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MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00

APC looking to housing, 2025 petitions

By JONATHAN SNYDER

Two housing projects are on the Wells County Area Plan Commission's watch list for 2025, along with potential clarity and consistency on ordinance amendments.

Gorman and Associates came before the Bluffton Common Council throughout May, June and July with plans for an addition involving 40 new townhomes for rent at nearby Cottonwood Court, with the option to buy after 15 years. An additional development of 46 lease-to-own units for seniors, near Dustman Road is also planned.

Lautzenheiser reported that both of the planned developments were given tax credits to help develop those areas. While neither of those developments have hit APC desks yet, Lautzenheiser expects them to be heard sometime in 2025.

"Those two projects will be bigger parts to our, I would assume, 2025 plans based on their schedules," Lautzenheiser said.

Additionally, Lautzenheiser said there is a "decent chance" that Paddlefish Solar's power overlay rezoning request will be heard again in 2025. The solar project was acted upon by the APC in March, with the APC giving a unanimous "do-not pass" recommendation for the project. Paddlefish Solar's application did not receive any further action from County Commissioners and the proposal was denied. APC rules of

(Continued on Page 2)

Holcomb's portrait tells his story from his time office

A look at the newly-unveiled gubernatorial portrait features homages to Indiana, family and more

• Accompanying photo on Page 2

By CASEY SMITH, Indiana Capital Chronicle

Cowboy boots, an Ohio River scene, former First Dog Henry: all were key components of outgoing Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb's gubernatorial portrait, unveiled during a Statehouse ceremony on Friday.

The 51st governor — whose tenure will end in less than a month — said he intentionally chose those and other details enshrined in the painting. Even the tiniest of details carry significant meaning, representing pivotal moments and experiences from his life before and since he took office.

Holcomb's portrait artist Russell Recchion was selected from a group of more than two dozen applicants to illustrate Holcomb's likeness on canvas.

"He very early on said that he's an artist, but he has to know what he's painting. And in this case, that was the person — me," Holcomb told the Indiana Capital Chronicle in a Friday interview. "He traveled with me ... he watched me interact with people. He wanted to be able to paint my personality, which was something he said very early on."

First Lady Janet Holcomb, an avid artist herself, was also "directly engaged" in the portrait process from start to finish and helped select Recchion as the artist.

"I knew he and Eric would easily connect on a personal level," the first lady said at Friday's unveiling. "I also felt that connection would come through in the portrait — and I believe it has."

Holcomb's story — in a painting

Among the symbolism and imagery in Holcomb's portrait is a "special view" of the Ohio River, as seen from Hanover College. Holcomb attended the private college from 1986 to 1990.

"There've been a few places in my life that have had a big impact on my life, and that's why we went to Madison," Holcomb said.

Originally, the governor said he wanted to be featured standing up, on Hanover's campus, with the Ohio River in the background.

"But, basically, (Recchion) came back and said, 'You're too tall.' ... If I stood there — to get the portrait — the frame would need to be bigger ... it would have looked more than funny ... so we decided, 'Hey, that can't work,'" Holcomb recalled. "But he took pictures of me standing there, and he agreed to paint that separately, because that's such an iconic kind of view of the state."

The river scene ultimately ended up in the background, hanging behind Holcomb. He emphasized that it's a "really important" and memorable view for him, personally, given that Recchion painted the scene from the same spot where

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Christmas in the Parlor City

Saturday marked Bluffton's annual Parlor City Christmas. At left, Brinley Copeland pets one of the reindeer at the plaza. (Photo by Jonathan Snyder)

At middle left, Santa explained that this was the sixth year he has visited with children at the "Masonic Lodge's Breakfast With Santa" event during Parlor City Christmas. Telling Santa what was on her wish list was Dahlia Frederick, center, as Oliver Anderson, left, and Illy Frederick, listens in. At middle right, Frosty the Snowman greeted visitors in the Wells County Public Library during Parlor City Christmas as he wandered through the library. (Photos by Barbara Barbieri)

At bottom, Jen Sturgeon takes a look at wares on offer at the Parlor City Market. (Photo by Jonathan Snyder) **More Photos on Page 3.**



U.S. agencies should use technology to identify mysterious drones, Schumer says

By BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS and DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — After weeks of fear and bewilderment about the drones buzzing over parts of New York and New Jersey, elected officials are urging action to identify and stop the mysterious flights.

"There's a lot of us who are pretty frustrated right now," Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said on "Fox News Sunday."

National security officials have said the drones don't appear to be a sign of

foreign interference or a public safety threat. But because they can't say with certainty who is responsible for the sudden swarms of drones over parts of New Jersey, New York and other eastern parts of the U.S. — or how they can be stopped — leaders of both political parties are demanding better technology and powers to deal with the drones.

Sen. Chuck Schumer called Sunday for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to deploy better drone-tracking technology to identify the drones and their operators.

"New Yorkers have tremendous questions about it," Schumer, the Sen-

ate majority leader, told reporters about the drone sightings. "We are going to get the answers for them."

The federal government did little to answer those questions in its own media briefings Sunday morning. "There's no question that people are seeing drones," U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told ABC's George Stephanopoulos. "But I want to assure the American public that we are on it. We are working in close coordination with state and local authorities."

Some of the drones reported above

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Outside

A rainy and foggy December day

Today	Tuesday	Wed.
High 56	High 44	High 41
Low 33	Low 31	Low 25

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Housing projects

(Continued from Page 1)

procedure state that an acted upon petition shall not be placed on their agenda's until one year has passed.

The APC will also look into further defining their nuisance issues through ordinance amendments. During Almo Steel's rezoning petition in September and October, a discussion on what the requirements are for a nuisance noise complaint was brought to the table. While consideration is given to noise levels for industrial zoning, there is no specific data on what amount of noise and for what period of time counts as a violation. Lautzenheiser hopes that the

APC can find those pieces of their ordinance and give more concrete definitions in the future.

Furthermore, the APC will be doing a comprehensive review of all their land uses and ordinance definitions. A rezoning petition by BCG Capital and Minnich Industries brought questions on appropriate land uses for light industrial versus business three zoning. Lautzenheiser hopes that a deep dive into those areas will give developers a clearer direction on appropriate land areas for their goals.

"We're going to be looking at a little bit of that," Lautzenheiser said. "To see

what land uses are proper in each zoning district and also to verify that we have the correct definitions and that they are used consistently across the ordinance itself."

Jerome Markley is also retiring from the APC in 2025, with County Council member Vicki Andrews taking his place. The APC is also looking to hire a new attorney, as previous attorney Colin Andrews going into full time as prosecutor. Colin Andrews will still take care of any outstanding issues, which will carry the APC through the beginning of next year.

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Holcomb portrait

(Continued from Page 1)

Holcomb stood at his graduation.

The purple tie donned by the governor is also an homage to his alma mater, honoring his fraternity, Phi Gamma Delta, of which he served as chapter president.

Part of his outfit, too, features cowboy boots — nod to the governor's "distinctive style and grounded approach," his office said.

Holcomb — who said he did not want to be depicted behind a desk — instead chose a "comfortable" sitting pose, which he called a "listening posture," to represent his commitment "to listen first."

A globe sits on the desk next to him, symbolizing the governor's efforts "to connect the state globally." Indiana's flag additionally hangs in the background.

"We've done a lot of traveling," Holcomb noted, but having Indiana at the globe's forefront "is to bring the world back to us."

And ever so discreetly, a family portrait featuring a photo of the first lady and former First Dog Henry "reflect family ties," the governor said. Henry's cameo made him the inaugural pet to be featured in a governor's painting.

"I couldn't have done the job without those two. I mean, Henry, you talk about my buddy during the pandemic. That was like ... get a dog if you want a friend. And he sat there on my lap and that rocking chair out there every night," Holcomb said, pointing towards a seat inside the governor's residence.

In question, however, was whether to paint Holcomb with a beard or glasses. In the end, the beard stayed, but the glasses — no longer worn by the governor — didn't make the cut.

"We agreed to just paint what you see," Holcomb said. "I was kind of quizzing him, like, beard no beard. I wanted to see if he



Gov. Eric Holcomb and First Lady Janet Holcomb view the newest gubernatorial portrait, painted by artist Russell Recchion, on Friday, Dec. 13, 2024, following an unveiling ceremony at the Indiana Statehouse. (Photo by Niki Kelly)

said, 'You need to shave.' I wouldn't have, but I just wanted to see what he said. And we agreed — if you paint something, you've got to paint what you see."

Holcomb is the first governor to have facial hair in his portrait since Samuel Ralston, who served between 1913 and 1917.

About the artist

Recchion, whose work has additionally been commissioned by Indiana University and Eli Lilly, was selected from the competitive field of artists — all with ties to the Hoosier state — to create the official portrait at the beginning of this year.

He's worked as a portrait painter for more than 30 years and serves on the board of the Oil Painters of America. In 1990, he moved to Indianapolis and built a studio in Avon, and was an active member in the Hoosier Art Salon and Brown County Art Guild, according to the governor's office.

While he now resides in Tuscon, Arizona, he still remains "very involved" with Hoosier Art Salon, Holcomb's team said.

Holcomb said the artist joined him at his eighth and last State of State to the General Assembly in January. Recchion also joined Holcomb on a trip to Madison and spent time at the governor's residence.

"They have been so generous with their time ... it has been such a joy for me to work with them," Recchion said of the Holcombs during Friday's ceremony. "All of this time together was so valuable for me, as a portrait painter, because I really got to know the governor. I got to see him up close at work, and from home, and I got to know his personality and his spirit before I even touched a brush to the canvas."

More than a century of portrait history

How Indiana's executive leaders are depicted in their gubernatorial portraits is largely up to them. It's a tradition that dates back to 1869, when then-Gov. Conrad Baker began collecting pictures of the 17 Hoosier governors who preceded him.

The collection of paintings has since come to capture every governor in Indiana history — including

those from when the state was just a territory — except acting Gov. John Gibson, who served for four months in 1800 while awaiting the arrival of territorial Gov. William Henry Harrison.

Mark Ruschman, chief curator of fine arts at the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, previously told the Capital Chronicle the portraits "immortalize" Indiana's top leaders and "honor them for the work they've done." They're also "excellent" windows into the past — providing a glimpse at the personalities, expressions and even the fashion preferences of former Hoosier governors.

Many of the works are now on display at the Indiana Statehouse. The Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites is charged with overseeing the portrait process and caring for existing portraits.

Private funding is used to pay for the artist's commission and framing of the portrait. Any remaining funds are maintained by the state museum for the preservation and exhibition of the collection.

U.S. agencies

(Continued from Page 1)

parts of New York and New Jersey have turned out to be "manned aircraft that are commonly mistaken for drones," Mayorkas said. "We know of no foreign involvement with respect to the sightings in the Northeast. And we are vigilant in investigating this matter."

Last year, federal aviation rules began requiring certain drones to broadcast their remote identification, including the location of their operators. It's not clear whether that information has been used to determine who is behind the drones plaguing locations over New York and New Jersey. Mayorkas' office didn't respond to questions about whether they've been able to identify drones using this capability.

Schumer wants the federal government to use a recently declassified radio wave technology in New York and New Jersey. The radio wave detector can be attached to a drone or airplane and can determine

whether another flying object is a bird or a drone, read its electronic registration, and follow it back to its landing place. Schumer said state and local authorities do not have the authority to track drones.

On Sunday, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said federal officials were sending a drone detection system to the state.

"This system will support state and federal law enforcement in their investigations," Hochul said in a statement. The governor did not immediately provide additional details, including where the system will be deployed.

Dozens of mysterious nighttime flights started last month over parts of New Jersey, raising concerns among residents and officials. Part of the worry stems from the flying objects initially being spotted near the Picatinny Arsenal, a U.S. military research and manufacturing facility, and over President-elect Donald

Trump's golf course in Bedminster. Drones are legal in New Jersey for recreational and commercial use, but they are subject to local and Federal Aviation Administration regulations and flight restrictions. Operators must be FAA certified.

Drones are now being reported all along the northern East Coast, with suspicious sightings in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Virginia, according to news reports.

Some U.S. political leaders, including Trump, have called for much stronger action against the drones,

including shooting them down.

Certain agencies within the Department of Homeland Security have the power to "incapacitate" drones, Mayorkas said Sunday. "But we need those authorities expanded," he said.

A bill before the U.S. Senate would enhance some federal agencies' authority and give new abilities to local and state agencies to track drones. It would also start a pilot program allowing states and local authorities to disrupt, disable or seize a drone without prior consent of the operator.

Weather

Monday, December 16, 2024

(24-hour observations at 10:06 p.m. Sunday)

High: 47; Low: 38; Precipitation: .74 inches of rain

Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.50 feet at 9:45 p.m. Sunday

Wells County forecast

Today: Rain likely, mainly before 1 p.m. Areas of fog before 1 p.m. Otherwise, cloudy, with a high near 56. South wind around 15 mph becoming southwest in the afternoon. Winds could gust as high as 30 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70%. New precipitation amounts between a tenth and quarter of an inch possible.

Tonight: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 33. West wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.

Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 44. West wind 5 to 10 mph.

Tuesday Night: A 30% chance of rain after 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 31. Calm wind.

Wednesday: A chance of rain before 1 p.m., then a slight chance of rain and snow. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 41. Chance of precipitation is 40%.

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

Thursday: Partly sunny, with a high near 36.

Thursday Night: A slight chance of rain before 1 a.m., then a slight chance of rain and snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 25. Chance of precipitation is 20%.

Friday: A 20% chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 34.

Friday Night: A 20% chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 22.

Saturday: A 20% chance of snow. Partly sunny, with a high near 29.

Saturday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 14.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 26.

Trump appoints Richard Grenell to serve as special missions envoy

By MEG KINNARD and AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump announced Saturday that he's picked long-time foreign policy adviser Richard Grenell to serve as an envoy for special missions, tasking him with helping the incoming administration deal with some of the toughest foreign policy challenges.

Grenell served as ambassador to Germany during Trump's first administration, special presidential envoy for Serbia and Kosovo peace negotiations, and did a stint as acting director of national intelligence.

He was also a contender to serve as secretary of state, but Trump opted to nominate Florida Sen. Marco Rubio.

"Ric will work in some of the hottest spots around the World, including Venezuela and North Korea," Trump said in a posting on his social media platform, Truth Social, announcing the appointment.

Grenell during Trump's first term developed a reputation for employing a sometimes contentious approach to diplomacy that rankled allies and the foreign policy establishment in Washington. But his style was appreciated by the president-elect who sees value in blunt talk with allies.

Grenell remained close to Trump after he left office in 2021, serving at times as a key adviser on foreign policy.

He was in the room when Trump met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in September. Grenell has advocated for a peace deal that would preserve Ukraine's territory while still allowing for "autonomous regions" where Russia could remain in control.

He's also advised against expanding NATO to include Ukraine, saying — as Trump has — that the alliance shouldn't grow until current members meet the alliance's defense spending targets. Members of the transatlantic alliance have committed for years to spending 2% of their GDP on defense, but several countries still fall short of the target.

He was an early supporter of Trump's 2024 campaign and held multiple events for the Republican nominee focused on economics and national security.

Speaking at the Republican National Convention, Grenell echoed Trump's mantra that "it's time to put America first" on the global stage and argued that China and Russia saw President Joe Biden's administration as weak.

Trump raised concerns among some allies during the 2024 campaign when he said he would not defend NATO members that failed to meet defense spending targets, and warned he would "encourage" Russia "to do whatever the hell they want" to alliance countries that he considered "delinquent."

Grenell has downplayed Trump's criticisms of NATO and said the only talk of leaving the alliance altogether "was really from the media."

"What we're saying is, don't come to the wedding without a gift," Grenell said.

Grenell was part of the Trump campaign's outreach to Arab American voters in Michigan, where the president-elect made gains with a traditionally Democratic constituency despite his history of banning immigration from several majority-Muslim countries. Grenell orchestrated pro-Trump events with Arab American voters, including a May meeting held in Troy, Michigan.

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OBITUARIES

Daniel "Dan" Baumgardner, 85

Daniel K. "Dan" Baumgardner, 85, of Ossian passed away on Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024.



He was born on April 15, 1939, in Bluffton, a son of the late Kenneth E. and Mildred N. (McGough) Baumgardner. Dan graduated from Ossian High School, Ball State Teachers College, and earned his Masters degree from St. Francis College. He worked as a teacher and drivers training instructor for 33 years before retiring. After retirement, he spent 10 years driving a tour bus. He was a member of New Haven Church of Christ, New Haven, Indiana. In his free time, he enjoyed politics, reading, and supporting the Chicago Bears and Chicago Cubs.

Surviving family include his wife, Fran Baumgardner; daughters, Tonya Johnson and Carla (Daniel) Springer; son, Ted (Chris) Baumgardner; grandchildren, Erich, Rachel, Blaine, and Brett Johnson, Shanna (Luke) Clark, Ian (Maddie), Heather, and Eli Baumgardner, Emily (Landon) Sands, Abigail (Nate) Mayer, and Evan (Reese) Springer; six great grandchildren; sister, Marlene Boxell; and brother, Max Baumgardner.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in passing by his siblings, Jean Kincaid, Norma Wolfe, Jack Baumgardner and Rita Burris.

Funeral service will be 11 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2024 at Elzey-Patterson-Rodak Funeral Home, 120 West Mill St. in Ossian, with visitation one hour prior. Visitation will also be from 2-7 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024, at the funeral home. Burial will be in Oak Lawn Cemetery in Ossian.

Memorials may be made to the New Haven Church of Christ. Condolences and memories of Dan may be left online at www.elzey-patterson-rodak.com

PARLOR CITY CHRISTMAS



Patty Randall speaks during one of the trolley rides, highlighting notable buildings around the city. From left to right, Jamie Johnson, Katrina England and Adam England listen. (Photo by Jonathan Snyder)



Lynne Niermeyer, at left, provided the accompaniment for Amanda Baldouf. (Photo by Barbara Barbieri)

Police Notebook

INCIDENTS

City:
Thursday, 7:38 p.m., 700 block of East Harrison Street. Suspicious activity, black vehicle was in caller's driveway and drove away quickly when caller arrived home.

Friday, 11:33 a.m., Wiley Avenue and Indiana Street. Train stopped, blocking road.

Friday, 1:15 p.m., Walmart. Man arrested on warrant.

County:
Thursday, 2:12 p.m., 1000 S 200 W, Keystone. Verbal altercation. Issue resolved.

Friday, 12:12 a.m., Adams Street and C.R. 200 S, Bluffton. Vehicle observed driving all over the roadway, one time driving completely in the oncoming lane. Driver wasn't impaired, had was reaching for applesauce cup on the floor to eat on the way home.

Market Street at Marion Street. Susan K. Smith, 73, Bluffton, was backing a 2015 Chevrolet Equinox out of a downtown parking spot and did not see a westbound 2014 Ford Focus driven by Gloria Gilbert, 68, Uniondale. Damage exceeded \$1,000.

Thursday, 7:03 a.m., Harvest Road. Haley Aker, 28, Fort Wayne was driving a 2013 Dodge Charger eastbound on Harvest Road and was struck by a 2012 Ford Transit Connect driven by Jose Gonzalez, 58, Bluffton, which was attempted to turn around. Damage did not exceed \$1,000.

Thursday, 6:43 p.m., Premier Avenue at mile market 1. Kykkah V. Drake, 21, Bluffton, was driving a 1999 Ford F-250 turning into Premier Avenue when he slid on ice and hit a fire hydrant. Damage exceeded \$2,500.

County:
Wednesday, 6 p.m., Hoosier Highway at Ash Road, Bluffton. Matthew Davis, 43, Bluffton, was driving a 2004 Chevrolet Tahoe northbound on Hoosier Highway and slid off the roadway and into a guardrail. Damage exceeded \$2,500.

Thursday, 9:36 p.m., C.R. 200 N, Bluffton. Samuel Walker, 22, Markle, was driving a 2016 Chevrolet Silverado westbound on C.R. 200 N and struck a deer. Damage exceeded \$1,000.

Friday, 7:16 a.m., C.R. 100 E near 700 N, Uniondale. Sophia M. Sperone, 18, Yoder, was driving a 2013 Chevrolet Equinox southbound on C.R. 100 E and rear-ended another 2013 Chevrolet Equinox driven by Shawn M. Page, 51, Ossian. Sperone's vehicle was towed from the scene. Damage exceeded \$5,000.

ACCIDENTS

City:
Tuesday, 2:47 p.m., Wayne Street at Tiger Trail. Rylynn Penick, 16, Bluffton, was driving a 2016 Ford Focus southbound on Wayne Street and rear-ended a stopped 2016 Ford Escape driven by Karli Anderson, 18, Bluffton. Penick had abrasions to her hands presumably from the airbags deploying. The Focus was towed from the scene. Damage exceeded \$5,000.

Tuesday, 7:41 p.m., S.R. 1 at Dustman Road. Robert A. Dasilva, 26, Bluffton, was driving a 2005 Nissan Altima northbound on S.R. 1 and rear-ended a stopped 2012 Ford F-150 driven by Davis P. Gruss, 67, Bluffton. Damage exceeded \$1,000.

Wednesday, 11 a.m.,



Above left, Connie Brubaker, left, and Lane Sander look at the sweets on offer at the Historical museum. Above right, Lovelynn Moreno sits down on Santa's lap. (Photos by Jonathan Snyder)



Ohio police launch investigation after bodies of 3 women found

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Authorities in Ohio launched a homicide investigation after the bodies of three women were found Saturday inside a home in Columbus.

Officers were called to a home on the city's south side just before 4 p.m. Saturday for what a 911 caller described as a medical event. Police found three women who were pronounced dead at the scene, according to police spokesman Sgt. James Fuqua.

He said the killings were considered homicides, but he did not have further

details, including what led up to the killings. "Unfortunately, this is a very complex scene with the amount of victims that we have," he told reporters Saturday. "It's going to take a little bit longer to make sure that we're very careful in going through the scene meticulously so we do not miss any key piece of evidence."

He said investigators were interviewing witnesses and looking for video evidence.

Fuqua said Saturday that no suspects had been taken into custody.

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.

VISITATION & SERVICES

Sue A. Manning Memorial Service:
5 p.m. Wednesday, December 18 at the funeral home.

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Death penalty process lacking accountability, transparency

Public access and transparency have taken a beating during the process to resume executions in the state of Indiana. And that hurts public confidence in the system.

The Indiana Department of Correction won't hold any press briefings or information sessions for the state's first execution in 15 years. It will send two updates via email to reporters on the day of the death.

Only Wyoming and Indiana don't allow media witnesses out of the 27 states and the federal government that have the death penalty. In several states, it's a discretionary choice for correction officials but the vast majority authorize a set number of media witnesses from three to 12.

Indiana is clear outlier. In some executions, reporters have provided factual information on mistakes or botched results.

The agency has also denied virtually every information request related to the execution, including any information about the drug that will be used to kill Joseph Corcoran before sunrise on Wednesday.

They won't say how many vials were bought, what it cost, the expiration date. Nothing.

They are hiding behind a law that protects the identity of the company that the state bought the pentobarbital from. That law exists because manufacturers and distributors were getting bad press when they supplied states with drugs to perform executions. And that's fine.

But as a taxpayer, we should be able to know what the state is spending on executions and the cost of the drug is a key part. Without knowing how many vials were bought, it's impossible to know how many executions the state intends to carry out. And the expiration date of the drugs is also important for the integrity of the process.

That's why I filed a complaint with the Public Access Counselor to get the cost. The law shields "information reasonably calculated to lead to the identity" of the supplier. IDOC considers the cost alone enough to give a foothold to reverse engineer online financial records to identify the identity of the supplier, according to their response.

How, I have no idea.

And all this leads to my other major transparency issue — my fear that public records and access would be decidedly chilled by last-minute legislative changes last April.

You see, lawmakers neutered the Public Access Counselor position because they didn't like some of his rulings. They first changed the post from a term of years to serving at the pleasure of the governor. The point of that is so he or she can be fired at any time if a ruling ticks the right people off.

But another key change said the public access counselor shall consider only: (1) the public access laws, as plainly written; and (2) valid opinions of Indiana courts.

I was concerned immediately that this would mean the counselor would avoid making rulings and instead force everyone to go to court. I was right.

The current counselor, Luke Britt, sent a letter Friday to me and a public defender who had also sought various records related to the execution. I have always respected Britt's decisions, even ones that didn't go my way. But it's clear from the letter that his powers have been muted.

"The General Assembly has issued new marching orders to the public access counselor to limit my interpretation of statutes of the access laws to their plain reading when crafting advisory opinions. The statute in question does not contain an exhaustive list of the public records that may lead to the reasonable calculation of an identity or a vendor. Toward that end, the legislature has not defined the term "reasonably calculated". The public access counselor must pass on any inference regarding ambiguous statutes either way. Likewise, case law does not exist either addressing these matters."

So, basically, the legislature tied the access counselor's hands behind his back and Hoosiers have to instead file a lawsuit to get an answer.

We are evaluating our next options as litigation can be lengthy and expensive. But it's clear Hoosiers won't know what the state of Indiana spent when Corcoran takes his last breath next week.

Niki Kelly is the editor of the Indiana Capital Chronicle, a non-profit newsroom. nkelly@indianacapitalchronicle.com

Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, Dec. 16, the 351st day of 2024. There are 15 left in the year.

Today in history: On Dec. 16, 1773, the Boston Tea Party took place as American colonists boarded a British ship and dumped more than 300 chests of tea into Boston Harbor to protest tea taxes.

Also on this date:

In 1907, 16 U.S. Navy battleships, which came to be known as the "Great

White Fleet," set sail on a 14-month, round-the-world voyage to demonstrate American sea power.

In 1944, the World War II Battle of the Bulge began as German forces launched a surprise attack against Allied forces through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and Luxembourg.

In 1960, 134 people were killed when a United Air Lines DC-8 and a TWA Super Constellation collided over New York City.



Niki Kelly

Hoosier Opinions



In flight with Gov. Holcomb

MICHIGAN CITY — Eric Holcomb stopped by my office above the Old Point Tavern to shoot the breeze in the spring of 2015. Holcomb had a Starbucks cup of coffee in his hand, and as he crossed his long legs he revealed a hole in the sole of one of his well-worn boots. He had been pounding the pavement and bending ears about his future.

Holcomb had been on U.S. Sen. Dan Coats's staff after 10 years with Gov. Mitch Daniels, where he was deputy chief of staff, managed his reelection campaign and served a stint as state GOP chair.

Holcomb was full of stories, like the time he needed GOP files and found a recalcitrant clerk in Southern Indiana in her office who was on mosey time. Holcomb found a nearby flower shop and then delivered a bouquet to her desk, suggesting he'd come back after lunch. When he did, the files awaited.

He was one of Daniels' legendary Statehouse enforcers, but he could spoon up ample sugar when the situation required.

Eric Holcomb had been diligently working the back channels of state government and the Republican Party in those days. When Gov. Daniels launched the Major Moves highway initiative, it was Holcomb who worked labor unions for support.

When Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama addressed the Indiana Democratic Jefferson-Jackson Dinner just before the Indiana May 2008 presidential primary, the sponsor banners on either side of the stage featured Sheet Metal Workers union chief Jay Potesta and Building Trades leader Tom O'Donnell. Both had endorsed the Republican Daniels' reelection bid in a move that had Holcomb's fingerprints all over it.

"Have you ever thought about running for office?" I later asked Holcomb as we shared pints of Guinness downstairs.

The answer would emphatically come later that year when he and his wife Janet kicked off a campaign for the U.S. Senate. Then he got a Valentine's Day 2016 call from Gov. Mike Pence, who was seeking a new lieutenant governor.

The Pence-Holcomb ticket would be transformed when Donald Trump finally selected the Hoosier governor as his veep just minutes before the deadline to withdraw from the ticket approached.

What commenced was a crazy week in Cleveland at the Republican National Convention, where Holcomb, U.S. Reps. Todd Rokita and Susan Brooks and state Sen. Jim Tomes twisted arms in hotel alcoves to replace Pence. Holcomb would win on the second ballot. He built a pay-as-you-go effort with a 100% burn rate, ultimately pulling off a come-from-behind upset over Democrat John Gregg in November.

"It was like building an airplane in flight," Holcomb explained. "It was kind of a bumpy ride."

Three weeks after winning the gubernatorial nomination, I traveled with Lt. Gov. Holcomb to Lake County and then LaPorte. When we reached LaPorte

City Hall word came of a devastating tornado had struck Kokomo.

What commenced was a 100-mph beeline down U.S. 31 with Holcomb riding shotgun, constantly monitoring his phone and making calls.

I observed: "He is a constant font of good cheer. He is curious and engaged. He tends to find a good balance of levity and humor. His staff time with Gov. Daniels and Sen. Coats has given him a good grasp of where the levers of power are and how they can be effectively used. Holcomb works easily with those from the other side of the aisle. He looks for alliances where others tend to find oppo-



Brian Howey

Politicking

nents and suspicion."

After taking office, there would be plenty of other bumpy flights. The state was just recovering from a decade-long battle with clandestine methamphetamine labs. Now Holcomb was confronted with an opioid epidemic. Three years later came the COVID-19 pandemic that would infect 2 million Hoosiers and kill more than 25,000.

While Holcomb and his health team held weekly press conferences, the political heat came from the right when he ordered businesses and churches to close. There were promises of political retribution, but when the votes were counted in November 2020, Holcomb received a record 1.7 million (56.5%).

At an Indiana Northwest Forum "Salute" to Gov. Holcomb, Gary Mayor Eddie Melton said the governor "had helped write a new chapter for this region. You have realized the strength of Indiana lies in all its cities and towns."

Mayor Melton then asked, "Has anyone here ever flown in a helicopter?"

The Democrat followed up, "So the only time I've ever flown in a helicopter — something I said I would never do — was with the governor. I did it and I was scared as hell the entire way. It was swaying left and right, and he was just sitting there cool as a cucumber."

After the tribute, the Indiana State Police detail delivered us to a waiting chopper. But there was a problem that was "digital" in nature. Five minutes later, we were cleared for liftoff.

Mayor Melton's words were ringing in my head. I didn't want to wuss out, so I took the flight. I probably had a look on my face similar to the one movie director Woody Allen had when he was driving to the airport with Annie Hall's suicidal brother.

Off into the night we went. Holcomb was cucumber cool, as the helicopter did what Melton had described, swaying back and forth and bouncing along above the thousands of Christmas lights that adorned many homes below.

Howey is a senior writer for Howey Politics Indiana and State Affairs. Find Howey on X @hwypol.

The Musk factor



Rich Lowry

It's a testament to the energy and drive of Elon Musk that he's now a key adviser to an incoming president of the United States who he helped elect this year — and this is a side project for him.

What stamp collecting is to most of us — something we make time for when not engaged in our day jobs — influencing the future direction of the United States government is to Musk.

This is not to minimize his significance. Far from it. The revolutionary businessman represents a distinctive and unexpected contribution to the Trump coalition.

From the perspective of a decade ago, if you had said the most visionary and wealthy entrepreneur on the planet was at the right hand of a Republican president-elect, promising to cut a couple of trillion dollars from the federal budget and bring massive innovation to the economy, you might have assumed Paul Ryan or someone in his ideological camp had gotten elected.

The former Speaker of the House and vice-presidential nominee was a relentless advocate of entrepreneurship, economic dynamism and a slimmed-down government.

Within the GOP, the rise of Trump the populist put the political squeeze on the likes of Ryan, whose business-oriented, free-market creed suddenly felt stale and out of touch.

Now, a version of that worldview has returned via Musk.

To be sure, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX is a different animal. He has an in-your-face persona, a bit of a Silicon Valley version of Trump. He's been radicalized on immigration, becoming a fierce opponent of Joe Biden's open border. He's a cultural warrior seeking to destroy what he calls "the woke mind virus."

And he can speak in apocalyptic tones.

All of this, and especially his acquisition of Twitter, has made him a populist hero in his own right, even as he champions an economic dynamism that would have thrilled conventional Republicans from the pre-Trump era.

Trump contains multitudes. Part of him is an inward-looking protectionist who believes, almost no matter what, that we are getting ripped off by foreign countries. Part of him is also a champion of endless possibility. Part of him is a tribune of the working class. Part of him is also inclined to make the stock market the economic measures of all things. He'll talk of American carnage, and of an American golden age.

This is a protean mix, and subject to change depending on circumstances and who is around Trump at any given point.

A danger of populism is that it can succumb to pure nostalgia and become overly defensive, giving in

to a distrust of technology, big companies and economic change. So long as Musk is a major player in Trump's world, there is a strong counter to this tendency.

Musk is the paladin of a future ripped from the covers of paperback science-fiction novels circa the 1950s — rocket ships, futuristic cars, robots and giant tunnel-boring machines.

He has almost single-handedly changed Republican attitudes toward Big Tech. He's proven that you can be a Silicon Valley entrepreneur and not be woke or a cowardly fellow traveler with left-wing politics. There's still plenty of contempt of and distrust for tech companies on the Right, but now it is Democrats who talk more of ideas like repealing Section 230 to hobble social-media companies.

At the same time, Musk's Department of Government Efficiency has made talk of cutting government fashionable again on the Right, when this priority had mostly lost out to other concerns since the advent of the Trump era. The hope that DOGE will cut as much as \$2 trillion from the budget is unrealistic, but any savings and efficiencies would be welcome.

Who knows how effective Musk will be in his role as a change agent confronting government, the most difficult institution to change? Sending a man to Mars might be easier. But Musk brings a boundless optimism and can-do verve to the effort, and he's a healthy new ingredient to Trump's populist mix.

Rich Lowry is on Twitter @RichLowry

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What's happening at the Wells County Public Library

The Wells County Public Library takes its mission to "provide the community with access, knowledge and growth" very seriously and offers a variety of events each week for kids, teens, and adults. Registration is preferred at most events. To sign up, go to www.wellscolibrary.org, click on the Library Event Calendar, navigate to the date of the event, and view more to get to the registration screen. Alternatively, call 260-824-1612 (Bluffton) or 260-622-4691 (Ossian) to register.

Kids' Club

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Tuesday, Dec. 17 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Grades K-3. Join us for book-related crafts, stories, games, and a chance to make new friends at the library. Registration appreciated.

Golden Gamers

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Tuesday, Dec. 17 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Adults. Are you bored? Do you need some social interaction? Come and enjoy two hours of socializing, games, and snacks. Registration appreciated.

Teen Advisory Board

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Wednesday, Dec. 18 from 6 to 6:45 p.m.

Grades 6-12. Do you wish you had a say in Teen Programming at the Library? Do you need volunteer credit? Join the Teen

Advisory Board! You don't need to sign up—just show up for the TAB meetings on the last Wednesday of the month.

Theater Thursday

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Thursday, Dec. 19 at 10 a.m.

Adults. Join us for a movie, popcorn, and snacks. This month is a "Prancer: A Christmas Tale." Sponsored by the Bluffton Parks & Recreation and the Friends of the Library. No registration needed.

Club 456

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Thursday, Dec. 19 from 6 to 7 p.m.

Grades 4-6. Join us as we travel the world! Explore different countries! Learn about different cultures! Taste traditional foods! And learn to dance or celebrate in different ways! This month...Peru! Registration appreciated.

"How the Grinch Stole Christmas"

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Thursday, Dec. 19 from 6 to 7:45 p.m.

Grades 6-12. Grades 6-12. Join us for a showing of How the Grinch Stole Christmas (2000, starring Jim Carrey) with themed snacks to get into the holiday spirit! Please note that this movie is rated "PG, for some crude humor." Registration appreciated, but not required.

Board Game Night

At the Ossian Branch Library: Thursday,

Dec. 19 from 6-8 p.m.

Adults (18+). Join us for a night of tabletop games at the Ossian Branch. Registration appreciated.

Saturday Movies

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Saturday, Dec. 21 at 11 a.m.

All ages. Drop-in for a family-friendly movie under the stars in the Story Hour Room. This month is "Prancer" (1989 version).

Library Closing for Christmas

The Main Library and the Ossian Branch will be closed from Tuesday, Dec. 24 through Thursday, Dec. 26 for Christmas. The library will reopen on Friday, Dec. 27.

Try It Night: Snowflake Window Clings

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Monday, Dec. 30 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Adults. Create or try out a new craft each month. This month you will use coffee filters and a variety of supplies to make a cute holiday decoration. All supplies provided. Registration required.

Noon Year's Eve

At the Main Library (Bluffton): Tuesday, Dec. 31 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

All ages. The entire family is invited for a countdown to Noon with a balloon drop, crafts, snacks, story time under the stars in the Story Hour room, and scavenger hunt in the Children's Room. Fancy festive attire is



welcome, but not required. No registration needed.

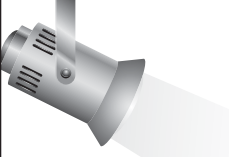
Library Hours

At the main library in Bluffton — Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At the Ossian branch library — Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon.

Access the library online at www.wellscolibrary.org for digital books, magazines, online databases, event info, and more.


Norwell ICE Spotlight award Max Babcock



Senior Max Babcock has been selected to receive the Norwell High School Internship Spotlight award. He has been doing his experience with Norwell High School Spanish teacher Lori White and the Riley Foundation. Max is the son of Tim and Julia Babcock of Bluffton.

As the president of the Riley Dance Committee, Max has learned a great deal about planning and organizing for raising funds. Such fundraisers include the Dance Marathon, 5K Color Run, the pancake breakfast, and numerous sporting events. Max has shown outstanding leadership as there are over 80 student members on the Riley Foundation committee.

Upon graduation, Max plans to Attend Indiana University to study finance. Eventually he aspires to be accepted in to the Kelley School of Business and become a financial planner.



Max Babcock
financial planner.

Zanesville News

by Melba Edwards

Just getting over Thanksgiving we are now preparing for Christmas as our family gathers at the Ossian United Methodist Church for our Christmas before Dec. 25. There is a great spread of food as all members bring something and some add their favorites to the menu. The site satisfies those who like to shoot a basket or just run around and play!

Have you had time to come over to

the Tower Life Center and see the Living Lights? Don't miss it. Bring some friends with you that don't drive anymore and they will love it. You don't have to get out of your car.

Don't forget that the Zanesville Town Council meets Tuesday evening at 6:30 at the Town Hall. Come and show your support of all those who keep the town up and going.

Friends Who Care seeking items for Jan. 4 auction

The 12th Annual Gospel Concert & Auction, sponsored by the Friends Who Care Cancer Relief Foundation, will be held on Saturday, Jan. 4 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the 4-H Community Building.

Doors will open at 4 p.m. for the silent auction and for concessions from Uncle Matt's BBQ. Seven local singing groups will provide the entertainment and an active auction also will be held.

There is no admission charge to attend, however sponsors are now being acquired

for five levels of giving (Diamond (\$5,000), Platinum (\$2,500), Gold (\$1,000), Silver (\$500) and Bronze (\$250). (For more information contact Steve Gerber at (260) 824-5189.)

Items for both the silent and active auctions also are being collected and may be brought to Bluffton's NAPA, Family Ford of Bluffton or Outdoor Concepts.

The Friends Who Care organization assists folks who live in Wells County and who have cancer.

Youtheatre presents the musical 'Anastasia'

For Wayne's Youtheatre, the 5th oldest youth theatre in the United States, is celebrating their 90th anniversary by presenting the musical "Anastasia."

There will be a performance at 7 p.m. Dec. 20 and 3 p.m. curtain times on Dec. 21 and 22. There will be a sensory performance on Dec. 19 at 7 p.m. and Breakfast with

Santa on Dec. 21, 10 a.m.

All presentations will be at the First Presbyterian Theater, 300 W. Wayne St. Fort Wayne. Tickets are \$20 adults, \$15, students and seniors. Breakfast with Santa tickets are \$35 adults and \$30 child. Ticket information at 260-422-4226 and at FortWayneYoutheatre.org.

Countdown to Noon at Science Central

Science Central's 30th annual "Countdown to Noon" will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 31 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for all ages of partygoers.

At noon the epic balloon drop will be sponsored by the Lake City Bank. Personalized "wish" balloons will be offered to participants.

Those attending will also receive access to 20th-anniversary Stamp Rally booklets offering prizes, scavenger hunts and thematic activities.

Regular admission applies with more information at www.sciencecentral.org.


Community Harvest Farm Wagon

The Community Harvest Farm Wagon visits Life Community Church every Tuesday at 9 a.m. to give FREE fresh food to needy families. The church address is 428 S. Oak St. in Bluffton. Enter the parking lot at the south entrance off of Oak Street and park facing North.

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Testy about takeout

Dear Annie: Both my adult daughter and her husband are employed. Since they do not cook, when my husband and I visit them, which is approximately four times a year, they send out for food and ask us to pay our share of the bill, or, on occasion, she will use my credit card to pay for the whole bill. When we go out to eat at a restaurant, I always pick up the check, which I feel is almost expected on their part.

Am I asking for too much by wanting them to entertain us when we visit them, as I have done for the past 20 years when they visit us? — Lunch With a Bill

Dear Lunch With a Bill: When it comes to parents picking up the tab, sometimes old habits die hard. If you've been paying for meals since your adult daughter was a child, she probably doesn't think twice before passing you the check.

Excuses aside, it's bad manners to charge guests for their portion of a meal. Next time she tries to charge you for lunch, just say, "You take care of this one, and I'll treat us all to dinner tonight."

Dear Annie: I have been with my fiancé for 15 years. She has two children from a previous relationship.

When I came into their lives, her son was 6 and her daughter had just turned 7. I almost immediately became a father figure to her children, as their father stopped all communication with them after the divorce.

I absolutely loved spending time with them, but I was 23 and had never been a father before. I made many, many mistakes and also developed a dependency on opiates that made me not such a good person at times.

Eventually, the children's father came back into his son's life but said he wanted nothing to do with my wife's daughter as he wasn't her real father. I was thrilled to be her father. I often thought of walking her down the aisle, being a grandpa to her children should she have any, etc.

As she got older, our relationship

became strained. She developed new personality traits, and I struggled with addiction and didn't make her feel good about herself most of the time. I thought I was doing the right thing back then.

Eventually, I got sober, and she moved out and became a mother to an amazing little boy. Part of my recovery process is making amends to people I have hurt. I love her more than I can put into words, and her son is absolutely crazy about me and calls me "Grandpa." I have told her many times how sorry I am, how wrong I was and how proud I am of her for what she has done with her life. I want more than anything to have a relationship with her and be a grandpa to that little boy. She has put up quite a wall, though.

Is there anything I can do, or do I need to just make peace with having to let her go? Please help. — Torn Apart in Illinois

Dear Torn Apart: Your stepdaughter probably expects that you'll let her down again or abandon her entirely, like her biological father did many years ago.

The proof is in the pudding. Instead of telling her again how sorry you are for your mistakes, let your apology shine through your actions. Plant your feet and hang tough. Show her that you've changed and you aren't going anywhere this time.

It might take time for her to come around, but be patient. One of the most important things we can do as parents is show up for our kids. When her wall eventually crumbles, she will realize that standing on the other side is the good-hearted and loving father she's always had.

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

Dear Annie

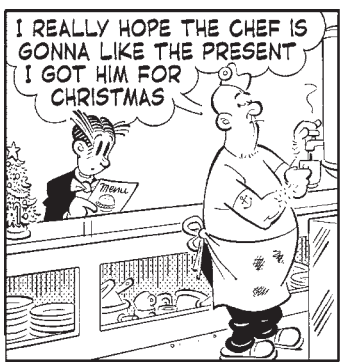
by Annie Lane



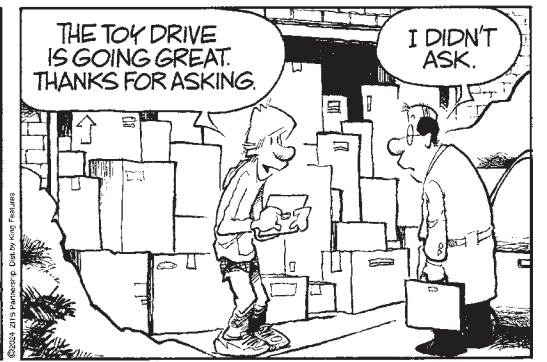
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My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



God's grace is available to us all

Question: I'm "amazed" that the world accepts the song "Amazing Grace," with its strong testimony of people being lost sinners and being saved by God's amazing grace. Is this the personal testimony of John Newton, once a slave trader? — A.G.

Answer: In an English village, not far from Oxford and Cambridge, is a 14th-century church. In the corner of the churchyard is a large tombstone with these words inscribed: "John Newton, Clerk; once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach

the faith he had long labored to destroy."

Newton was the son of a sea captain who was engaged in the Mediterranean trade. His mother died when he was 6, and after only two years of formal schooling, he joined his father's ship at the age of 11. His early life was one of immorality, debauchery, and failure, rejected by his father, in trouble with his employers, and finally jailed.

This miserable seaman was brought to his senses by reading the book "Imitation of Christ". His conversion was the result of a violent storm in which he almost lost his life. Newton became a minister and gave the rest of his life to serving God in the church. It was during this time that Newton wrote his own testimony — "Amazing

Grace."

God's grace has been defined as "His undeserved favor." It was this grace that reached out to Newton. When he learned that Christ loved him and had died for him, he was amazed. It was this grace that made him conscious that he was a sinner ("grace taught my heart to fear") and then assured him that his sins were forgiven ("grace my fears relieved"). While many people sing the words, they don't understand the message, but this grace is available to us all.

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

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Saturday's answer 12-16

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers in some cells and empty cells for numbers 1-9.

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7		6	9	8		1		4
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12/16

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Public Notices

PUBLIC SESSION MEETING NOTICE
The Local/Regional Child Fatality Review Team Serving Adams and Wells County will meet on Thursday, December 19, 2024 8:15 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the Adams County Detention Center 911 Peacekeepers Way, Decatur, IN 46733

nb 12/16

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Lottery Numbers

Saturday's Drawings
HOOSIER LOTTERY
Cash 5 — 05-06-27-39-40
Cash4Life — 25-35-37-45-49, Cash Ball: 04
Lotto Plus — 06-18-20-29-31-44
Quick Draw Midday — 13-16-17-19-33-34-35-38-42-47-54-57-58-60-63-66-68-72-75-78, BE: 57
Daily Three-Midday — 08-09-08, SB: 03
Daily Three-Evening — 05-06-02, SB: 01
Daily Four-Midday — 03-07-05-06, SB: 03
Daily Four-Evening — 06-04-02-01, SB: 01
Quick Draw Evening — 01-07-09-10-11-13-17-19-32-34-36-37-41-42-44-47-53-60-69-77, BE: 09
Hoosier Lotto — 02-13-16-20-26-32
POWERBALL
12-17-23-52-67; Powerball: 01; Power Play: 2X

HOOSIER LOTTERY
Cash 5 — 15-17-26-27-29
Cash4Life — 01-18-22-29-39, Cash Ball: 01
Quick Draw Midday — 01-04-09-11-13-25-27-29-40-42-45-48-50-52-53-71-73-74-76-79, BE: 40
Daily Three-Midday — 05-03-05, SB: 05
Daily Three-Evening — 02-02-03, SB: 02
Daily Four-Midday — 07-02-00-07, SB: 05
Daily Four-Evening — 04-07-02-03, SB: 02
Quick Draw Evening — 03-06-07-11-17-18-20-22-28-34-40-45-46-50-54-72-74-76-77-78, BE: 72
Hoosier Lotto — Estimated jackpot (for Wednesday): \$32.3 million
MEGA MILLIONS
Estimated jackpot (for Tuesday): \$740 million
POWERBALL
Estimated jackpot (for Wednesday): \$55 million

Sunday's Drawings

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Tigers roll to third straight win

By ANDREW FEEBACK

In a very one-sided affair, the Bluffton boys' basketball team won its third straight game Saturday afternoon by routing the Elwood Panthers 60-15.

About 16 hours after their last game ended, the Tigers (3-1) showed no signs of fatigue after a long road trip Friday night and quick turnaround Saturday, racing out to a 21-0 lead and never looking back.

Coach Craig Teagle was pleased with the performance, mainly with how his team played after Friday night's game with Lakeland Christian.

"Sharing the basketball, our team defense, switching and communicating, and keeping the ball in front of us," he said, noting what he found most impressive.

He also liked how his team handcuffed Elwood's Jayden Mullins, holding him to two points.

"He's been really good at getting into the paint, and finishing around the rim," he said. "We did a good job keeping him in front of the most part."

Bluffton reached Elwood's entire offensive output by the end of the first quarter with a 15-0 lead. After Kaleb Green's one-handed dunk on a fast-break, it was 21-0.

Mullins notched Elwood's only points of the half on a bucket in the paint with 5:38 to play, one of the few times he was even a threat to score.

The Panthers' only points the rest of the game came on a pair of triples from Jackson Gordon, two three-pointers from Corbin Leavell, and a free throw from Ethan Casas.

Elwood (1-5) missed its first 11 shots and ended 5 of 33 for the game, including 4 of 24 from deep.

Bluffton ended the third quarter with 15 straight, capped off by a three-pointer from Declan Grieser at the buzzer right in front of his teammates on the Tiger bench, and the lead was 53-8.

Grieser finished with 18 points, while Green had 16. Nolan Lambert went 3 for 3 from long distance for nine points, while Cameron Williams chipped in eight.

Even though the Tigers won big Friday night at Lakeland Christian, Teagle wasn't particularly happy with it.

"I didn't think we played great last night," he said. "We had 16 turnovers, we got dribble-split too much defensively, and I didn't think our intensity level was as high as it needed to be. We talked about that, and I thought we cor-

rected some of that today. Our intensity level was up, we communicated better, and I thought we were more on the same page today than we were last night."

Bluffton will host Southern Wells Friday night.

The Tigers took the junior varsity game 48-22. Reid Abbett topped the Tigers with 12 points, while Gibson Grieser had eight. Kameron Klinski and Abram Gehrett both had seven.

sports@news-banner.com

BLUFFTON 60, ELWOOD 15

At Bluffton
ELWOOD (1-5): Jayden Mullins 1-6 0-0 2, Brice Shuler 0-0 0-0 0, Ethan Casas 0-2 1-2 1, Jackson Gordon 2-8 0-0 6, Braden Etchison 0-1 0-0 0, Tarik Osborn 0-0 0-0 0, Blaise Jones 0-2 0-0 0, Corbin Leavell 2-10 0-0 6, Conner Wooten 0-2 0-0 0, Jacob Bell 0-1 0-0 0, Liam Cannon 0-1 0-0 0. TOTALS: 5-33 1-2 15.
BLUFFTON (3-1): Nolan Lambert 3-3 0-0 9, Cameron Williams 2-5 4-4 8, Marshall Gerber 1-5 0-0 2, Austin Geimer 0-0 0-0 0, Gavin Grieser 0-0 0-0 0, Griffin Morgan 2-2 0-1 4, Declan Grieser 8-14 1-2 18, Benjamin Maggard 0-1 0-0 0, Kaleb Green 8-10 0-1 16, Jonah Geisel 0-0 0-0 0, Axton Beste 0-0 0-0 0, Maxwell White 1-2 0-0 3, Gibson Grieser 0-0 0-0 0. TOTALS: 25-42 5-8 60.

Elwood 0 2 6 7 — 15
Bluffton 15 17 21 7 — 60
Three-point Goals: Elwood 4-24 (Gordon 2-6, Leavell 2-10, Jones 0-2, Casas 0-1, Mullins 0-1, Etchison 0-1, Wooten 0-1, Bell 0-1, Cannon 0-1), Bluffton 5-14 (Lambert 3-3, Declan Grieser 1-2, White 1-2, Gerber 0-3, Williams 0-3, Maggard 0-1). Rebounds: Elwood 9 (Mullins 8, Casas 1), Bluffton 31 (Green 9, Declan Grieser 7, Williams 4, Lambert 3, Gibson Grieser 2, Morgan 2, Geisel 2, Gerber 1, Maggard 1). Turnovers: Elwood 11, Bluffton 8. Fouls: Elwood 10, Bluffton 7. Fouled out: None. Technicals: None. JV: Bluffton 48, Elwood 22.



Bluffton's Declan Grieser, left, glides to the hoop for a basket in front of Elwood defenders during the first half of Saturday's non-conference game. Grieser's 18 points helped the Tigers to a 60-15 win over Elwood. (Photo by Chad Kline)

Not enough offense for Norwell in loss to Blackhawk Christian

By ANDREW FEEBACK

FORT WAYNE— A lot had to go right for the Norwell Knights if they were going to have any chance to knock off the Fort Wayne Blackhawk Christian Braves Saturday.

For the first half, some things did. But in the second half, most of them didn't, and the Knights fell to the home-standing Braves, 56-34.

"Our guys competed really hard," coach Mike McBride said. "Our guys did a lot of things we wanted to do coming into the game."

One of those was to slow the game down and limit possessions. Norwell did that early on, and even led for a time, with three-pointers from Owen Wallis and Garry Riley staking them to an early 9-6 lead.

"We wanted to get ourselves through the first quarter in a position where we were right there," McBride said.

The Knights (3-2) were right there, but a costly four-point swing ended the frame. Trailing 11-9, Adam McBride was fouled with four seconds left, but made only one of two. Blackhawk's Bryce Sefton made a heavily-contested shot from the top of the key as the buzzer sounded, giving the Braves (4-1) a four-point cushion.

That was just the beginning for Sefton, who led all scorers with 20 points and made 6 of 12 shots beyond the arc.

Sefton's next triple had the Braves up 23-13 and looking like they could break away at any moment. But Norwell came up with a

couple steals which they converted into baskets, and with neither team scoring for the last two minutes of the half, the Knights trailed just 23-17 at the break.

The drought continued for both teams into the second half, with no points either way until Sefton connected from deep nearly three minutes in. He hit another one on the Braves' next possession, and after a fast-break layup from Luke Mansfield, Blackhawk Christian suddenly led 31-17.

"I thought we were really good defensively at the start of the third quarter," McBride said. "But we could not cut into the six-point deficit. They're too good offensively to not take advantage of those stops. We had multiple possessions in a row where we got defensive stops, but we could not score it on the other end."

After a timeout, the Knights got back to back buckets from Adam and Josh McBride and kept the deficit at 10 for a bit.

Sefton's next three ended the third-quarter scoring and began a 13-0 run for the Braves. His sixth and final trey began the last quarter, and was followed by a three-point play from Briggs Pardon, then consecutive layups from Drake Sefton.

While some of the first-half positives for the Knights were not maintained for the whole game, one area they excelled in



throughout the contest was neutralizing the Braves' size advantage. Blackhawk Christian's shortest starter was listed at 6-2, equaling the listed height of Norwell's tallest.

A big mismatch was Blackhawk's 6-10 forward Kellen Pickett, who came in averaging 20 points per game but incredibly did not score in this one.

Norwell flustered the big man by swarming him when he got his hands on the ball and forcing him too far underneath the basket.

"We just can't guard Pickett one on one, so we have to send multiple guys," McBride said. "Our zone was very active and gave us a chance. They're just physical, big, strong and athletic. I think they wore us down a bit with their defensive pressure. Eleven turnovers is not bad, but in a game like this, we've probably got to have five."

Norwell made seven three-pointers, but Blackhawk Christian made 11 out of 29. The Knights were just 12 of 36 overall.

"We needed to shoot a little better than we did earlier in the game," McBride said. "The margin of error is so small against this talented of a team."

Wallis was the only Knight to reach double figures, finishing with 12. Nick McBride added eight.

Although the end result was nearly the

same score as the Knights' season-opening 58-30 loss at Carroll, Coach McBride felt this was a considerably better showing.

"I'm very impressed with what we were able to do and how we were able to stay competitive longer than we did when we went on the road at Carroll, against similar size," he said. "We did a better job of giving ourselves a greater opportunity later in the game."

Norwell will travel to DeKalb Friday.

The junior varsity Knights came up with a 36-28 victory. Noah Comer scored 14 points, Cade Thornton had nine and Cooper Bunn added five.

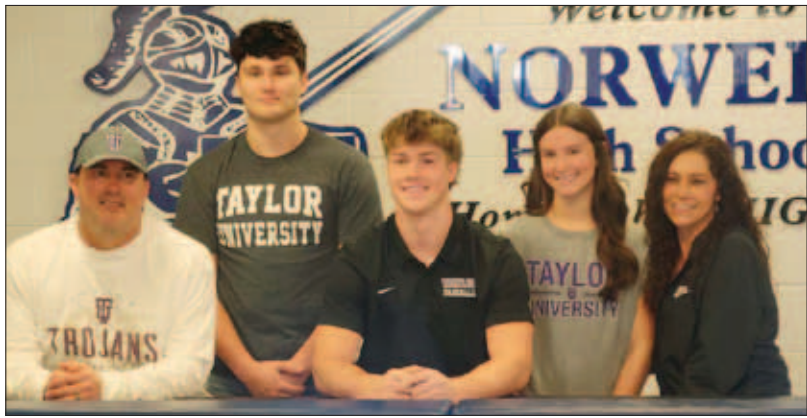
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FORT WAYNE BLACKHAWK 56, NORWELL 34

At Fort Wayne Blackhawk
NORWELL (3-2): Owen Wallis 4-5 0-0 12, Garry Riley 1-4 0-0 3, Adam McBride 2-10 1-2 5, Josh McBride 3-9 2-2 8, Nick McBride 2-7 0-0 6, Noah Comer 0-0 0-0 0, Ryne Thornton 0-1 0-0 0. TOTALS: 12-36 3-4 34.
FORT WAYNE BLACKHAWK (4-1): Briggs Pardon 4-6 3-4 11, Drake Sefton 4-6 0-0 9, Kellen Pickett 0-8 0-0 0, Payton Rhinehart 1-3 0-0 3, Owen Saleik 0-0 0-0 0, Kyler Wood 0-0 0-0 0, Bryce LaCross 2-7 2-2 8, Christian Webster 0-2 0-0 0, Jaeden O'Neal 1-3 0-0 3, Bryce Sefton 7-14 0-0 20, Luke Mansfield 1-2 0-0 2, Luke Metzler 0-0 0-0 0. TOTALS: 20-51 5-6 56.

Norwell 10 7 4 13 — 34
Fort Wayne Blackhawk 14 9 11 22 — 56
Three-point Goals: Norwell 7-23 (Wallis 4-5, Nick McBride 2-6, Riley 1-4, Adam McBride 0-3, Josh McBride 0-4, Thornton 0-1), Fort Wayne Blackhawk 11-29 (Bryce Sefton 6-12, LaCross 2-5, Drake Sefton 1-2, Rhinehart 1-2, O'Neal 1-3, Pickett 0-4, Mansfield 0-1). Rebounds: Norwell 18 (Josh McBride 9, Adam McBride 4, Nick McBride 3, Thornton 1, Riley 1), Fort Wayne Blackhawk 30 (Pickett 12, Drake Sefton 6, LaCross 5, Mansfield 2, Pardon 2, Bryce Sefton 2, O'Neal 1). Turnovers: Norwell 11, Fort Wayne Blackhawk 6. Fouls: Norwell 9, Fort Wayne Blackhawk 7. Fouled out: None. Technicals: None. JV: Norwell 36, Fort Wayne Blackhawk 28.

Norwell baseball player Drew Graft signed with Taylor University at the high school Friday. Pictured, left to right, is Ryan, Luke, Drew, Ally and Kristan Graft. (Photo by Ryan Walker)



Graft commits to Taylor baseball

By RYAN WALKER

Taylor University is getting a big upgrade in the outfield.

Norwell's Drew Graft, a three-time first-team Northeast 8 Conference player, made his commitment official Friday morning as he signed with the Trojans.

"I'm really excited," Graft said. "It means a lot. A lot of work's gone in throughout the years, so it means a lot to make it official today."

Graft was joined by friends and family, including his brother, Luke Graft, who is at Taylor playing football. The two played baseball and football together for the Knights as well.

The Knights' senior centerfielder will have one more season to play in his high school career before heading to Upland.

In his three seasons as a full-time varsity member, he's patrolled centerfield and led off for Norwell. He was named a top-10 uncommitted outfielder on Prep Baseball Report near the end of his sophomore year and drew interest throughout high school.

In his Knights' career, he's hit .423 with 102 hits, 42 RBI, 35 extra-base hits and a 1.144 OPS. He's 36-41 on stolen bases and boasts a .971 fielding percentage with only three errors as a defender.

It's no secret why Taylor head coach Kyle Gould, now in his 21st season at the helm, was recruiting Graft heavily. His Trojan's baseball program has won 10 of the last 20 Crossroads League championships and has been a regular in the NAIA's Opening Round tournament. In 2023, Gould's team posted a 42-17 record and hosted the Opening Round at Taylor, where the team struck gold and advanced to the NAIA World Series for the first time since 1969. The Trojans went 2-2 in the field of nine teams.

Taylor is a preseason ranked at 19, the highest among the Crossroads League.

"The culture that they present with the coaches and all of the players, it was an opportunity that I really fell in love with throughout my recruiting process," Graft said.

Graft will not be alone when he arrives on campus, with brother Luke Graft and former teammate Lane Lewis, who is also on the Trojans baseball team.

"He (Luke) definitely made a little bit of an impact on my decision," Graft said. "We've been best friends since we've been young. It's definitely still my decision, but his impact still certainly played a role."

Graft is planning on studying marketing.

ryan@news-banner.com

Sports Roundup

Southern Wells girls triumph over Heritage in hoops

The Southern Wells girls' basketball team took home another win Friday night, beating Heritage 55-19 on the road. The team holds a 10-2 record for the season.

Individual stats were not available. The girls will play against Woodlan at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at home.

Norwell boys take first at swim invitational

The Norwell boys' swim team came out on top among nine teams hosted for the school's invite on Saturday. The team racked up 287 points, followed by Bishop Dwenger (236), Oak Hill (215), Bellmont (212), Leo (116), Blackhawk Christian (102), Huntington (54), Adams Central (44) and South Adams (36).

Event winners:

• Braden Hoag, Kale Meredith, Colten Strunk and Rylan Heyerly in the 200-year

medley relay.
• Ethan Williamson, Strunk, Meredith and Heyerly in the 400-yard freestyle.
• Heyerly in the 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard freestyle.
• Strunk in the 100-yard butterfly.

Bluffton wrestling splits ACAC Team Duals

Bluffton's wrestling team took away three team wins and three losses Saturday at the ACAC Team Duals at Adams Central. The team beat Southern Wells 71-12, Woodlan 72-12, and Heritage 56-21, but fell to Jay County 30-45, South Adams 28-51, and Adams Central 20-45.

Southern Wells lost all four of its duals, falling 6-75 to Adams Central, 6-75 to Jay County and 18-63 to South Adams.

Adams Central took first Saturday, winning all six of its duals, followed by Jay County 5-1, South Adams 4-2, Bluffton 3-3, and Southern Wells, Woodlan and Heritage 0-4.

High School Calendar

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.

SWIMMING & DIVING (co-ed): South Side at Bluffton, 5:30 p.m.; South Adams at Norwell, 5:30 p.m.; Woodlan at Southern Wells, 7:30 p.m.

WRESTLING: Southern Wells at Mississinewa, 6 p.m.

FRIDAY, DEC 20

BOYS BASKETBALL:

Southern Wells at Bluffton, 7:30 p.m.; Norwell at DeKalb, 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, DEC 21

BOYS BASKETBALL: Garrett at Bluffton, 7:30 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL: Bluffton at Adams Central, 1:30 p.m.; DeKalb at Norwell, 7:30 p.m.

SWIMMING & DIVING (co-ed): Bluffton at Norwell, 10 a.m.

WRESTLING: Norwell at Wawasee Super Duals, 9 a.m.

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