second consecutive IndyCar championship and third in four years at Nashville Superspeedway, where Colton Herta won the Music City Grand Prix for Andretti Global.
Next race: March 2, 2025, St. Petersburg, Florida.

NHRA Drag Racing
Last event: Drag racers ended their season in Pomona, California, with Antron Brown winning the Top Fuel title at the In-N-Out Burger NHRA Finals and taking his fourth world championship.
Next event: March 6-9, 2025, Gainesville, Florida.

World of Outlaws Sprint Cars
Last event: David Gravel won in Concord, North Carolina, on Nov. 7 and clinched the series crown a day later. Gravel finished fourth in the Nov. 8 race, which was enough to lock up the title.
Next race: Feb. 5-8, 2025, Barberville, Florida.

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'Joyful Sounds of Christmas' included vocals, guitar and piano music

By BARBARA BARBIERI

On Sunday the 3rd Annual "Joyful Sound of Christmas" celebration, featuring local vocalists and instrumentalists, was held in the lobby of the Auditorium, 428 S. Oak St. in Bluffton.

Attendees were able to come to visit with Santa in his big sleigh and snap photos, pause for a cup of hot cocoa or apple cider and stay for the entertainment that began at 4 p.m.

Otto "Tank" Lowe was the organizer of the event and

started off the entertainment with the singing of "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas." He was followed by Jessica Barker singing "Go Tell It On the Mountain."

The rest of the entertainment included:

A vocal by Grace Summerfeld; Joy to the World by the Wyatt and Summerfeld families; piano selections by Abigail Schlemmer, Bri Schlemmer and Grace Bender; guitar music by Carson Bender and Eli Bender; a vocal by David Shepherd; guitar/vocals by Lisa Rich and a French carol by Sarena and Emma.

A sing-along, conducted by Lowe and ending with "We

Wish You a Merry Christmas," concluded the celebration. The Wells County's Creative Arts Council were sponsors.



The "joyful" program was held in the lobby of the Auditorium on South Oak St., against a background of a cozy fireside. Otto "Tank" Lowe, at right, served as the MC for the program in addition to singing.



"Joy to the World" was sung by the Wyatt (Jeff, Deborah and Gabriel) and Summerfeld (Ethan and Grace) families.



Santa and his helpers were available for visiting as he sat in his big sleigh. (Photos by Barbara Barbieri)



Rotary delivers dictionaries to third-graders

The Bluffton Rotary Club delivered dictionaries to Wells County third-graders as part of the club's literacy and youth efforts. Over 400 dictionaries were presented to students in all three public school systems. Above, Rotarians Chaz Carroll and Lee VonGunter display the dictionaries with students from Mrs. Johnson's third-grade class at Lancaster Elementary School on Tuesday. The Bluffton Rotary Club has been delivering non-powered-word-definition-devices to Wells County schools for 15 years. (Photo provided)

Winter events at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo

Among the things going on at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo during December is the registration of youngsters for summer camps. For more information call 260-427-6800, ext. 301 or check education!@kidszoo.org.

Recycle Lights

Another project is the recycling of old Christmas lights by the zoo. From now through Jan. 17th expired strands may be dropped off at the Guest Services building on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Wild Zoo Wonderland

The zoo will be open Dec. 13-15, 20-23 and 26-30 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day. Activities will include story times, visits with favorite animals and Santa. More info at kidszoo.org.

Theme nights at Headwaters Park Ice Rink

Theme nights have been announced for the Headwaters Park Ice Rink in Fort Wayne.

Shake It Off will be held on Thursday, Dec. 12; Holiday Cheer on Dec. 19 and Popular Pop on Dec. 26.

Regular hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 4 to 9 p.m. and from noon to 9 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Holiday hours will include noon to 9 p.m. on Dec. 23, 26, 27, Jan. 2, 3 and on Dec. 31

from noon to 6 p.m. (Closed Christmas eve, Christmas day and New Year's Day.

Skates rent for \$3 and admission is \$6 for those 3 and older. For event updates check out fortwayneparks.org.

Gnome for the Holidays at the Botanical Conservatory

From now through Jan. 5th the Fort Wayne Botanical Conservatory will be featuring Gnome for the Holidays.

\$1 nights are offered on Thursdays and Fridays from 5 to 8 p.m. through Dec. 20.

On Sunday, Dec. 15, from 2 to 2:45 p.m. the Suzuki Strings will perform. On the Saturdays of Dec. 14 and 21 Santa and reindeer will be visiting. (Santa takes a break from 2 to 2:30 p.m.)

In the gallery art work by Ben Klinger will feature art to the theme of "Down on Main Street."

Regular admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for youth (3-17). Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, until 8 p.m. on Thursdays and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, closed Mondays.



Little Miss Indiana Universal Global

Former Little Miss Wells County Destiny Alig, the seven-year-old daughter of Heath and April Alig, was recently named Little Miss Indiana Universal Global. Destiny will be competing for the crown in Orlando, Florida next July. Her goal, other than bringing home the crown, is to make new friendships and to show the world Jesus through her platform. She has a heart for God and she loves to share with anyone she can. Destiny is the granddaughter of Dave and Teresa Alig, Judy Wheeler, Brice and Donna Hudson and Lisa Wheeler. (Photo submitted)

Winter Solstice hikes in Fort Wayne

Two Winter Solstice events will be celebrated in Fort Wayne on Dec. 21.

A Walk/Ride & Campfire gathering will be held at Salomon Park Farms, 817 Dupont Rd. For more information check out fort-

wayneparks.org.

A Solstice Lights Hike & Food Drive is another free drop-in event that will be held at Lindenwood Nature Preserve, 600 Lindenwood Ave.

Bring a food item and

yourself decorated with battery-operated lights or glow sticks for this hiking opportunity. Collected food items will be delivered to the Community Harvest Food Bank in Fort Wayne.



We are proud of our teams

A showcase in the lobby of Bluffton's City Hall is now displaying memorabilia from some of Wells County's winning sports teams over the years. The displays are set up by members of the Wells County Historical Society and are changed periodically. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

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