

Jay County Council

The cost of communication

The chart below breaks down the costs of new radio equipment for Jay County. (It does not include warranties and services agreements.) It is broken down into costs for Jay County (left), including new infrastructure such as a tower, and its municipalities and IU Health Jay (right). Jay County Council approved a lease agreement Wednesday to pay for the new radios and other equipment. The county has not yet negotiated with the communities regarding how much of the cost of the new equipment they will be able to cover.

Jay County		Municipalities/hospital	
System infrastructure	\$1.48 million	Bryant fire	\$227,045
Drive testing	\$67,927	Dunkirk police	\$107,156
Sheriff	\$525,546	Dunkirk fire	\$154,373
JEMS	\$236,350	Pennville police	\$44,985
EMA	\$97,557	Pennville fire	\$149,806
Health department	\$15,538	Portland police	\$454,224
Highway	\$259,749	Portland fire	\$404,919
		Redkey police	\$30,262
		Redkey fire	\$168,698
		Salamonia fire	\$204,894
		IU Health Jay	\$14,723
Sub-total	\$2.68 million	Sub-total	\$1.96 million

Total = \$4.64 million

Cuts made to '26 budget proposal

By BAILEY CLINE
The Commercial Review
With an uncertain financial future, county officials are taking precautions with budget increases next year.

Jay County Council agreed Wednesday to advertise a \$26.1 million budget for 2026, a decrease of about \$902,000 from the budget reviewed Sept. 2. It now sits at an increase of \$2 million (roughly 8%) from the current year.

The largest change comes from adjusting proposed wage increases to 2% from the previous 3%.

County auditor Emily Franks shared a spreadsheet with council on Wednesday comparing 2024 and 2025 and two options for the 2026 budget. One option for 2026 included 3% raises as well as estimates put together by department heads. The other called for 2% raises and freezes in funds for office supplies, contracts and equipment across all departments.

"I feel like, at that point, we're to a fairly comfortable number," said Franks, referencing the more conservative budget proposal.

Council mulled over the budget for about an hour Wednesday following a more than hour-long discussion about whether to purchase new radio equipment for local emergency responders and other personnel. (See related story.)

Council member Bryan Alexander expressed concern that the county's budget is increasing, not decreasing, for 2026. He pointed to other local government agencies' budgeting processes.

"I have yet to see any news report of any county or city not cutting," he said.

He also pointed to wage increases in recent years, saying county officials at that time knew they would slowly deplete the county's cash reserves.

See Budget page 2

By BAILEY CLINE

The Commercial Review

It's time to strengthen the signal.

Jay County Council agreed Wednesday to a \$4.64 million lease agreement with Motorola for new radio equipment for emergency responders and other agencies across the county.

Those slated to receive equipment include Jay County Sheriff's Office, Jay Emergency Medical Service, Jay County Emergency Management Agency, Jay County Health Department, Jay County Highway Department, Portland fire and police departments, Dunkirk fire and police departments, Pennville fire and police departments, Redkey fire and police departments, Salamonia Fire Department, Bryant Fire Department

and IU Health Jay. (Hospital security and emergency room staff have been added to the project per Wednesday's presentation.)

The 10-year lease, which comes at a 3.72% interest rate, allows the county to pay off the lease early with no penalties. It also allows the county to delay its first payment until February 2027. It doesn't include system upgrades and maintenance costs for the next 15 years, which are estimated at just shy of \$1.6 million total. Warranty costs between years two and five for subscriber units have not been determined.

Ritter Strategic Services co-founder Barry Ritter shared figures Wednesday with council, noting at least one department has changed the amount of radios it will need and leading

to price changes. (Updated numbers were shared with The Commercial Review on Thursday morning. Ritter clarified in an email that Jay County's subscriber unit inventory first developed in 2024 has been updated and changed throughout the course of the project.) Motorola also presented new lease terms Wednesday, having previously offered five-, seven-, 10- and 15-year lease options.

Estimated costs for each department are as listed below:

- Jay County Sheriff's Office — \$525,546.04
- Jay County Emergency Medical Service — \$236,349.52
- Jay Emergency Management Agency — \$97,556.84
- Jay County Health Department — \$15,538.12
- Jay County Highway Department — \$259,749.04
- Portland Fire Department — \$404,918.78
- Portland Police Department — \$454,223.88
- Dunkirk Fire Department — \$154,372.68
- Dunkirk Police Department — \$107,156.17
- Redkey Fire Department — \$168,697.58
- Redkey Police Department — \$30,261.61
- Pennville Fire Department — \$149,805.80
- Pennville Police Department — \$44,985.10
- Salamonia Fire Department — \$204,893.86
- Bryant Fire Department — \$227,044.86
- IU Health Jay — \$14,723.49

Additionally, the new radio tower to be installed at the sheriff's office is estimated at \$1.48 million and drive testing at \$68,000.
See Radio page 2

Radio lease approved

Chronic absenteeism rates are improving

By CASEY SMITH

Indiana Capital Chronicle
indianacapitalchronicle.com

Fewer Hoosier students are missing large chunks of school, but chronic absenteeism rates still remain well above pre-pandemic levels, according to new data presented Wednesday to the State Board of Education.

Indiana's chronic absenteeism rate dropped to 16.7% in the most recent 2024-25 school year — marking the third straight year of improvement.

The rate, which measures students missing at least 10% of school days in a single academic year, is down 1.1 percentage points from last year and more than four points since 2022, when it topped 21%.

"The data is clear. Regular student attendance is

vital to ensuring more students master foundational literacy and numeracy skills and graduate high school prepared for their next step," Indiana Secretary of Education Katie Jenner said Wednesday. "Statewide chronic absenteeism rates continue to move in the right direction ... but we know there is still more to be done."

The Indiana Code specifically defines chronic absenteeism as missing at least 10% of instructional days in a school year for any reason, regardless of whether it is excused. That's equal to about 18 absences per school year. Separately, "habitual truancy" is used to define students who miss 10 or more days without any excuse.

Jenner told board

members that many chronically absent students are typically absent for more than a month, however.

"It's not just that they hit the 18 days — it's much beyond that," she said.

John Keller, with the Indiana Department of Education, called the attendance numbers "a good sign" but additionally emphasized that "we have more work to do."

Student absences have been on the rise since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indiana and across the nation. Chronic absenteeism surged during the pandemic, nearly doubling to peak at 21.1% in 2022, according to IDOE.

Rates have declined in recent years, though: 21.1% in 2022; 19.2% in 2023; and 17.8% in 2024.



Metro

Data from Indiana State Board of Education shows that the state's chronic absenteeism rate dropped to 16.7% in 2024-25. It was the third consecutive year that the rate has dropped. It peaked at 21% in 2022.

Inside

Page 4 — Economist is concerned about status compared to neighbors.

Page 5 — A look at opinions about the use of AI in agriculture.

Page 8 — Jay County teen is working toward being NEXT in Major League Soccer.

Weather

The high temperature was 80 degrees Wednesday in Jay County. The low was 53.

Tonight's low will be in the upper 50s. Expect a high in the lower 80s Saturday under partly cloudy skies. There is a 30% chance of showers and storms Saturday night.

See page 2 for an extended outlook.

In review

Jay County Solid Waste Management District will have recycling trailers available from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday in the parking lot at 220 Lincoln St., Portland, and Dunkirk City Park.

Coming up

Saturday — Coverage of the JCHS football game against Class 2A No. 1 Adams Central.

Tuesday — Photos from the Jay County Cancer Society Cruise.

Wednesday — Details from Monday's Jay School Board meeting.



Budget ...

Continued from page 1

Council member Harold Towell suggested several cuts, the largest of which included \$500,000 from Jay County Commissioners’ budget. (Franks noted reasons for the commissioners’ budget increasing include a new computer maintenance contract and property tax software. Insurance costs also increased. Longevity pay and all county phone bills will also be paid out of the commissioners’ budget starting next year.)

Towell also suggested the county only fund Jay County Country Living through June 2026, approximately six months earlier

than the deadline imposed by commissioners. Jay County Country Living’s budget would be essentially halved, cutting roughly \$210,000. (County officials recently voted to close the facility while allowing time for its residents to transition to other facilities.)

As a member of the facility’s advisory board, Towell said work on shutting it down has been progressing smoothly. He anticipated it could be ready to close as soon as the end of this year. He also said some residents will stay until the last day it is open.

Bracy, who serves as president of the advisory board, said the

end-of-year timeline is hopeful, but agreed closing in June 2026 would be a realistic timeline.

Sheriff Ray Newton asked the council to give department heads guidance on how to go about slashing their budgets.

“I think that’s one of the biggest problems with us right now, we don’t know what to cut, no one is telling us anything,” said Newton.

“Cut money, just cut money,” responded Bracy.

“We’d like to know how much,” Newton said. “You know, if I have to cut \$100,000, at least tell me that. Maybe we can look at where to cut.”

A few council members said they aren’t experts about each department’s inner workings, questioning how they could make economical cuts without jeopardizing critical needs. Bracy noted decreases could be different among departments depending on a variety of factors.

“How many of you have actually met with your department heads that you’re over?” asked county clerk Missy Elliott.






Bracy said she had met with some, but not all of them. Other council members didn’t respond to Elliott’s question.

Council president Matt Minnich asked Franks what council

would do at its next meeting. Franks explained the council needs to advertise its 2026 budget by the end of this week. (Per state law, the county can’t request a budget higher than what it advertises, but it can make cuts.)

Council will host a public hearing and first reading of the budget Sept. 24. If approved, it will hold a second reading and consider adopting its 2026 budget at its regular council meeting Oct. 8.

Alexander voiced support for publishing the proposed 2026 budget with 2% wage increases. Council then approved moving forward with that version of the budget.

CR almanac				
Saturday 9/13	Sunday 9/14	Monday 9/15	Tuesday 9/16	Wednesday 9/17
 85/59 <small>Saturday's forecast shows a 5 to 10 mph wind. Otherwise, mostly cloudy.</small>	 88/61 <small>Sunday's weather looks like a slight chance of rain. The high may hit 88.</small>	 90/60 <small>Sunny skies are in the forecast for Monday when the high may hit a blistering 90.</small>	 90/58 <small>Tuesday's weather looks like mostly sunny skies with a high around 90 degrees.</small>	 89/58 <small>Wednesday's forecast shows mostly sunny skies with slight winds.</small>

Lotteries	
Powerball 2-24-45-53-64 Power Ball: 5 Power Play: 2 Estimated jackpot: \$50 million	Daily Four: 9-7-8-4 Quick Draw: 1-2-3-13-17-20-22-27-30-32-38-39-60-61-64-65-67-70-76-80 Cash 5: 5-12-13-25-41 Estimated jackpot: \$90,000
Mega Millions Estimated jackpot: \$381 million	Ohio Wednesday Midday Pick 3: 5-3-3 Pick 4: 6-1-3-8 Pick 5: 5-7-4-7-9 Evening Pick 3: 7-2-4 Pick 4: 4-1-2-9 Pick 5: 3-1-9-9-6 Rolling Cash: 10-14-17-26-38 Estimated jackpot: \$140,000
Hoosier Wednesday Midday Daily Three: 6-0-5 Daily Four: 2-9-9-1 Quick Draw: 5-10-11-14-23-24-25-28-29-30-32-34-35-42-44-47-54-56-65-77 Evening Daily Three: 7-1-2	

Markets	
Cooper Farms Fort Recovery Corn.....4.11 Oct. corn4.06 Dec. corn4.21	Oct. beans9.94 Wheat 4.75
POET Biorefining Portland Corn.....4.16 Oct./Nov. corn4.06 Dec. corn4.26	ADM Montpelier Corn.....3.94 Late Sept. corn3.94 Beans.....9.91 Late Sept. beans9.81 Wheat4.70
The Andersons Richland Township Corn4.01 Oct. corn3.98 Beans.....9.94	Heartland St. Anthony Corn.....4.11 Late Sept. corn4.06 Beans.....9.74 Late Sept. beans9.74 Wheat4.55

Today in history	
<p>In 1918, during World War I, Gen. John J. Pershing launched the first major offensive of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe.</p> <p>In 1990, Jay County Council on a 3-2 vote decided against adding three full-time deputies to the Jay County Sheriff’s Office staff in order to wait until the new sheriff came into office in 1991.</p> <p>In 2013, Indiana University Health announced that it would cut about 800 jobs by the</p>	<p>end of the year. Cuts were set for seven hospitals, including those in Indianapolis, Muncie and Tipton.</p> <p>In 2022, Eric Butcher was hired as the new superintendent of Jay County Highway Department. Butcher took over the role about four months after the death of former superintendent Donnie Corn. He served in the role for approximately 15 months before resigning in February 2024.</p> <p>—The CR</p>

Citizen’s calendar	
Monday 3:45 p.m. — Jay County Election Board, voting room, courthouse, 120 N. Court St., Portland. 4:30 p.m. — Jay County Election Board public hearing, auditorium, courthouse, 120 N. Court St., Portland. 5 p.m. — Jay School Board, General Shanks, 414 E. Floral Ave., Portland. 5:30 p.m. — Portland City Council, council chambers, fire station, 1616 N. Meridian St. 6:30 p.m. — Fort	<p>Recovery Local Schools, community room, high school, 400 E. Butler St. 7:30 p.m. — Fort Recovery Village Council, village hall, 201 S. Main St.</p> <p>Wednesday 4 p.m. — Portland Board of Aviation, airport, 661 W. 100 North.</p> <p>Sept. 22 9 a.m. — Jay County Commissioners, auditorium, courthouse, 120 N. Court St., Portland.</p>

Radio ...

Continued from page 1

Prash Ramani of Motorola laid out the timeline for the project, anticipating radios will be delivered within two to six weeks. He expects the tower to be constructed before summer 2026.

Ritter Strategic Services facilitated a radio study on Jay County’s equipment in 2024. It showed the majority of their coverage is available only if users take their radios outdoors to use them, with significant coverage gaps in the northeast and south areas of the county. Ritter suggested joining the Integrated Public Safety Commission radio system and upgrading the county’s equipment. The company also facilitated the request for proposals process for the project over the last few months.

Ritter reminded council that how Jay County officials negotiate agreements with the county’s municipalities and hospital has no bearing on its obligation to Motorola. He also noted the county’s deadline to lock in costs for the proposal is Sept. 18, with Motorola’s prices to go up if no action is taken.

Council member Bryan Alexander expressed disappointment with Ritter in his work on the project, saying there are still costs attached to the project that the county doesn’t know. He also criticized Motorola’s Sept. 18 deadline, suggesting it gives a “false sense of urgency” to the request.

Alexander also questioned how the county will pay for the project. He expressed concern that other agencies haven’t been approached or asked for financial matches in the project. (Ritter later noted his contract didn’t include requiring him to negotiate payments with other agencies on the county’s behalf.)

Portland Fire Chief Mike Weitzel explained local emergency response stakeholders have been discussing the project since 2021. Pointing to costs, he noted some departments are working on extremely tight budgets and likely wouldn’t be able to afford the upgrades. Nonetheless, he said, they need to have access to the system. Council member Cindy Bracy argued emergency response such as fire departments are in the purview of the county’s responsibility. Council member Michael Brewster also indicated he thought council had planned to take on some of the costs for departments that may not be able to pay for the upgrades.

Council member Harold Towell shared concerns about the proposed new system offering only 95% coverage across the county, a requirement Ritter said earlier in the meeting is a realistic standard across the industry.

Sheriff Ray Newton said he’s comfortable with the 95% coverage as compared to the poor connection the county currently experiences on a daily basis.

“There’s places we can’t even get out, that’s how bad it is, Harold,” he said. “You know, to prolong this, something bad’s going to happen, and our radio system goes down and, what, we’re going to wait another month?”

Newton reminded council members he was a council member himself when discussion about upgrading radios first started years ago.

“This is something that we desperately need,” he said. “I’ve got to protect my officers. I’ve got to protect public safety. If they can’t hear us, we’re in trouble.”

Amid discussion about overall cost, county auditor Emily Franks noted a

few different potential funding options, including a portion out of the county’s infrastructure fund, economic development income tax (EDIT) dollars or money coming in future years from wind farms and solar farms through economic development agreements.

Council approved the 10-year lease agreement, with Matt Minnich, Faron Parr, Michael Brewster, Alexander and Bracy voting in favor. Towell and Randy May voted against.

In other news, council members:

- Had a request to transfer \$33,570 between infrastructure funds in the commissioners’ budget die for a lack of a motion. The transfer was intended to pay a claim from MSS Engineering for a portion of the cost to draw plans for constructing a public safety building. Tentative plans were to place the structure on the county’s 68 acres along Indiana 67 in Portland. Commissioners agreed on a 2-1 vote in August to move forward with a proposal from the company, with commissioner Duane Monroe dissenting.
- Heard from Waggoner, Irwin, Scheele and Associates regarding its salary analysis report. A representative shared various suggestions for adjusting job classifications and their respective wages.
- Made the following additional appropriations: \$177,000 for tuck-pointing, sealant and other brick repairs for Jay County Courthouse, \$37,000 in the Jay County Surveyor’s Office fund for repairing the department’s old excavator and purchasing a new excavator, \$26,000 for Jay County Jail information technology upgrades, \$15,000 for replacing road signs and \$8,800 (Towell opposed) for professional services from Ritter Strategic Services.

GOP leaders were quiet after caucus

By WHITNEY DOWNARD and NIKI KELLY
Indiana Capital Chronicle
indianacapitalchronicle.com

Senate Republicans met behind closed doors on Wednesday at the Indiana Statehouse roughly three weeks after their House counterparts to discuss redistricting, though none shared specifics with media following the caucus.

Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray, who leads the Republican body, declined to comment as he left the Senate caucus room.

Also on Wednesday, a national poll found that most Republicans want to ban mid-decade redistricting even as a group sends texts encouraging

Hoosiers to support the move.

The two-hour meeting follows a Washington, D.C., trip last month where Bray and House Speaker Todd Huston met personally with President Donald Trump to discuss redistricting. Trump and his allies have identified Indiana as an opportunity to grow the slim Republican majority in Congress.

Just two of Indiana’s nine congressional districts are held by Democrats, limiting pick-up opportunities. But with Republican supermajorities in both chambers, and a GOP governor, there’s little opponents can do to halt the process.

Felony courts

Pointing firearm
A Bryant man was placed on probation after pointing a firearm at another person.

Shannon P. Kuhn, 22, 208 North Malin St., Bryant, pleaded guilty in Jay Superior Court to the Level 6 felony. He was sentenced to one year in Jay County Jail with all but two days suspended and given two days credit for time served. Kuhn was fined \$1, assessed \$189 in court costs and placed on probation for one year.

meanor. He was sentenced to one year in Jay County Jail with all but two days suspended and given two days credit for time served. He was assessed \$189.50 in court costs and fined \$500. Recinos Gomez was placed on probation for one year.

SERVICES

Saturday

Donnally, Jacquelin: 1 p.m., Church of the Most Holy Trinity, 7321 Indiana 67, Bryant.

Clark, Raiden: 3 p.m., IOOF Cemetery, Montpelier.

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Resisting law
A Muncie man was placed on probation after pleading guilty to resisting police and driving without a license.

Ignacio G. Recinos Gomez, 52, 3505 E. North St., pleaded guilty in Jay Superior Court to resisting law enforcement, a Level 6 felony, and operating a vehicle without a license, a Class C misde-



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Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday 10 am - 4 pm

Cousin hits rough patch

DEAR ABBY: I love my cousin “Carly” like a sister. We come from a large family, and both of us are estranged from our mothers (who are sisters) as well as our siblings. We’re OK with this because we have no room for toxic people in our lives.

Recently, Carly has fallen on hard times — a bitter divorce and a failed business. She lost one son in a terrible accident and the other to drugs and alcohol. Her daughter has sided with her dad and rarely speaks to Carly.

When she does contact her mom, she is unkind and rude. I think that since Carly no longer has money to spend on her, the girl is kicking her mom while she’s down.

Carly is heartbroken, depressed and struggling with the “why me?” of all of this. If I had the funds, I’d help her with whatever she needed to deal with her legal woes, but these are tough times for everyone. I try to check in on her daily via text (we live in separate cities) and give her strategies to deal with her failing business and all the clean-up — financial and emotional — that comes with letting go of her dream of owning her own shop.

I worry about Carly because she has no one other than me. All the fair-weather friends who hung

Dear Abby



months. She’s not a friend I would ever think to visit or even call on the phone, and she apparently feels the same.

Stacy writes that she “wants to keep in touch,” yet her messages contain nothing more than a greeting followed by a perfunctory response, like “been busy,” when I ask what she’s been up to.

I used to offer details about work, my hobbies, my spouse and where I’ve traveled on vacations, without acknowledgment or reciprocation on her part. Now, I no longer bother offering her any details. Frankly, I don’t see this as keeping in touch at all. Would it be rude, after all these years, to stop writing her back? — FLUM-MOXED IN FLORIDA

DEAR FLUMMOXED: No, it would not be rude. It appears Stacy sends out blanket messages in an effort to “keep her contacts warm,” but she isn’t sincere enough to show a personal interest in the recipients. You are not required to respond to her messages.

.....
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at Dear-Abby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

around her business are gone, and her kids and grandkids have floated away. What advice can I give her? — LOVING COUSIN IN NEW MEXICO

DEAR COUSIN: From what you have written, you have given Carly about as much emotional support as you can. If you can manage to schedule some in-person, one-on-one time with Carly, it might lift her spirits. However, there may be one more thing you can give: Hope. Remind your cousin that when one door closes, another may open, and when it does, she will be able to apply all the lessons she has learned so far.

As to “why me?” — setbacks happen to everyone at one time or another. The trick is to learn from our mistakes so we don’t repeat them.

.....
DEAR ABBY: I have a casual acquaintance, “Stacy,” who long ago moved to a different part of the country and sends me a message every couple of

Dining with Diabetes program is Monday

Monday marks the first session in a cooking program intended to help folks learn how to prepare healthy meals for those with diabetes.

Dining with Diabetes begins at 6 p.m. Monday at John Jay Center for Learning, 101 S. Meridian St., Portland. Participants will learn about nutrition basics and taste test recipes. Other sessions are as follows: 6 p.m. Sept. 22, 6 p.m. Sept. 29, 6 p.m. Oct. 6, 6 p.m. Oct. 13 and 6 p.m. Oct. 20.

To register, call (260) 726-4707 or email adrees@purdue.edu.

Class of 2005 reunion

It’s been 20 years since the Class of 2005 graduated.

Jay County High School Class of 2005 will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a reunion at 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 20, at Portland Elks Lodge, 126 W. High St. Tickets are \$25 per person and include dinner and dessert catered by Mrs. P’s Kitchen. There will also be a cash bar available.

To reserve a spot, call or text Jenae Horn Blasdel at (260) 251-2439.

Nominations open

The Robert Cooper Audubon Society is accepting nominations for its conservation awards.

Among the awards are the Robert H. and Esther L. Cooper Conservation Award, the chapter’s highest honor, for contributions to conservation of and appreciation for the natural environment.

Taking Note

Other awards are for conservation education, public service, development or preservation of habitat and conservation practices for an individual 18 or younger.

Nominations can be emailed to admin@cooperaudubon.org. The deadline is Sept. 20.

Series continues

The Muncie Three Trails Music Series wraps up next weekend.

The final concert in the series is a performance by Afro Peruvian Jazz Orchestra. A 20-piece ensemble, the orchestra blends jazz with traditional Peruvian rhythms, according to its website. The show opens at 7 p.m. Sept. 20 at Brown Family Amphitheater at Ball State University in Muncie.

For more information, visit munciethreetrails.com.

Baby showers

There’s a community baby shower every week this month.

Jay County Family Resource Center, 827 W. High St., Portland, will celebrate families with infants up to 1 year old every Tuesday in September from 1 to 5 p.m.

Community members are invited to walk in to join the celebration.

Community Calendar

Notices will appear in Community Calendar as space is available. To submit an item, email news@thecr.com.

Today

PAST RECOVERY SERVICES — Peer Addiction Support Team recovery support group meets at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. each Friday at the Jay County Drug Prevention Coalition office at 100 N. Meridian St., Portland. To learn more information, please call (260) 251-3259.

Saturday

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 10 a.m. at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 218 E. High St., Portland. For more information, call (260) 251-3336 or (260) 729-7000.

Sunday

A BETTER LIFE – BRIANNA’S HOPE — A faith-based recovery group for all kinds of addictions, will meet from 5 to 6:30 p.m. each Sunday at Fellowship Baptist Church, 289 S. 200 West, Portland. Come early for a meal.

For more information, call (260) 766-2006.

Monday

PORTLAND BREAKFAST OPTIMISTS — Will meet at 7 a.m. for breakfast at Richards Restaurant.

PING PONG — Will be played from 9 a.m. to noon each Monday at Jay Community Center.

EUCHRE — Will be played starting at 1 p.m. each Monday at West Jay Community Center, 125 Hoover St., Dunkirk.

TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY (TOPS) — Will meet for weigh-in at 4:30 p.m., with the meeting at 5 p.m., at Trinity United Methodist Church, 323 S. Meridian St., Portland. New members welcome. For more information, call (260) 726-5924.

THE LIFE CENTER — Free pregnancy testing with ongoing support during and after pregnancy, as well as help with the needs of the family. The center is located at 1209 S. Shank St., Portland. Hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information or to schedule an appoint-

ment, call (260) 726-8636. Walk-ins accepted.

BREAD OF LIFE COMMUNITY FAMILY MEAL — Will be served from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Asbury United Methodist Church, 204 E. Arch St. in Portland. Everyone is welcome.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 6:30 p.m. each Monday at A Second Chance At Life Ministries, 228 S. Meridian St. in Portland. For more information, call Brenda Eads at (260) 726-9625 or Dave Keen at (260) 251-8792.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SUICIDE GRIEF — Meets from 7 to 8:30 p.m. the third Monday of each month. The support group serves to help individuals who have lost a loved one to suicide. To register, contact Stephanie Patterson at (260) 251-3259.

Tuesday

COMPASSIONATE CONNECTIONS RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP — A group for anyone with a substance use disorder that helps individuals find connections as they develop long-term recovery meets at noon each Tuesday in the IU Health Jay Outpatient Behavioral Health Center, Entrance C, 510 W. Votaw St., Portland.

JAY COUNTY PASTORS AND CHAPLAINS — Meet at 11:30 a.m. on the third Tuesday of each month in the chapel at Indiana University Health Jay Hospital.

FRIENDS OF JAY COUNTY LIBRARY — Will meet at 6 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month at the library.

A BETTER LIFE – BRIANNA’S HOPE — A faith-based recovery group for substance abuse. Meal starts at 6 p.m. and the meeting is from 6:30 to 8 p.m. every Tuesday at the Nazarene Fellowship Building across from the Nazarene church, 249 E. Center St., Dunkirk.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 7 p.m. at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 218 E. High St., Portland.

Wednesday

WEDNESDAY MORNING BREAKFAST CLUB — Will meet at 8 a.m. in the east room of Richards Restaurant. All women are invited to attend. Includes activities and devotional time.

PING PONG — Will be played from 11 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays at West Jay Community Center.

PORTLAND ROTARY CLUB — Will meet at noon each Wednesday in the cafe at John Jay Center for Learning, 101 S. Meridian St., Portland.

COMMUNITY REINFORCEMENT AND FAMILY TRAINING — A non-confrontational, evidence-based intervention for helping families affected by addiction meets at 4 p.m. each Wednesday in the IU Health Jay Outpatient Behavioral Health Center, Entrance C, 510 W. Votaw St., Portland.

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP — New Beginnings, a support group for friends and families of alcoholics, will meet at 6:30 p.m. each Wednesday in the Zion Lutheran Church, 218 E. High St., Portland. For more information, call (260) 726-8229.

A BETTER LIFE – BRIANNA’S HOPE — A faith-based recovery group for all kinds of addictions, will meet from 6:30 to 8 p.m. each Wednesday at Redkey United Methodist Church, 122 W. Main St. Come early for a meal. For more information, call Pastor Randy Davis at (765) 369-2085.

Thursday

STITCH AND CHATTER QUILT CLUB — Meets from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at Jay Community Center. Show and tell is at 1 p.m. The club is open to all ages and is for anyone who wants to sew. Bring unfinished projects and a sewing machine. For more information, call Nan Weesner (260) 766-9334.

CELEBRATE RECOVERY — A 12-step Christian recovery program meets at 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. each Thursday at A Second Chance At Life Ministries, 228 S. Meridian St. in Portland. For more information, call Brenda Eads at (260) 726-9625 or Dave Keen at (260) 251-8792.

SMART RECOVERY — A group for those struggling with addiction that focuses on motivation, coping with cravings, managing thoughts, feelings and behavior, and living a balanced life meets at 11 a.m. each Thursday in the IU Health Jay Outpatient Behavioral Health Center, Entrance C, 510 W. Votaw St., Portland.

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Sudoku

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

Level: Advanced

Thursday's Solution

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

The objective is to fill a nine-by-nine grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine three-by-three boxes (also called blocks or regions) contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time each.

At least we’re ahead of Kentucky

By MORTON J. MARCUS

It seems Indiana has a comfortable place in the world, as long as we are better off than Kentucky.

Where did this come from? We might suspect, because many of our southern counties were populated early on by folks from Kentucky (the Lincolns, for example), they needed to convince themselves that they made the right move.

It is common for immigrants to see their new lives as an improvement over their old lives, no matter how substandard that new life might be. As the girls sing in “West Side Story”:

I like to be in America!
O.K. by me in America!

Morton J. Marcus



Ev’rything free in America
For a small fee in America!
So we find Hoosiers content with average weekly wages in December 2024 of \$1,222, which ranked 44th in the nation. That we were down from 41st place a year earlier does not matter. We were ahead of 46th-place Kentucky by \$33. In addition, we could boast that our gain of \$51 over a year earlier (35th best in

the nation) outpaced 46th-place Kentucky by \$6 per week.
Never mind that our state’s numbers were worse than Illinois, Michigan and Ohio. We weren’t embarrassed. We had just re-elected a moribund legislature and a new governor who freely admitted the impotence of his office. We remained ahead of Kentucky.
For some unfathomable reason, Hoosiers seem to be proud that our governors take trips to visit foreign countries to seek foreign investments in our state. I imagine it is invigorating to see Paris, Perth and Pretoria after a lifetime in Piercetown, Portage or Princeton.
What a thrill for the staff

who arrange these excursions and the executives who accompany the governor. How well they displayed Hoosier humility, advocating for alms. We proudly tell those foreigners how gladly we will provide funds to those who graciously take notice of us. We will exempt them from the responsibility of citizenship (paying taxes) on land that has no better use than theirs.
And don’t forget, dear investors, you don’t have to pay workers in Indiana as much as you might in Illinois, Michigan or Ohio. Yet you will have easy access to those wealthier markets via the federal highways we enjoy in all directions.
What some might find

strange is the absence of effective cooperation with our neighboring states. Together these five states have average weekly wages that are \$83 (6%) below the national average. But we and they only see each other as competitors, not as colleagues in relative decline.
Centrally located Indianapolis seems to be a natural place for such a gathering, a well-prepared summit, unless our governor would be uncomfortable working with three prominent Democrats from Illinois, Kentucky and Michigan.
.....
Marcus is an economist formerly at the IU Kelley School of Business. Contact him via email at mortonjmarcus@gmail.com.

Rural communities brace for health cuts

By ROKOSZ MOST

OtherWords
Bari Senecal waits outside the emergency department at Columbia Memorial Hospital in Hudson, New York. “I do construction. I fell three stories,” Senecal explains. “I was on top of the scaffold and this new kid we hired didn’t put the braces on correctly.”

Like 70 million Americans, Senecal qualifies for Medicaid, the state and federally-funded public health insurance program for low-income patients. She also qualifies for Medicare. She’s what’s known as being “dual-eligible.”

At Columbia Memorial, 63 percent of patient service revenue is reimbursed through a combination of the two programs. But “we run a deficit every year,” says Dorothy Urschel, CEO of Columbia Memorial Health. “For many, many years, we’ve been reimbursed at well below cost.”

The hospital has the only emergency room serving the more than 110,000 residents scattered among two predominately rural counties. “Of course, we’re struggling,” says Urschel. “But rural community hospitals always struggle.”

Columbia Memorial already closed its maternity ward in 2020 — part of a distressingly common trend. A recent study from the Journal of the American Medical Association found that more than half of rural counties now have no hospital-based obstetric services whatsoever.

Like other rural hospitals across the country, Columbia Memorial is bracing for the loss of Medicaid-covered patients and funding because of the Republican reconciliation bill, dubbed the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” which was signed by President Donald Trump this summer.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the bill will cut \$911 billion in federal Medicaid spending over the next decade and result in an estimated 10.3 million people losing their Medicaid health insurance. Add in cuts to the Affordable Care Act and the number of people expected to lose their insurance rises to 16 million.

According to Larry Levitt, vice president for health policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation, this amounts to “the biggest rollback in federal support for health coverage ever.” And it will put enor-

Guest Opinion

mous strain on rural hospitals especially — which in Columbia County and elsewhere are often the largest local employer in addition to crucial care providers.

The GOP staggered these cuts so that the worst effects of the budget changes won’t be felt until after the mid-term elections in 2026 are safely past. But “some rural hospitals around the country have already started closing” in anticipation of the cuts, warns Michael Chameides, a member of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors.

Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) provided a list of 338 rural hospitals in danger of either closing or drastically scaling back services. All 338 had experienced three consecutive years of negative total profit margins and were in the top 10 percent of institutions with patients on Medicaid.

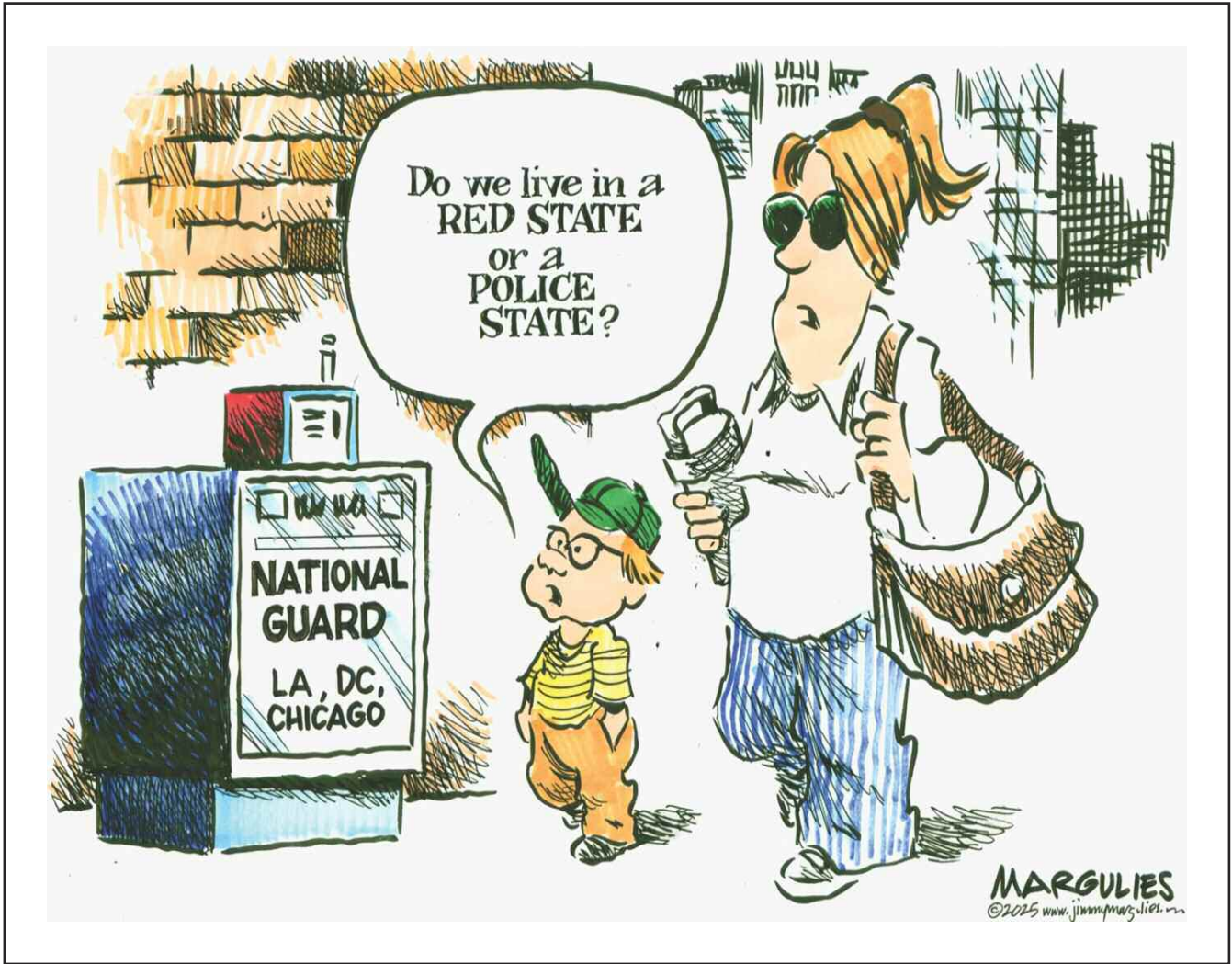
Rural hospitals facing disaster are identified individually according to which state will see the losses. Kentucky, Louisiana, and California top the list with 35, 33, and 28 rural hospitals identified as at risk of closure, respectively. New York has 11. (Columbia Memorial isn’t officially one of them, but Garnet Medical Health Center Catskills, another Hudson Valley hospital, is.)

An estimated 1,796 hospitals remain in rural America, but those numbers obscure the level at which the services they offer may have already contracted. According to the Government Accountability Office, over the last decade more than 100 rural hospitals have closed across the country — 50 of them in just the last eight years.

In New York and every other state, as federal funding runs dry it will be up to the governor and legislature to make provisions for struggling rural hospitals — or stand by and watch them collapse.

.....
Most is a journalist based in New York’s Hudson Valley who writes at rokoszmost.com.

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Meals weren’t an extra value?

Chicago Tribune

Tribune News Service

As fans of the Golden Arches, we recall the days when any rational person craving a Quarter Pounder did a little math in their heads (we’re talking pre-phones, folks), figured out the drink would be almost free if they got the fries and went with the combo instead of the “sandwich only” option on what was then a pretty simple menu board.

Jake from State Farm didn’t invent bundling; McDonald’s got there when Jake was just a kid. And Ronald’s bosses made bank, given that sodas cost fast-food restaurants like the Chicago-based giant and its franchisees little more than the price of the cup and the lid.

So we’ve been stunned to see the flap these last few days between McDonald’s and its franchisees over the need to actually offer customers extra value (aka a bundling deal) from those combo meals.

We thought they had been much cheaper all along; apparently we were deceived, even to the point where McDonald’s CEO Chris Kempczinski actually made flattering headlines by insisting that franchisees offer a 15% discount on a meal deal, which is a much smaller discount than we thought we had been getting on our favorite combos since the 1980s. Said franchisees were so appalled that Kempczinski even had to promise to cover some of their losses.

Where were the hard-hitting journalists asking the question of both church and state: You mean you quietly reduced those discounts years ago and just counted on no one noticing?

The McDonald’s menu board is

Guest Editorial

one fascinating thing. Price discrimination (getting rich people to pay more for much the same thing) is all the rage these days and, over time, McDonald’s quietly shunted the price-conscious customers to its bottom-right “Value Menu,” now “McValue Menu,” letting those who don’t seek out a deal, or who don’t care enough to pay attention, make pricier selections, even as part of a combo. It’s all exhausting, especially since you can’t count on the deals being available, say, at O’Hare International Airport, where even the bags of fries appear reduced in size.

It’s hard for fast-food eateries to price discriminate, although they sure try. Kempczinski’s latest push for an advantage, or what he claims is a level playing field, is to oppose the subminimum wage provided for workers who earn tips. This has been cloaked in some McNonsense about treating tipped workers well, but the real motivation is clearly that McDonald’s workers don’t get tips (with rare exceptions) and the subminimum wage allows some low-cost sit-down restaurants with tipped workers to compete on price with the Golden Arches, at least before tips are taken into account.

Kempczinski also sees another pesky problem coming his way: President Donald Trump’s no-tax-on-tips initiative, always a bad idea, will help McDonald’s staffers

not at all and likely force franchisees to pay more to compete for workers. Progressive advocates have grabbed onto McDonald’s position like the fast-food giant is an ally, rather than a huge corporation acting in its own self-interest, even if it puts the independent taco joint down the street out of business.

Of course, Kempczinski also could install those dreaded flip-pable screens to get McDonald’s customers to tip, but no doubt he fears a backlash.

It’s no secret the restaurant industry as a whole is struggling in this inflationary era. Eateries compete against each other, obviously, but they also cooperate when various policies threaten the industry at large. Look no further than the Illinois Restaurant Association’s continued attempts to curb the most deleterious aspects of Chicago’s gradual elimination of the subminimum wage.

So it’s bad form in our view for McDonald’s to attempt to kneecap its competitors in this way. This is a precarious time for restaurants and now they’re having to fend off policy attacks from the nation’s largest fast-food chain in addition to the Brandon Johnsons of the world.

As for McDonald’s itself, we’d prefer to see a simplified menu board that offered quality food at a fair price to everyone, with transparent bundling discounts. We’d also be fine with a ban on restaurant tipping entirely and workers being paid a just wage, but nobody in the restaurant industry desires that because owners want to keep entrance prices low, and servers know tips can be very lucrative.

Nobody except for fast-food chains, anyway.

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—Thomas Jefferson

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Consumers support of AI

Transparency is key issue in the production process

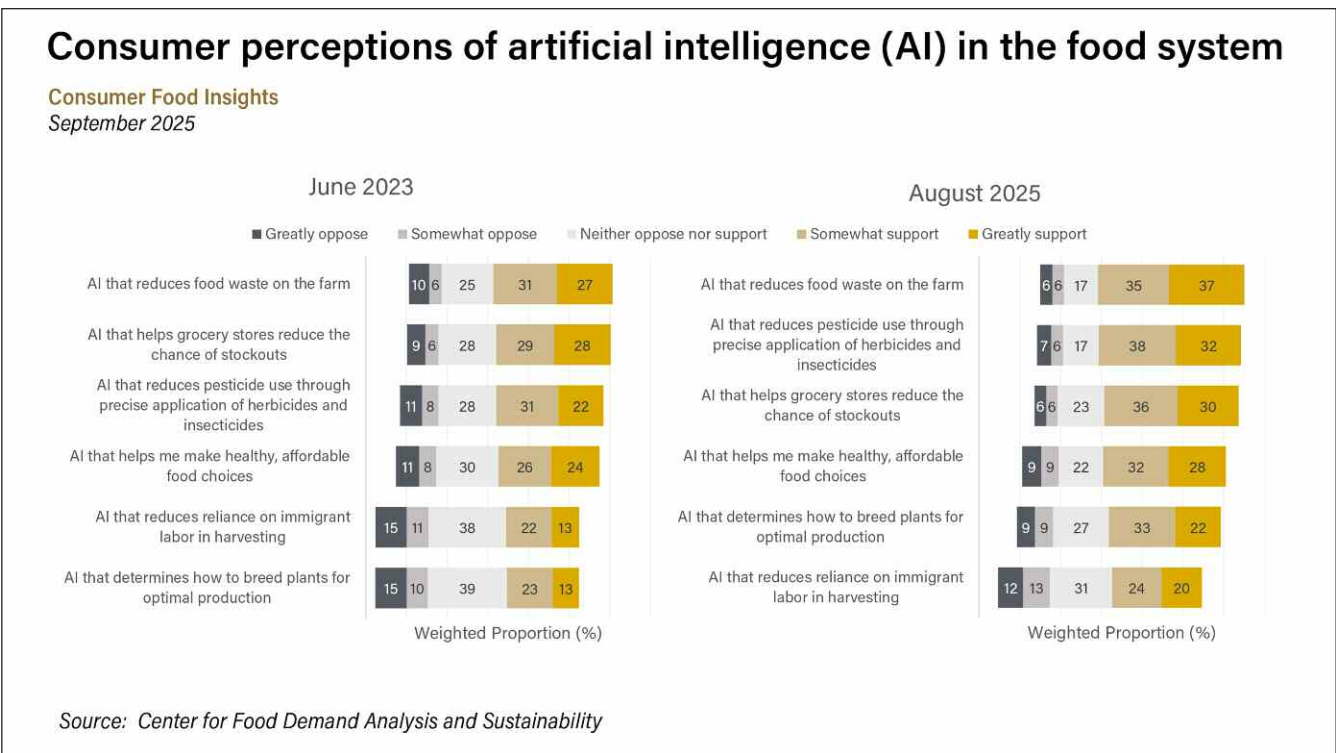
By STEVE KOPPES
Purdue Ag News
WEST LAFAYETTE — Consumers generally support using artificial intelligence to improve food and agricultural production, according to the August Consumer Food Insights Report (CFI).

The survey-based report from Purdue University's Center for Food Demand Analysis and Sustainability (CFDAS) assesses food spending, consumer satisfaction and values, support of agricultural and food policies and trust in information sources. Purdue experts conducted and evaluated the survey, which included 1,200 consumers across the U.S.

The CFI first addressed AI in food and agriculture in June 2023. At that time, ChatGPT was a relatively new tool. Since then, consumers have become more familiar with AI; many use it weekly or even daily. From June 2023 to August 2025, consumers were asked about their support, neutrality or opposition to six applications of AI to food and agriculture, such as reducing food waste on farms by determining how to breed plants for optimal production.

"Many consumers trust AI to make decisions in food production, but they emphasize the importance of transparency about its use in the production process," said the report's lead author, Joseph Balagtas, professor of agricultural economics at Purdue and director of CFDAS. Almost two-thirds say it is either "very" or "extremely" important for food producers to disclose when AI is used in the production or decision-making process.

"The likelihood that consumers say they would



select a food item labeled 'AI assisted' is mixed across consumers," he said. "Consumers cite trust in AI as a big factor in whether they'd choose a food product labeled 'AI assisted.'"

Most consumers (70%) who said they would be "unlikely" to choose an AI-assisted product over a conventionally produced alternative cited trust in its ability to maintain food safety as a concern. Conversely, 53% of those who selected "likely" believe AI can improve food safety.

"This contrast shows the wide range of perspectives in this new age of technology. What's clear is that trust and understanding play a major role," Balagtas said. "Many consumers still aren't sure what 'AI assisted' really means in the context of food production. For food producers and brands, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity: Building trust through

transparency and education will be key. Helping consumers understand how AI is used, from optimizing harvests to improving freshness or developing recipes, could make a big difference in acceptance and adoption."

Food values remain consistent with those of previous months in the survey. Taste, affordability, nutrition and availability take priority over environmental impact and social responsibility.

"This disparity in what consumers value when choosing food at the grocery store is even greater among older consumers," said Elijah Bryant, a survey research analyst at CFDAS and a report co-author. The importance of the environmental impact and social responsibility of one's food shrinks with age, he noted.

The report's authors broke down their results in

six age groups: 18-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 65-plus. Environmental and social factors, while more valued by younger consumers, remain secondary overall.

The average diet quality score among American adults was 62.2, placing more in the "intermediate" category. "While older adults tend to score higher, all age groups show room for improvement," Bryant said. "Only 17% of respondents were classified as having a 'healthy' diet."

Food security remains a concern but within the survey's historical variation, with 13.5% of households reporting challenges in accessing enough food. The issue is most pronounced among younger adults (18-34), with a reported rate of 24.1% compared to just 3% among those 65 and older.

In August, consumers reported spending an average of \$127 a week on gro-

ceries and \$70 a week dining out. Spending tends to be higher among younger and middle-aged adults, likely due to larger household sizes and children at home.

Consumers expect food prices to rise by 4.5% over the next year, marking the third consecutive monthly increase and a 0.5-percent-age point jump from July. "This growing expectation stands in contrast to the actual inflation rate, which has remained relatively stable around 2.9% after increasing gradually over the past few months, according to the consumer price index," Bryant said. "The gap between perception and reality suggests that consumers may be responding to persistent economic uncertainty and sentiment about the cost of food."

Bryant noted some differences and similarities here between consumers

of different ages. Younger consumers tend to choose foods marketed as sustainable or more ethical than older consumers. However, older consumers are less likely to take risks with the foods they eat. "Overall, label-checking behavior is similar across all consumers for information such as nutrition and dates," he said.

Aligned with the findings in the consumer behaviors section, younger consumers are more likely to believe in the health advantages of eating alternative options such as organic, plant-based and gluten-free food in place of their conventional counterparts. As age increases, skepticism about these health statements grows. Many consumers from all age groups believe in the connection between agriculture and the environment.

Finally, trust in different organizations as sources of information for healthy and sustainable food is more varied and lower among younger consumers. Older adults consistently show more stable and higher levels of trust in institutional information sources. Young adults, by contrast, exhibit a wider range of trust for various information sources.

The Center for Food Demand Analysis and Sustainability is part of Purdue's Next Moves in Plant Sciences 2.0 and uses innovative data analysis shared through user-friendly platforms to improve the food system. In addition to the Consumer Food Insights Report, the center offers a portfolio of online dashboards at ag.purdue.edu/cfdas/data-resources/dashboards.



MU Extension

Fall is the time of year to plant cover crops, such as the wheat pictured above. Cover crops can help prevent soil erosion.

Fall is the prime time to establish cool-season forages

University of Missouri

GALENA, Mo. — Fall offers the best opportunity to establish or renovate cool-season forages like tall fescue, orchardgrass and winter annuals such as brassicas, oats, wheat, rye and triticale.

With strong cattle prices and improved cash flow, now is a smart time to invest in your forage base, says University of Missouri Extension agronomy specialist Tim Schnakenberg.

Scout and assess

Evaluate forage stands for drought damage, overgrazing, weed pressure and poor species diversity. Watch for issues like excessive Kentucky bluegrass, Johnson grass or brushy species. Consider drainage, fertility and phosphorus levels. Walk your fields and take notes. If the stand looks thin or patchy, it may be time to renovate.

Choose method

No-till seeding is preferred; it conserves moisture, reduces erosion and lowers costs. If using a rented drill, clean and

inspect it thoroughly to avoid seed tube blockages. Practice using the drill before planting. Make sure seed flows evenly, and calibrate for accuracy.

Time planting

Fall droughts have made timing tricky, says Schnakenberg. While grasses tolerate later planting, legumes such as clover and alfalfa must reach the third trifoliate stage before frost. Watch the forecast. Avoid planting just before a light rain unless more moisture is expected soon.

Burndown vs. no-till

If your pasture is dominated by Kentucky bluegrass or other perennials, a full chemical burndown may be necessary. For summer annuals, you can drill directly or wait until they die back naturally.

Monitor seeds

Most cool-season perennials should be planted ¼ to ½ inch deep. Deeper planting may delay emergence, especially in dry soils. Get on your hands and knees to check seed depth. Use GPS or criss-

cross patterns to avoid gaps.

Low-tech/high-tech

Drone seeding is great for hard-to-reach areas. For low-tech methods, ensure good seed-to-soil contact. If broadcasting, it may be best to disturb the soil before broadcasting seed, says Schnakenberg. However, if letting livestock trample the seed into the ground, they can come in after broadcasting.

Don't just scatter seed and hope; it needs contact with soil to germinate.

Use wisely

Cover crops like oats or rye can protect seedlings and reduce erosion, but don't let them outcompete your main forage crop. Use low seeding rates for cover crops, and avoid harvesting them in spring if your goal is a permanent stand.

Planting timeline

Late August: Oats and brassicas.

Early September: Legumes.

Mid-to-late September: Small grains for spring forage.

Fall is Coming

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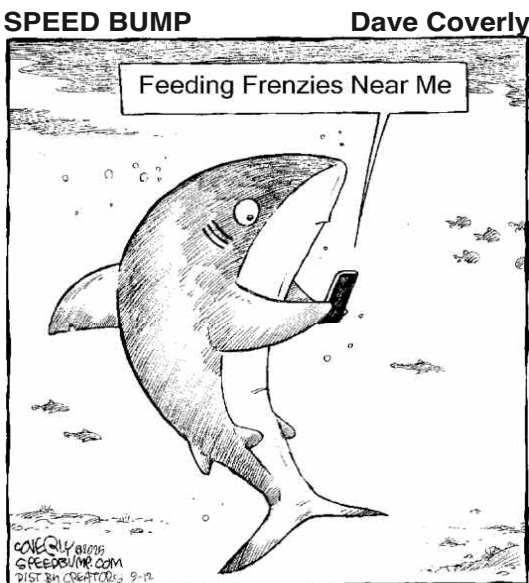
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SPEED BUMP

Dave Coverly




9-12

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THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



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Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

Bidding quiz

You are South, both sides vulnerable. The bidding has gone:

North	East	South	West
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	?	?

What would you bid now with each of the following four hands?

- ♠ AQJ62 ♥ 854 ♦ J82 ♣ K7
- ♠ KJ95 ♥ A98 ♦ Q6 ♣ K972
- ♠ AJ843 ♥ KJ76 ♦ 74 ♣ 83
- ♠ AK985 ♥ A73 ♦ K86 ♣ 94

1. **Three diamonds.** Partner's rebid indicates a hand in the minimum range, but game possibilities cannot be dismissed when you have 11 high-card points and partner might have as many as 15. To indicate mild interest in game, you raise partner to three diamonds, saying that game in spades, diamonds or notrump is possible if partner is in the upper half of the range for his two previous bids.

It is far better to show your diamond support than it is to rebid your five-card spade suit. If partner has three-card support for spades and better than a minimum for his two-diamond bid, he will bid three spades over three diamonds.

2. **Three notrump.** It would be wrong to bid only two notrump, which would merely invite partner to bid game and allow him to pass with minimum values. Since you have a full opening bid, you must make sure of reaching game and everything points to notrump as the best spot.


3. **Pass.** Partner has between 13 and 15 points, so it is hardly likely that your nine-point hand combined with his can produce a game. Once you reach this conclusion, the only problem remaining is where the best partscore lies. There is no good reason to think that a two-heart or two-spade bid would help improve matters, especially when a bid of two hearts would force partner to bid again. Partner is very likely to have a six-card diamond suit and should be able to make two diamonds opposite your hand.

4. **Two hearts.** This unorthodox bid with a three-card suit is the best answer to a difficult situation. Obviously, there's a game somewhere, but you have no way of knowing whether it's in spades, diamonds or notrump.

Since you are naming a new suit as responder, partner is forced to bid again, even with a minimum opening bid. His next action — the most likely being another diamond bid, a spade preference or a notrump bid — should clear up the question of which game to bid. If partner should happen to raise hearts, you will show your diamond support next.

Tomorrow: The numbers game.
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Peanuts



9-12

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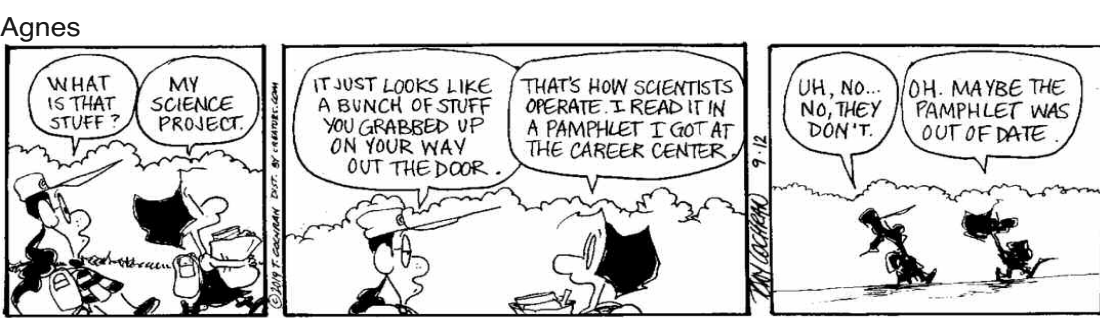
Rose is Rose



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Agnes



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Hi and Lois



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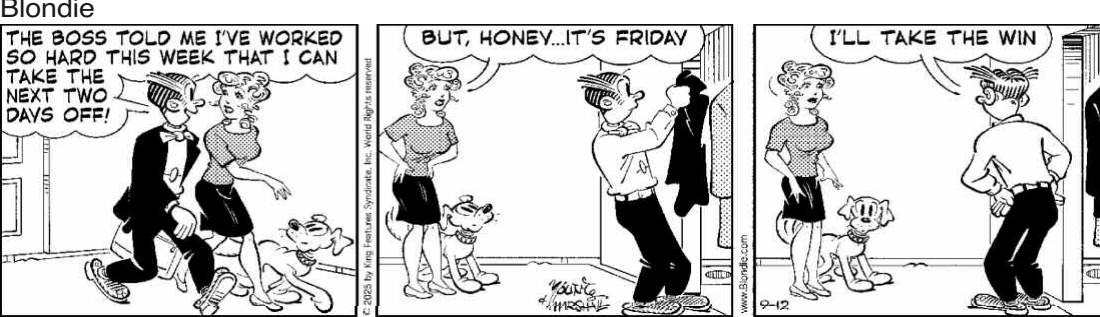
Between Friends



9-12

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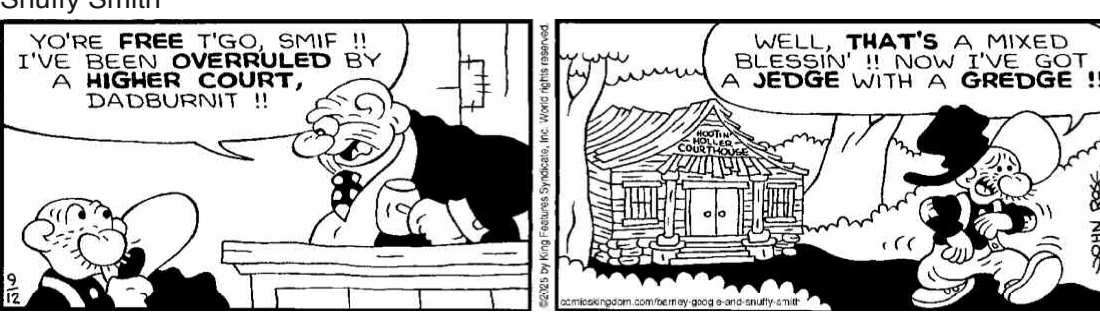
Blondie



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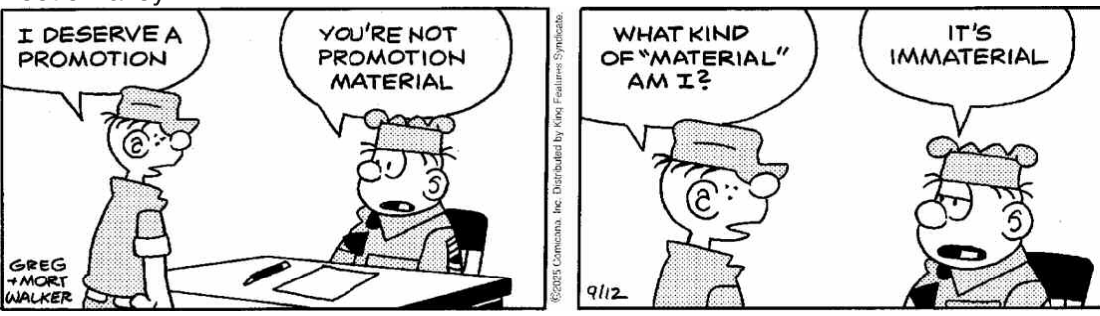
Snuffy Smith



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Beetle Bailey



9-12

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CRYPTOQUIP

RZUCB BQGUUCQ PWD NDLCV
SZUJNKMS SZUCV YWZY GVC
FZQBV PKYW RKLC QDPV ZMB
FDNGUMV: JKMSD VYZQQ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL PROBABLY BE THE PREFERRED DRINK OF AGGRESSIVE INDIVIDUALS? BRUTE BEER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals G

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "Don't — stranger!"
4 Wise bird
7 Encrypted
12 USN
13 "Entou- rage" role
14 Heavyset herbivore
15 "Dia- monds" singer
16 Where wine bottles are often opened
18 Addams cousin
19 Binge
20 Swank
22 Dubai's country, for short
23 Sports group
27 Patch target
29 Coffee-flavored liqueur
31 Ninnies
34 Royal authority
35 Bunion site
37 Ambu- lance initials

38 Prado display
39 Upper limit
41 TV trophy
45 Capital of Jordan
47 Debtor's letters
48 Item next to a sofa
52 Scot syllable
53 Sage info
54 JFK dis- penser
56 Explorer on Mars
57 Trio after Q
58 Bashful

2 Mary's sister on "Downton Abbey"
3 Expen- sive violin
4 Feedbag fill
5 Finish
6 Fall sign
7 Manitoba tribe
8 Surprised cries
9 Cato's 502
10 Finale
11 Female rabbit
17 Onion relative
21 Largest Greek isle
23 The ones here

24 NFL's Manning
25 Calendar abbr.
26 "Sheesh!"
28 Equal (Pref.)
30 Weap- onize
31 Lawyers' org.
32 — Lancelot
33 Boot camp VIP
36 Tennis star
37 Glorifies
40 Traffic light color
42 Gold- loving king
43 River part
44 "Delish!"
45 Bick- ering
46 Spruced up
48 Old map letters
49 — Jima
50 Apply cream
51 Moody rock genre

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterday's answer 9-12

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13			14				
15			16			17				
18			19							
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00 CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED ADS
260-726-8141

ADVERTISING RATES
20 Word Minimum
Effective 07/01/2018:
Minimum charge....
\$12.40
1 insertion.....62¢/ word
2 insertions.....81¢/ word
3 insertions.....96¢/ word
6 insertions.... \$1.14/ word
12 insertions. \$1.52/ word
26 insertions. \$1.77/ word
Includes
Online.....FREE
Classified Display \$6.95/ per column inch
No borders or logos allowed on Classified Page
Card of Thanks Up to 100 words.... \$13.00
In Memory Up to 100 words.... \$13.00
Advertising Deadline is 12:00 p.m. the day prior to publication.
Pre-Payment required for: Rummage sales, business opportunities, jobs wanted, boats and sporting equipment, wanted to rent, motorized vehicles, real estate and mobile homes.

40 NOTICES

PLEASE NOTE: Be sure to check your ad the first day it appears. We cannot be responsible for more than one days incorrect copy. We try hard not to make mistakes, but they do happen, and we may not know unless you call to tell us. Call before 12:00 pm for corrections. The Commercial Review, 309 W Main, Portland, Indiana 260-726-8141.

60 SERVICES

J. L. CONSTRUCTION & ROOFING LLC. Amish crew. Custom built homes, new garages, pole barns, interior/exterior remodeling, drywall, windows, doors, siding, roofing, foundations. 260-726-5062, leave message.

GOODHEW'S ALL SEASON Construction- Specializing in standing seam metal roofs. When Quality Counts, Count On U.S. A company you can trust. Member of the BBB. New Installation and repairs. Call Rodney Thornbury, owner 765-509-0191

SEAMSTRESS NAN HOMEMADE Sewing and Alterations, Quilts, Baby Blankets, Applique, Zippers, Hemming, Memory T-Shirt, Special Orders, Wedding & Prom Gowns. 260.766.9334

90 SALE CALENDAR

LAND AUCTION
MONDAY OCTOBER 13TH, 2025
TIME 5:00 P.M.
LOCATED: 1 Mile North of New Mt Pleasant on Como Rd, Portland, IN
REAL ESTATE
95.67 Acres In Section 16, Jefferson Twp, Jay County Indiana. Practically all tillable with Frontage on Como Rd. Property does have a Windmill, Lease and Payment will stay with the Farm. Wooded area not Included. Taxes to be prorated day of Closing. Possession upon Harvest of 2025 Crops. Drive by's are Welcome or Phone Auctioneers for More Information. Auction Held On-Site.
OWNERS: Denney Family Properties, LLC
Note: Check Auctionsoft and AuctionZip for more photos.
SHAWVER AUCTIONEERING AND REAL ESTATE
AC31800004
AUCTIONEERS
Zane Shawver
Lic. #AU10500168
260-729-2229
Pete D. Shawver
Lic. #AU19700040
260-726-5587

BOOLMAN'S

Auto Sales & Service, Inc.

Highway 67 W,
Portland, Indiana

260-251-9735

Wendel's

Carpets & Upholstery Cleaning

Von Schrader Dry Foam Cleaning

For Quick Drying, Residential & Commercial

Green Seal Approved

Dave Wendel
Ph. 260-726-4520
Cell 260-729-2797

Bricker's Flowers & More

414 N. Meridian St. Portland
Call or text to order 260-703-0304
Open 9:30-5:00 Monday - Friday
9:30-3:00 Saturday

Little JJ's Tree Service

Tree Trimming, Removal, Stump Grinding.
Firewood available
765-509-1956

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Kitchens, Bathrooms, Interior Trim, Windows, Doors, Siding, Decks, Drywall, and Painting

(260)-227-0875

Dave's Heating & Cooling

Furnace, Air Conditioner
Geothermal Sales & Service
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Now accepting MC/Visa

BAIL BONDS

Travis Weaver
260-726-3189
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E and E Construction Amish Crew

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The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

On goal

Jay County High School freshman Ayla Jackson fires a shot with several Wapahani defenders around her during the Patriots’ 8-0 victory Tuesday. Jackson scored once for JCHS in the win, while Aixa Lopez added three goals, fellow freshman Maria Laux scored twice and London Lloyd connected once.

Patriot runners claim the top spots at WCHS

WINCHESTER — The Patriots claimed the first dual meet of the season against their neighbors to the east.

The results were no different when they traveled south.

The Jay County High School cross country teams beat the Winchester Community Golden Falcons by a total of 40 points in a tri-match with Union City.

The Patriots girls (2-0) ran away with the victory as they claimed the top four places to defeat WCHS 17-42. The Jay County boys (2-0) claimed a 21-36 win over the Golden Falcons. Union City didn’t have enough runners to put together a team score on either side.

Brooklynn Byrum, Abby Fifer and Ava May claimed the top three finishes. Byrum crossed the finish line in 21 minutes, 27 seconds, while Fifer followed in 21:30 and May was two seconds behind.

Christiana Teegarden (21:38) of Union City split up the pack of Patriots, but Jessie Homan claimed fifth place with a 22:25 to score the next point.

The final score for Jay County came from Alexis Sibray (eighth place, 23:30), while Paityn Wendel (ninth, 23:58) and Alyvia Muhlenkamp (12th, 28:08) took points away from the Golden Falcons. (Winchester’s top finish belonged to Mariah Manning in sixth with a 22:57.)

Max Klopfenstein paced the boys with a 18:56 to win the race. Daegan Albertson (19:01) of Winchester crossed the line second, but the next three finishers were Patriots.

Caison Lloyd earned third with a 19:06, Grant Glentzer trailed behind with a 20:12 and Alex Rivers’ 21:10 had him crossing the line in fifth.

Ethan Powers and John Cook had back-to-back finishes in eighth and ninth with times of 22:33 and 22:55, respectively. (Powers’ placement added to the Patriots’ score, while Cook just took points away from Winchester.) Isaac Hawbaker also competed, running a 26:48 that placed him 12th.

Sports on tap

Local schedule

Today
Jay County — Football vs. Adams Central – 7 p.m.
Fort Recovery — Football vs. St. Henry – 7 p.m.

Saturday
Jay County — Cross Country at Randolph Southern Invite – 9 a.m.; Volleyball at Noblesville tournament – 9 a.m.; Girls soccer at South Adams – 10 a.m.; Boys tennis in Patriot Invitational – 10 a.m.; Junior high volleyball vs. Woodlan – 10 a.m.
Fort Recovery — Boys golf at Nate Niekamp Invite – 8 a.m.; Cross country at Troy Twilight – 6:30 p.m.; JV football at St. Henry – 10 a.m.; Middle school volleyball vs. Ansonia – 10 a.m.; Middle school cross country at Troy Twilight – 6:30 p.m.

TV schedule

Today
2:30 p.m. — Bundesliga soccer: Bayer Leverkusen at Eintracht Frankfurt (ESPN2)
6:30 p.m. — College football: Indiana State at

Indiana (BTN)
7 p.m. — College volleyball: Utah at Nebraska (FS1); Wisconsin at Georgia Tech (ESPN2)
7:30 p.m. — College football: Colorado at Houston (ESPN)
9 p.m. — College football: Kansas State at Arizona (FOX)
10 p.m. — College football: New Mexico at UCLA (BTN)
10:05 p.m. — MLB: Cincinnati Reds at Athletics (FDSN Indiana)

Saturday
5:35 a.m. — AFL: Gold Coast Suns at Brisbane Lions (FS1)
7:30 a.m. — Premier League soccer: Arsenal FC at Nottingham Forest (USA)
9 a.m. — MotoGP: San Marino Grand Prix (FS1)
10 a.m. — Premier League soccer: Fulham at Leeds United (USA)
12 p.m. — College football: Wisconsin at Alabama (ABC); Oklahoma at Temple (ESPN2); Houston Christian at Nebraska (FS1); Oregon at Northwestern (FOX); Central Michigan at Michigan (BTN); Clemson at Georgia Tech (ESPN)
12:30 p.m. — Premier League soccer: West Ham United at Tottenham Hotspur (NBC)

12:30 p.m. — NWSL soccer: North Carolina Courage at Angel City (CBS)
3 p.m. — Premier League soccer: Brentford at Chelsea (USA)
3:30 p.m. — College football: Georgia at Tennessee (ABC); USC at Purdue (CBS); Youngstown State at Michigan State (BTN); Villanova at Penn State (FS1); Oregon State at Texas Tech (FOX); Pitt at West Virginia (ESPN)
4 p.m. — College football: Iowa State at Arkansas State (ESPN2)
7 p.m. — College football: Western Michigan at Illinois (FS1)
7:30 p.m. — College football: Florida at LSU (ABC); Texas A&M at Notre Dame (NBC); UMass Amherst at Iowa (BTN)
7:30 p.m. — NASCAR Cup Series: Bass Pro Shops Night Race (USA)
7:30 p.m. — USL Championship soccer: Charleston Battery at Oakland Roots (FOX)
8 p.m. — College football: Duke at Tulane (ESPN2)
8:15 p.m. — MLB: St. Louis Cardinals at Milwaukee Brewers (FOX)
9:45 p.m. — College football: Air Force at Utah State (FS1)
10 p.m. — College football: Southern at Fresno State (CBS)

10:05 p.m. — MLB: Cincinnati Reds at Athletics (FDSN Indiana)
10:30 p.m. — College football: Minnesota at Cal (ESPN); Texas State at Arizona State (TNT)

Local notes

Cooper to host
Cooper Farms will host its 18th Annual Turkey Trot 5K benefiting EverHeart Hospice on Nov. 1. The race will begin at Cooper Farms Turkey Harvesting Plant at 1 Cooper Farms Drive, St. Henry, OH. Registration is at 9 a.m. with the race beginning at 10 a.m.
There will be age groups from nine-and-younger to 60-and-older. Awards will be handed out to the top female and male from each age group.
Refreshments and a to-go turkey meal will be provided for all runners.
For more information on registering, visit speedy-feet.com and search “Cooper Farms Turkey Trot 5K” or email Tonya Huber at tonyah@cooperfarms.com.

Outing announced
The Adams Health Network Foundation will host the 12th Annual Golf Classic today at

Wabash Valley Golf Club.
There will be two shotgun starts at 7:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Breakfast, snacks and beverages will be provided, as well as a lunch in between flights.
The event raises funds for healthcare scholarships and local health initiatives in Adams County.
For more information, email kim.tormbley@adamshealthnetwork.org.

Chamber to host
Jay County Chamber of Commerce will host its golf outing on Sept. 19 at 9 a.m.
Participation costs \$250 per team with lunch included. A \$20 team mulligan golf ball can be purchased as well.
Sponsorships can be purchased as well. A lunch sponsorship will cost \$500, while a gold sponsorship will go for \$450. Hole sponsorships cost \$100 for members and \$150 for non-members.
The deadline to register is Sept. 12. For more info, call (260) 726-4481 or email amanda@jay-countychamber.com.
.....
To have an event listed in “Sports on tap”, email details to sports@thecr.com

90 SALE CALENDAR

LAND AUCTION
MONDAY OCTOBER 20TH, 2025
TIME 5:00 P.M.
LOCATED: CR 200 S AND CR 300 E. PORTLAND, IN
REAL ESTATE
74 +/- Acres in Section 35, Wayne Twp, Jay County Indiana with 67 Acres Tillable, balance being Wooded and Road Frontage. Farm has Frontage on CR's 200 S and 300 E. Typographic: Level. Possession: Upon Closing or Harvest of 2025 Crops. Taxes: To be Pro-rated the Day of Closing. Very Desirable Farm in a Great Location. Drive by's are Welcome or Phone Auctioneers for More Information. Auction Held On-Site.
OWNER: Gary D and Kimbra L Weesner
Note: Check Auctionsoft and AuctionZip for more photos.
SHAWVER AUCTIONEERING AND REAL ESTATE
AC31800004
AUCTIONEERS
Zane Shawver
Lic. #AU10500168
260-729-2229
Pete D. Shawver
Lic. #AU19700040
260-726-5587

PUBLIC AUCTION
Located: 103 S Washington Street, Montpelier IN
Saturday Morning
SEPTEMBER 27, 2025
10:00 A.M.
REAL ESTATE
1 story home built in 1950 with 3 bedrooms, 2 full bathrooms and 1478 square feet of living area. Home has a gas forced air furnace, central air, gas fireplace, gas water heater, and a detached 1 car garage. For more information or a private showing contact Loy Real Estate, Kim Loy Broker 260-726-2700 or Gary Loy Auctioneer 260-726-5160
HOUSEHOLD GOODS - OLD & COLLECTORS ITEMS - GUNS
3 pc. Queen size bedroom suit with Sleep

90 SALE CALENDAR

Number mattress; Whirlpool refrigerator; Smith Bros. 3 cushion sofa; (2) leather recliners; Longaberger baskets; McCoy owl cookie jar; Diamond Arms 12ga single shot; Stevens 22 lever action single shot octagon barrel; baseball gloves; canning jars; Coke bottles; and many other items not listed.
TRAILER - TOOLS
2 wheel 5' x 6' trailer; Troy Bilt 24i snowblower; Viper Earthquake roto tiller; Craftsman router; McCullough Power Mack 320 chain saw; ; buzz saw blade; 2 man saw; levels; oil cans; pry bars; pliers; screwdrivers; and other items not listed.
JEAN LANDIS
Loy Auction
AC#31600027 Auctioneers
Gary Loy AU01031608
Travis Theurer AU11200131
Aaron Loy AU11200112
Kaden Khayyata AU12400069

PUBLIC AUCTION
SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 20th, 2025
TIME 9:00 A.M.
LOCATED: 2641 E 1100 S. Montpelier IN.
TRACTORS - CRAWLER
1968 JD 4020 D. w/ Quad-shift, Front weights, 4900 hours.
1967 JD 2510 w/ Front weights, 6800 hours.
Case 1030 Tractor w/ 3600 hours. New Holland GT-122A Lawn Tractor w/ deck and blade. Wheelhorse 14HP Garden Tractor. JD 450-B Crawler Loader.
TRUCKS-MOTORCYCLES-FARM EQUIPMENT
. 1968 Chevy C50 Single Axel Dump Truck. 2000 Chevy S10 ZR2 4x4 93,000 Miles. 1985 Chevy C30 Utility Truck w/ Boom Lift and Snow Plow. 2021 Harley Davidson 1200 Model 48 w/ 2300 Miles. 2009 Kawasaki KLX 250 S Dirt Bike w/ 708 Miles. JD 55-A 3 Bottom Plow. Oliver 565 4 Bottom

90 SALE CALENDAR

Plow. JD 7' Cycle Bar Mower. JD 4 Row Cultivator. New Idea 2 Row wide Picker. JD 24T Square Baler. Kelly 18i Backhoe Bucket. 30 Ton Hyd Press. Lincoln 225 Welder. . Merry Mac Shredder Chipper. Rabbit Cages.
TOYS-ANTIQUES
JD, Oliver, Massey Ferguson, AC, Massey Harris Toy Tractors. . (2) 110 lb Anvils w/ Stands. Corn Sheller. Misc State. (4) Steel Wheels. Radio Flyer Wagon.
OWNER: James M Robbins.
Note: Check Auctionsoft and AuctionZip for more photos.
SHAWVER AUCTIONEERING AND REAL ESTATE
AC31800004
AUCTIONEERS
Zane Shawver
Lic. #AU10500168
260-729-2229
Pete D. Shawver
Lic. #AU19700040
260-726-5587

PUBLIC AUCTION
SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 13th, 2025
10:00 A.M.
LOCATED: 8584 Day Rd, Versailles OH.
TRACTORS
JD 3010 D. Wide front, low profile Tractor (rare). JD A. Modified pulling Tractor w/ weights. 1936 JD A. w/ spoke rear rims. Massey Harris 33 Tractor. JD Tractor and Equipment Manuals.
TRUCK-TRAILERS-EQUIPMENT-MISC
2003 Ford F250 Fx4 155,000 miles. Moritz DLH Series 10,000 lb Dump Trailer. Tandem Axel 10,000 lb Goose-neck Flatbed Trailer w/ Ramps. 15' Tandem Axel Livestock Trailer. 13 x 38 Rims and Tires. 7' Skid Steer Bucket w/ Boom. Snow Blade. 48i Lawn Roller. 3 Hog Feeders. Hardwood Lumber. . Chicago 90 amp Flux Wire Welder. Acetylene Cutting Set. Lincoln 225 Stick Welder. . Gone w/ the Wind Style Lamp. Last Supper and other Pic-

90 SALE CALENDAR

tures. Cast Iron Pot w/ Lid. Flower Bin. Quilting Rack. Champion 12 gauge Single Shot Shotgun.
OWNER: Kenneth Dirksen Estate.
Note: Check Auctionsoft and AuctionZip for more photos.
SHAWVER AUCTIONEERING AND REAL ESTATE
AC31800004
AUCTIONEERS
Zane Shawver
Lic. #AU10500168
260-729-2229
Pete D. Shawver
Lic. #AU19700040
260-726-5587

PUBLIC AUCTION
SATURDAY SEPT. 27TH, 2025
TIME 10:00 A.M.
LOCATED: 1499 N 100 W. PORTLAND, IN
RTV-TRACTOR-MOWERS - MOTOR HOME- GOLF CART.
Kubota BX2680 4WD Tractor w/ LA 344 Loader 29.3 Hours. Ferris 61i 27HP Zero Turn Commercial Mower w/ Suspension 2020 Hours. 2004 Condor Motor Home w/ 2 Slide Outs, Built-in Generator, Sleeps 4, 20,875 Miles. 2022 EZ-GO Gas Lifted Golf Cart w/ Rear Seat, Street Legal. Paddle Boat. Flat Bottom Boat Trailer.
GUN -CROSSBOW
Savage 30.6 Model 110E Bolt Action. H&R Model 923 22 Cal 9 Shot Revolver. North Midlen Co. Black Powder Pistol. Ten Point XR-40 Crossbow w/ Scope and Crank. Gun Sight Stand. Small Combination and Gun Safe.
ANTIQUES-HOUSEHOLD -MISC
Authentic Signed Paintings Including West Point Painting. 6 pc Cherry California King Size Bedroom Suite Including Blanket Chest. 5 pc California King Walnut Bedroom Suite. Leather Power Love Seat and Chair. GE Washer and Dryer. Gaming Table. Golf Clubs. Pop-up Canopy. Cornhole Game. (8) 8'

90 SALE CALENDAR

Poly Folding Tables. (34) Padded Folding Chairs. High Quality Auction with Large Selection of Modern Items
OWNER: Gary L Morgan
Note: Check Auctionsoft and AuctionZip for more photos.
SHAWVER AUCTIONEERING AND REAL ESTATE
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AUCTIONEERS
Zane Shawver
Lic. #AU10500168
260-729-2229
Pete D. Shawver
Lic. #AU19700040
260-726-5587

100 JOBS WANTED

AMISH CREW LOOKING FOR any work. No job is too big or small. Pole barns, roofing, remodeling. 260-849-2489.
AL'S ODD JOBS
Repairs-Cleaning-Assembly-Carpentry-Painting-Pet Sitting and many other services. CALL FOR A FREE QUOTE. 260-251-0636

110 HELP WANTED

HELP WANTED CITY OF PORTLAND will be accepting application for the position of Full Time Mayor's Assistant. Mayor's Assistant is responsible for performing a variety of clerical, administrative and technical tasks in support of the City government. Essential duties: Greet visitors to the Mayor's Office, answer the telephone, schedule appointments for the mayor, coordinate Mayor's travel schedule, prepare claim vouchers for Mayor's Office. Also, complete special assignments, projects, correspondence, filing, copying, faxing and printing as directed by the Mayor. Applications are available at Portland City Hall, 321 North Meridian St. Portland, IN 47371, 8:00AM-4:30PM Monday thru Friday, Application deadline is Noon September 15th, 2025. No

110 HELP WANTED

application will be excepted after this time. The City of Portland is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

130 MISC. FOR SALE

FOR SALE Hay and Straw call 260-249-8458
SCRATCH PADS ARE BACK various bundles sizes and XL pads. \$1.25 plus tax. Pick up at The Commercial Review Tuesday thru Friday 10am to 4pm.
PAPER END ROLLS FOR SALE Various sizes and prices. Call The Commercial Review at 260-726-8141 for more information.

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190 FARMERS COLUMN

AG RENTAL Spreaders: BBI, Artsway Vertical. New Holland 228 skid loaders w/full cab, heat/ac. Fort Recovery 419-852-0309

250 PUBLIC NOTICE

250 PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice

Knox Township, Jay County
977 S. SR 1, Dunkirk, IN 47336
(also meeting location)
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TO APPROVE THE TOWNSHIP'S CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN
Notice is hereby given to the taxpayers of Knox Township, Jay County, Indiana that the Board of the Knox Trustee will meet on Monday, September 22, 2025 at 3:15 pm to consider the adoption of the Township's Capital Improvement Plan.
Taxpayers appearing at the meeting shall have the right to comment. The Capital Improvement Plan as adopted will be referred to the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF).
Jennifer J. Cline-Wagner, Trustee
Knox Township
CR 9-12-2025-HSPAXLP

200 FOR RENT

LEASE SPACE available, Coldwater, OH. Manufacturing, warehousing, assembly, distribution, offices, inside and outdoor storage. Easy access to major highways and railroad access with loading docks and overhead cranes available. Contact Sycamore Group, 419-678-5318, www.sycamorespace.com

FOR RENT COUNTRY HOME BETWEEN Dunkirk & Redkey. 2BR/1 bath, suitable for 2 people. No pets/No smokers. Rent negotiable. 765-760-0272

230 AUTOS, TRUCKS

WE PAY CASH for junk autos. We pick up at your location. 1-765-546-2642 or 1-765-857-1071. Slocum's Salvage

250 PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TO APPROVE THE TOWNSHIP'S CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN
Notice is hereby given to the taxpayers of Penn Township, Jay County, Indiana, that the Board of the Penn Township Trustee will meet on Wednesday September 24, 2025, in the office at the Penn Township Trustee Office at 7:00 pm to consider the adoption of the Township's Capital Improvement Plan.
Taxpayers appearing at the meeting shall have the right to comment. The Capital Improvement Plan, as adopted, will be referred to the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF).
Nathaniel Springer
Penn Township Trustee
9-12-2025-HSPAXLP

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NEXT up

Jay's Montes joins Hoosier Premier Academy

By **ANDREW BALKO**
The Commercial Review

Aryan Montes played a key role to help the Patriots win the Allen County Athletic Conference and a sectional title last season.

While he isn't representing Jay County this season, he is back out on the pitch, playing a key role for another squad.

Montes, a junior at Jay County High School, kicked off the season over the weekend after joining the 17-and-younger Hoosier Premier Academy soccer team as part of the MLS NEXT program.

MLS NEXT is the highest level of youth soccer in North America and provides an opportunity for high schoolers to train with and against some of the best talent. It also increases exposure to college scouts as the team travels across the country and even a little internationally with matches in Canada.

"They'll travel regionally for the league itself," said coach Russ Lawson. "As well as have a couple of events nationally to get in front of college coaches nationwide."

Along with the long travel for matches — the team opened with a match in Toronto — Montes has to travel to Noblesville four times a week to practice with the team.

The first day of practice had the players working with an individual coach to focus on the skills needed for their position. (Montes is set to play center back for the Hoosier Premier Academy.) The other three days are spent working together as a cohesive team.

"It's a whole different environment and it's been hard because they take it really seriously," Montes said. "Even though the traveling is rough, and it's an hour and a half there and an hour and a half back, and sometimes I don't get back until around 11:30 at night, it's worth it. I just feel way better and I know that I'm going to improve here."

Previously, Montes played for the Delaware County Futbol Club of Muncie for eight years before discovering Hoosier FC out of Noblesville between his freshman and sophomore seasons in high school. While there, Hoosier FC created Hoosier Premier Academy to join Indy 11 in



The Commercial Review/Andrew Balko

Aryan Montes heads a ball during the Jay County High School boys soccer team's 4-3 win over Connorsville on Sept. 28, 2024. Montes is no longer on the pitch for the Patriots as he joined the Hoosier Premier Academy of the MLS NEXT league.

the MLS NEXT program. He first learned about the team during a practice when the players from the MLS NEXT team happened to make a visit.

"My coach brought it up to me and said I should look into

the team because he believed I could make the team," Montes said. He then practiced with the 16-and-younger team, which led to an invite to try out for the 17-and-younger squad. "Me and my mom prayed before just to

say, 'If this isn't for me then God won't make it happen, but if it is, God will make it happen.'"

"About a week later, I got an email saying that I made the team for the 2025-2026 roster

and I would start practicing with them in August."

While there are still some technical things for Montes to clean up — he only played two games at the center back position during his time with the Patriots — his new coach likes his base of skills.

"He has a foundation that we're really excited about," Lawson said. "Physically with his size and his athleticism, he can compete. With the transition from high school to club to now next-level club, it's going to take some time to get adjusted to the quicker pace. ..."

"But when it comes to Aryan, his foundation has worked great. He's a fantastic teammate. He's a joy to coach because he just wants to absorb everything in."

Some of that foundation was built with his time as a Patriot. He spent two years with the Jay County High School boys soccer team. Largely playing as a midfielder while moving to defense at times, he totaled three goals and three assists over the two seasons.

Montes also played a key role in helping the Patriots win the 2024 sectional title as he manned the center back position on defense to prevent the undefeated Eastbrook Panthers from scoring. He also netted a penalty kick to secure the win after the two overtime periods.

"I hate to see him leave because he's a heck of a player," said JCHS coach Rodney Reynolds during an interview for the team preview. "But also, it's awesome to see a kid from Jay County get a chance and he succeeded and he's doing what he needs to do. ... He's on to the next chapter and hope he succeeds. We'll be cheering him on."

Montes had some pre-season jitters due to the new environment and massive changes, but he is looking to take the new challenge head on with the goals of improving himself and learning where he is at compared to the new level of competition.

"I'm really nervous because it's obviously my first year and I don't have a lot of experience at this level," Montes said. "But I'm ready to better myself. ... I'm just glad I get to play soccer at the highest level in the United States and it's going to be worth it for sure. And I just can't wait to see where my future goes."

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*Ads must run in September