

# The News - Banner

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2024 BLUFFTON, INDIANA • Wells County's Hometown Connection \$1.00



## 8 groups receive grants from health department

**By HOLLY GASKILL**  
Eight local groups will receive grants from the Wells County Health Department through Health First Indiana funding. The health board unanimously approved the grant proposals during their regular meeting on Thursday morning. The department budgeted \$135,000 for grants in 2025, allocated through the \$551,202.90 Wells County will receive by joining Health First Indiana. These grants aim to partner with local groups already serving health needs outlined by the state of Indiana as key performance indicators. Administrator Sahara Wall said the eight groups had originally requested over \$300,000 in total, but a subcommittee of herself, Public Health Nurse Lynn Blevins, and board members Molly Hoag and Chris Esterling worked together to ensure every-

one received an award. Recipients are: Bluffton Parks and Recreation, \$1,000; Alive & Well, \$15,000; Purdue Extension Wells County for Nutrition Education Program, \$9,500; Brightpoint, \$7,500; Community Care of Northeast Indiana, \$23,653.40; Family Centered Services, \$30,000; Wells County Council on Aging, \$12,896.60; and Helping Hands, \$22,450. Information regarding the individual grant application requests has not yet been provided to The News-Banner, with Wall citing concerns that the contracts have not been signed. During their meeting Thursday, the board discussed how to distribute the award amounts, and ultimately agreed to issue one lump sum to each applicant. Each group will also have to report on their project and how it benefited an HFI key performance (Continued on Page 2)

### Caroling to Christmas

Bluffton-Harrison Elementary School celebrated their last day of school before winter break with a fun-filled morning of carols on Thursday. Teachers and staffed kicked off festivities with a "lipsync battle," where Jake "DJ Paws" Amstutz, pictured below, stole the show. At right, instructional assistant Cruz Rinkenberger twirls in traditional dress to "Feliz Navidad," and above, students link arms and sing along to the song. Shown left to right are first graders Wyatt Campbell, Aubrey Foss, Alaina Gephart, Myah Kaehr and Kamryn Krinn. In front of the row is Lillian Gniadek, also a first grader. (Photos by Holly Gaskill)



City of Bluffton employees install lighting poles on River Road Thursday morning. (Photo by Holly Gaskill)

## Bluffton moves forward with River Road lighting

**By JONATHAN SNYDER**  
Crews have begun placing light posts on River Road despite backlash from residents. Mayor John Whicker told The News-Banner Thursday that he understands the concerns from the residents, but that public safety needs for lighting are paramount. Additionally, right-of-way information for that area is

with City Attorney Tony Crowell. "It's dark when you drive down there," Whicker said. "We feel like ... due to the fact that it is a safety issue, that we needed to take action." In March, the Board of Public Works and Safety announced the purchase of new street light materials for River Road and the

Rivergreenway. On April 19, a letter to the editor was sent to The News-Banner by River Road residents, stating their concerns over legal documentation regarding the right-of-way near the area, alleged lack of communication and potential impact on property values. Another letter on Aug. 21 stated that while the (Continued on Page 2)

## Indiana lawmakers hint at road funding changes

**By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑIZ**  
**Indiana Capital Chronicle**  
It appears all funding options are on the table as budget heads and other lawmakers on Wednesday called on the Indiana General Assembly to boost transportation infrastructure investment at the state and local levels. The two-year panel — the Funding Indiana's Roads for a Stronger, Safer Tomorrow Task Force (FIRSST) — was authorized to tackle Indiana's impending multi-billion-dollar road and bridge shortfalls. "If we don't take care of what we currently have, it's a form of debt, and I'm not one that just loves debt," said task force co-Chair Rep. Jeff Thompson. "... If we do nothing, we're borrowing and putting burden on future taxpayers. And so I — we must do this. It's hard decisions, but it's the best thing long-term for our state."

Co-Chair Sen. Ryan Mishler concurred, saying, "I think we've done a good job managing our money, but with inflation increasing the cost, we just can't keep up. So if we want to keep up, we have to do something."

The two men lead their respective chambers' powerful budget-building committees, which are critical stops for bills with fiscal impacts. In a final report — adopted by consent, without any changes — the task force found that Indiana's road and bridge network is critical to the state's economic success, and that improvements to it are "necessary and appropriate" costs. Those expenses, per the report, should be paid by those that benefit from the network, "in proportion to their use."

First, the task force recommended that lawmakers increase investment in state and local transportation infrastructure. It didn't specify a mechanism. In a July revenue study presented at the task force's August meeting, INDOT suggested increasing existing transportation fees and taxes, tying registration fees to vehicle age or fuel efficiency, directing some electric and hybrid vehicle fees away from the Community Crossings Matching Grant program, adding road usage fees, tolling more roads and bridges, taxing electric vehicle charging, and several more strategies. The agency previously said it faces a fiscal cliff if funding changes aren't made. The group next suggested that lawmakers and the executive branch should "provide greater incentive" to communities that take advantage of local revenue-raisers and "prove they are using their road funding resources optimally." Rep. Jim Pressel, R-Rolling Prairie, said he planned (Continued on Page 2)

Both reports will cost \$39,500. Wessler also noted that Baker Tilly may need to be involved in the asset management plan, which would cost an additional \$25,000. Workshops for both reports will be done throughout February and March, with the SRF request need-

## Contract approved for lead pipe replacement program

**By JONATHAN SNYDER**  
Wessler Engineering will perform a preliminary engineering report and asset management plan for the city to remove lead pipes in its infrastructure. Environmental Protection Agency regulations require drinking water systems to remove lead pipes from their infrastructure. The pipes need to be replaced within 10 years. In response to the regulations, the Board of Public Works and Safety contracted Wessler during a special meeting Thursday, to prepare necessary reports and plans to submit a SRF loan request to help fund the project. Both reports will cost \$39,500. Wessler also noted that Baker Tilly may need to be involved in the asset management plan, which would cost an additional \$25,000. Workshops for both reports will be done throughout February and March, with the SRF request need-

ing to be submitted by March 31. Board member Scott Mentzer reported that the project will be funded in part with \$10,000 in remaining American Rescue Plan Act funds, and the rest will come out of the water department's depreciation account, which currently holds over \$500,000. Additionally, bids for Roush Park improvements and alley paving were approved by the Board of Works. Brooks Construction won both projects, bidding \$411,392 for Roush Park and \$243,334 for alley paving. Brooks had the low bids for both projects, going about \$50,000 under the next highest bid for Roush and about \$100,000 under the next highest bid for alley paving. Transfers within the street and parks departments were also made to help pay for both projects. \$14,376 was transferred from (Continued on Page 2)

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**Outside**  
Baby, it's cold outside; snow today and tonight  
Today High 34 Low 21  
Saturday High 29 Low 15  
Sunday High 29 Low 20  
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# Health department grants

(Continued from Page 1)  
indicator. Blevins notes that between the eight groups, the county will be able to target many of the state's KPIs.

Also during the meeting, Wall announced that environmental specialist Erin Harvey has started working full-time, bringing the department to two full-time inspectors.

Environmental specialist Ryan Bennett stated that septic inspections have been slow, but Harvey found food inspections have been more involved as some businesses have not been inspected in some time. She conducted 15

regular food inspections, two complaint investigations, and followed up on 13 vendors.

In the same timeframe, Blevins performed 299 adult vaccinations and 301 child vaccinations. Blevins said the total was 30 more than the same timeframe last year. He also reported seeing an increase in pneumonia in children and strep throat in adults.

Wall also said she's heard from the public that the board's meeting time is "not accessible." The board has previously met at 6:30 a.m. on the third Thursday of every other month and will meet at the same time on the

third Monday of every other month in 2025.

In making this change in October, the board also discussed changing the meeting time. However, they ultimately felt it was going to be difficult to make any time work with their demanding schedules.

The board affirmed this sentiment again on Thursday. "I could see that, but honestly, trying to get all these professionals together every time is already difficult," board member Dr. Bart Hott said.

"Well I can tell you, if there's a hot topic, they'll be here," Blevins joked. "They have been."

Hoag suggested the board add a mid-year evening session for information regarding HFI and grant reports, which the board was receptive to. Wall added that board meetings are required to be livestreamed beginning in July and will be available on Facebook.

In addition to Esterling, Hoag and Hott, board members Steve Bales, Ann McNabb and Tamara Trout were present; Dr. Mary Donley was absent.

The board will meet next at 6:30 a.m. Feb. 24, one week later due to Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

holly@news-banner.com

# Weather

Friday, December 20, 2024

(24-hour observations at 10:40 p.m. Thursday)

High: 34; Low: 29; Precipitation: None  
Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 1.86 feet at 8:45 p.m. Thursday

## Wells County forecast

**Today:** Snow, mainly before 4 p.m. High near 34. Light and variable wind becoming north 10 to 15 mph in the morning. Winds could gust as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 80%. New snow accumulation of around an inch possible.

**Tonight:** A 10% chance of snow before 7 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 21. North wind 5 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

**Saturday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 29. Calm wind becoming north around 5 mph in the afternoon.

**Saturday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 15. Calm wind.

**Sunday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 29.

**Sunday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 20.

**Monday:** A chance of rain and snow after 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 39. Chance of precipitation is 30%.

**Monday Night:** Rain likely, possibly mixed with snow before 1 a.m., then a chance of rain. Cloudy, with a low around 34. Chance of precipitation is 70%.

**Tuesday:** A 30% chance of rain. Cloudy, with a high near 41.

# Road funding changes

(Continued from Page 1)  
to file a "buffet" of options for local governments. He chairs the House's road panel.

It could split Community Crossings into tiers, lowering matching requirements for tiny locales and raising awards for big cities with widespread needs. Pressel also contemplated prying money from townships, or requiring locals to use tools like the wheel tax to earn eligibility for state

help.

Third, the task force said the state should work with locals to improve safety, highlighting high-risk railroad crossings as a priority. Indiana has previously used its "Local Trax" grant program for that.

Finally, per the report, lawmakers and the executive branch should move on the projected shortfalls. That includes finding new revenue sources for the state, giving locals more revenue options and "optimizing" existing resources.

This biennium's task force was a reprisal of the original FIRSST.

Detailed 2016 recommendations led to legislation raising the gas tax by 10 cents, indexing the tax to inflation with a cap of one penny annually, and directing revenue from a separate gas sales tax to a dedicated road improvement account rather than the state's general fund.

# Amazon workers are striking at multiple delivery hubs: Here's what you should know

By HALELUYA HADERO  
AP Business Writer

Amazon workers affiliated with the Teamsters union launched a strike at seven of the company's delivery hubs less than a week before Christmas.

The Teamsters said the workers, who voted to authorize strikes in recent days, joined picket lines on Thursday after Amazon ignored a Sunday deadline the union had set for contract negotiations.

The company says it doesn't expect the strike to impact holiday shipments.

Amazon has a couple hundred employees at each delivery station. The Teamsters mainly have focused on organizing delivery drivers, who work for contractors that handle package deliveries for the company. But Amazon has rebuffed demands to come to the negotiating table since it doesn't consider the drivers to be its employees.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters also says the union represents some Amazon warehouse workers.

Here's what else you need to know:

**Where are the strikes happening?**

The strikes are taking place at three delivery

hubs in Southern California, and one each in San Francisco, New York City, Atlanta, Georgia, and Skokie, Illinois, according to the union's announcement.

The union hasn't said how many workers are participating in the strike, nor how long it will go on. Vinnie Perrone, the president of a local Teamsters union in metro New York, said Thursday that the walkout would continue "as long as it takes."

The union, which claims to represent 10,000 Amazon workers at 10 facilities, said workers in more locations were prepared to join the fight.

Employees at a company air hub in California have authorized a strike. So have workers at an Amazon warehouse in New York, which unionized with the nascent Amazon Labor Union in 2022 and has since affiliated with the Teamsters.

The Teamsters says its local unions are also putting up picket lines at other Amazon warehouses. A company spokesperson said Thursday the strikers were "almost entirely outsiders, not Amazon employees or partners, and the suggestion otherwise is just another lie from the Teamsters."

**What do the workers want?**

The striking workers are fighting for higher wages, better benefits, and safer work conditions.

The Teamsters have tried to get Amazon to come to the negotiating table since last year, when the labor organization first said it had unionized a group of delivery drivers in California who work for a contractor. Amazon -- which denies it employs the workers -- refused, leading the union to file unfair labor charges against the company at the National Labor Relations Board.

In August, prosecutors at the federal labor agency classified Amazon as a "joint employer" of subcontracted drivers. In September, the company boosted hourly pay for the drivers amid the growing pressure.

Amazon warehouse workers who voted to union in the New York City borough of Staten Island also have tried to get the company to engage in contract negotiations.

The National Labor Relations Board certified the Amazon Labor Union election, but the company objected to the representation vote and refused to bargain. In the process, Amazon also filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the labor board, which it

accused of tainting the vote.

Some organizers involved with the unionization effort there have long believed Amazon would not come to the negotiating table unless workers went on strike.

**What about holiday deliveries?**

Amazon says it doesn't expect the strike to impact its operations, but a walkout -- especially one that lasts many days -- could delay shipments in some metro areas.

An Amazon spokesperson said Thursday that the company intentionally builds its sites close to where customers are, schedules shipping windows and works with other large carriers, such as UPS, to deliver products.

"We believe in the strength of our network and plan for contingencies to minimize potential operational impact or costs," the spokesperson said.

# Israeli airstrikes hit Yemen's rebel-held capital, port city after Houthi attack targets Israel

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A series of intense Israeli airstrikes shook Yemen's rebel-held capital and a port city early Thursday and killed at least nine people, officials said, shortly after a Houthi missile targeted central Israel.

Thursday's strikes risk further escalating conflict with the Iranian-backed Houthis, whose attacks on the Red Sea corridor have drastically impacted global shipping. The rebels have so far avoided the same level of intense military strikes that have targeted Palestinian militant group Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah, fellow members of Tehran's self-described "Axis of Resistance."

Israel's military said that it conducted two waves of strikes in a preplanned operation that began early Thursday and involved 14 fighter jets. The military said the first wave of strikes targeted Houthi infrastructure at the ports of Hodeida, Salif and the Ras Isa oil terminal on the Red Sea.

Then, in a second wave of strikes, the military said its fighter jets targeted

Houthi energy infrastructure in Sanaa.

"After Hamas, Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Syria, the Houthis are almost the last remaining arm of Iran's axis of evil," said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a statement released Thursday. "They are learning and they will learn the hard way, that whoever harms Israel pays a very heavy price for it."

The Houthi-controlled satellite channel al-Masirah said that some of the strikes targeted power stations in the capital, posting videos of flames engulfing one structure, as civil defense workers doused it in water, trying to extinguish the fire.

The strikes on the two power plants will worsen the electricity crisis faced by Sanaa, where those who can afford it run gas generators or get power from private providers because of the city's long-failing infrastructure.

"Approximately one quarter of Sanaa -- particularly shops, stores and commercial facilities -- will face immediate and severe

disruptions," said Mohamed al-Basha, a Yemen analyst. "In a city already staggering under a profound economic crisis, 2025 is set to be exceptionally challenging."

The al-Masirah channel, citing its correspondent in the port city of Hodeida, said that at least seven people had been killed at Salif, while another two had been killed at the Ras Isa oil terminal. Others suffered wounds at the Hodeida port as well, it said.

An Israeli military statement offered no damage assessment.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, an Israeli military spokesman, said the strikes hit energy and port infrastructure, which he alleged the rebels "have been using in ways that effectively contributed to their military action."

"I suggest the leaders of the Houthis to see, to understand and remember: Whoever raises a hand against the state of Israel, his hand will be cut off. Whoever harms us, will be harmed sevenfold," Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said.

## Online Directory

Check out these websites of local & area companies and businesses.

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|  |  |  |
| <a href="http://boxdropfortwayne.com">boxdropfortwayne.com</a>             | <a href="http://mrkoolheatingandair.com">mrkoolheatingandair.com</a>                             | <a href="http://dazeys.com/bluffton-in">dazeys.com/bluffton-in</a>             |
|  |  |  |
| <a href="http://stefffinancial.com">stefffinancial.com</a>                 | <a href="http://genesispestservices.com">genesispestservices.com</a>                             | <a href="http://daniels-jewelers.net">daniels-jewelers.net</a>                 |
|  |  |  |
| <a href="http://infarmbureau.com">infarmbureau.com</a>                     | <a href="http://jcsgaragedoor.com">jcsgaragedoor.com</a>   | <a href="http://myersfuneralhomes.com">myersfuneralhomes.com</a>               |
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| <a href="http://extension.purdue.edu/wells">extension.purdue.edu/wells</a> | <a href="http://3riversfcu.org">3riversfcu.org</a>   | <a href="http://blufftontire.com">blufftontire.com</a>                         |
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| <a href="http://lengerichmeats.com">lengerichmeats.com</a>                 | <a href="http://stillwatersfamilydentistry.com">stillwatersfamilydentistry.com</a>               | <a href="http://thomarich.com">thomarich.com</a>                               |
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OBITUARIES

**Darrell Gilbert, 102**

Darrell E. Gilbert, 102, of Bluffton, passed away on Tuesday morning, Dec. 17, 2024, at Christian Care in Bluffton.



He graduated from East Rockcreek High school in Wells County and later served in the U.S. Army Aircorp during WWII. Darrell was a farmer in Wells County and had also worked for REMC for over 30 years as a lineman and eventually Branch Manager, retiring from White County REMC. He was a former member of the St. Paul Lutheran church in Uniondale and former board member of Northern Wells Community Schools. Darrell later lived in Florida for over 30 years. He loved all sports especially golf and basketball.

Darrell was born on Sept. 18, 1922 in Bluffton, a son of the late John B. and Reeda (Dowty) Gilbert.

He was united in marriage to Beulah "Boots" Freds. Boots preceded him in death in 1991. He later married Clara Boltz, she had three children and several grand and great-grandchildren. Clara preceded him in death in March 2020.

Survivors include a daughter, Vicki (Bart) Seslar of Bluffton; a son, Ron (Sara) Gilbert of Bloomington; four grandchildren and a step-grandson; eight great-grandchildren and a step-great grandson; a sister, Carol (Jerry) Day of Markle and a brother: David (Linda) Gilbert of Hagerstown, Indiana.

He was preceded in death by four sisters and a brother.

Private family services will take place at a later date, with burial at the St. Paul Lutheran cemetery in rural Uniondale.

Memorial contributions can be made out to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, sent in care of Myers Funeral Home, PO Box 403, Markle, IN 46770.

To sign Darrell's online guest registry log onto our website at [www.myersfuneralhomes.com](http://www.myersfuneralhomes.com) and scroll down to obituaries.

**David Lee Adney, 74**

David Lee Adney, 74, of Montpelier, passed away at 11:56 a.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024 at his home in Montpelier. He was born on Saturday, Sept. 9, 1950, in Hartford City.

David is survived by his daughter, Konnie "Kay" (Pat) Dunnuck, Poneto; two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; brother, Timothy (Debi) Adney, Muncie; and two nieces.

He was preceded in death by his father, Charles Adney; mother, Martha (Royal) Adney; infant son, Jonathan David Adney; and brother, Thomas Adney.

A Celebration of Life will be held at Walker & Glancy Funeral Home located at 109 W Windsor St Montpelier on Sunday, Dec. 22, 2024, from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Military honors will be conducted by the Millar-Brown American Legion Post 156.

Arrangements are being handled by Walker & Glancy Funeral Home in Montpelier.

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

**Area Christmas services**

**Asbury Chapel United Methodist Church**

Asbury Chapel United Methodist Church invites the public to their Christmas Eve service at 6 p.m. on Dec. 24, located at 8013 W 1100 S-90 in Montpelier.

**First Baptist Church**

First Baptist Church, 202 W. Cherry St. in Bluffton, will have a Christmas Eve candlelight service at 7 p.m.

**First Church of Christ**

First Church of Christ, 909 W. Spring St. in Bluffton, will hold a Carols and Candelight Service at 3:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

**First Presbyterian Church**

First Presbyterian Church, located at 123 S Jefferson St. in Ossian, will host two Christmas services. The first will be during the regular time on Sunday, Dec. 22, with the Sunday School hour at 8:45 a.m. and the worship service at 10 a.m. A Christmas Eve service will also take place at 7 p.m. on Dec. 24. Services are also available via livestream on Youtube.

**First United Methodist, Bluffton**

First United Methodist Church, 325 W. Washington St. in Bluffton, will hold a Christmas Eve candlelight service at 4:30 p.m.

**Hope Missionary Church**

Hope Missionary Church, 429 E. Dustman

Road in Bluffton, will hold Christmas Eve services at 1 p.m., 3 p.m., 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. at its main campus.

Christmas Eve services will be held at 3 p.m., 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. at the church's Ossian campus at 1705 Hillcrest Dr.

**ITOWN Church**

ITOWN Church will host its Christmas services at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 22, at its campus at 2711 N Main St. in Bluffton. The church also has Christmas Eve services at 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.

**Sonlight Wesleyan Church**

Sonlight Wesleyan Church, 2350 S S.R. 1 in Bluffton, will host Christmas Eve services at 4 p.m. and 11 p.m.

**St. Joseph Catholic Church**

St. Joseph Catholic Church, 1300 N. Main St. in Bluffton, will have two Christmas Eve two services — a Vigil Mass with the Children's Choir at 4 p.m. and a Vigil Mass with the Adult Choir at 6 p.m. The choir will lead the congregation in singing Christmas carols at 5:30 p.m. A candlelight Midnight Mass will be held Sunday night/Monday morning.

**Bethlehem Lutheran**

Bethlehem Lutheran Church LCMS, 6514E-750N in Ossian, will have a Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m. Sunday. A Christmas Day service will follow at 9 a.m.

**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.



**Friends Who Care donation**

First Bank of Berne made a \$1,000 donation to Friends Who Care Cancer Relief Foundation. Pictured are Bluffton branch manager Erica Bennett, left, and Steve Gerber from Friends Who Care. The Organization helps people with financial needs they encounter due to battling cancer. The donated funds will be used for the Annual Gospel Concert and Auction. For more information, contact Steve Gerber at Outdoor Concepts 260-824-5189. (Photo submitted)

**Police Notebook**

**INCIDENTS**

**City:**

Wednesday, 3:48 p.m., Family Farm & Home. Report panhandling, subject advised to move down the road.

Wednesday, 4:08 p.m., 500 block of West Market Street. Intoxicated driver.

Wednesday, 5:16 p.m., Main Street and Dustman Road. Head-on crash, report to follow.

Wednesday, 6:12 p.m., Walmart. Wind took door, minor scratch.

Wednesday, 6:44 p.m., Silver and Main streets. Two-vehicle crash, report to follow.

Wednesday, 8:11 p.m., Airplane Express. Report of harassment.

Thursday, 2:02 a.m., S.R. 124 and Elm Grove Road. Driver cited for 67 in a 50 mph zone.

Thursday, 3:18 a.m., Animal Shelter. Two large dogs on the loose.

Thursday, 4:04 a.m., 400 block of West Washington Street. Report of a dog barking outside for 30 minutes, owner advised to take the animal inside.

Thursday, 4:43 a.m., 1100 block of South Scott Street. Report of four subjects broken into residence, later advised it was hallucinations.

Thursday, 6:29 a.m., 200 block of North Oak Street. Multiple packages stolen from porch overnight.

**County:** Wednesday, 2:47 p.m., Wells County Jail. Warrant served.

Wednesday, 2:51 p.m., Wells County Jail. Warrant served.

Wednesday, 3:11 p.m., 8000 S 700 E, Bluffton. Report of possible fraud.

Wednesday, 4:33 p.m., 2066 E 300 N, Bluffton. Report of domestic disturbance between two men.

**County:**

Tuesday, 7:59 a.m., Jeff Road at mile market 3, McNatts. Hayden A. Quickery, 16, Warren, was driving a 2009 Nissan Maxima southeast on Jeff Road and struck a deer. Vehicle towed from the scene. Damage exceeded \$5,000.

Wednesday, 7:50 a.m., S.R. 116, Murray. Andrew K. Yergler, 46, Bluffton, was driving a 2011 Toyota Sienna southeast on S.R. 116 just east of Meridian Road and struck a deer. Vehicle towed from the scene. Damage exceeded \$2,500.

**ARRESTS**

Wednesday, 7:54 p.m., 8000 S 700 E, Bluffton. Report of possible fraud.

Thursday, 6:47 a.m., C.R. 450 E at River Road, Bluffton. Car vs. deer, report to follow.

Thursday, 9:06 a.m., S.R. 124 and C.R. 500 W, Markle. Citation issue for speeding.

**ACCIDENTS**

**City:** Wednesday, 5:15 p.m., S.R. 116 at Garr Street. Scott L. McNamara, 31, Bluffton, was driving a 2006 Chevrolet Silverado southbound on S.R. 116 and thought he had a clear opening to turn south around eastbound backed up traffic, but collided head on with a 2017 Ford Escape driven by Christina R. Huffman, 49, Bluffton. The Escape was towed from the scene. Damage exceeded \$5,000.

Thursday, 11:05 a.m., 1274 S Adams St. Stephanie Zeigler, 47, Berne, was backing a 2025 Kia Sportage and struck a 2022 Volvo VLN driven by a Tavraj Sangha, 49, Mississingua, Ontario. Damage exceeded \$5,000.

**County Briefs**

**County moves forward with certificate sale**

The Wells County Commissioners approved a resolution Monday allowing them to sell tax sale certificates for properties delinquent in property taxes that did not get bids matching the minimal sale price of the properties at a tax sale.

Four properties were included in the resolution, which carry a total minimum sale price of \$2,914.73. SRI of Indianapolis will handle the proceedings and accrue 15% of the sale.

**Sheriff reports on jail population**

On Monday, Sheriff Scott Holliday gave his regular report on the Wells County Jail population. There were 81 inmates in total at the time, 42 of which were pre-trial holds from the Circuit Court, 19 pre-trial holds from the Superior Court, 16 from the Department of Correction

and three Level 6 felons. — Compiled by Holly Gaskill

**Ernest Lee Martin**

Malone III, 46, Fort Wayne; invasion of privacy, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$25,000.

Jesus Emmanuel Chamorro Montanez, 41, Fort Wayne; driving while suspended, a Class A misdemeanor. Bond set at \$1,500.

Zachary Anthony Duffitt-Planck, 30, Bluffton; possession of marijuana and operating a vehicle while intoxicated endangerment, both Class A misdemeanors, and operating a vehicle with a controlled substance in the body, a Class C misdemeanor. Bond set at \$2,500.

**Jerold "Jerry" Dillon**  
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 Saturday, December 21.  
 Service: 3 p.m.  
 Saturday, December 21 at the funeral home.  
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 Calling: 1 - 4 p.m.  
 Saturday, December 21.  
 Service: 4 p.m.  
 Saturday, December 21 at the funeral home.  
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### The Drone Mystery - a look through cartoonists' eyes...



## Other Opinions

### Congress should repeal the Corporate Transparency Act

Politicians prattle on endlessly about their love for small business, as opposed to the corporate giants it's easy to denounce. Yet when they get the chance, they saddle small business with laws like the Corporate Transparency Act. A federal court in Texas has handed Donald Trump and the Republican Party an opportunity by imposing a nationwide injunction on the CTA's reporting mandate.

In 2020 Congress tucked the CTA into the National Defense Authorization Act in the last days of the Trump Administration and it passed over Mr. Trump's veto. The intent was to combat money launderers and drug dealers. But the result, says the National Federation of Independent Business, is a bill that imposes another compliance burden, makes confidential business data less secure, and does little to deter real criminals.

The law took effect last Jan. 1. It requires corporations or limited liability companies of fewer than 20 employees and \$5 million or less in revenue to disclose details about their beneficial owners to the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). Failure to comply can result in up to two years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

The law defines a beneficial owner as any person who "directly or indirectly, through any contract, arrangement, understanding, relationship, or otherwise — (i) exercises substantial control over the entity; or (ii) owns or controls not less than 25 percent of the ownership interests of the entity." FinCEN estimates the law applies to 32.6 million small businesses and associations.

But the Dec. 3 order by federal Judge Amos Mazzant enjoins FinCEN from enforcing the law as well as its implementing regulations. The judge calls the law "unprecedented" as a federal attempt to monitor companies created under state law and because it ends the anonymity many states designed as a feature of their corporate formation. The plaintiffs, he wrote, are likely to succeed on their claim that the law is unconstitutional.

What's next? The Biden Administration has asked the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals for a stay of Judge Mazzant's injunction. It also wants the appellate court to rule by Dec. 27, so that businesses would still have to meet the reporting deadline of Dec. 31.

The Fifth Circuit could throw out the CTA on grounds Judge Mazzant lays out, but other courts are split. A federal judge in Alabama has ruled the CTA unconstitutional, while federal judges in Oregon and Virginia made preliminary rulings going the other way. The cases could go to the Supreme Court.

But Congress needn't wait for courts to remove this looming burden from millions of small businesses. This is the kind of unnecessary regulation that Republicans campaigned to stop. A one-year delay is already under consideration as an amendment to the year-end spending bill being debated in Congress. Congress can adopt this amendment, deliver relief to small business, and give the courts the time they need to resolve this mess.

*This is the kind of unnecessary regulation that Republicans campaigned to stop.*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL  
Distributed by The Associated Press

## Longshoremen and Trump are in the same anti-automation boat

When Harold Daggett, the horny-handed son of toil who for more than 10 years has been president of the International Longshoremen's Association, grips with his callused hands the steering wheel of his Bentley (the least expensive of these British-made beauties costs north of \$200,000), he knows that the president of the United States will be riding shotgun. Donald Trump, ever transactional, has rewarded Daggett for the ILA's neutrality (in 2020 it endorsed Joe Biden) in the 2024 presidential campaign.

A brief October strike shut 36 East and Gulf coast ports that Daggett's union controls — the first Maine-to-Texas strike in 47 years. Longshoremen won a tentative 61.5 percent pay increase over six years. The Wall Street Journal editorial page notes "the astounding fact" that there are only about 25,000 port jobs, so about half of ILA members do not have to show up for work daily. The rest stay home collecting payments previously negotiated in contracts protecting "jobs" (loosely — very loosely — defined). In 2010, Daggett said his members should make more than \$400,000 annually. Today, the Journal says, "some now do with overtime."

Daggett, however, threatens another strike on Jan. 15 unless any additional automation — e.g., automated cranes loading and unloading containers — is banned. Resistance to automation is why no U.S. port ranks among the world's 50 most efficient ones. The strike could "cripple" and "crush" (his promises) the nation's economy before Trump's promised tariffs do.

Daggett cheerfully anticipates car salesmen and construction workers laid off because cars, lumber, steel and other materials "ain't coming in off the ships." And "they won't be able to do anything in this country without my f---ing people." In October, he said: "If we have to be out here a month or two months, this world will collapse."

Trump, paladin of reactionary populism, who considers imports distasteful, is unperturbed. He begins his reward to Daggett with a social-media toot of his own horn:

"I've studied automation, and know just about everything there is to know about it. The amount of money saved is nowhere near the distress, hurt, and harm it causes for American Workers, in this case, our Longshoremen. Foreign companies have made a fortune in the U.S. by giving them access to our markets. ... They've got record profits, and I'd rather these foreign companies spend it on the great men and women on our docks, than machinery, which is expensive, and

which will constantly have to be replaced."

Evidently, America will be made great again using only machines that last forever. Skyrocketing pay, stagnant productivity: MAGA.

In the 1950s, the ILA opposed one of history's simplest, yet most consequential, technologies for human betterment: large rectangular steel containers. They replaced swarms of stevedores stowing and unloading (and often pilfering) cargo packed into ships' holds in differently sized wooden crates, a process so slow ships often spent more time in port than at sea.

Containerization (and bar codes, also resisted by the ILA) facilitated the globalization of commerce that reduced, from about 50 percent in 1975 to less than 10 percent today, the portion of humanity living in what the World Bank calls extreme poverty (on \$2.15 per day, adjusted for inflation). The ILA's limited acceptance of containerization was contingent on featherbedding — inefficient make-work. Seven decades later, the ILA leadership's primary concern is still the number of dues-paying members who enable the leadership to live as it has become accustomed to living.

Like his soulmate Trump, Daggett is a 78-year-old child of Queens. His helper with the task of striking the chains from workers' ankles is ILA's executive vice president, his son Dennis, who says the ILA "does not support any kind of automation." "Machines don't pay taxes," says the automation-opposing president of the ILA local in Mobile, Alabama. But the more productive the workforce is the more taxes it pays.

During the three-day October strike, Kamala Harris said, "This strike is about fairness." But Reason's Eric Boehm noted two discordant X posts from a progressive, ILA-supporting news outlet. One praised workers for blocking "job-killing automation." The other lamented that ILA members' jobs are "backbreaking."

As Jan. 15 approaches, so perhaps does the first crisis, five days later, for Daggett's foremost friend. Daggett's conversations are often laced with colorful profanities, and he sometimes sports gold chains and a diamond ring. Do not, however, begrudge working stiff (Daggett's 2023 base salary was \$728,694, plus \$173,040 as president emeritus of an ILA local) life's simple pleasures: a lager, a Bentley.

georgewill@washpost.com.



George Will

## Today in History

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Dec. 20, the 355th day of 2024. There are 11 days left in the year.

Today in history: On Dec. 20, 1803, the Louisiana Purchase was completed as ownership of the territory was formally transferred from France to the United States.

Also on this date: In 1946, the classic holiday film "It's a Wonderful Life" premiered at the Globe Theater in New York City.

In 1986, three Black men were attacked by a group of white youths in the Howard Beach neighborhood of Queens, New York, resulting in the death of one of the men, Michael Griffith.

In 1987, more than 4,300 people were killed when the Doña Paz, a Philippine passenger ship, collided with the tanker Vector off Mindoro island.

In 1989, the United States launched Operation Just Cause, sending troops

into Panama to topple the government of Gen. Manuel Noriega.

In 2019, the United States Space Force was established when President Donald Trump signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020.

Today's Birthdays: Rock drummer Peter Dinklage (Kiss) is 79. Producer Dick Wolf ("Law & Order") is 78. Musician Alan Parsons is 76. Author Sandra Cisneros is 70. Actor Michael Badalucco is 70.

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Opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily represent the views of this newspaper.

Dealing with difficult exes

Dear Annie: How do I convey to my adult married children that I do not like being around my ex for the holidays?

We were together for seven years on our second stint, and we had another child. We eventually didn't work out when my job took me away and she refused to leave her mother.

My daughter has had Christmas at her home every year since my granddaughter was born. We are invited, but my ex is always there. I think holidays should be happy occasions...

Now I am treated like a criminal. I don't get to see them and am only allowed to talk to the youngest one, and that's only once a week. The mother refuses to work with me on a fair schedule...

I want to spend time with my kids, just not with her around. My daughter-in-law and son-in-law have had disagreements with her in the past. My letter is long enough; I could go on and on.

The mother isn't a good person, and I fear for the way my kids are being raised and what they are being told. I'm at a loss on what to do while I wait for the court date.

Dear Avoiding Ex: The best way to convey to your adult children that you would not like to be around your ex for the holidays is to tell them that.

Dear Concerned: At least you're honest, admitting that your treatment of her was not good, so you can understand why she is keeping you away.

You really have two choices: Ignore the chatter and negativity that is your ex-wife for the sake of spending more (quantity) time, or spend less time — but quality time — with your kids without your ex making rude remarks.

Regardless of what you decide, she is going to be in your life. It's best to try to let go and forgive some of the anger you have toward her for her adultery.

Dear Annie: I broke up with the mother of my children two years ago. We have had a very rocky past. I treated her badly for the first couple of years, and we separated for two years after our first child was born.

"How Can I Now Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book.

Dear Annie: I broke up with the mother of my children two years ago. We have had a very rocky past. I treated her badly for the first couple of years, and we separated for two years after our first child was born.

My Answer



Jesus came to take away our sins

Question: What is the best way to answer children when they ask the true meaning of Christmas without talking about sin?

look and we miss the chance to instill in them truth — God's truth — which is the most important thing that people need.

the tree to be opened. But the gifts won't really belong to others until they receive them. The same is true with Jesus. God has done everything possible to give us the gift of salvation...

Answer: The purpose of Jesus' birth cannot be separated from the Christmas story, for the Bible says that Mary "will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus..."

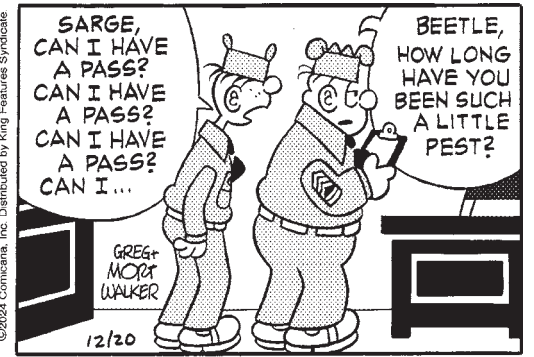
At Christmas, we celebrate the birthday of Jesus more than 2,000 years ago. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Son of God, who came down from Heaven to give us the greatest gift any person can ever receive — the gift of eternal life.

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

How wonderful when children ask questions. Children are curious and interested in many things that adults often over-

Children often receive many gifts at Christmas. Loved ones do everything possible to give them what they want. They choose gifts, pay for them, wrap them, and put them under

BEETLE BAILEY



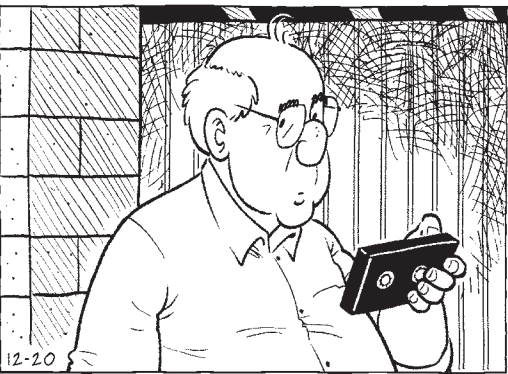
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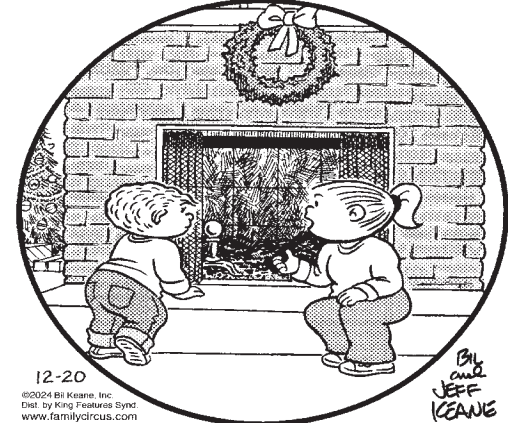


CRANKSHAFT



THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



"Santa will be in trouble if he doesn't wipe his feet."

The LOCKHORNS



"When does the 'Silent Night' part begin?"

Table with columns for time slots (12:00 to 12:30) and various TV channels (WIMM, CBS, Antenna, ABC, NBC, etc.) listing programs and their descriptions.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 25 mins and a 'Yesterday's answer' grid.

Grid for 'Yesterday's answer' crossword puzzle with numbers 1 through 55.

# Southern Wells girls fall in close matchup with Woodlan

By RICK SPRUNGER

A bad start to the fourth quarter doomed Southern Wells in its bid to pick up a huge Allen County Athletic Conference victory against Woodlan Thursday night.

An 8-0 run in the first three minutes of the period gave Woodlan the separation it needed to hold off the Raiders down the stretch for the hard-fought 61-53 win.

Southern Wells fell to 10-3 in all games and 2-2 in the conference with the loss. Woodlan improved to 3-1 in the league and 6-5 overall with the win.

"It stinks to play this well and lose," said Southern Wells coach Kyle Penrod, disappointed with the outcome but not with the effort. "I'm actually surprised that we executed our game plan as well as we did after all the missed practices we've had this week because of illness. They did a good job of doing what I asked them to do. We wanted to focus on rebounding and guarding (Alyssa) Anderson in the post."

Southern Wells won the battle of the boards by a solid 34-28 margin. And although Anderson had game-highs of 17 points and 14 rebounds, she managed just four points in the entire second half, all of them on free throws.

Southern Wells was right there through three quarters, trailing just 48-46 after a back-and-forth contest that saw five ties and 14 lead changes to that point.

But Woodlan's Brooke Kneubuhler and Layla Hodson opened the fourth stanza with back-to-back three-pointers, Kneubuhler added a steal and layup, and the Warriors were suddenly on top, 56-46.

"A couple of their role players stepped up and hit threes," said Penrod, referring to Hodson, who only scored two other points the rest of the night, and freshman Savannah Scheumann, whose triple from the left corner to end the third quarter gave Woodlan that two-point lead.

Southern Wells, meanwhile, was missing four shots and committing four turnovers during that Woodlan breakout.

"They brought their defense out farther and pushed us about four feet off the three-point line," said Penrod of Woodlan's defensive push in the fourth quarter. The Raiders didn't go down without a fight, however.

A three-pointer by Kaylea Coffel, one of two free throws by Ashlie Needler, and a bucket underneath by Collena Reeves off a sharp feed from Erika Beavans got them back to within 56-52 with 1:51 left, and they got the ball back on a turnover.

But a steal and layup by Scheumann kicked it back out to 58-52 with 1:09 left.

And despite consecutive Woodlan turnovers in the backcourt against Southern



Wells' fullcourt press, the Raiders were unable to get closer than five points after that.

The game was competitive throughout.

On two separate occasions, just when Woodlan appeared ready to step on the gas, Southern Wells came charging back.

A 12-2 Woodlan run in the first quarter that was fueled by four Raider turnovers in five possessions staked the Warriors to a 22-15 lead.

But Southern Wells answered with an 11-1 run of its own to move in front, 26-23.

Then, after a Kneubuhler three early in the third quarter put Woodlan on top, 39-33, Southern Wells went on a 9-0 burst on three inside buckets by Needler and a three by Reeves for a 42-39 Raider edge with 3:40 left in the period.

But Scheumann scored twice in eight seconds with a Southern Wells turnover on the inbounds pass in between to put Woodlan back on top, 43-42.

A 15-footer from the free throw line by Coffel gave Southern Wells its last lead at 46-45. Scheumann then hit her three-pointer to end the quarter, and the rest has been told.

Needler finished with 15 points on 7-for-11 shooting to lead Southern Wells.

Davis added 13 points, all of them in the first half, for the Raiders, who connected on 22 of 47 shots from the floor for a .468 shooting percentage.

Kneubuhler scored 15 points and Schuemann 12 to join Anderson in double figures for Woodlan.

The Warriors were 24-for-59 from the field for .407.

Woodlan won the junior varsity contest, 53-25.

Cadence Watkins scored eight points and Remi Holmes seven to lead Southern Wells. Ellie DeWeese added four points and Adalynn Morrison, Lexi Pennington, and Lillia Paxson two each for the Raiders.

sports@news-banner.com

**WOODLAN 61, SOUTHERN WELLS 53**  
WOODLAN (6-5, 3-1 ACAC): Reagan Widenhoefer 1-6 0-0 2, Makenna Smith 2-2 0-0 5, Alyssa Anderson 6-13 5-6 17, Brooke Kneubuhler 6-14 1-2 15, McKenna Goble 1-5 0-0 3, Emma McDaniel 1-6 0-0 2, Savannah Scheumann 5-10 1-2 12, Layla Hodson 2-3 0-0 5. TOTAL: 24-59 7-12 61.  
SOUTHERN WELLS (10-3, 2-2 ACAC): Erika Beavans 4-11 1-2 9, Kaylea Davis 5-8 1-2 13, Collena Reeves 3-7 0-0 8, Callie Ripberger 1-4 0-0 3, Ashlie Needler 7-11 1-2 15, Kaylea Coffel 2-5 0-0 5, Kyah Thomas 0-0 0-0 0, Kenzie Paxson 0-0 0-0 0, Aubree Mayer 0-1 0-0 0. TOTAL: 22-47 3-6 53.

**Woodlan 22 12 14 13 — 61**  
**Southern Wells 17 13 16 7 — 53**  
Three-point shooting: Woodlan 6-23 (Widenhoefer 0-3, Smith 1-1, Kneubuhler 2-8, Goble 1-4, McDaniel 0-2, Scheumann 1-3, Hodson 1-2), Southern Wells 6-18 (Beavans 0-3, Davis 2-3, Reeves 2-4, Ripberger 1-3, Coffel 1-4, Meyer 0-1). Rebounds: Woodlan 28 (Anderson 14), Southern Wells 34 (Needler 8, Reeves 7, Davis 5). Turnovers: Woodlan 13, Southern Wells 26. Personal fouls: Woodlan 11, Southern Wells 10. Fouled out: None. Technical fouls: None.

# Sosa appears to acknowledge PED use, apologizes; Cubs welcome him back into fold

CHICAGO (AP) — Sammy Sosa appeared to acknowledge using performance enhancing drugs during a career in which he hit more than 600 home runs, and the Chicago Cubs said they were ready to welcome back their former star.

In a statement released Thursday through Aurora Global Consulting, Sosa said he is sorry for mistakes.

"There were times I did whatever I could to recover from injuries in an effort to keep my strength up to perform over 162 games," he said. "I never broke any laws. But in hindsight, I made mistakes and I apologize."

Cubs chairman Tom Ricketts said the team is "ready to move forward together" with Sosa and plans to invite Sosa to the annual fan convention Jan. 17-19 in Chicago.

"We appreciate Sammy releasing his statement and for reaching out," Ricketts

said. "No one played harder or wanted to win more. Nobody's perfect but we never doubted his passion for the game and the Cubs. It is an understatement to say that Sammy is a fan favorite."

Sosa, the franchise's record-holder with 545 home runs, was traded to Baltimore after he showed up late for the 2004 finale at Wrigley Field and left early.

Sosa, Barry Bonds and Mark McGwire, all tainted by allegations of performance-enhancing drugs use, fell well short of Hall of Fame election in 2022 on their 10th and final appearance on the Baseball Writers' Association of America ballot.

Sosa received a high of 18.5% support in his final appearance, less than a quarter of the 75% needed. His next chance for consideration would be if he is placed on the ballot for the contemporary player committee, which meets next December.



Three advance to Regionals

Three Wells County Bowlers advanced to Regionals on Wednesday night at Villa Lanes in Decatur. Miken Habegger and Grant Reifsteck from Bluffton qualified for the step ladder final in first and third position, respectively, and Habegger was sectional champion. Tyler Grover from Southern Wells qualified sixth. All three boys will bowl in the regional singles tournament on Jan. 25 at MVP Lanes in Fort Wayne (Photo submitted)

## Sports Roundup

### Norwell girls', boys' swim crush South Adams

Both Norwell swim teams beat South Adams in a meet at home Thursday night. Girls won 134-39 and boys won 104-72.

#### Individual Winners

##### Girls

- Rilynn Ervin, Kylee Hannie, Ryleigh Huffman and Vivian Reidenbach in the 200-yard medley relay.
- Ervin in the 100-yard breaststroke.
- Emerson Meredith in the 200-yard IM, 1 mtr. diving.
- Cassie Coyne in the 500-yard freestyle.
- Marlee Meredith in the 100-yard backstroke.

##### Boys

- Ryan Heyerly, Mikah McCartney, Colten Strunk and Tyler Zent in the 200-yard medley relay.
- Austen Parteko, Wyatt Goulet, Haden Meyer and Zent in the 200-yard freestyle relay.
- Franklin Bales, Braden Hoag, Goulet and Heyerly in the 400-yard freestyle relay.
- Heyerly in the 500-yard freestyle and 100-yard backstroke.
- Kale Meredith in the 200-yard freestyle, 100-yard butterfly
- Evan Swallow in the 200-yard IM.
- Benjamin Peterson in 1 mtr. diving.

### Bluffton boys', girls' swim outlast South Side

Both the boys' and girls' swim/diver teams brought home wins against Fort Wayne South Side on Thursday night. The boys beat the Archers 133-46 and the girls carried won 105-43.

#### Individual Winners

##### Girls

- Anna Zurcher, Ellie Coyne, Libby Arnett and Kiestynn Reed for 200-yard medley relay.
- Coyne, Zurcher, Bredemeyer and Reed in the 200-yard freestyle relay.
- Bredemeyer, Arnett, Gerber and Hansen in the 400-yard freestyle relay.
- Reed in the 200-yard freestyle and 100-yard freestyle.
- Zurcher in the 200-yard freestyle and

##### 100-yard backstroke.

- Arnett in the 500-yard freestyle.
- Coyne in the 100-yard breaststroke.
- Adalynn Fiechter in diving.

##### Boys

- Noah Brooks, Isaac Wheeler, Braden Lemler and Athan King in the medley relay.
- Rhett Gerber, Griffin Linderwell, Wheeler and Brooks in the 400-yard freestyle.
- Brooks in the 100-yard freestyle.
- Lemler in the 200-yard IM.
- King in the 50-yard freestyle.
- Linderwell in the 200-yard freestyle and 500-yard freestyle.
- Blake Reinhard in diving.
- Anthony Hartman in the 100-yard breaststroke.

### BHMS basktkball dominates Paul Harding Middle School

All four Bluffton-Harrison Middle School teams — seventh and eighth grade boys' and girls' teams — came out on top against Paul Harding Middle School Thursday night.

##### Boys

The eighth grade boys' team secured an impressive 46-26 victory, with Maddox White leading with 15 points. Chase Kistler followed with 14 points, Wyatt Holmes (7), Parker Christal (4), and Vince Lamert and Kamdyn Shuman (3).

The seventh grade team took away a 27-8 win. Davin Drayer led with nine points, followed by Riker Beste (6), Kreigh Ault (3), Easton Schipper and Clive Gerber (2) and Simeon Terry (1).

##### Girls

The eighth grade girls' team secured a strong 44-4 victory. Khloe Gehrett and Josie Nash led the scoreboard with 11 points each, followed by Audrey McMillan (8), Averie Patton (6), Audrey Mechling (4), and Madalyn Narvaez and Luci Jenkins (2).

The seventh grade team also won by a large margin, 40-10. Adrienne Smallman led with 13 points, followed by Averie Pearson (7), Cadence Lehman (6), Cheyenne Sonnigsen (4), and Abby Garrett, Ava Scheiman, Eliza Gearheart, Olivia Brown and Alaya Reinhard (2).

# Clemson adds 2nd transfer this week in Purdue defensive end

It's portal palooza for Clemson and coach Dabo Swinney, who after being the lone Power Four program not to add a transfer from the portal last offseason has brought on its second this week in ex-Purdue defensive end Will Heldt.

Swinney announced Heldt's signing Thursday.

Heldt is a 6-foot-6, 265-pound defen-

sive lineman who played his first two seasons with the Boilermakers. He appeared in 24 games and this fall was credited with 56 tackles, 10 behind the line of scrimmage, with five sacks and a fumble recovery he took 16 yards for a touchdown.

Heldt, 19, from Carmel, Indiana, had two years of eligibility remaining.



## Fred Lorenzen, a NASCAR Hall of Famer and the 1965 Daytona champion, dies at 89

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Fred Lorenzen, a NASCAR Hall of Famer and the 1965 Daytona 500 champion, died Wednesday. He was 89.

NASCAR released a statement that Lorenzen had died and had confirmed the death with his family. A cause of death wasn't given, but Lorenzen had been in declining health for years.

In 1998, he was named one of NASCAR's 50 Greatest Drivers.

One of NASCAR's first superstars, Lorenzen was known as the "Golden Boy" for his rugged, movie-star looks. He won 26 career Cup races and made starts in 12 seasons from 1956 to 1972.

"Fred Lorenzen was one of NASCAR's first true superstars. A fan favorite, he helped NASCAR expand from its original roots. Fred was the picture-perfect NASCAR star, helping to bring the sport to the silver screen — which further grew NASCAR's popularity during its early years," NASCAR Chairman Jim France said in a statement. "For many years, NASCAR's 'Golden Boy' was also its gold standard, a fact that eventually led him to the sport's pinnacle, a rightful place in the NASCAR Hall of Fame."

In 1964, Lorenzen entered 16 of the scheduled 62 races and won eight, including five consecutive starts. During that stretch, Lorenzen led 1,679 of the possible 1,953 laps, one of the more dominant stretches in NASCAR history.

He was the first driver in NASCAR to earn more than \$100,000 in a single season, which he did in 1963.

Lorenzen battled dementia in his later years and pledged his brain to the Concussion Legacy Foundation.

His daughter, Amanda Lorenzen Gardstrom, told The Associated Press in 2016 she was convinced Lorenzen had CTE from years of brutal wrecks and hits from the 1960s, one of the most dangerous eras in racing history.

"He never stopped to heal," she said.

His daughter said Lorenzen first showed signs of dementia around 2006. He had memory loss and used a wheelchair at Oak Brook Healthcare in Illinois.

The Elmhurst, Illinois, native was one of NASCAR's first stars to hail from outside the sport's Southern roots.

"The hardest part right now is that his racing memories are starting to go," Gardstrom said in 2016. "That was the one thing that was really wonderful, to connect and see him light up when he talked about racing."

Seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson was part of a 54-member panel that picked Lorenzen for induction into the hall in 2015. Tony Stewart introduced Lorenzen at his hall induction.

"He was such a humble guy, that I don't think he ever realized what an impact he had on the sport," Gardstrom said.

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# Richardson, Levis showdown on hold as Colts, Titans square off

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Anthony Richardson and Will Levis entered the NFL last season with similar traits.

Both played in the SEC, had big arms and loads of upside. Most draft experts had them ranked either third or fourth among that quarterback class. And both wound up being taken by teams in the AFC South — Richardson at No. 4 by Indianapolis and Levis at No. 33 by Tennessee.

Strangely, though, as their second NFL seasons near a close, they still haven't squared off. And it won't happen Sunday, either.

The Titans and Colts both seem to have more questions than answers about the guys anointed the faces of their franchises.

"He's kind of had two games that really have been a struggle for him, and we need to have better (play) there," first-year Titans coach Brian Callahan said in announcing Levis' benching this week. "Just like any other player, when your play dips the way it did and we have a chance let somebody else go do it ... I still believe very much in Will."

The benching is the latest twist in this two-year journey.

Richardson missed the last two Titans games because of injuries, and the one time he did start in 2023, he left early with a shoulder injury. Levis, meanwhile, started last season behind Ryan Tannehill, played and lost the last two against Indy (6-8) and now is benched.

Levis has 17 of Tennessee's league-worst 29 turnovers. So after losing three straight and five of six, the Titans (3-11) opted to go in a different direction — for now.

Richardson can relate. It has been a month since he regained the starting job following a two-week benching for poor play and tapping out of a game because he was tired. Coach Shane Steichen urged Richardson to recommit himself to the team while paying more attention to details and, at times, he has looked sharper.

Like Levis, he struggled with turnovers again last week in a critical 31-13 loss at Denver that may have cost the Colts (6-8) a playoff spot. But unlike Levis, who will be replaced by Mason Rudolph, Richardson hopes to rebound by winning Indy's final three games and getting the help Indy needs to make the postseason.

"We're just trying to make sure we finish out strong this year, so if we do get an opportunity to get in the playoffs, then we make sure that we take care of our business," Richardson said.

The Titans believe a little time on the sideline may help Levis view the game through a different prism, one that helps him come back a stronger player.

It sure couldn't hurt. Just ask Richardson. "He's shown improvement," Callahan said. "There's a lot of things he has improved at, but there hasn't been enough consistency at this moment and so those are the things that we're trying to fix."

Tackling Richardson could prove tricky for the Titans, who saw Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow run around for 9 seconds before throwing a TD pass in last week's 37-27 loss.

Richardson is an even stronger runner than Burrow and has been using his legs more over the past four games. The Titans are well aware that Richardson has five TD runs in 10 games this season, and they're focused on keeping him contained.

"We know that he's a good runner,"

Titans two-time Pro Bowl defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons said. "He has all the tools to be able to kill you in the run game. We know that the Colts have a lot of designed runs for him as well. So at the end of the day, we have to be disciplined."

Colts running back Jonathan Taylor didn't even realize what happened initially when the refs started reviewing what he thought was a 41-yard TD run. Instead, they took the points off the board because Taylor dropped the ball before crossing the goal line.

It's a lesson he won't forget and an embarrassing one he had to relive during this week's film session. Now, though, it serves as something else for the one-time rushing champ: motivation.

"It definitely will. I mean, I'm not the type that gets motivated off of certain things," Taylor said Thursday. "I feel like if you're not already motivated intrinsically to want to be the best player, to make big plays, I just think it's going to be tough to — this league is going to be tough for you if you're not just intrinsically motivated."

# Notre Dame-Indiana game a twist for those with dual loyalties

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Jim O'Donnell's legacy will be felt inside Notre Dame Stadium on Friday night.

His son, Jim, will attend the first playoff game in major college football to ever be played at a campus site, dressed in the cream-and-crimson color garb of his dad's alma mater, Indiana. The younger O'Donnell's son, Dylan, will don the Fighting Irish "Rudy" jacket his grandfather wrapped his frail body in as he battled dementia.

The man whose split loyalties were legendary to friends and family certainly will be there in spirit as his two beloved college teams — seventh-seeded Notre Dame and the 10th-seeded Indiana — kick off the College Football Playoff against each other in South Bend. He was one of the many fervent football fans in Indiana and would have loved this clash.

"What would he think of this matchup? To tell you the truth, he'd root for Notre Dame in a heartbeat," said Carri O'Donnell. "But anybody at IU who asked him, he would lie to them and say he rooted for IU — and then he would wink at you."

In many ways, O'Donnell typified what

this rare in-state, non-rivalry is all about — pride, passion and pleasantries.

He grew up in the state's northwest corner, Irish Catholic, the son of a man who schooled him well in the Notre Dame lore that makes the program a global love for so many. Still, O'Donnell was so determined to become a Hoosier that he hitchhiked his way 200 miles to the Bloomington campus.

After graduating, O'Donnell returned to Chicago, or what many call "The Region," where his dual rooting interests showed up like so many other people in Indiana.

He was a Notre Dame season-ticket holder from the 1950s through the 2000s. He met every Irish coach from Dan Devine to Charlie Weis. And O'Donnell never allowed his Hoosier ties to clash with his Irish roots.

Instead, those rooting interests merged.

"It's funny when you look at the state of Indiana, you've got your Purdue fans, your IU fans and your Notre Dame fans, but there's a lot of people that are Notre Dame football and IU basketball," said Irish linebacker Jack Kiser, who grew up in tiny Royal Center, population 800. "Historically, those have been the (state's) really good programs."

Because the twain rarely met, fans embraced the best of both worlds.

Yes, Indiana has five national championship banners hanging from the rafters inside its basketball arena, but the football program's claim to fame until this season had been that it lost more games than any other Bowl Subdivision program.

Notre Dame, meanwhile, owns the second-most national championships in college football's poll era (nine) and has seven Heisman Trophy winners but made its only appearance in the men's Final Four in 1978; the women's program has two national titles.

For years, the Irish and Hoosiers met annually on the basketball court when coaches Digger Phelps and Bob Knight were on the sideline. Those basketball games, though, were more friendlies than rivalries and the same is true in a football series Notre Dame has dominated, 23-5-1.

The Hoosiers last made the 200-mile trek to South Bend in 1991 only to get walloped 49-27. That was the first contest between the schools since 1958. Indiana hasn't won since 1950, and with so few matchups there's little spite.

"When Bob Knight came to town, there certainly was a fair number of Notre Dame football fans who became IU basketball fans and showed their true colors with red sweaters, probably close to 50-50 in the arena actually," former South Bend Tribune sports editor Bill Bilinski said. "It always seemed like a lot of South Benders had two sports wardrobes — one for fall and one for winter."

O'Donnell and longtime South Bend resident Alan Bell both fit Bilinski's description.


Bell's father, Ed, grew up in Chicago and was recruited for football by Notre Dame and Indiana. He wound up playing for Hoosiers coach Bo McMillin in the 1940s before spending four pro seasons.

The Bells moved to South Bend in 1960, where Alan grew up a Notre Dame football fan even though he and most of his family members graduated from Indiana. He and his son Chris, also an Indiana alum, plan to dress accordingly Friday night.

"I will be wearing spirit wear from both schools — some visible and some underneath," Alan Bell said. "Either way, my heart is with both schools and supporting each program."

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**DECEMBER 29-JANUARY 5 - Bidding starts closing at 2 p.m. - Estate of Eldrid Tinkel, seller.** Large antique and collectible auction. Country primitives, early metal toys including vintage tractors, farm implements, trucks, boats, more, antique furniture, cast iron collection, antique brass cash register, antique stoves, large and rare collection of vintage graniteware, Fenton, Marion advertising memorabilia, vintage beer signs, crocks, long guns, coins, more. Open house Dec. 29, 2-4 p.m., Jan. 4, 10 a.m.-noon, 1910 N. Meridian St., Marion. Sale manager Brandon Steffen, 260-710-5684, *The Steffen Group Inc.*, [steffengrp.com](http://steffengrp.com), 260-824-3006.

**BIDDING ENDS JANUARY 2 at 10 a.m. - (Online Only)** - MD Landscaping LLC, owner. Over 170+ Lots. John Deere 5525 W/ Belly Blade, Bobcat Dozer 96" Blade, 2016 International 4300 Box Truck, 2003 Wells Cargo Enclosed/Office Trailer, 84" 3-Point Cultivator, 2008 Ford F-350 W/ Boss Snow Plow, 2007 Jeep Wrangler w/J Truck Bed, Volvo ECR88 Excavator Kawasaki 65TMVB Wheel Loader, Kubota SCL 1000 Mini Skid Steer, Skid Loader Attachments, Hardscape Stone, Walnut Slabs, Assorted Lawn Tools, Power Tools and much more. 3883 US HWY 33 Decatur IN, 46733. *Krueckberg Auction & Realty LLC*, 260-724-7402, [kjauction.com](http://kjauction.com).

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Cash 5 — 15-16-32-34-41  
Cash4Life — 25-30-45-51-58, Cash Ball: 02  
Quick Draw Midday — 01-03-04-06-07-14-19-20-27-28-29-30-31-32-34-44-49-51-61-70, BE: 19  
Daily Three-Midday — 06-07-06, SB: 08  
Daily Three-Evening — 06-07-03, SB: 06  
Daily Four-Midday — 07-02-04-00, SB: 08  
Daily Four-Evening — 08-09-03-00, SB: 06  
Quick Draw Evening — 02-05-07-13-16-19-29-31-36-40-43-54-56-58-59-62-68-69-74-78, BE: 02  
Hoosier Lotto — Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$32.9 million  
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# House rejects plan on government shutdown, next steps uncertain

**By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING**  
**Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — A day before a potential government shutdown, the House resoundingly rejected President-elect Donald Trump's new plan Thursday to fund operations and suspend the debt ceiling, as Democrats and dozens of Republicans refused to accommodate his sudden demands.

In a hastily convened evening vote punctuated by angry outbursts over the self-made crisis, the lawmakers failed to reach the two-thirds threshold needed for passage — but House Speaker Mike Johnson appeared determined to reassess, before Friday's midnight deadline.

"We're going to regroup and we will come up with another solution, so stay tuned," Johnson said after the vote. The cobble-together plan didn't even get a majority, with the bill failing 174-235.

The outcome proved a massive setback for Trump and his billionaire ally, Elon Musk, who rampaged against Johnson's bipartisan compromise, which Republicans and Democrats had reached earlier to prevent a Christmastime government shutdown.

It provides a preview of the turbulence ahead when Trump returns to the White House with

Republican control of the House and Senate. During his first term, Trump led Republicans into the longest government shutdown in history during the 2018 Christmas season, and interrupted the holidays in 2020 by tanking a bipartisan COVID-relief bill and forcing a do-over.

Hours earlier Thursday, Trump announced "SUCCESS in Washington!" in coming up with the new package which would keep government running for three more months, add \$100.4 billion in disaster assistance including for hurricane-hit states, and allow more borrowing through Jan. 30, 2027.

"Speaker Mike Johnson and the House have come to a very good Deal," Trump posted.

But Republicans, who had spent 24 hours largely negotiating with themselves to cut out the extras conservatives opposed and come up with the new plan, ran into a wall of resistance from Democrats, who were in no hurry to appease demands from Trump — or Musk.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said Democrats were sticking with the original deal with Johnson and called the new one "laughable."

"It's not a serious proposal," Jeffries said as he walked to Democrats' own closed-door caucus meeting. Inside, Democrats were

chanting, "Hell, no!" All day, Johnson had been fighting to figure out how to meet Trump's almost impossible demands — and keep his own job — while federal offices are being told to prepare to shutter operations.

The new proposal whittled the 1,500-page bill to 116 pages and dropped a number of add-ons — notably the first pay raise for lawmakers in more than a decade, which could have allowed as much as a 3.8% bump. That drew particular scorn as Musk turned his social media army against the bill.

Trump said early Thursday that Johnson will "easily remain speaker" for the next Congress if he "acts decisively and tough" in coming up with a new plan to also raise the debt limit, a stunning request just before the Christmas holidays that has put the beleaguered speaker in a bind.

And if not, the president-elect warned of trouble ahead for Johnson and Republicans in Congress.

The tumultuous turn of events, coming as lawmakers were preparing to head home for the holidays, sparks a familiar reminder of what it's like in Trump-run Washington.

For Johnson, who faces his own problems ahead of a Jan. 3 House vote to remain speaker, Trump's demands left him severely weakened, forced to abandon his word with Democrats and work into the

night to broker the new approach.

Trump's allies even floated the far-fetched idea of giving Musk the speaker's gavel, since the speaker is not required to be a member of the Congress. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., posted she was "open" to the idea.

Democrats were beside themselves, seeing this as a fitting coda after one of the most unproductive congressional sessions in modern times.

"Here we are once again in chaos," said House Democratic Whip Katherine Clark, who detailed the harm a government shutdown would cause Americans. "And what for? Because Elon Musk, an unelected man, said, 'We're not doing this deal, and Donald Trump followed along.'"

As he left the Capitol, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said, "Now it's time to go back to the bipartisan agreement."

The debate in the House chamber grew heated as lawmakers blamed each other for the mess.

At one point, Rep. Marc Molinaro, who was presiding, slammed the speaker's gavel with such force that it broke.

The stakes couldn't be higher. Trump was publicly turning on those who opposed him.

One hardline Republican, Rep. Chip Roy of Texas, drew Trump's ire for refusing to along with the plan. Roy in turn told his own GOP

colleagues they had no self-respect for piling onto the nation's debt.

"It's shameful!" Roy thundered, standing on the Democratic side of the aisle and pointing at his fellow Republicans.

The slimmed-down package does include federal funds to rebuild Baltimore's collapsed Key Bridge, but dropped a separate land transfer that could have paved the way for a new Washington Commanders football stadium.

It abandons a long list of other bipartisan bills that had support as lawmakers in both parties try to wrap work for the year. It extends government funds through March 14.

Adding an increase in the debt ceiling to what had been a bipartisan package is a show-stopper for Republicans who want to slash government and routinely vote against more borrowing. Almost three dozen Republicans voted against it.

While Democrats have floated their own ideas in the past for lifting or even doing away with the debt limit caps — Sen. Elizabeth Warren had suggested as much — they appear to be in no bargaining mood to save Johnson from Trump — even before the president-elect is sworn into office.

The current debt limit expires Jan. 1, 2025, and Trump wants the problem off the table before he joins the White House.

# Man accused in CEO killing faces federal charge eligible for death penalty

**By MICHAEL R. SISAK, LARRY NEUMEISTER and MARK SCOLFORO**  
**Associated Press**

NEW YORK (AP) — The man accused of killing UnitedHealthcare's CEO was whisked back to New York by plane and helicopter Thursday to face new federal charges of stalking and murder, which could bring the death penalty if he's convicted.

Luigi Mangione was held without bail following a Manhattan federal court appearance, capping a whirlwind day that began in Pennsylvania, where he was arrested last week in the Dec. 4 attack on Brian Thompson.

The 26-year-old Ivy League graduate had been expected to be arraigned Thursday on a state murder indictment in a killing that at once rattled the business community and galvanized some health insurance critics, but the federal charges preempted that appearance. The cases will now proceed on parallel tracks, prosecutors said, with the state charges expected to go to

trial first. Mangione, shackled at the ankles and wearing dress clothes, said little during the 15-minute proceeding as he sat between his lawyers in a packed federal courtroom.

He nodded as a magistrate judge informed him of his rights and the charges against him, occasionally leaning forward to a microphone to tell her he understood.

After the hearing, a federal marshal handed Mangione's lawyers a bag containing his belongings, including the orange prison jumpsuit he had worn to court in Pennsylvania.

Mangione had been held in Pennsylvania since his Dec. 9 arrest while eating breakfast at a McDonald's in Altoona, about 233 miles (37 kilometers) west of Manhattan.

At a hearing there Thursday morning, Mangione agreed to be returned to New York and was immediately turned over to at least a dozen New York Police Department officers who took him to an airport and a plane bound for Long

Island.

He then was flown to a Manhattan heliport, where he was walked slowly up a pier by a throng of officers with assault rifles — a contingent that included New York City Mayor Eric Adams and Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch.

The federal complaint filed Thursday charges Mangione with two counts of stalking and one count each of murder through use of a firearm and a firearms offense. Murder by firearm carries the possibility of the death penalty, though federal prosecutors will determine whether to pursue that path in coming months.

In a state court indictment announced earlier this week, Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office charged Mangione with murder as an act of terrorism, which carries a possible sentence of life in prison without parole. New York does not have the death penalty.

Mangione's lawyer, Karen Friedman Agnifilo, said it's a "highly unusual situation" for a defendant

face simultaneous state and federal cases.

"Frankly I've never seen anything like what is happening here," said Friedman Agnifilo, a former top deputy

in the Manhattan district attorney's office.

She reserved the right to seek bail at a later point and declined to comment as she left the courthouse.

Mangione, of Towson, Maryland, is accused of ambushing the 50-year-old Thompson as the executive arrived to a Manhattan hotel for an investor conference.

# A race is on to save the Everglades, protect a key source of drinking water

EVERGLADES, Fla. (AP) — In a region of Florida known as the River of Grass, John Kominoski plops into hip-deep waters. Blobs of brown periphyton — a mishmash of algae, bacteria and other organisms — carpet the surface.

The air is thick and sticky as Kominoski, a Florida International University professor, pushes a rod to secure a tube that collects timed and continuous water samples that will help his team investigate the impacts of climate change and freshwater flows.

The Everglades ecosystem was degraded and transformed when a highway connecting Tampa and Miami was built in 1928, cutting through a mosaic of prairies, sawgrass marshes, freshwater ponds and forested uplands. Sections of the road are now being elevated to restore water flows into the Shark River Slough — a vital restoration area deep in the Everglades National Park.

The highway elevation is part of a massive state-federal project, approved by Congress in 2000 with bipartisan support, that aims to undo damages wreaked upon these wetlands.

"This is the biggest, most complicated and most expensive ecosystem restoration project in the world," said Eve Samples, executive director of Friends of the Everglades.

More than two decades into it, there are signs of progress. Wildlife is returning to some areas, regions dominated by the invasive melaleuca tree have dropped 75%, and enthusiasm is high as significant projects are finally underway, others gain momentum and funding pours in. But there are also worries: the projects are billions of dollars over budget and questions remain about whether some will work.

Once about twice the size of New Jersey, today only half of the Everglades remains. Home to endangered and threatened species, the area buffers storms and is a vital source of drinking water for millions of Floridians. Decades of engineering projects for development and agriculture partitioned and drained water that once flowed freely from the Kissimmee River to Lake Okeechobee to the Florida Bay. Invasive species have transformed the land, and pollution from

agriculture — primarily phosphorus — has impoverished water quality.

Efforts to repair the Everglades are projected to cost more than \$23 billion and take 50 years to complete. Water quality has improved, but challenges remain and accelerating salt water intrusion, sea level rise and higher temperatures are ongoing threats.

Since 2019, the South Florida Water Management District has completed, broken ground on, or celebrated other milestones on some 70 projects. This year, lawmakers earmarked \$1.275 billion for the next 12 months of restoration efforts — the largest annual amount allocated. It is unclear what Donald Trump may do with restoration efforts when he takes office, but during his first presidential term he allocated funds and helped pass the Great American Outdoors Act, which secured \$900 million annually in permanent funding to improve access to public lands, protect watersheds and more.

Northwest of Miami, excavators claw mounds of blasted limestone as crews replace acres of sugarcane fields in a massive project that aims to supply clean freshwater to the Everglades.

When the \$3.9 billion Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir Project is complete, a reservoir and wetland will store and clean polluted water from Lake Okeechobee in central Florida before it's discharged into the southern Everglades.

Considered by some of the most important of the projects, the reservoir, at 10,500 acres, will have the capacity to store enough water for the equivalent of about 480,000 to 720,000 homes. Its adjacent 6,500-acre wetland — or the stormwater treatment area — will clean reservoir water before it's discharged.

Combined, the project will be nearly the stretch of a marathon.

"The wildlife and the mosaic of habitats that are here rely on getting the water right, and that's what this project is about," said Jennifer Reynolds, the director of ecosystem restoration and capital projects for the water district. "It's about getting the water right for the natural habitats and also to sustain the population of people who live and recreate here."

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