

## Utility rate increases due to infrastructure projects

#### **By JONATHAN SNYDER**

There have been multiple increases throughout the 2020s for Bluffton residents' sewer, water and electric bills.

The recent increase in electric bills in December of 2024 has been part of multiple increases. Electric rates have increased in 2022 and 2024, sewage rates have increased twice, while water rates

#### increased in 2022.

According to Common Council member Scott Mentzer, the increases are due to multiple factors. While inflation throughout the 2020s played a factor, Mentzer noted that key infrastructure projects brought on the need for increases. Water filtration plant upgrades completed in 2021, along with a water tower and the wastewater treatment plant, have been the primary cause of rate increases for those specific utilities.

"We've got to take out debt ... to handle those projects," Mentzer said. "That debt gets rolled into the rate — That's the only way to pay off the debt service."

While Mentzer acknowledged that sewer rates are just above average for Indiana municipalities, the new wastewater plant should allow Bluffton to slowly move further down the pricing scale. Mentzer expects the new plant to last approximately 40 years. Mentzer also noted that while there have been increases, the Common Council tried to ensure that Bluffton is still at or lower than the midpoint for utilities.

"We have always shown where

Bluffton falls within other cities in the region," Mentzer said. "When we did the water increase, we were well below the average, and the water increase took us right about to the midpoint."

Most infrastructure projects in recent years have been due to regulations set by the Indiana Department of Environmental Manage-

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#### Winter weather makes an appearance

Bluffton reached over one inch of snowfall through Thursday night and Friday. More snowfall is expected over the weekend and a Winter Storm Watch has been broadcasted for Wells County from Sunday afternoon to Monday evening. Above, Philip Tessmer shovels the sidewalk outside of Billy Ann's restaurant.

## Double dose of winter is about to hit parts of the U.S. with snow, ice and cold

## Indiana's graduation rate hit record high in 2024; Some students still struggle

The rate of non-waiver Hoosier graduates continues to rise, reversing record-low numbers in 2022

#### By CASEY SMITH Indiana Capital Chronicle

Newly released data shows Indiana's high school graduation rate reached a record high with the Class of 2024, but minority and low-income students across the state continue to lag behind their peers.

In the most recent 2024 class, 90.23% of Hoosier students graduated, according to a report released by Indiana's Department of Education last week. IDOE officials said it's the highest graduation rate since the state began publishing data.

The increase builds upon a rebound from the decade-low high school graduation rate in 2022, when just 86.52% of students earned diplomas.

The graduation rate for the Class of 2024 marked a slight increase — about 1% — over the Class of 2023. The previous rate peak of 90.06% was set in 2014, according to IDOE data

"Over the past year, we have celebrated a number of successes in K-12 education, and there is urgency to continue this positive momentum for Indiana students," Jenner said in a statement.

"As a state, we have seen literacy rates increase for the third consecutive year. Indiana and increasing opportunities for students."

#### By the numbers

State education leaders said the federal graduation rate for Indiana also increased for 2024 graduates to 88.67% from 87.52% in 2023, and up from 85.12% in 2022. The federal graduation rate is calculated differently due to differences between state and federal accountability equations and standards.

IDOE officials additionally noted a continued drop in the rate of students across the state who need a waiver to graduate.

The state's non-waiver graduation rate — the number of students who complete all their diploma requirements without needing a waiver — improved from 84.92% in 2023 to 87.53% in 2024.

Students who do not complete or pass some graduation requirements can still qualify for a diploma if they demonstrate knowledge or skill.

The waivers are intended to help students with special circumstances, including for those who transfer to a new school, or in cases where a student has attempted to pass competency tests at least three times.

Reducing the number of waivers used

#### BY SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

A strong snow and ice storm followed by brutally cold conditions will soon smack the eastern twothirds of the United States as frigid air escapes the Arctic, plunging as far south as Florida, meteorologists forecast.

Starting Saturday, millions of people are going to be hit by moderate to heavy snow from Kansas City to Washington - including a high chance of at least 8 inches of snow between central Kansas and Indiana the National Weather Service warned Friday. Dangerous ice particularly lethal to power lines - "so heavy like paste, it's hard to move," said private meteorologist Ryan Maue - is likely to set in just south of that in southern Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and much of Kentucky and West Virginia.

"It's going to be a mess, a potential disaster," Maue said. "This is something we haven't seen in quite a while."

National Weather Service meteorologist Alex Lamers said Friday that the potential for blizzard conditions is increasing, particularly in Kansas and neighboring portions of the Central Plains, and that wind gusts may reach 50 mph at times.

As the storm moves out on Monday, hundreds of millions of people in the eastern two-thirds of the nation will be plunged into dangerous bone-chilling air and wind chills all week, government and private forecasters said. Temperatures could be 12 to 25 degrees Fahrenheit colder than normal as the dreaded polar vortex stretches down from the high Arctic bringing chilly weather, they said.

"This could lead to the coldest January for the U.S. since 2011," AccuWeather Director of Forecast Operations Dan DePodwin said Friday. "It's not just one day of this. It's going to be three to five, in some cases a week or more of temperatures that are well below historical average."

The biggest drop below normal is likely to be centered over the Ohio Valley, but significant unusual cold will extend southward all the way to the Gulf Coast, said Danny Barandiaran, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center.

Forecasts have moderated a bit from last week when some computer models envisioned the worst cold spell in decades. Now it's unlikely many cold records will break, but it will still have a big impact on the country, Barandiaran said.

There should even be a hard freeze in Florida, while areas near the Canadian border will be around zero, Barandiaran said.

"It's not going to thaw out for awhile," Maue said.

Woodwell Climate Research Institute climate scientist Jennifer Francis said the initial blasting winds from the north may shock people after a fairly warm last couple of years.

"The wind chills are going to be brutal," she said. "There'll be a lot of whining, but it is winter. ... Just because the globe is warming doesn't mean these cold snaps are going away."

This double dose of nasty weather may be triggered in part by a fast-warming Arctic, serving as a not-sogentle reminder that climate change gooses weather extremes, even winter ones, said Francis and Judah Cohen, seasonal forecast director at the private firm Atmospheric and Environmental Research.

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chronic absenteeism rates improve for the second year in a row, and today, the highest state graduation rate on record," she continued. "Together, we must continue to keep our foot on the gas pedal in 2025, ensuring we keep improving our education system in by Indiana high schoolers has been a focal point for state education and policy leaders.

A law adopted during the 2023 legislative session established new caps on the percentage of graduation waivers that can (Continued on Page 2)

## Gunshot wounds top abuse and neglect report for Indiana's children

· If you suspect a child

is being abused or

neglected, call the

Indiana Department of

Child Services' Child

Abuse and Neglect

available 24 hours a

day, 7 days a week,

including weekends

You can report abuse and

at 1-800-800-5556.

neglect anonymously

and holidays.

Hotline today. It is

#### By NIKI KELLY Indiana Capital Chronicle

Fractured ribs, head injuries, accidental drownings and gunshot wounds. This is a glimpse at how 56 children

glimpse at how 56 children died from abuse and neglect in 2023.

The Indiana Department of Child Services released its annual report on child deaths on New Year's Eve. It investigated 261 child deaths in 2023 and determined 56 were a result of abuse or neglect. That is down slightly from the year before.

According to the report, 20 of the fatalities were due to abuse, and 36 were the

result of neglect. The majority, 68%, of the fatalities involved a child 3 years old or younger, which is consistent with national trends.

Thirteen of the victims included in this

report were previously victims in a DCS case of substantiated abuse or neglect.

Causes of death were taken from state death certificates. Death by weapon, includ-

ing body part, was the leading cause of death, listed in 50% of cases. Using a closed fist is also an example of death by weapon. Drowning and poisoning or overdose also were leading factors.

The number of abuse and neglect deaths has remained relatively steady in recent years. In 2022 and 2021, the number was 61 and 60 respectively. In 2020, 50 children died from abuse and neglect.

DCS reviews all child fatalities that meet the following circumstances:

For children under 3 years of age: The death is sudden, unexpected or unexplained, (Continued on Page 2)

Inside How to contact us: 824-0224 Call us: Local/Area or 1-800-579-7476 PADDLEFISH Follow us on Facebook! Obituaries.....3 Go to www.facebook.com/ Police Notebook ....3 newsbanner solar project www.news-banner.com Opinion Sunny today, but snow **Place Your Classified** Saturday Sub . . . . . . 4 and wind tomorrow Ads 24/7 Susan Poper - Local Representative 201 E. Market St., Suite No. 3 Bluffton, IN 46714 info@paddlefishsolar.com twitter.com/newsbanner edf-re.com/project/ paddlefish-solar-project/ (260) 355-5951 Sunday Monday Today Vol. 96 No. 52 Office Hours: Tues. 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. Thurs. 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. or by appointment Also... High 25 | High 27 High 22 Paddlefish Solar Project £ Sports. . . . . . . . . . . . 6-7 Low 14 Low 21 Low 13 SATURDAY facebook.com/PaddlefishSolar Classifieds . . . . . . . . . . . . 8 January 4, 2025 More Weather on Page 2 Diversions . . . . . . . . . . . . . 9

#### LOCAL/NATION

### **Utility rate increases**

(Continued from Page 1) ment. IDEM cited the wastewater plant as a site that was beginning to fail before 2021. The water filtration plant needed replacement since 2019, before the project's completion.

The electric increase is a different beast, however. Recent federal regulations have removed a majority of coal and gas-fired plants from auctions, the primary source of acquiring energy capacity for providers. In response, the city's electric provider, Wolverine Power Cooperative, declared its rates would increase by approximately 6-7% in 2030. The electric rate increase intends to avoid a major spike in 2030, while funds from the increase will be collected in a slush fund to further ease the burden beyond 2030.

"There has to be a gas plant to take that gas and convert it to electricity," Mentzer said in the council meeting on Dec. 3. "The cost to build gas plants, because of some of the regulations that have been put on, are so significantly high that people aren't investing in new gas plants. The way to drive down cost is by increasing capacity ... and right now, it's not very costeffective for these energy providers to build plants."

While rates could go down once the debt service

is paid off from the bonds, inflation over the bond cycle makes those decreases highly unlikely. Mentzer stated that while the city audits rates every year and tries to calculate future needs, the bonds also last 20 to 30 years. While Mentzer is open to tweaking rates down after the bond cycles, he also noted it is incredibly early to predict what rates will look like then.

"People don't pay a lot of attention to utilities and the cost that we put into those things," Mentzer said. "But when they don't work, everybody notices right away. When the utility stops operating, it's a big deal. I think we're in a really good

situation now, we've got new water infrastructure, we've got new sewer infrastructure and we continue to put not only new capacity in the electric infrastructure — But all of our increases have also included backup capacity in case something goes down."

While maintenance for the new water and wastewater plants will need attention, the two projects that the city has targeted in the future are the Cherry street substation and the replacement of lead pipes in city infrastructure. Federal regulations state that pipes with lead need to be replaced by 2030, so the city needs plans and funds to replace them.

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### Indiana's graduation rate

#### (Continued from Page 1)

be counted toward a school's state and local graduation rate beginning with the 2024 graduation cohort.

Lawmakers set a 9% cap on the number of students who can graduate from a school with a waiver during the 2023-2024 school year. After that, the cap drops to 6% in the following academic year, and down to 3% for each school year after June 30, 2025.

New data also showed non-public school students performed slightly better than their peers in public schools.

Students in non-public Indiana schools graduated at a 92.3% rate while students in public schools graduated at a rate of 90.11%. Both rates are up compared to 2023.

Same as in the year prior, students at traditional public schools graduated at a higher rate in 2024 than those at charter schools. State data shows that 92.48% of traditional public school students graduated in the most recent cohort, compared to 58.6% in charter schools.

**Disparities remain** 

Despite progress across all demographics, disparities persist statewide among racial, economic, and special education student groups, however.

Statewide, graduation rates increased by roughly 1.5 points for Black and Hispanic students, building on small gains in previous years. About 83.88% of Black students and 87.83% of Hispanic students graduated in 2024 — both below the statewide average. That's compared to 95.91% of Asian students and 91.89% of White students.

English learners and special education students had slightly better graduation rate improvements.

The English learner graduation rate jumped from 87.72% in 2023 to 89.48% in 2024. The rate for students receiving special education services additionally increased to 85.30% in 2024, up from 83.24% in 2023.

The graduation rate for those who receive free and reduced lunch — the nationally-recognized metric for calculating student poverty — increased from 88.74% in 2023 to 91.52% in 2024.

While that's still roughly 1.5 percentage points behind the rate for paid meal students, the gap between the two student groups is closing; the split was as high as 8.5 percentage points in 2022. That year, Indiana schools graduated only 83.7% of students who received free and reduced lunch, according to IDOE data.

The landmark graduation rate was announced just ahead of the 2025 session, during which state lawmakers are expected to revisit discussion and possible legislation to address Indiana's ongoing challenges around literacy, absenteeism and graduation requirements.

In December, Indiana's State Board of Education approved a high school diploma overhaul meant to boost Indiana's dismal college-going numbers and ensure that all Hoosier students college-bound or not — graduate from high school with high-value, workready skills. Those changes will take effect with Indiana's Class of 2029, but schools can opt in earlier, if they choose.

# Biden blocks \$14 billion acquisition of U.S. Steel by Japan's Nippon Steel

#### By FATIMA HUSSEIN, JOSH BOAK and MARC LEVY Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden has blocked the nearly \$15 billion proposed deal for Nippon Steel of Japan to pur-

pon Steel of Japan to purchase Pittsburgh-based U.S. Steel — affirming his ear-

told The Associated Press last month that some federal agencies represented on the panel were skeptical that allowing a Japanese company to buy an Americanowned steelmaker would create national security risks.

The decision comes just weeks before the Democrat-

for our members and for America's national security."

McCall had long questioned Nippon Steel's status as an honest broker for U.S. national trade interests and reiterated that Friday, calling Nippon Steel a "serial trade cheater" that would degrade U.S. steelmaking and had, and U.S. national security. The announcement came

during a tide of renewed political support for rebuilding America's manufacturing sector and followed a long stretch of protectionist U.S. tariffs that analysts say have helped reinvigorate domestic steel.

Nippon Steel waged a

Weather

Saturday, January 4, 2025 (24-hour observations at 10:05 p.m. Friday) High: 31; Low: 19; Precipitation: 1.5 inches of snow Wabash River Level (at the Main Street bridge): 3.51 feet at 9:45 p.m. Friday

### Wells County forecast

**Today:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 22. West wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

**Tonight:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 14. West wind 5 to 10 mph.

**Sunday:** A 30% chance of snow after 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 25. Calm wind becoming northeast around 5 mph.

**Sunday Night:** Snow likely. Cloudy, with a low

around 21. East wind 5 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70%. New snow accumulation of 1 to 3 inches possible.

**Monday:** A 40% chance of snow, mainly before 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 27.

Monday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 13.

**Tuesday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 26.

**Tuesday Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 12.

**Wednesday:** Mostly cloudy and cold, with a high near 20.

Wednesday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 7. Thursday: Mostly sunny and cold, with a high near 19. Thursday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 8. Friday: Partly sunny, with a high near 21.

### Neglect report

(Continued from Page 1) or involves allegations of abuse and neglect.

For children aged 3 or older: The death involves allegations of abuse or neglect.

The child's biological parents were often deemed responsible for the child fatalities detailed in this report, accounting for 65 of the 76 alleged perpetrators. Multiple perpetrators can be involved in one child's death.

Fifteen children in Marion County died from abuse and neglect. The remaining deaths occurred in 22 other counties.

At least 10 cases involved toddlers finding loaded firearms and shooting themselves or siblings.

In one case the parents left two children in the living room while doing cocaine in another room. They heard a loud pop and found their five-year-old son dead of a gunshot wound. The father stated he had left his gun pushed down into a couch cushion with the top of the gun's handle sticking up.

In another case, a 2-year-old girl died from a gunshot wound. She lived with her parents. On the day of the fatality, the child was home with the mother while the father was at work. The mother was cleaning the home and heard a gunshot. The mother found the child suffering from a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the parents' bedroom. It was common for the mother to keep a loaded firearm on her bedside table at night, and she had forgotten to move the gun that morning.



lier vow on the presidential campaign trail to prevent the acquisition of Steeltown USA's most storied steel company.

The proposed deal kicked up an election year political maelstrom across America's industrial heartland and blocking it drew a threat of litigation from Nippon Steel.

"We need major U.S. companies representing the major share of US steelmaking capacity to keep leading the fight on behalf of America's national interests," Biden said in a Friday morning statement.

Nippon Steel and U.S. Steel blasted the decision, saying in a joint statement that Biden's blocking the deal "reflects a clear violation of due process and the law" in a process it said was "manipulated" to advance Biden's political agenda.

It also insisted that Biden cited no credible evidence of the deal presenting a national security problem and suggested it will sue, saying "we are left with no choice but to take all appropriate action to protect our legal rights."

Biden's decision comes after the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, known as CFIUS, failed to reach consensus on the possible national security risks of the deal last month, and sent a long-awaited report on the merger to Biden. He had 15 days to reach a final decision.

The committee, chaired by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and made up of other Cabinet members, can recommend that the president block a transaction, and federal law gives the president that power.

A U.S. official familiar with the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity, ic president is set to leave office and could damage relations between the U.S. and Japan, which is America's biggest ally in Asia and its largest foreign holder of U.S. debt.

In their statement, the two steel companies said it's "shocking — and deeply troubling" that the U.S. would reject a transaction that advances U.S. interests and "treat an ally like Japan in this way."

"Unfortunately, it sends a chilling message to any company based in a U.S. allied country contemplating significant investment in the United States," the companies said.

Biden previously came out against the deal during the presidential campaign and was backed by the United Steelworkers, concerned over whether the company would honor existing labor agreements or slash jobs, as well as over the firm's financial transparency.

"It is important that we maintain strong American steel companies powered by American steel workers," Biden said in a March statement, while he was still seeking reelection to the presidency before dropping out of the race. "U.S. Steel has been an iconic American steel company for more than a century, and it is vital for it to remain an American steel company that is domestically owned and operated."

President-elect Donald Trump has also opposed the acquisition and vowed in December on his Truth Social platform to block the deal and to use tax incentives and tariffs to boost U.S. Steel's fortunes.

On Friday, Steelworkers President David McCall said the union is grateful for Biden's move to block the sale and, in a video news conference, called it the "right move for decades, undermined the domestic steel industry by dumping its products into U.S. markets.

"Allowing it to purchase U.S. Steel would have offered it the opportunity to further destabilize our trade system from within and in the process, compromise our ability to meet our own national security and critical infrastructure needs," McCall said.

McCall insisted that U.S. Steel — which is profitable and reported \$1.8 billion on its balance sheet — has the financial wherewithal to make the company strong. Nippon Steel's offer was a "huge windfall" for executives and investors, but not for America or workers, McCall said.

However, U.S. Steel has warned that, without Nippon Steel's cash, it will shift production away from its aging blast furnaces to cheaper non-union electric arc furnaces and move its headquarters out of Pittsburgh.

For its part, Nippon Steel had said it is best positioned to help American steel compete in an industry dominated by the Chinese and to invest billions in United Steelworkers-represented facilities, including the company's aging blast furnaces in Pennsylvania and Indiana.

It pledged to protect U.S. Steel in trade matters, and promised not to import steel slabs that would compete with the blast furnaces.

N i p p o n S t e e l announced in December 2023 that it planned to buy the steel producer for \$14.9 billion in cash and debt, and committed to keep the U.S. Steel name and Pittsburgh headquarters. Despite that, its proposal raised concerns about what the transaction could mean for unionized workers, supply chains public relations campaign to consolidate support, even offering \$5,000 in closing bonuses to U.S. Steel employees, a nearly \$100 million expense.

A number of conservatives and business groups like the U.S. Chamber had publicly backed the deal, as Nippon Steel began to win over some Steelworkers union members and mayors in areas near its blast furnaces.

Nippon Steel was the world's fourth largest steelmaker in 2023, according to World Steel Association figures. U.S. Steel was 24th.

### **U.S. winter**

(Continued from Page 1)

The polar vortex, ultracold air spinning like a top 15 to 30 miles high, usually stays penned up above the North Pole. But sometimes it escapes or stretches down to the United States, Europe or Asia. And that's when large numbers of people get intense doses of cold.

Cohen and colleagues have published several studies showing an increase in the polar vortex stretching or wandering. Cohen, Francis and others last month published a study that attributed these cold outbreaks partly to changes from an Arctic that's warming four times faster than the rest of the globe.

The change in temperature and loss of Arctic sea ice make the jet stream the river of air that moves storm fronts — wavier, allowing plunges of cold air to come south and extreme weather to stay put, Francis said.

What's about to hit "is a really good example of these kinds of cases," Francis said.



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#### **OBITUARIES**

#### Rae Ann Hayden, 71

Rae Ann Hayden, 71, of rural Bluffton, passed away Thursday morning, Jan. 2, 2025, at Lutheran Hospital in Fort Wayne.

Rae Ann was born in Bluffton on Nov. 24, 1953, to Bob L. and Virginia "Ginny" M. (Clark) Schocke. She married Charles "Charlie" A. Hayden in Bluffton on Aug. 24, 2002; he survives.

A 1972 graduate of Bluffton High School, Rae Ann worked

at Franklin Electric, which later became Bluffton Motor Works and then WEG Industries, for 47 years, retiring in 2019. For over 30 years she was a member of the American Legion Post 111 Auxiliary. She loved being outdoors, camping and making homemade jewelry. She was also an excellent cook and enjoyed sharing her recipes with her granddaughter.

In addition to her husband, Rae Ann is survived by a daughter, Tomra "Tomi" Cardin of Fort Wayne; a granddaughter, Markia "KiKi" Cardin of Fort Wayne; three sisters, Lynn Schocke of Anderson, Jan (David) Rindler of Berne, and Bobbi (Dal-

#### Nicholas E. Norris, 37

Nicholas "Nick" E. Norris, 37, of rural Markle, passed away Thursday morning, Jan. 2, 2025, following an accident while doing what he loved, cutting firewood in the family woods.

Nick was born in Bluffton on Dec. 12, 1987, to Kelly and Dave (Stabler) Norris. He married Alexia "Lexy" McKee-Miller in Ossian on Oct. 12, 2019; she survives

A 2006 graduate of Norwell High School, Nick later worked at imi Aggregates in Bluffton for the past 14 years, where he served in various roles, including anything from office work to operating heavy equipment.

Nick was an avid Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Arizona Wildcats basketball fan. He loved hanging out with his friends and enjoyed hosting "Sunday Fun Day" at his home. He also loved spending time with his family, especially playing sports with his kids in the yard. He and Lexy also enjoyed taking vacations and traveling around the country.

In addition to his wife and parents, all of rural Markle, Nick is survived by a

#### Derryle L. Pharr, 83

Derryle L. Pharr, 83, of Berne, peacefully went home to be with his Lord and Savior Thursday morning, Jan. 2, 2025, surrounded by his family at Swiss Village in Berne.

He was born on March 11, 1941, in Ringgold, Georgia, to the late Howard L. and Rufine R. (Habegger) Pharr. Derryle was united in marriage to Neva VonGunten on July 31, 1986, at First Mennonite Chapel in

Berne, and she preceded him in death on Dec. 15, 2020.

Derryle was a member of the First Mennonite Church in Berne.



las) Moser of Bluffton; and a brother, Bruce (Karen) Schocke of Zanesville.

Aside from her parents, Rae Ann was preceded in death by a brother, David Schocke.

Visitation will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025, from 10:00 until 11:00 a.m., at Goodwin – Cale & Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton, followed immediately by a funeral service at 11:00 a.m.,

with Pastor Bill Campbell officiating. Private burial will be held at Elm Grove Cemetery in Bluffton.

In lieu of floral tributes and gifts, the family requests that memorial contributions be given to the Redemption House Ministry of Fort Wayne, an organization started by her daughter that helps women find recovery, stability and hope. Contributions can either be mailed directly to 426 E. Wayne St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802, or be made online at www. redemptionhousefw.org.

Online condolences may be shared at www.goodwincaleharnish.com.

> son, Elias; two daughters, Rhea and Karsvn: a brother. Jason (Amber) Norris of Markle; a grandmother, Suzanne Stabler of Bluffton: and two nephews. Camden and Crew Norris.

> Nick was preceded in death by his grandparents. Lawrence "Lornie" Stabler, and Eugene "Red" and Marie Norris.

Visitation will be Monday, Jan. 6, 2025, from 1:00 until 7:00 p.m., at Goodwin - Cale

& Harnish Memorial Chapel in Bluffton. In honor of Nick's love for sports, the family requests that everyone dress in their favorite sports team attire to the visitation. Services will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025, at 11:00 a.m., at the funeral home, with one hour of visitation prior to the service. Pastor Mike Gilbert will officiate. Burial will follow at Sparks Cemetery in Wells County.

Memorial donations in memory of Nick may be made to an educational fund for Nick's children, payable directly to Alexia Norris, or to the Mike Evans Family Foundation.

Online condolences may be shared at www.goodwincaleharnish.com.



Laddipeerla, Chance (Natalie) Reynolds, Abby (Dalton) Combs, Cashton Reynolds; 12 great-grandchildren; and 13 step-great-grandchildren and one on the way.



#### Destination Recreation

Let there be light! We are excited to announce that the long-awaited River Road/Rivergreenway lighting project is now complete. After years of planning and work, we are thrilled to see it come to fruition, especially given the positive feedback we've received since they were installed.

This milestone brings us one step closer to achieving the goals outlined in our 5-year Master Plan, developed in 2021 through public surveys, focus groups, and community meetings. The survey revealed that the Rivergreenway is the most frequently visited park, with annual trail counts exceeding 56,500. Survey comments reflected strong support for this lighting initiative, with users expressing how much they hoped for improvements: "Adding lights on the Greenway has always been a hope for this frequent user," and "Lighting alone the entire Greenway would be a huge benefit for early morning walks in the fall, winter, and spring!" One respondent even noted, "The River Greenway and Interurban Trail needs additional lighting. I often feel unsafe and not seen by drivers when it gets dark October - April in the early evening hours."

These sentiments were echoed in the public meeting on Aug. 17, 2021, where attendees identified stabilizing and lighting the Rivergreenway as the top priority for the next five years. While I'm the most excited about what the project does



to increase the visibility on the trail, more importantly, a traffic study

By Brandy Fiechter

conducted on River Road outlined the importance of lighting the roadway. The study reports, "The installation of overhead lighting, ideally illuminating both the roadway and the trail, can increase safety. In addition to increased visibility, lighting provides an indication to drivers they are entering a developed area. Lighting also provides additional personal safety for trail users. Lighting can also help reduce nighttime crashes, which are a significant percentage of current crashes." Of the most used roads under the city's care, River Road sees a lot of traffic and is ranked as having a high pedestrian volume, posing a significant safety concern.

As someone who regularly uses the trail at 5:30 a.m., I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Caylor-Nickel Foundation, which generously donated to this lighting project. It's incredible how much safer I feel now, being able to see approaching runners rather than being startled by someone coming up unexpectedly in the darkness. I'm thankful for the Foundation's continued support, not only in this project but also for the assistance with Lancaster Park and the Interurban Trail. They have been instrumental in making a difference in the lives of many, fostering safe spaces for outdoor enjoyment, fitness, and community connection.

Have a great week!

### **Police Notebook**

#### **INCIDENTS**

City: Thursday, 3:56 p.m., Capri Court. Report of man possibly harassing a woman,

unable to locate. Thursday, 5:45 p.m., 500 block of Cottonwood Court.

Verbal domestic dispute. Thursday, 6:12 p.m., 600 block of South Jersey Street. Report trespassing, possibly ongoing issue.

Thursday, 6:26 p.m., 700 noise at location where block of South Williams no one was living. Officer Street. Report of theft.

Thursday, 7:35 p.m., Walmart. Report of trespass-

Thursday, 7:46 p.m., Main Street and Premier Avenue. Driver cited for no valid license.

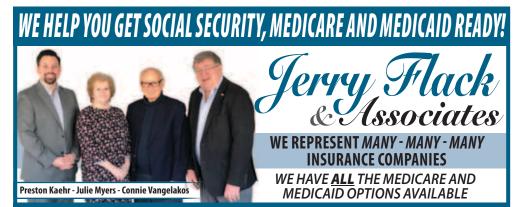
Thursday, 10:41 p.m., 800 block of Eastmoor Drive. Report of partying and loud

no one was living. Officer found main door open, but no foot prints in the snow.

Friday, 12:19 a.m., Western Avenue and Decker Drive. Intoxicated driver, juvenile detained.

Friday, 11:15 a.m., Pine Grove Apartments. Junk violation.

County: (Continued on Page 10)





He began his working career at Franklin Electric in the Maintenance Department, then Haines Engineering as a Millwright, and retired from O & R Precision Tool and Die in Berne after 21 years of service.

Derryle had a passion and love for coin collecting. Derryle and Neva went on many different cruises following different Southern Gospel groups. In his spare time, he was an avid Pegs & Jokers player with family and friends. Following his grandchildren and great-grandchildren in their different sporting events were very important to him and watching sports on T.V.

He is survived by his daughter, Rita (Mike) Bolinger of Warren; son, Tony (Jang) Pharr of Bloomington; step-son, Tom Dull of Berne; step-son, Ron (Celia) Dull of Berne; step-son, Mike (Rona) Dull of Cicero, Indiana; step-daughter, Rhonda (Shane) Reynolds of Decatur; daughterin-law, Song Pharr of Coalmont, Tennessee; nine grandchildren, Jarod Pharr,

#### Derryle was preceded in death by a son, Rick Pharr; granddaughter, Alexan-dria Pharr; great-grandson, Shaun Hammond; step-great-grandson, Cole Dull; and two sisters, Diane Foust, and Dixie Pharr.

A funeral service will be held at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2025, at the First Mennonite Church in Berne, with Pastor Jim Schwartz and Pastor Dathan Foust officiating. Burial will follow at M.R.E. Cemetery in Berne.

The family will receive friends from 1-2 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025, at the Swiss Village Chapel in Berne, and from 4-7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025, at the Zwick & Jahn Funeral Home, Yager-Kirchhofer Chapel in Berne, and one hour prior to the service at the church on Wednesday.

Preferred memorials can be given to Three Oaks Christian School.

Arrangements by Zwick & Jahn Funeral Homes, Yager-Kirchhofer Chapel of Berne, Indiana

### Philip Shafer, 76

Philip Roe Shafer was born Dec. 4, 1948, the son of the late Paul E. Shafer and Mildred Roe Shafer. He grew up in his hometown of Ossian, to which he returned after graduating from Ball State University and where he lived most of his life. He and his wife, the late Mary Humbracht Shafer adopted two boys, Samuel and Patrick. Samuel died earlier this year.

Phil worked as a banker

until he suffered injuries in a serious auto accident, after which he sold insurance and worked in various other jobs. He enjoyed his retirement as a Mustang enthusiast, putting time and treasure into a 1972 Mustang convertible. He enjoyed running, sometimes with his sons. Phil was a singer and was associated with musical groups throughout his life. He toured Europe as a member of a high school choir and was an outstanding tenor in the Ball State University Singers, serving as that organization's president as an upper classman. He regularly sang in the annual Messiah presented by the Mennonite Choral Society each December in Berne. He had a goofy sense of humor.

As a result of the earlier auto accident, Phil developed dementia, which progressed to the point that he moved

to Bloomington and lived in memory care facilities, first in Jill's House and recently in Cedar Creek Memory Care. As he got older – he had just celebrated his 76th birthday - he became weaker. Last week he came down with Covid, and he was unable to survive its attack on his health. Phil died peacefully in his sleep early Monday morning, Dec. 30, 2024.

He is survived by his son Patrick of Kirklin, Indiana; his brother Tom and his wife Susan Parrish of Bloomington; his brothers-in-law John Holzinger and Steve Bracke of Ossian: and his niece Marissa Bracke, nephews Alex Bracke and Charlie Bracke and Joseph Shafer; and many, many friends, nieces and nephews.

Phil will be cremated and interred next to Mary at their gravesite in the Ossian Cemetery. A celebration of life will follow later in the year.

In lieu of flowers, you may want to remember and honor Phil, a lifelong blood donor, with a donation to the American Red Cross. If so, mail a donation to your local Red Cross Chapter or to the American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37839, Boone, IA 50037-0839. In the memo section of your check, write "Blood Services." Cherish each day.

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### 1 CHRONICLES 29:10-16

SATURDAY JANUARY 4

Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. 1 CHRONICLES 29:14 ]

### **GIVING BACK TO GOD**

ne year, the leaders of our congregation invited us to give gifts, in addition to our regular weekly offerings, to build a new gymnasium—a space we could use to minister to the families in our community. After prayerfully considering the medical expenses caused by living with a disability, I asked my husband, "Are you sure we can do this?" He nodded. "We're not giving God anything that's not already His," he said. "He'll provide all we need." And He did! Over a decade later, our church family still has the privilege of serving Jesus by serving people in that facility.

In 1 Chronicles 29, King David showed the leaders of Israel his commitment to support his son Solomon as his God-chosen successor and the builder of the temple (VV. 1-5). Everyone followed suit, "gave willingly," and "rejoiced" (VV. 6, 9). David praised God and declared that "everything in heaven and earth" belonged to Him (V. 11). He prayed: "LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you" (V. 16).

As we consider all God has done and given to us, specifically the gift of a personal relationship with Jesus, we can express our worship and show our gratitude and love by simply giving back to God, the Giver of all good things! XOCHITL DIXON

How does acknowledging that all things belong to God change the way you view giving? How can expressing your gratitude through giving change you?

Loving God, thank You for being a generous and faithful provider.

of Bluffton 970 N. Main St., Bluffton 824-2300

(Ford)

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From our family

to you ...

Family Ford of Bluffton hope that you will take a few moments at least once each week to spend some time with what really matters during these "interesting times." This short essay is from

Our Daily Bread<sup>®</sup>

- a free publication we would love to share with you. Stop in anytime. There is no cost or obligation.

Family Ford

The Reimschisel family at

### Year end lists and new year hopes

A few yearend observations, none of which

### **Saturday's Sub**

seem to deserve a full column's attention. Akin to cleaning out a cluttered closet.

– Our tradition of selecting the top ten stories always seems to have a "side-bar" of some sort. The "ballot" we received from editor Holly Gaskill had 20 possibilities. I would consider nearly half them to be of a positive nature. Unfortunately this might be



Mark Miller

interpreted that there is some truth to the old adage that bad news seems to get more attention: only two of them made the top ten.

Those two were fun to cover. Sports editor Ryan Walker will gladly expound some more about covering the Norwell girls' basketball state-final run in February and I had more fun than anticipated working on my part of the solar eclipse in April. The others that did not make the cut included the successful Paddlesports launch site in Vera Cruz, school projects either finished or progressing and the city's new Lancaster Park opening with the Interurban Trail extension.

Although the other eight stories that made the cut were not necessarily bad news, this contemplation raised the thought of wondering how we might involve our readers in next year's poll. It would be interesting to compare that to our internal rankings.

- Besides the "top ten" lists, there are others, at least a couple involving words.

Dictionary.com selected "demure" as their word of year and the Oxford dictionary went with "brain rot." As I understand it, these selections were made based on search engine activity and trends on social media. For example, weekly searches for "demure" on Dictionary. com spiked in August, with more than 13 million queries during the week of August 19. It had something to do with social media. Which of course I don't understand. Which is probably just as well.

And "brain rot" is also related. It is defined by the powers-that-be as "spending too much time consuming low-quality content on social media." There have been times this past year, that I had that very feeling after spending too much time watching news on television.

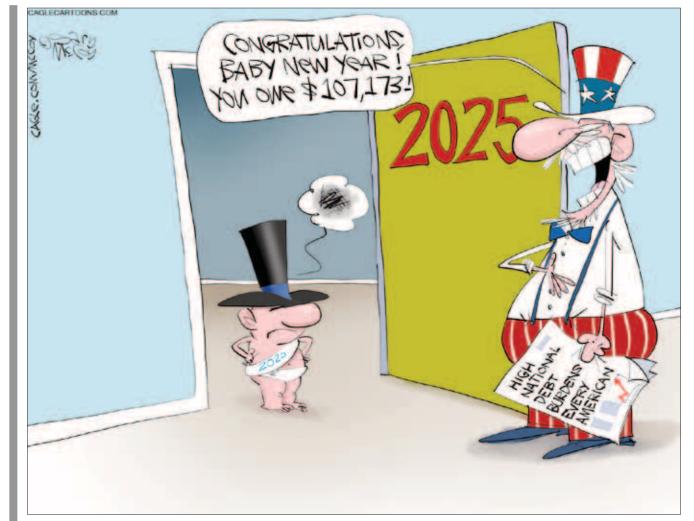
I somehow also feel compelled on New Years Day to go to the website of Lake Superior State University to check on their annual list of words and phrases that should be banished due to what they call "overuse, misuse or abuse.'

"Cringe" topped their list Wednesday, followed by "game changer," "era," "dropped," "IYKYK," "sorry not sorry," "skibidi," "100%," "utilize," and "period." A google search will explain them all if you're curious enough.

These lists have been the annual subject of a conversation with a friend; we usually kick around some ideas on what might be a local word of the year and/ or a local word or phrase we'd like to see banished, although we've never come up with anything definite or printable.

My favorite word with a local angle from this past year is "totality" — as in: we were in the "zone of total-ity" for the solar eclipse, a truly amazing experience I will not soon forget. And if I had to come up with a phrase I wouldn't mind not hearing again, it would be "KPI." Frankly not sure why.

Perhaps it was because I heard it at least once too



### Memo to Musk: Overhauling government isn't rocket science. It's harder.

Elon Musk, a Don Quixote with Vivek Ramaswamy tagging along as Sancho Panza, recently ascended Capitol Hill to warn the windmills of tiltings to come. They have vowed to cut government down to the size they prefer. But when they descended from the Hill, their most specific proposal remained what it was before they ascended: to eliminate ... daylight saving time. How this would improve governmental "efficiency" is unclear.

Musk's instrument for Washington's betterment is the new "Department of Government Efficiency," which might be more plausible if it did not incorporate two fibs in four words. DOGE is not a department; departments are created by Congress, which created pretty much everything Musk's advisory committee exists to frown about. And his announced, and arithmetically daunting, goal is to slice a third of the federal budget from the less than a third of the budget that includes neither Social Security, Medicare, debt service nor defense.

He does not just want government to do what it does more efficiently, he wants it to stop doing much of what it does. Bet on the windmills.

Most things government does it does because a constituency - intense, articulate and well-lawyered - wants it done. Or because government wanted to create such a constituency that, benefiting from it, will demand its continuance, and expansion.

Transforming the strange and embarrassing charisma of wealth into political power, beginning around 4 a.m. on a December day, Musk unleashed more than 150 posts on X to kill a bill to fund the government. This fusillade of opinions and falsehoods provoked a digital uprising in the countryside and stampeded congressional Republicans. An exultant Musk, confusing himself with the American public, cried, "The voice of the people has triumphed!" And, making God his accomplice, he added: "Vox populi, vox dei." With remarkable precision, Ramaswamy chimed in, "That's how America is supposed to work." This, of course, is exactly wrong. The Framers' institutional handiwork was designed to temper and refine, by slowing and filtering, the translation of impulses into policy. That process, however, presupposes elected representatives who understand the foundational principle of representative government: The people do not decide issues, they decide who shall decide. This, however, presupposes a Congress proudly performing its duty to render independent judgments. Pride is one of the seven deadly sins, but its absence is deadly for the legislature's dignity, without which government's downward spiral into the public's distrust and disgust will accelerate.

Readers of Walter Isaacson's meticulous and disturbing biography of Musk can decide the extent to which they think he is bipolar, on the Asperger's spectrum. Clearly, however, no one ever entertained an ambition more vaulting than Musk's.

He thinks, Isaacson shows, that because human consciousness might not exist anywhere else in the universe, and because something — war, disease, an asteroid, something — might someday make Earth uninhabitable, he is in a rush to make human beings an interplanetary species. Hence SpaceX, which seems more important to him than electric cars

Meanwhile, Musk's increasingly manic behavior extends to instructing German voters to embrace the Vladimir Putin-friendly Alternative for Germany party. (Musk: "Only the AfD can save Germany.") And Musk reportedly is contemplating a financial intervention in British politics, pursuant to a Scot's (Robert Browning's) axiom that a man's reach should exceed his grasp.

Musk's reach probably does concerning Mars. It certainly does regarding government, which is politics straight through. The young need to learn that. As do the excitable (Musk: "I'm not just MAGA, I'm Dark Gothic MAGA").

President William Howard Taft, when being briefed by a young aide who repeatedly referred to "the machinery of government," reportedly murmured, "He really thinks it's machinery." Musk is not the first engineer-in-politics to bedazzle Americans.

'World's Biggest Man Chosen to Fill World's Biggest Job," said a headline soon after the 1928 presidential election. New York Times reporter Anne O'Hare McCormick wrote in 1930: "We were in a mood for magic ... We had summoned a great engineer to solve our problems for us ... The modern technical mind was for the first time at the head of a government." (From Kenneth Whyte's excellent and sympathetic biography "Hoover: An Extraordinary Life in Extraordinary Times.")



George Will

often without also hearing explanations of exactly what "key performance indicators" might be involved. Overused, misused, abused? Don't know. That too might be an interesting question to our readers.

So we look forward to another year of words, phrases and cluttered closets. Happy (we hope and pray) new year.

miller@news-banner.com

### Your Right to Know

A continuing series on how to contact government officials

As an Indiana citizen you have the right to inspect and copy most governmental records and attend government meetings

to a record or a public meeting, you are encouraged to contact the office of the Public Access Counselor, an office established by the Governor to deal with access complaints.

Open review and discussion of government actions are fundamental principles of our form of government.

If you feel you have been improperly denied access

Call 1-800-228-6013 You may discuss your issue with an access counselor free of charge.

### **Today in History**

#### By The Associated Press

Today is Saturday, Jan. 4, the fourth day of 2025. There are 361 days left in the year.

Today in history: On Jan. 4, 2007, Nancy Pelosi was elected the first female speaker of the House as Democrats took control of Congress.

Also on this date:

In 1853, New Yorker Solomon Northup regained his freedom after being kidnapped in Washington, D.C., and forced into slavery in 1841; he would later tell his story in his memoir, "Twelve Years a Slave."

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his State of the Union address in which he outlined the goals of his "Great Society" initiative.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon refused to hand over tape recordings and documents subpoenaed by the Senate Watergate Committee.

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In American parlance, saying that some task is simple often involves saying, "It's not rocket science." Radically changing government, as Musk promises to do, is not rocket science. It is harder.

As he will understand when, probably sooner than he or many mesmerized Americans expect, he returns to actual engineering challenges. They involve materials more tractable than those of politics: human beings, with their appetites and passions.

georgewill@washpost.com.

### Will Rogers knew Congress too well

As we head into the New Year, the approval ratings of the U.S. Congress are still at historic lows. After bottoming out at 12% last February, Congressional approval is now hovering at a sorry 17%. The timeless wit and

political wisdom of Will Rogers explains why:

'Congress is so strange; a man gets up to speak and says nothing, nobody listens, and then everybody disagrees."

We all joke about Congress, but we can't improve on them. Have you noticed that no matter who we elect, he is just as bad as the one he replaces?

"When Congress makes a joke it's a law, and when they make a law, it's a joke.'

Rogers – America's first great Mister Rogers — spoke these words in the 1920s and 1930s, but they're just as true now. When voters gave Republicans the majority in the Senate in November, they voted for change. They want an end to massive bills that are packed with ridiculous spending

Regrettably, according to Rogers, there's nothing new about the shenanigans of Congress:

We cuss Congress, and we joke about 'em, but they are all good fellows at heart, and if they wasn't in Congress, why, they would be doing something else against us that might be even worse.'



"Never blame a legislative ody for not doing something. When they do nothing, they don't hurt anybody. When they to something is when they ecome dangerous."

Rogers saved some of his est barbs for the Senate, the allegedly august body of distinguished minds that is supposed

to snuff out bad ideas and bills the House passes and advance good ones. But even during Rogers' time, things hardly ever turned out that way:

"About all I can say for the United States Senate is that it opens with a prayer and closes with an investigation."



"Senators are a never-ending source of amusement, amazement and discouragement."

The Senate just sits and waits till they find out what the president wants, so they know how to vote against him.'

That's what is most agitating about our current Congress. Too many

members on both sides of the aisle are narrow-minded, partisan and looking to advance their self-interests.

The average American doesn't like that. The average American knows that the country is facing giant challenges — entitlement programs that are going broke faster than we can fund them and massive \$2 trillion federal budget deficits that must be tamed.

The average American wants these problems to be solved by people who are interested in the good of their country - not Republicans and Democrats interested in the good of their parties.

It's no wonder we are disgusted. But according to Rogers, that's nothing new either:

'It's getting so if a man wants to stand well socially, he can't afford to be seen with either the Democrats or the Republicans."

"There is something about a Republican that you can only stand him just so long; and on the other hand, there is something about a Democrat that you can't stand him quite that long.

We can only hope our 2025 Congress begins to comprehend what the American people have been trying to tell it — that it needs to get in step with the wisdom and will of the people.

Because, as the wise and witty Mr. Rogers said, "Our country is not where it is today on account of any one man. It's here on account of the real common sense of the Big Normal Majority.'

Tom Purcell is a Pittsburgh Tribune-Review columnist. tom@TomPurcell.com.



Tom Purcell

### CHURCH PAGE

This page is dedicated to the building of a more spiritual and greater church-going people and is made possible by the Advertisers on this page who want as their return to see more people go to church.

A CITY ON A HILL CHURCH 705 W.-900 N., Uniondale 9 a.m. - First Service. 10:45 - Second Service.

#### **APOSTOLIC** CHRISTIAN **CHURCH - COUNTRY** 1970 S.-800E., Bluffton 9:45 & 11:45 a.m. - Worship.

#### **APOSTOLIC** CHRISTIAN **CHURCH - NORTH** 630 E. Dustman Rd. 9:45 & 11:45 a.m. - Worship.

**ASBURY CHAPEL** UNITED METHODIST 8013 W.-1100S.-90, Montpelier 9:30 a.m. - Sunday School. 10:30 - Worship.

#### BETHEL

(Independent Bible) 4500E-300S, Bluffton 9 a.m. - Sunday School. 10 a.m. - Worship.

#### BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH LCMS

6114E-750N, Ossian blcsossian.org 9 a.m. - Divine Service. 10:15 - Adult Bible Class, Youth Bible Class & Sunday School. 11:30 - Voice of Bethlehem on 92.7 FM.

#### **BLUFFTON**

**CHURCH OF GOD** 327 W. Cherry St. 10 a.m. - Sunday School. 11 a.m. - Worship. 6 p.m. - Service.

#### **BLUFFTON**

**WESLEYAN CHAPEL** (Independent Holiness Church) 1309 W. Washington St. blufftonwesleyan.net 9:30 a.m. - Sunday School. 10:30 & 6:30 p.m. - Worship.

#### CALVARY LUTHERAN, ELCA 1532 N. Main St. 9 a.m. - Worship.



**BOEHMER UNITED** METHODIST 3467 S 600 W, Liberty Center boehmerumc.org 9:30 a.m. - Worship. 10:45 - Sunday School.

#### **CHESTER CENTER**

900S-300W, Poneto 9:30 a.m. - Sunday School. 10:30 - Worship.

#### **CHRISTIAN NEW LIGHT** 1011 W. Washington St. 9:45 a.m. - Sunday School. 10:30 - Worship. 6 p.m. - Praise & worship.

**CHURCH OF CHRIST** 

735 S. Marion St. 10 a.m. - Bible Study. 10:45 - Worship.

#### **COVENANT CHAPEL**

3550 S. SR 1 10:15 a.m. - Sunday Worship. (Children's Church for ages 6-12).

#### **DILLMAN UNITED** BRETHREN

8888S-1100W-90, Warren 9 a.m. - Worship. 10 a.m. - Sunday School.

#### DOMESTIC CHURCH **OF CHRIST**

9 a.m. - Sunday school. 10 a.m. - Church service.

#### **EPWORTH UNITED** METHODIST

1204 W. Cherry St. 9:30 a.m. - Worship. 10:40 a.m. - Sunday School.

#### **FAIRVIEW CHURCH**

OF GOD 5511 W. Yoder Rd., Yoder fairviewlife.com 9 a.m. - Sunday School. 10 a.m. - Worship.

#### **FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST**

210 W. Townley fbc-bluffton.com 10 a.m. - Worship. 11 a.m. - Discipleship.

#### **FIRST BAPTIST**

202 W. Cherry St. fbcbluffton.com 10:15 - Worship.

#### **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF OSSIAN** 1001 Dehner Dr.

9:30 a.m. - Sunday School. 10:30 a.m. - Worship. 6:30 - Service.



by Chet

Baumgartner

**HEARING THE** SILENT CRY Sometime in December,

a stray cat appeared at the patio door.

And I now think Mom and I should charge him rent. Unlike the other

strays, this cat wants to dine inside. And he doesn't

just want to dine. He wants to stretch out on the couch. He wants to lay next to — and across — my laptop.

He wants — he demands - attention.

And when I don't satisfy, he'll inform me with his never-ending chorus of meows.

I admit that I feel some relief when I don't hear him late at night. When I don't hear him demanding a little compassion, I don't feel any obligation to relieve his suffering.

Granted, I don't know if Friendly the cat — as Mom and I have christened him truly suffers.

But I do know that worldwide, many Christians do suffer, and I confess that I can easily ignore their suffering simply because I can't hear their cries.

So as I begin this new year hoping to find a permanent home for Friendly (e-mail, please), I also hope to find ways to hear the cries of those persecuted for Jesus.

And in that spirit, I want to republish a portion of the World Watch List, an annual chronicle of the 50 countries that most harshly persecute Christians.

The faith-based organization Open Doors releases an updated list at the beginning of each year, and I hope that the following summary from last year will inspire others to hear the cries and pleas that silently echo throughout the world.

To see the entire list from last year and see the latest list once Open Doors publishes it, go to www.

#### opendoors.org

1. North Korea

"Being discovered to be a Christian in North Korea is effectively a death sentence. Believers will either be deported to labor camps or killed on the spot. And it's not just them: their whole family gets the same fate. Even being found to own a Bible could mean death.'

#### 2. Somalia

"Christians are a highvalue target for murder. Leaving Islam is also seen by many as a betrayal of Somali culture and clan - so new believers face harassment, abuse and even murder from their own families and communities."

#### 3. Libya

"A small number of Libyans follow Jesus. It could cost them everything. Converts from Islam face the most intense violence from family and community. They risk house arrest, attack, abduction, sexual violence and murder.'

#### 4. Eritrea

"Eritrea only recognizes three heavily monitored denominations, so anyone who follows Jesus outside of these denominations is at constant risk. Around 1,000 Eritrean Christians are in prison without being charged with any crime. Some have been held for more than 10 years."

#### 5. Yemen

"Yemeni society is strongly Islamic, and the tribal punishment for denouncing Islam can be death or banishment. As conversion from Islam is forbidden by law, Christians risk severe repercussions. This can include divorce, loss of custody of children, arrest and even honor killings.'

baumofchet@gmail.com

MARKLE **RIVERSIDE 316** 145 W. Morse St. 10 a.m. - Worship.

#### **MURRAY MISSIONARY**

1117 N. Washington St., Murray murraymc.org 9:30 a.m. - Worship. 11 a.m. - Sunday School.

**NEW BEGINNING** 2187 W. SR 218 10 a.m. - Sunday School. 10:30 - Worship.

#### **NEW HOPE LUTHERAN** (Missouri Synod) 8824 N. SR 1, Ossian newhopelutheran-ossian. webs.com

9 a.m. - Sunday School & Adult Bible study. 10 a.m. - Worship.

#### **OSSIAN CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

302 N. Metts St. ossiannaz.org 9:15 a.m. - Bible study. 10:30 - Service.

#### **OSSIAN UNITED** METHODIST

201 W. Mill St. ossianumc.org 9 a.m. - Worship, Worship child care nurse. 10 a.m. - Fellowship. 10:15 -Adult Sunday School.

#### **PARK COMMUNITY**

617 S. Bennett St. parkccbluffton.org 10 a.m. - Connection. 11 a.m. - Worship.

#### PETROLEUM **COMMUNITY CHURCH** 3625 E. 2nd St.

9 a.m. - Worship. 10:30 -Sunday School.

**PONETO BAPTIST** Grape Street 8:30 a.m. - Sunday School. 9 a.m. - Worship.

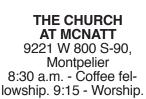
#### PONETO FAITH **COMMUNITY CHURCH** 36 E. Walnut St.

9 a.m. - Worship. 10 a.m. - Fellowship. 10:15 -Sunday School.

#### **RIVER OF HOPE**

1224 W. Central 11 a.m. - Worship & the Word.

> **RIVER OF LIFE** 122 Lamar St



#### THE MEETING PLACE 115 E. Market St.

6:30 p.m. - Bible study.

#### **TOWER LIFE CENTER** 11811 N. Wayne St.,

Zanesville towerlifecenter.com 9:30 a.m. - TLC Groups. 10:30 - Worship.

#### TURNPOINTE **COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN**

500 W. Logan, Markle turnpointechurch.com 9:30 a.m. - Fellowship. 10 a.m. - Adult & Children's Worship.

#### UNIONDALE **COMMUNITY CHURCH**

5867 N. Main St. 9 a.m. - Worship.

#### UNIONTOWN **CHURCH OF CHRIST**

11419 N-200W, Ossian 9 a.m. - Sunday School. 10 a.m. - Worship.

#### **VERA CRUZ FAMILY WORSHIP CENTER** CCCU

2771 SE Mulberry St., Vera Cruz 9-10 a.m. - Sunday School. 10-10:30 - Fellowship. 10:30 - Worship.

WESTSIDE

**COMMUNITY CHURCH** 

205 S. Adams St.,

Monroe

9 a.m. - Worship. 10:15

- Discipleship for adults &

ZANESVILLE

COMMUNITY

**CHURCH OF GOD** 

11984 N. Marzane Rd.

**ZANESVILLE UNITED** 

**BRETHREN IN CHRIST** 

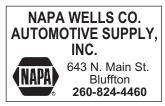
3092 W. Broadway

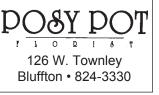
9 a.m. - Sunday School.

10 a.m. - Worship.

10 a.m. - Worship.

children.













#### **FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST** 909 W. Spring St.

FCCfamily.com 9:30 & 11 a.m. - Worship.

#### **FIRST CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE** 1515 Clark Ave.

blufftonnazarene.org 9 a.m. - Sunday School. 9-10 a.m. - Free ESL classes. 10:15 - Worship. 6 p.m. - Service.

#### **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN**

215 E. Dustman Rd. firstpcbluffton.org 9:30 a.m. - Children/ youth & Adult Sunday School. 10:30 - Worship.

#### **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN** (EVANGELICAL)

123 S. Jefferson St., Ossian www.ossianfp.church 8:45 a.m. - Sunday school. 10 a.m. - Worship.

#### **GRACE BAPTIST** 1621 S. 350 E. Stogdill Rd. Ext. gbcbluffton.com 9 a.m. - Sunday School. 10 a.m. & 6 p.m. - Worship.

#### HOPE MISSIONARY 429 E. Dustman Rd.

hope4thefamily.com 8 a.m., 9:30 & 11 a.m. -Service at Main Campus. 9:30 & 11 a.m. - Service, north campus, Ossian.



#### FIRST REFORMED **CHURCH OF** BLUFFTON

301 W. Cherry St. 9:15 a.m. - Sunday School. 10:30 - Worship.

#### **FIRST UNITED** METHODIST

325 W. Washington St. blufftonfirstumc.com 9:30 a.m. - Worship. 10:45 - Sunday School.

**FORGIVEN CHURCH** 1409 S. Main St. forgivenonline.org 9 a.m. - Worship.

#### **GRACE BIBLE**

6626 Village Way, Berne gracebibleberne.com 9 a.m. - Sunday classes. 10 a.m. - Collective Worship.

#### HARVEST TIME BIBLE 11015S-600E, Keystone 9:10 a.m. - Prayer. 10 a.m. - Worship.

**KEYSTONE CHURCH** 10556S-200W 9:30 a.m. - Worship. 10:30 - Sunday School.

**KINGDOM HALL OF JEHOVAH'S** WITNESSES 2803 N. Main St. jw.org 10 a.m. - Worship.

LANCASTER CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST 4510 E 400N, Craigville 9 a.m. - Sunday School. 9:40 - Fellowship. 10 a.m. Worship.

#### LIFE COMMUNITY 428 S. Oak St. lifecommunity.net 10:30 a.m. - Service (Children's programs available).

### **TO REPORT CHURCH NEWS:**

- · E-mail to churchnews@news-banner.com
- Drop information at 125 N. Johnson St. in Bluffton

#### LIBERTY CENTER BAPTIST

3071 W. Cherry St. 8:30 a.m. - Pastor/Deacon's Prayer. 9 - Sunday School. 9:55 - Fellowship. 10:15 - Worship.

#### LIBERTY CENTER **COMMUNITY CHURCH**

8:45 a.m. - Choir practice. 9 a.m. - Coffee, donuts, conversation. 9:30 - Worship w/infant nursery & children's church. 10:45 - Sunday School.

#### LIVING FAITH **MISSIONARY**

17718 Bluffton Rd., Yoder 10 a.m. - Worship. 11:30 - Sunday School.

#### LIVING WATER UNITED CHURCH 6486 S 700E, Bluffton 8:45-9 a.m. - Prayer. 9 a.m. - Sunday School. 10

**MARKLE CHAPEL** HILL SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST 470 E. Morse St. Saturday: 9:30 a.m. -Worship. 10:45 - Sabbath School (Bible study).

### MARKLE CHURCH OF CHRIST

455 E. Morse St. marklechurch.org 9 a.m. - Adult Bible study groups. 10:30 -Worship. Children's & student programming both hours.

ST. MARK EV. LUTHERAN 16933 Thiele Rd. stmarkfw.org 8:45 a.m. - Sunday School. 10 a.m. - Worship.

Suite 108, 110 riveroflifebluffton.com 10:30 a.m. - Worship.

### SIX MILE

4790 SE SR 116 9 a.m. - Sunday School. 10 a.m. - Worship.

#### SONLIGHT WESLEYAN

2350 S. SR 1 sonlightwesleyan.org 9:30 a.m. - Sunday School. 10:30 - Worship. Nursery & Children's classes available during Sunday School & Worship.

#### SOUTHERN WELLS **COMMUNITY CHURCH** 9450 S 300 W, Poneto

9 & 10:45 a.m. - Worship.

#### **ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC**

1300 N. Main St. Saturday: 7:45 a.m. -Prayer. 8 a.m. - Mass. 8:30 - Rosary. 4 p.m. or by appointment - Confessions. 5 p.m. - Mass. Sunday: 7:30 & 10 a.m. - Mass.

**ST. LUKE CHURCH** 4960W-100N, Decatur stlukechurch.in 9 a.m. - Worship. 10:15 -Sunday School.

ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN (NALC) 5912 N. Sugar St., Uniondale 10 a.m. - Worship. 10:15 - Children's Sunday School.



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### **Raiders strong second half not enough to take Indians**

**By RYAN WALKER** PONETO — It was the Raiders best shot so far this year to pick up win No. 1, but fell by just one point to Union City on Friday.

CJ Reber's three-point bucket at the final buzzer was one point shy for the 45-44 final score between the Raiders (0-7) and Indians (2-5).

Scoreboard-wise, this was the best game Southern Wells had played under first-year head coach Doug Smith. The margin of previous losses never got better than 15 points. However, Smith left the game with some question marks that could have given his team its first win of the campaign.

"In some ways I think so," Smith answered when asked if this was the best his team had played. "In other ways, it's like, 'Man, there's so many things that we are capable of, but we still just didn't execute. I guess overall, yes."

The biggest capability the Raiders could have fixed was the first and second halves. Offensively, they shot 2-21 in the first, making one shot each quarter. But in the second half, a new team emerged from the locker room after Smith switched to a high-low look with Joshua Aulbach and Reber near the basket against the Indians' zone.

Reber hit a pair of shots in the third quarter, including the first make of the period. That got Trey Slusher and Landon Johnson going, who made a two and a three and suddenly, Southern Wells was down by one point with three minutes left to play.

On a play shortly after, Union City's Jackson Cowper received a technical foul for harmlessly touching the ball after a play was over. That sent Johnson to the line and made the pair, and gave the Raiders their first lead of the day.

Reber hit his second shot of the period and got the Raiders up by three points, but that lead would dwindle down quickly.

The Indians applied full-court pressure for the first time all game, and it threw the Raiders into fits. Three straight turnovers swung six quick points back the other way and closed the quarter out on a 7-2 run. Union City was up 25-23.

"We dug such a big hole for ourselves early in the game," Smith said. "So we were telling them to chip back, chip back, chip back. We had plenty of opportunity and what it comes down to, is they came out of their press — we have a rock solid press break offense, and they just didn't execute. They scored six quick points on the press, and that's the difference in the ballgame."

Unlike the first 24 minutes, the final eight were points galore. Both teams eclipsed the 20-point mark but did not have much separation. Union City went up by as many as seven early in the fourth when it got on a 11-0 run for a minute and a half.

Reber weathered the storm by scoring four buckets in a row and tallying his teamhigh 20 points. Johnson made two jumpers in his 11 points in the half. But that 11-point span was too much to come by.

Southern Wells will play Heritage in an ACAC contest at home with Heritage. Tipoff will be at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 11.

Union City won the junior varsity contest 35-11. Hunter Durham scored six points and Adam Aulbach five for the Raiders.



Union City's Asa Vaughn (left of referee and Southern Wells' Joshua Aulbach (right) stare down the ball in the official's hand to get the game started at The Raiderdome Friday night) (Photo by Ryan Walker)

ryan@news-banner.com

UNION CITY 45, SOUTHERN WELLS 44 At Southern Wells UNION CITY (2-5): Jackson Cowper 7-10 2-3 17, Trendon Spencer 4-15 6-8 15, Cayden Hartman 2-6 1-2 5, Colton Emrick 1-5 0-0 3, Caleb Lutz 1-1 0-0 3, Jace O'Connor 1-3 0-0 2, Luis Nieto 0-90-00, Brayden Hug-9-13 45.

SOUTHERN WELLS (0-7): CJ Reber 8-16 3-4 20, Land-on Johnson 4-11 2-4 11, Trey Slusher 2-4 1-2 5, Joshua Aul-bach 1-3 1-2 2, Wyatt Yoder 0-8 3-4 3, Hunter Durham 0-1

SPORTS

0-0 0, Rugar Holmes 0-0 0-0 0. TOTALS: 15-43 10-16 44. U. City 11 5 9 20 - 45 S. Wells 2 8 13 21 - 44 Three-point Shooting: Union City 4-13 (Luts 1-1, Spen-cer 1-4, Emrick 1-2, Cowper 1-2, Nieto 0-3), Southern Wells 2-16 (Reber 1-3, Johnson 1-5, Yoder 0-7, Durham 0-1). Rebounds: Union City 29 Cowper 9, Spence 6, O'Connor 4, Nieto 4, Lutz 3, Vaughn 2, Emrick 1), South-ern Wells 28 (Aulbach 11, Reber 7, Durham 3, Slusher 2, Yoder 2, Holmes 2, Johnson 1). Turnovers: Union City 16, Southern Wells 14. Fouls: Union City 12, Southern Wells 11. Fouled Out: None. Technicals: Union City 1, Cowper. JV Score:

JV Score: 35-11 Union City.

### Norwell boys go 2-0, wins Wawasee Holiday Tournament

Norwell's boys' basketball team made the 61-mile day trip to Wawasee High School and it was well worth the drive.

The Knights won both games to win the Wawasee Holiday Tournament, improving to 8-2 on the season and now are winners of five games in a row.

In the 10 a.m. game, Norwell defeat-ed Elkhart Christian (2-4) 52-32. Adam McBride led the team with 14 points and nine rebounds, while Nick McBride added 12 and Josh McBride 10.

At 7:30 p.m., Norwell defeated Wawasee (3-7) 52-36 in the championship game. Adam scored 17 to lead the team, Nick 16 and Josh 12.

NORWELL 52, Elkhart Christian 32 At Wawasee ELKHART CHRISTIAN (2-4): Hayden Hensler 4-6 2-2 12, Lewy Eyob 1-6 3-4 6, Kian Hibbard 2-10 0-0 6, Ace Haviland 2-5 0-2 5, Jaden Vida 1-3 0-0 3, Justin Annan 0-0 0, Liam Elkins 0-2 0-0 0, Reid Hoober 0-9 0-0 0. TOTALS: 10-41 5-8 32. NORWELL (7-2): Adam McBride 14 2-2 14, Nick McBride 5-11 2-2 12, Josh McBride 4-11 0-2 10, Owen Wallis 2-7 1-1 5, Garry Riley 1-2 1-2 4, Cade Thornton 1-1 0-0 3, Noah Comer 1-3 0-0 2, Ryne Thornton 1-3 0-0 0, Jack Richardson 0-1 0-0 0, Trey Privett 0-0 0-0. TOTALS: 21-51 6-9 52. Elkhart 8 5 5 11 8 - 32 Norwell 14 11 16 11 - 52 Three-point Shooting: Elkhart Christian 7-24 (Hib-bard 2-8, Hensler 2-2, Vida 1-1, Eyob 1-5, Haviland 1-3, Hoober 0-4), Norwell 4-18 (J. McBride 2-7, Riley 1-1, C. Thornton 1-1, A. McBride 0-3, N. McBride 0-4). Rebounds: Elkhart Christian 24 (Haviland 5, Eyob 4, Hibbard 3, Vida 3, Hoober 2), Norwell 25 A. McBride 9, Riley 8, J. McBride 6, R. Thornton 4, Wallis 3, C. Thornton 1, Richardson 1,



N. McBride 1, Comer 1). Turnovers: Elkhart Christian 10, Norwell 5. Fouls: Elkhart Christian 9, Norwell 6. Fouled Out: None. Technicals: None.

#### NORWELL 52, WAWASEE 36

NORWELL 52, WAWASEE 36 At Wawasee NORWELL (8-2): Adam McBride 7-12 1-17, Nick McBride 6-8 0-0 16, Josh McBride 5-8 1-2 12, Owen Wal-lis 1-1 1-2 3, Garry Riley 1-3 0-0 2, Noah Comer 1-1 0-0 2, Palmer Krug 0-0 0-0 0, Vinny Freiburger 0-0 0-0 0, Ryne Thornton 0-0 0.0 TOTALS: 21-33 3-5 52. WAWASEE (3-7): Weston Hoffert 4-11 4-4 16, Kane Dukes 3-8 0-0 9, Brayden Miller 1-6 4-6 6, Mason Worrell 1-1 0-0 3, Kaden Andrew 1-2 0-0 0, Camden Reel 0-2 0-0 0, Ryan Mack 0-1 0-0 0, Easton Rollins 0-0 0-0 0, Jack Shoemaker 0-2 0-0 0. TOTALS: 10-33 8-10 36. Norwell 14 10 15 13 - 52 Wawasee 13 6 14 3 - 36 Three-point Shooting: Norwell 7-12 (N. McBride 4-6, A. McBride 2-3, J. McBride 1-3), Wawasee 8-20 (Hoffert 4-11, Dukes 3-6, Worrell 1-1, Shoemaker 0-1, Miller 0-1). Rebounds: Norwell 23 (J. McBride 7, A. McBride 5, N. McBride 3, Wallis 3, Riley 1), Wawasee 13 (Miller 4, Reel 3, Dukes 2, Shoemaker 1, Hoffert 1, Worrell 1, Andrew 1). Turnovers: Norwell 9, Wawasee 9. Fouls: Norwell 10, 1). Turnovers: Norwell 9, Wawasee 9. Fouls: Norwell 10, Wawasee 7. Fouled Out: None. Technicals: None.



Norwell sophomore offensive lineman Carson Powell (second from left) was able to experience the NFL's Dallas Cowboys Stadium for a Dream All-American Rising Stars football showcase on Dec. 29. Above, he takes a photo to remmeber his time at AT&T Stadium with fellow coaches and participants at the event. (Photo submitted by Reagan Powell)

### Knights' lineman Powell plays in **Dream All-American Rising Stars** game at AT&T Stadium in Dallas

A Norwell sophomore had an experi- In the game, Powell made five pan-

### Notre Dame and Penn State will renew a long-dormant rivalry in a CFP semifinal at Orange Bowl

#### **By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer**

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - No. 3 Notre Dame and No. 5 Penn State are coming off rather divergent College Football Playoff quarterfinal experiences as they prepare to clash as semifinalists in the Orange Bowl next Thursday.

The Fighting Irish (13-1, CFP No. 7) mustered an opportunistic victory over SEC champion Georgia after an unprecedented delay and under emotionally trying circumstances stemming from a deadly terror attack in the Sugar Bowl's host city.

The Nittany Lions (13-2, CFP No. 6) overwhelmed a non-power conference team that looked overmatched in the Fiesta Bowl, during which social media was alight with football fans and some analysts - questioning a CFP committee seeding process that had given eighth-ranked Boise State a No. 3 seed and a bye.

Notre Dame's Marcus Freeman isn't buying the notion that a team's performance in an upcoming game can be predicted by the path it took to get there.

In the case of the Sugar Bowl, Georgia earned a bye by winning the SEC title game against Texas, which is still playing in the semifinals at the Cotton Bowl against Ohio State. Notre Dame did not get as much rest. They had to play in the first round and looked sharp coming off a convincing victory over Indiana.

"Whatever circumstanc-

the most of them," Freeman said. "And if we would have had a first-round bye, I would have been the first one to say, 'Hey, this is great for us.'

"I don't believe in my heart that the first game (against Indiana) had anything to do with this one (in the Sugar Bowl)," he added. "It was about the preparation they did after the first game."

#### Similar styles

Notre Dame is listed as a 1.5-point favorite, according to BetMGM Sportsbook. Neither offense airs it out on regular basis. Their yardspassing averages are outside the top 50 nationally. But both teams have rushed for more than 200 yards per game this season, and both have played some of the best defense in the country, each allowing fewer than 16 points per game.

Penn State ranks fifth nationally in yards allowed per game (288.8), while Notre Dame ranks eighth (295.3).

"Running game and defense travels; that's going to show up throughout a season," Penn State coach James Franklin said. "That's going to show up in bad weather. That's going to show up when you're trying to (run out the clock) at the end of the game."

In the Fiesta Bowl, Penn State outgained Boise State on the ground, 216 yards to 108. The Nittany Lions largely contained Broncos star Ashton Jeanty, the Heisman Trophy runner-up,

es you're given, you make limiting him to 104 yards on 30 carries. Penn State also forced four turnovers, including three interceptions

"Being able to control the line of scrimmage, whether it's your offensive line or our defensive line, is critical," Franklin said. "It showed up (against Boise State). ... It's really kind of shown up all season."

Notre Dame was outgained on offense by Georgia, 296 yards to 244, but outrushed the Bulldogs 154 yards to 62. Meanwhile, Irish defenders forced and recovered two pivotal fumbles — one inside their own 20-yard line and one inside Georgia's — and stopped all three of Georgia's fourthdown attempts.

"The red zone defense, the big fourth down stops. It's a great group," Freeman said of his defense. "Got great leadership, great players, and they're doing a heck of a job."

#### Minority representation

The Orange Bowl matchup means either James Franklin or Marcus Freeman will have a chance to become the first Black coach to win a major college football championship.

That's something Freeman hopes will be less relevant at some point. But he recognizes it holds somewhat historic significance at the moment.

"It's a reminder that you are a representation for many others, and many of our players that look the same way I do," Freeman said.

ence of a lifetime in December.

Offensive lineman Carson Powell attended a Recruit Nation Regional Showcase in Westfield in June with 15,500 other players. His showcase went so well, that Powell was one of 180 players to receive an invitation to the Dream All-American Rising Stars football game at AT&T Stadium in Dallas, also known as the NFL's Dallas Cowboys football stadium.

Powell was the only representative from Indiana, as he received instruction from coaches, practiced, participated in media day and was recognized in a ceremony on Dec. 29.

cake blocks and his teammates allowed no sacks for their quarterback that day. College scouts were also in attendance.

Following his commitment to the Dream Football Classic on thenationalradar.com, a recruiting site, it says Powell "excels in run and pass blocking, utilizing his great hands and lateral quickness to create opportunities for his teammates. His knack for executing pancake blocks and his hard-hitting style make him a formidable presence on the field. A natural leader, Carson's coachable attitude ensures he consistently improves and inspires his team."

### Zapala scores season-high 15 points as No. 18 Michigan **State holds off Ohio State**

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - Szymon Zapala scored a season-high 15 points and No. 18 Michigan State made 8 of 10 free throws to hold off Ohio State 69-62 on Friday night for its third straight win to start Big Ten play.

Zapala fueled a 12-0 run to build a 14-point lead for the Spartans (12-2, 3-0). However, the Buckeyes rallied as John Mobley Jr. hit a 3 and Bruce Thornton followed with a jumper with 8:47 left to go up, 50-49.

Ohio State (9-5, 1-2) then committed turnovers on three straight possessions. After Thornton's second turnover in under a minute Xavier Booker drove the length of the floor for a three-point play. Tre Holloman drilled a 3 and Booker dunked to give Michigan State a 57-50 lead. Micah Parrish hit two 3-pointers and Mobley added a third, but the Spartans finished hitting 8 of 10 from the line.

Jaden Akins was 5 for 6 from the freethrow line, hitting 3 of 4 in the final minute, to finish with 14 points for Michigan State. Coen Carr was 7 for 8 at the line and added 11 points. Jaxon Kohler grabbed 10 rebounds.

### Washington hires former Purdue head coach Ryan Walters as DC

SEATTLE, Wash. (AP) - Former Purdue football coach Ryan Walters was hired as defensive coordinator for the Washington Huskies on Friday.

Coach Jedd Fisch announced the hiring of Walters, who compiled a 5-19 record in two seasons with the Boilermakers and was fired at the conclusion of the season. Walters built a reputation as a defensive mind at Illinois. In 2020, the Illini ranked 97th in FBS in scoring defense and No. 114 in total defense. In his first year, those rankings improved to No. 29 and 49, respectively, and in 2022, he coached the Illinois defensive to the national No. 1 ranking in scoring defense (12.3 ppg) and No. 2 in total defense (263.8 ypg).

"Hiring Ryan Walters allows us to continue to build on the foundation of the 2024 defense while continuing to grow and improve," Fisch said. "His experience in the Big Ten Conference was vital in this hire, along with having deep family ties in the Seattle area.'

Walters played college football at Colorado and was a graduate assistant coach at Colorado, Arizona and Oklahoma. He was also a defensive backs coach at North Texas, Memphis and Missouri.

### **News-Banner Scoreboard**

#### FOOTBALL

#### NFL

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y-Buffalo 13 Miami 8 e-N.Y. Jets 4 e-N. England3		0 0 0 0 0 0	.813 .500 .250 .188	325 306	332 384
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x-clinched playoff spot y-clinched division \*-clinched home-field advantage

Saturday's Games Cleveland at Baltimore, 4:30 p.m.

Cleveland at Baltimore, 4:30 p.m. Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, 8 p.m. Sunday's Games Buffalo at New England, 1 p.m. Carolina at Atlanta, 1 p.m. Chicago at Green Bay, 1 p.m. Houston at Tennessee, 1 p.m. Jacksonville at Indianapolis, 1 p.m. N.Y. Giants at Philadelphia, 1 p.m. New Orleans at Tampa Bay, 1 p.m. Washington at Dallas, 1 p.m. Kansas City at Denver, 4:25 p.m. L.A. Chargers at Las Vegas, 4:25

p.m. Miami at N.Y. Jets, 4:25 p.m. San Francisco at Arizona, 4:25 p.m. Seattle at L.A. Rams, 4:25 p.m. Minnesota at Detroit, 8:20 p.m.

#### College

College Glance Dec. 30 Music City Bowl Nashville, Tenn. Missouri 27, Iowa 24 Dec. 31 ReliaQuest Bowl Tampa, Fla. Michigan 19, Alabama 13 Sun Bowl El Paso, Texas Louisville 35, Washington 34 **Citrus Bowl** Orlando, Fla. Illinois 21, South Carolina 17 Texas Bowl Houston LSU 44, Baylor 31 College Football Playoff Quarterfinals Fiesta Bowl Glendale, Ariz. Penn St. 31, Boise St. 14 Jan. 1 College Football Playoff Quarterfinals Rose Bowl Pasadena, Calif.

Ohio St. 41, Oregon 21 Peach Bowl Atlanta

Texas 39, Arizona St. 31, 201 Jan. 2 Sugar Bowl New Orleans Notre Dame 23, Georgia 10 Gator Bowl Jacksonville, Fla. Ole Miss 52, Duke 20 Jan. 3 First Responder Bowl Dallas Texas St. 30, north Texas 28 Duke's Mayo Bowl Charlotte, N.C. Minnesota 24, Virginia Tech 10 Jan 4 Bahamas Bowl Nassau, Bahamas Buffalo vs. Liberty, 11 a.m. (ESPN2) Jan. 9 **College Football Playoff** Semifinals Orange Bowl Miami Penn St.-Boise St. Winner vs. Notre Dame-Georgia winner, 7:30 p.m. (ESPN) Jan. 10 College Football Playoff Semifinals Cotton Bowl

Jan. 20 College Football Playoff National Championship Mercedes-Benz Stadium Atlanta Semifinal winners, 7:30 p.m (ESPN)

#### **BASKETBALL**

**High School** Friday Boys' Scores Adams Central 65, Bellmont 49 Barr-Reeve 59, Eastern (Greene)

44 Carmel 13, Victory Christian Acad-

emy 10 Center Grove 59, Floyd Central 49 Christian Academy 57, Lou. Central,

- Ky. 22 Columbus East 65, Mooresville 62
- Connersville 43, Oldenburg 36 Covenant Christian High School 78, Owen Vallev 29
- Crown Point 72, Hamilton Southeastern 55
- E. Noble 45, Central Noble 41 Eminence 60, Central Christian 31
- Evansville Central 45, Jasper 35 Evansville Memorial 57, Brebeuf
- Jesuit Preparatory Academy 53 Evansville North 71, Evansville
- Mater Dei 41
- Evansville Reitz 56, Heritage Hills 50

Franklin Central 57, Lou. Jefferson-

town, Ky. 52 Ft. Wayne Blackhawk 61, Columbia City 42

- Gibson Southern 48, Forest Park 43 Greenfield 67, Rushville 21 Hanover Central 45, Illiana Christian
- High School 35 Henderson Co., Ky. 56, Evansville
- Harrison 52 Indpls Ritter 85, Speedway 55 Indpls Riverside 63, Indpls Irving-
- ton 38
- Indpls Roncalli 48, Triton Central 42 Jeffersonville 82, Lou. Eastern, Ky. 71
- Jennings Co. 61, Franklin Co. 53 Lawrence North 99, Marion 63 Logansport 56, Wabash 31 Madison-Grant 59, Cowan 46 Manchester 72, Northwestern 33
- Monroe Central 65, Cambridge City Lincoln 56 N. Miami 60, Oregon-Davis 31 N. Vermillion 72, S. Newton 46 New Albany 94, Lou. DuPont
- Manual, Ky. 75 Northeastern 57, New Castle 51
- Northside 57, Crossroads, III. 48 Paoli 77, Scottsburg 45 Providence 55, Lou. Southern Ky. 22
- Providence Cristo Rey 52, Attica 39 S. Bend Riley 80, Jimtown 48 S. Central (Elizabeth) 85, Lou.
- Brown, Ky. 57 S. Spencer 54, Springs Valley 50 Shoals 32, Crawford Co. 28 Silver Creek 69, Clarksville 30 Southport 61, Plainfield 56 Tell City 67, Washington Catholic 10 Tippecance Valley 54, Plymouth 47 Tri 52, Morristown 49, OT Tri-West 63, Beech Grove 45 Union (Dugger) 68, Indiana Deaf 28 Union City 45, Southern Wells 44 Union Co. 53, Wes-Del 51 W. Lafayette 64, Seeger 37 Waldron 59, Brown Co. 49 Wapahani 85, Blue River Valley 4' Warren Central 55, Noblesville 44 Woodlan 50. Fremont 39
- Bloomington South Tournament Championship Brownsburg 51, Bloomington South 38 First Round
- Bloomington South 83, Indpls Chatard 56 Brownsburg 61, Michigan City Marquette 42 Third Place Indpls Chatard 59, Michigan City Marquette 52 Clinton Central Tournament
  - Championship Tipton 49, Carroll (Flora) 46
- Third Down KASH 76, Clinton Central 37
- **Fishers Tournament**
- Championship Fishers 62, Ft. Wayne Wayne 56
- Fifth Place
- Lawrence Central 77, Evansville Bosse 60

N. Decatur 58, Seton Catholic 51 NorthWood 52, Ft. Wayne North 42 Purdue Poly (Englewood) 55, Cen-terville 44 Warsaw 76, Indpls Washington 30

Fifth Place NorthWood 66, Heritage Christian 25

- First Round Indpls Shortridge 54, Phalen 49 Ninth Place
- Warsaw 87, N. Decatur 59 Semifinal
- Indpls Ben Davis 55, Ft. Wayne Luers 41
- Shelbyville 51, Richmond 36
- Seventh Place Ft. Wayne North 64, Indpls Short-
- ridge 51 Third Place Ft. Wayne Luers 60, Richmond 49 Wawasee Tournament
- Championship Norwell 52, Wawasee 36
- First Round
- Norwell 52, Elkhart Christian 32 Wawasee 61, S. Central (Union
- Mills) 47
- Third Place S. Central (Union Mills) 50, Elkhart Christian 42

Friday Girls' Scores Bellmont 54, Eastside 52 Bremen 62, Mishawaka 15 Daleville 46, Tri-Central 22 Dubois 52, W. Washington 35 E. Noble 49, Central Noble 37 East Chicago Central 36 Lagr East Chicago Central 36, LaPorte 31 Eastern (Pekin) 65, S. Central (Elizabeth) 58 Evansville North 57. Evansville

Mater Dei 45 Fishers 62, Stevenson, III. 42

Hamilton Southeastern 47, Carmel 42

Indpls Irvington 30, Indpls Riverside 13

- Indpls Roncalli 57, Lafayette Harrison 45 Kokomo 57, Frankton 35 LaVille 39, New Prairie 30 Lakeland (IN) 70, Heritage 27 Lawrence North 77, Hammond
- Central 25
- N. Miami 59, Oregon-Davis 52 New Albany 66, Evansville Harrison 58 OT
- Northwestern 47, Manchester 33 Northwestern 47, Manchester 33 Perry Central 60, Clarksville 39 Shelbyville 70, Columbus East 37 Tri-Township 43, N. Judson 35 Vincennes Rivet 76, Shoals 19 Warren Central 71, Jeffersonville 43
- Ben Davis Classic Indpls Ben Davis 41, Linton 25 Indpls Ben Davis 57, Jeffersonville 36
- Warren Central 55. Linton 31 Delphi Tournament Championship Pioneer 58, Delphi 39 Consolation N. Newton 40, Frankfort 12 Taylor 62, N. Montgomery 33 Fifth Place N. Montgomery 36, N. Newton 28 Seventh Place Taylor 48, Frankfort 36 Third Place Rossville 51, Winamac 35 Edinburgh Tournament Championship Austin 69, S. Dearborn 20 Fifth Place Firth Place Columbus HomeSchool 37, Indpls Tindley 34 Seventh Place Hagerstown 38, Southwestern
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120 Cleveland 134, Dallas 122 San Antonio 113, Denver 110 Memphis at Sacramento, late

Atlanta at L.A. Lakers, late Saturday's Games Philadelphia at Brooklyn, 6 p.m. Minnesota at Detroit, 7 p.m. Phoenix at Indiana, 7 p.m. Denver at San Antonio, 8 p.m. New York at Chicago, 8 p.m. Portland at Milwaukee, 8 p.m Utah at Miami, 8 p.m. Memphis at Golden State, 8:30

p.m. Atlanta at L.A. Clippers, 10:30

#### **HOCKEY**

NHL

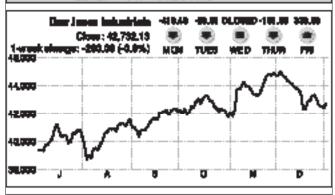
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Dallas

Clemson-Texas-Arizona St. winner vs. Ohio St.-Oregon winner, 7:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Semifinal Fishers 74, Chesterton 35 Ft. Wayne Wayne 63, Portage 57, OT Seventh Place Bloomington North 63, S. Dearborn 53 Third Place Portage 55, Chesterton 44 Huntington North Tournament Championship Avon 71, S. Bend Adams 38 Fifth Place Mishawaka Marian 75, Lighthouse 25 Third Place Huntington North 68, Ft. Wayne Snider 64 Richmond Tournament 11th Place Seton Catholic 60, Indpls Washington 52 13th Place Purdue Poly (Englewood) 59, Indianapolis 26 15th Place Centerville 63, Phalen 46 Championship Indpls Ben Davis 51, Shelbyville 43 Consolation Heritage Christian 53, Indpls Shortridge 48 Indianapolis 63, Phalen 56

Adams Central 49, Blue River Val ley 29 Clinton Central 52. Blackford 17 Ft. Wayne Blackhawk 64, Centerville 32 Semifinal Clinton Central 40, Union City 22

#### College

Men's Scores

Friday, Jan. 3 EAST CCSU 74, St. Francis (Pa.) 59 Chicago St. 64, Wagner 52 Georgetown 69, Xavier 63 LIU 78. Le Movne 62 Marist 70, Iona 65 Mercyhurst 76, Stonehill 69 Merrimack 67, Fairfield 54 Quinnipiac 59, St. Peter's 46 Siena 103, Manhattan 95, 2OT Temple 91, Wichita St. 85 MIDWEST Akron 71, Bowling Green 68 Marquette 79, Creighton 71 Michigan St. 69, Ohio St. 62 Saint Louis 73, Saint Joseph's 57 Wisconsin 116, Iowa 85 FAR WEST UC Santa Barbara 64, Hawaii 61

> Women's Scores Friday, Jan. 3

38 26 Vegas 38 26 9 Los Angeles 3722 10 3 55136 1 49116 5 Edmonton 38 23 12 Vancouver 37 18 11 3 49124 1 8 44116 1 Calgary 38 18 13 Seattle 39 17 19 7 43104 1 3 37114 Anaheim 38 16 18 36 97 1 4 San Jose 41 12 23 6 30107 14 NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs

Friday's Games Florida 3, Pittsburgh 2, SO St. Louis 4, Ottawa 0 Chicago 4, Montreal 2 Edmonton 3, Anaheim 2 Nashville at Vancouver, late Saturday's Games N.Y. Rangers at Washington, 12

p.m. New Jersey at San Jose, 4 p.m. Boston at Toronto, 7 p.m. Detroit at Winnipeg, 7 p.m. Minnesota at Carolina, 7 p.m. Montreal at Colorado, 7 p.m. St. Louis at Columbus, 7 p.m. Utah at Dallas, 8 p.m. Tampa Bay at Los Angeles, 9 p.m. Buffalo at Vegas, 10 p.m. Edmonton at Seattle, 10 p.m. Nashville at Calgary, 10 p.m

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### PGA Tour discussing changes to Championship

**By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer** 

KAPALUA, Hawaii (AP) - The PGA Tour is contemplating another change to the format at the Tour Championship to crown a FedEx Cup champion as part of its response to what fans, television and corporate partners want to see.

Two PGA Tour officials said several concepts are still under discussion as officials review what effect it would have on everything from corporate hospitality at East Lake in Atlanta to determining the best way to reward the top performances.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the discussions have not been made public. One person directly involved in studying the various concepts said none has been brought to the Players Advisory Council.

The Athletic first reported on movement toward a change of format for the season finale.

Any change would need approval by the PGA Tour board, and the official said while not impossible, it was unlikely to be decided before this year's Tour Championship.

The tour is leaning toward a bracket of seeds, which is not necessarily straight match play. While considered the purest format in golf competition, match play on television can be less compelling as the field shrinks, especially for fans who have only one match on the course.

One of the options involves stroke play to narrow the field and a form of medal matches, which is head-to-head stroke play, assuring 18 holes. Another idea being reviewed is having matches decide positions from No. 1 through No. 8, with a big discrepancy in prize money.

Scottie Scheffler won the FedEx Cup last year and earned a \$25 million bonus.

Commissioner Jay Monahan had said in his year-end remarks to the staff that "everything is on the table," and that includes the Tour Championship.

The Tour Championship has struggled to find the best way to crown a season champion since the FedEx Cup began in 2007. Tiger Woods won the FedEx Cup and Phil Mickelson won the Tour Championship in 2009, leading to two storylines – and trophies – from one tournament.

Tour officials had contemplated keeping the Tour Championship intact, followed by an extra day when the top players in the standings would play for the FedEx Cup. That was scrapped for what became known as "starting strokes" in 2019.

The top seed began the tournament at 10-under par with a two-shot lead over the No. 2 seed, on down the list until the final five qualifiers in the 30-man field

started at even par.

That allowed for one winner, but only twice in six years - Rory McIlroy in 2019 and in 2022 - has the FedEx Cup champion had the lowest actual score over 72 holes at East Lake. Xander Schauffele was medalist in 2020 and tied FedEx Cup champion Viktor Hovland in 2023.

Among the four iterations of the FedEx Cup was 2008, when the tour was trying to create more volatility. Vijay Singh won the opening two playoff events and did well enough in the third event that he only had to finish 72 holes at East Lake to win the cup.

It was always a case of choosing between the potential for drama and crowning a champion the best player. By resetting the points for the Tour Championship — as the tour had done since 2009 — it allowed everyone in the field a chance to win the FedEx Cup. But there were years when the best player had a bad week and didn't win.

"You can't call it a season-long race and have it come down to one tournament," Scheffler said last year before going on to win the FedEx Cup.

The PGA Tour already is going through substantial changes. Only the top 100 players after this season will keep their full cards - down from 125 players — and field sizes will be smaller starting in 2026.



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#### Lottery Numbers

Friday's Drawings **HOOSIER LOTTERY Cash 5** — 04-27-32-33-

35 Cash4Life — 12-25-28-47-55, Cash Ball: 01

**Quick Draw Midday –** 03-07-21-22-31-33-38-39-43-53-55-56-58-61-63-64-67-73-76-77, BE: 43

Daily Three-Midday -01-02-07, SB: 04

Daily Three-Evening -04-04-02, SB: 00

**Daily Four-Midday** — 02-09-08-05, SB: 04

Daily Four-Evening — 00-03-03-07, SB: 00

**Quick Draw Evening** 04-11-14-17-18-21-25-29-35-39-42-43-45-49-56-58-64-71-77-79, BE: 29

Hoosier Lotto — Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$35.8 million **MEGA MILLIONS** 20-42-46-59-69, Mega Ball: 19, Megaplier: 4X

**POWERBALL** Estimated jackpot (for Saturday): \$200 million



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**BIDDING ENDS 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 Jan. 4, 10 a.m.-noon, 1910 N Merid-ian St., Marion. Sale manager Brandon Steffen, 260-710-5684, The Steffen Group Inc., Steffengrp.com, 260-824-3006. BIDDING ENDS JANUARY 7 at 10 a.m. - (Online Only) - Wayne Metals LLC Machining Division, owner. Offer-ing over 200+ Lots. Roskel-1440 Lathe, 2007 Haas ley SL-40T CNC Turning Lathe, Hardinge CHNCI Precision CNC Machine, Delta Floor Drill Press, Omni Turn GT-75 CNC Lathe, Targa Surface Grinder, Acer Milling Machine W/ Phase-2 3 Jaw Chuck, Abex Denison Stamp Machine, OOYA RE-1225H Drilling & Tapping Radial Arm Drill, Čincinnati Milacron Hawk 150 A2100 CNC Lathe, Welders, Tooling Cabinets, Large Selec-tion of pallet racking, Power &

Hand Tools and much more. 9312 Avionics Drive, Fort Wayne IN 46809. Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC, 260-724-7402, kjauction.com. JANUARY 17 - 10 a.m. -Secured creditors & various consignors, owners. 815 Adams St., Decatur. Online only truck & equipment auc-tion. Offering 500+ lots! 2012-2014 Freightliner M2106 box trucks, dump trucks, day cabs, sleepers, utility trucks, bucket trucks, utility & semi trailers, SUV's, pickup trucks, 250+ various skid steer attachments, various truck parts, fencing, work benches, tool boxes & much more! Accepting consignments! Krueckeberg Auction & Realty LLC, 260-724-7402, Kjauction.com.

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#### DIVERSIONS

HE KEEPS THE BENCH

WARM WHEN WE'RE OUT ON THE FIELD

LET ME

HERB'S NEW

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### Old flirtation, new suspicions at church

Dear Annie: A woman, "Patty," who pursued my husband 10 years ago, attends church with me. During this time, my husband alerted me to her efforts, and it culminated with her answering her home's front door in only a towel. Patty had called him to pick something up. My husband, fearing her aggressive flirting, demanded I come with him. So instead of my husband, I was standing there when she answered the door. I remarked at the time, "I apologize for interrupting your naked time." I also apologized to my husband for minimizing his concerns about Patty.

Ten years later, I have gone out of my way to forgive her for the past, and I am openly friendly and kind to her. However, recently, I've suspected she is bringing me up during the church prayer request time when I am not in attendance. The pastor of our small church asks the congregation who they would like to pray for, and first names are shouted out. I have witnessed her shouting my first name when I watch the church service online. My name is not common. I have had a couple people ask if I am OK. Patty has not shouted my name when I attend in person. Should I continue with no response and be friendly, or should I address it in some way? – Needing Prayers for No Drama

Dear Needing Prayers: If you feel up to it, confront "Patty" kindly but direct-ly about these public prayer shoutouts. This shows her you're aware of what she's doing even if you're not in person at these services, but it also allows an opportunity for you two to officially clear the air after a decade of awkwardness.

It says a great deal about your character that you so graciously forgave Patty for her extremely inappropriate behavior toward your husband. While we don't know what her motives are these days, perhaps she thinks that by

praying for you, she is being gracious in return.

Dear Annie: I'm writing in regards to "Heartbroken Cancer Survivor," who has short-term memory loss from chemo treat-

ments and feels she annoys her family when she repeats questions and conversations she can't remember. She said she feels like she has no voice in her own house.

Dear

Annie

by Annie Lane

I am an occupational therapist and used to work with patients who had traumatic brain injuries. They also deal with short-term memory loss. What we teach them to do is carry a notebook with them and write down questions/ answers, dates, the day's calendar etc., so instead of "Heartbroken" asking the same question over and over, once she asks and is answered, she can write the information down and refer back to it. This is also useful to put the day's schedule in, the menu for the day, etc. I hope this might help "Heartbroken"

with her situation. — Hoping to Help Dear Hoping: Thank you for your letter. Several other readers wrote in with this very suggestion. Many others sang the praises of speech-language pathologists in related specialties and their ability to potentially help with recovery.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology - featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation - is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit http:// www.creatorspublishing.com for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com. © 2025 CREATORS.COM



**BEETLE BAILEY** 

BEETLE IS A REAL

TEAM PLAYER

"To real people Mommy's name is Thel and Daddy's name is Bill.'

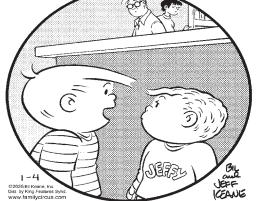


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Answer

By Dr. Billy

Graham

Question: Every four

years we have elections at

the highest level of govern-

ment. While some changes

*come* – *good or bad* – *we* 

seem to be in commo-

tion from something as

simple as children's sports

to financial chaos. Could

another revolution change

### Life's fundamental problems are spiritual

solve our problems, and no one can. The tragedy of our times is that we have used up all of our options and the questions, basic to life, are not being answered by worldly wisdom. This is because life's fundamental problems are spiritual.

More than revolution is the need for regeneration, taking off the old hostilities and resentments and putting on the attributes of the only Person who can make everything new. This is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ who is wisdom. "God gives wisdom and knowledge" (Ecclesiastes 2:26). Ōnly He can bring relief to the chaos the world experiences. Let us remember that the world is a reflection of mankind. Until the human soul is regenerated, dark-

are looking to man to ness remains.

The future does not hinge on the world situation, however grim it might be. It depends on what we do with what happened 2,000 years ago when Jesus died on the cross to cover the sins of the whole world. He shed His very blood and conquered death for each person who will receive His salvation. There is going on in the world today a quiet, bloodless revolu-

changing so fast that no one can really keep up with it. Students often only hear what is bad about the world. Many professors tantalize students declaring they "live in a messed-up world, so burn it down and start all over again."

The environment that surrounds us crackles with conflict because we

tion that brings hope. Listen only to the voice of the One who has the power to change lives.

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

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**Local Roundup** 

#### County Commissioners will hold executive session

The Wells County Commissioners will hold an executive session at 3:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 6, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

The reason cited for the executive session is: "To receive information about and interview prospective employees."

#### County Drainage Board will meet Monday afternoon

The Wells County Drainage Board will meet at 4:30 p.m. Monday, Jan. 6, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

Items on the agenda include:

• Board re-organization.

• Certify 2025 drainage collections.

• Project updates and miscellaneous matters.

#### County Commissioners will meet Monday evening

The Wells County Commissioners will meet at 5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 6, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

Items on the agenda include:

• Consideration of amending right-ofway requirements for road conversion.

• Regular appointments with Sheriff Scott Holliday, Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar and County Engineer Nate Whitacre.

• Renewal of worker's compensation.

• Monthly reports and miscellaneous business.

• Consideration of a new job description for the director of the Wells County Emergency Management Agency.

• Appointment of a director of the Wells County Emergency Management Agency.

• 2025 commissioner board appointments.

• Approval of a commissioner sale and minimum bid.

• Approval of the 2025 Solid Waste Management District salary contract.

### Bluffton Board of Works to meet Tuesday afternoon

The Bluffton Board of Public Works and Safety will meet at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7, in the Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 128 E. Market St.

Items on the agenda include:

• Consideration of a water bill adjustment.

• Personnel and financial matters.

Animal shelter fee.

## Bluffton Common Council will meet Tuesday evening

### Jefferson Township board will meet Tuesday evening

The advisory board for Jefferson Township will meet at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7, at Norwell Community Schools' central office, 312 N. Jefferson St. in Ossian.

- Items on the agenda include:
- Board re-organization.
- Review of investments.

### Wells County Council will meet Tuesday evening

The Wells County Council will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

Items on the agenda include:

• Re-organization of the board.

• Commissary report from Sheriff Scott Holliday.

• An appointment with Bluffton Common Council member Scott Mentzer and Bluffton Park Department Superintendent Brandy Fiechter for Wells Community Pool funding.

• Approval of the 2025 Solid Waste Management District salary contract.

### Visitors Commission will meet Wednesday morning

The Wells County Council will meet at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 8, in the conference room of the Wells County Commerce and Visitors Centre, 211 Water St. in Bluffton.

Items on the agenda include:

Regular reports and updates.Discussion about distributing maps and

marketing materials. • Consideration of a meeting date change for March.

• Strategic planning goals for 2025.

### Bluffton parks board will meet Thursday evening

The Bluffton parks board will meet at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 9, in the Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 128 E. Market St.

### Area Plan Commission will meet Thursday evening

The Wells County Area Plan Commission will meet at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, in Room 105, the multi-purpose room on the lower level of the Wells Carnegie Government Annex, 223 W. Washington St.

Items on the agenda include:

• A petition from Jose Juan Tell Zarate to rezone 601 N Metts St. in Ossian from R-1 to R-2.

• Consideration of rezoning properties owned by BCG Capital LLC & Minnich Enterprises from R-1 to B-3. The properties are located at 1590 W Washington St. and 1600 W Washington St., both in Bluffton.

• Consideration of a resolution to amend the Economic Development Plan to add the new Wells Community Pool project.

### **Police Notebook**

(Continued from Page 3)

Thursday, 12:10 p.m., Wells County Courthouse. Person arrested on warrant out of Allen County.

Thursday, 4:28 p.m., 5559 W 300 N. Deceased person found in woods, apparent incident with fallen tree branch.

Thursday, 6:33 p.m., Airplane Express, Bluffton. Car vs. deer.

Friday, 6:16 a.m., 7824 SE S.R. 116, Bluffton. Car in ditch, Indiana State Police handled crash report.

#### ACCIDENTS

City: Thursday, 4:30 p.m., S.R. 1 at Wabash Street. Samantha J. Brickley, 26, Bluffton, was driving a 2015 Chrysler Town and Country northbound on S.R. 1 and rear ended a stopped 2010

Chrysler 300 driven by Madison P. Selke, 26, Fort Wayne. Damage exceeded \$1,000.

#### County:

Thursday, 6:28 p.m., Elm Grove Road, Bluffton. Mason Raines, 29, Bluffton, was driving a 2012 Hyundai Azera westbound on S.R. 124 and struck a deer. The vehicle was towed from the scene. Damage exceeded \$5,000.

Thursday, 9:17 p.m., C.R. 700 S, Bluffton. Brooklyn Moore, 19, Poneto, was driving a 2019 Kia Stinger westbound on C.R. 700 S and struck a raccoon. Damage exceeded \$2,500.

Friday, 2:28 a.m., C.R. 1100 S, Keystone. Justin Byler, 18, Poneto, was driving a 2017 Ford F-350

southbound and hit a slick spot, going off the roadway and hitting a utility pole. The vehicle was towed from the scene. Damage exceeded \$25,000.

#### FIRES

Thursday, 8:05 p.m., Dollar General, Ossian. Smell of gas reported in back room, building evacuated.

#### ARRESTS

Jason Dewayne Harding, 47, Bryant; possession of meth, a Level 6 felony, and operating a vehicle while intoxicated, a Class C misdemeanor. Bond set at \$5,000.

Raven Dawn Haney, 30, Bluffton; compulsory attendance for full term, a Class B misdemeanor, and neglect of a dependent, a Level 6 felony. Bond set at \$6,000.

### Soldier who blew up Tesla at Trump hotel left note saying blast was to be a 'wakeup call' for U.S.

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A highly decorated Army soldier who fatally shot himself in a Tesla Cybertruck just before it blew up outside the Trump hotel in Las Vegas left notes saying the New Year's Day explosion was a stunt to serve as a "wakeup call" for the country's ills, investigators said Friday.

Matthew Livelsberger, a 37-year-old Green Beret from Colorado Springs, Colorado, also wrote in notes he left on his cellphone that he needed to "cleanse" his mind "of the brothers I've lost and relieve myself of the burden of the lives I took." Livelsberger served in the Army since 2006 and deployed twice to Afghanistan.

"This was not a terrorist attack, it was a wakeup call. Americans only pay attention to spectacles and violence. What better way to get my point across than a stunt with fireworks and explosives," Livelsberger wrote in one letter found by authorities and released Friday.

The explosion caused minor injuries to seven people but virtually no damage to the Trump International Hotel. Authorities said that Livelsberger acted alone.

Livelsberger's letters covered a range of topics including political grievances, societal problems and both domestic and international issues, including the war in Ukraine. He said in one letter that the U.S. was "terminally ill and headed toward collapse." The new details came as investigators were still trying to determine whether Livelsberger sought to make a political point with the Tesla and the hotel bearing the president-elect's name.

"Although this incident is more public and more sensational than usual, it ultimately appears to be a tragic case of suicide involving a heavily decorated combat veteran who was struggling with PTSD and other issues," Spencer Evans, the FBI special agent in charge in Las Vegas, said Friday.

Livelsberger died of a self-inflicted gunshot to the head. Investigators have not yet explained how Livelsberger shot himself inside the Cybertruck while simultaneously igniting fireworks and camp fuel packed inside, causing the explosion.

Among the charred items found inside were a handgun at Livelsberger's feet, another firearm, fireworks, a passport, a military ID, credit cards, an iPhone and a smartwatch. Authorities said both guns were purchased legally.

The explosion came hours after 42-yearold Shamsud-Din Bahar Jabbar rammed a truck into a crowd in New Orleans' famed French Quarter early on New Year's Day, killing at least 14 people before being shot to death by police. The FBI says they believe Jabbar acted alone and that it is being investigated as a terrorist attack.

Attention Advertisers coming in February ... OUR 27th ANNUAL

The Bluffton Common Council will meet at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 7, in the Council Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 128 E. Market St.

Items on the agenda include:

• Approval of Resolution 2025-02 SB1 Star Engineering.

• Approval of an ordinance for trash rates.

• Approval of Resolution 2025-1 – Amendment to Temp Fire Loan.

- Mayor's appointments.
- Board re-organization.

• Approval of Lancaster Township Interlocal Agreement/Resolution 2025-03

• Approval of Ordinance 1651 Lancaster Fund.

• Consideration of a resolution to create a new Hale Street TIF district.

• Attorney update and contract.

• Year-end report and 2025 plan of operations.

• Regular updates and announcements.

### Markle Town Council will meet Thursday evening

The Markle Town Council will meet at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, at the town hall, 154 E. Morse St. in Markle.

- Items on the agenda include:
- Regular reports and updates.
- Board appointments.

### **Republican Mike Johnson reelected House speaker in dramatic floor vote**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Mike Johnson narrowly won reelection Friday as House speaker on a first ballot, overcoming hard-right GOP holdouts in a tense standoff and buoyed by a nod of support from President-elect Donald Trump.

The uneasy scene brought an ominous start to the first day of the new Congress. A small collection of hardline Republicans convened in the back of the House chamber, one by one declining to vote or choosing another lawmaker. Johnson's face turned grim, acknowledging fresh turmoil and signaling trouble ahead for him as Trump returns to the White House with unified GOP control of Washington.

In the end, however, Johnson was able to flip two holdouts who switched to support him, with help from Trump, who called the dissenting Republican lawmakers from the golf course. The final tally was 218-215.

Johnson, visibly relieved, vowed to "reject business as usual" in his first speech with the gavel. "We're going to drastically cut back the size and scope of government," he promised.

Johnson's weak grip on the gavel has threatened not only his own survival but Trump's ambitious agenda of tax cuts and mass deportations as Republicans sweep to power in the House and the Senate. The stark vote tally laid bare the challenges he faces. Even backing from Trump himself, usually a surer bet for Republicans, was no guarantee of Johnson's ability to stay in the speaker's office.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jefferies attempted to push past the Republican tumult of the past two years, saying it was time to come together, put party politics aside "to get things done" for Americans.

What was once a ceremonial day with newly elected lawmakers arriving to be sworn into office, often with family, friends and children in tow — Republicans this year wearing long, Trumpstyle red ties — has evolved into a high-stakes vote for the office of House speaker, among the most powerful elected positions in Washington. Vice President Kamala Harris swore in the senators.

While the Senate is able to convene on its own and has already elected party leaders — Sen. John Thune as the Republican majority leader, who vowed in his first speech to preserve the legislative filibuster, and Sen. Chuck Schumer for the Democratic minority — the House must first elect its speaker. It's a role required by the Constitution, second in the line of succession to the president.

With opposition from his own GOP colleagues, Johnson arrived at the Capitol with outward confidence after working into the night to sway dissenters. A flop by Johnson could have thrown Monday's congressional certification of Trump's 2024 election victory into turmoil.

Trump had endorsed Johnson, and was on the phone during the vote to secure the outcome. "Mike will be a Great Speaker, and our Country will be the beneficiary," Trump posted on social media after the vote.

## Wells County Fact Book

## **2025** Wells County Fact Book



One of our most popular annual projects, it is sure to be a "keeper!"

Jampacked with information we use everyday but take for granted, updated with newly elected officials and more!

Useful information for new residents and visitors as well as natives! From who to call at city hall, county offices, schools and utilities ... how to get a building permit, listings of regional zip codes, important phone numbers...

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You'll want your business to be a part of this year-

round handy reference guide to Wells County!

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