



A decade of caring



Photo provided

Volunteers gather at Walmart in Portland to shop for Secret Families Christmas Charity of Jay County in 2019. On Saturday, Dec. 6, the organization will hold its 10th shopping, wrapping and delivering day to ensure that families in need in Jay County are able to celebrate the holiday season. Co-founders Conny Knight and Kadie Hall said there are typically at least 150 volunteers who participate in the shopping portion of the day. They encouraged more volunteers, including local athletic teams and service groups, to get involved. "It's a very powerful statement from your community or for someone to see when they don't think they're gonna get Christmas at all," said Knight.

Secret Families has grown to an annual budget of \$80,000-plus and serves more than 150 families

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review
Conny Knight and Kadie Hall saw a need. They had been involved with an organization in Delaware County that helped provide for families during the holiday season. They thought a similar effort could make a difference at home. Secret Families Christmas Charity of Jay County is preparing for its day of shopping, wrapping and delivering on Dec. 6 as it celebrates its 10th year. The organization is devoted to making sure Jay County families that might otherwise not

have the trimmings of a holiday season are able to celebrate. "I think it's easy to overlook what's right next to you," said Hall, who along with her mom volunteered for Secret Families Christmas Charity of Delaware County for several years before branching off. "And I think the more people that get involved, the more that our community sees the need and recognizes that need and wants to help fulfill that need, I think that that's what's important. "My personal goal is not just to serve one more family. ... I think the goal is to show one more person that they matter. ... I think that that's more important than just raising a

number. ... That's what I like and what I love to see grow." The growth has been constant. During Secret Families' first year of operation, it served 19 families. A small group of volunteers gathered to shop and then wrap gifts in a single room at Portland Elks Lodge. The number of families served more than doubled in the second year, nearly doubled again in the third and continued to climb. The gift wrapping moved to the commons area at Jay County Junior-Senior High School. By 2024, the number of families served cleared the 150 mark. With the increase in those

who have received help, so too has the participation of those providing it. "I think our biggest growth that we've seen — it really kicked in about year five — was just recognition of Secret Families in Jay County," said Knight. "We always felt like Jay County would support and embrace this because of the tight-knit community that it is. But then by year five, people really started looking forward to it. And that's what you want. You want people to make it a part of their holiday season. ... The community involvement is what drives Secret Families, in my opinion." See Caring page 6A

Journey Home targets Jay Co. facility

Organization that serves veterans is interested in moving

By BAILEY CLINE
The Commercial Review
The Journey Home of Winchester is interested in starting operations in Jay County. A few representatives from the organization approached Jay County Commissioners to discuss potential plans Monday. Earlier this year, The Journey Home expressed interest in using Jay County Country Living as a space for veterans. Their interest followed news of plans to close the county-run living facility within the next few years. The Journey Home CEO Dan Baker, who also serves in the National Guard, talked about the nonprofit organization's mission. "Our directive is to end veteran homelessness," he said. The organization doesn't serve as a permanent housing solution, explained Baker, who noted The Journey Home has helped hundreds of veterans over its last 10 years in operation. Residents typically move through three-to-six-month programs at the facility. Justin Lester, director of advancement and operations at The Journey Home, explained the organization helps 60 veterans in Randolph County monthly with coordinated meals through Second Harvest Food Bank. If The Journey Home were to move services into Jay County, he added, it could expand another Second Harvest Food Bank route to provide for Jay County veterans. See Journey page 6A

Dunkirk ready for new Todd opportunity

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review
DUNKIRK — Six and a half years after filing suit against Todd Building Group, the city is ready to move on. Dunkirk City Council voted Monday to drop its lawsuit against Todd Building Group if it can reach a deal to sell the former Todd Opera House to a designated private investor. Mayor Jack Robbins explained that private investors are interested in the building at 214 S. Main St. The city has had a lengthy dispute over the building after developers Ray Willey and Bill Brown of Todd Building Group failed to meet deadlines that were part of an agreement that included \$150,000 in local funding. (The city provided \$75,000, with the other \$75,000 from Dunkirk Industrial Development

City agrees to dismiss lawsuit to allow sale of former opera house

ment Corporation.) The two-year agreement called for Todd Building Group to renovate the former opera house and have two restaurants open by July 1, 2019. In March of that year, the developers told Dunkirk Industrial Development Corporation that they would not be able to meet the deadlines. Willey said at that time that Todd Building Group had spent \$300,000 on renovations, with nearly \$90,000 of that total coming from the city and Dunkirk Industrial Development Corporation. "Bill and I are committed to seeing the project through," Willey said in March 2019. "We're not going to abandon the project or walk away from it." By April, the city and Dunkirk Industrial Development Corporation had filed a lawsuit to be released from their agreements with Todd Building Group and seek reimbursement of the \$89,473.44 in loans that had been distributed to that point. See Todd page 2A



Photo provided

The former Todd Opera House at 214 S. Main St., Dunkirk, has been the subject of a lawsuit since 2019. The city and Dunkirk Industrial Development Corporation have agreed to dismiss their suit if Todd Building Group is able to negotiate the sale of the building to an approved private

In review

Jay County's Community Thanksgiving Dinner will be held at 1 p.m. Tuesday at Asbury United Methodist Church, 204 E. Arch St., Portland. Those interested in volunteering to work at the event or to deliver meals can call Carol Smith at (260) 726-9049 or Caren Huey at (260) 729-1239.

Weather

Jay County had a high temperature of 54 degrees Monday. The low was 30. Tonight's low will be in the mid 20s with a 20% chance of snow and winds gusting to 40 mph. Expect a high in the lower 30s on Thanksgiving. See page 2 for an extended outlook.

In review

There will be no paper Thursday in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday. We will resume our regular publishing schedule on Friday.

Coming up

Friday — Coverage of this week's Redkey Town Council meeting.
Saturday — Details from the FRHS girls basketball game against Mississinawa Valley.
Tuesday — Results from the JCHS boys basketball game against Richmond.



Todd ...

Continued from page 1A

City attorney Wes Schemenaur and Robbins explained that the city is unlikely to see any of its money back from Todd Building Group. Schemenaur added that the lawsuit and lien give the city and Dunkirk Industrial Development Corporation leverage over the potential sale of the building. In order for the sale to go through, the lawsuit needs to be resolved.

“The goal would be to get it developed and get somebody in there that’s going to contribute to the city,” said Schemenaur.

“I think it’s time to move on,” said Robbins, who voted against the loans as a council member at the time.

Council members Jesse Bivens, Christy Curts, Dan Watson, Donna Revolt and Randy Murphy voted unanimously to dismiss the lawsuit once a deal is in place for Todd Building Group to sell the

building to a private investor. (Bivens also voted against the loans as a council member in 2017.)

Though Robbins indicated a private investor is interested in the property, the potential buyer was not identified during the meeting.

In other business, council:

- Heard an update from Jay County Development Corporation executive director Ceann Bales regarding work on in-fill housing. Jay County Commissioners on Monday approved donating 19 properties that have gone through multiple tax sales without being purchased. Schemenaur said it will take about four months to obtain the deeds. Bales added that she is continuing to work on a grant application to tear down the “green building” at 303 S. Main St.
- Was reminded by Schemenaur that a public hearing on annexation of about 10 acres on the south

side of the city is planned for council’s Dec. 22 meeting. The land is being targeted for an apartment development.

- Learned from the mayor that the city’s plan commission met and discussed needs for updates to zoning ordinance.
- Briefly discussed where funds generated from permit fees from its right-of-way ordinance that was updated earlier this year should be deposited. Schemenaur suggested that council members think about where they would like to put those funds while clerk-treasurer Kara Lowe checks with the Indiana State Board of Accounts regarding its options.
- Approved the purchase of a valve exerciser for \$9,743.73 from Utility Supply. Bivens also reported that a third of the city’s water meters have been replaced. Plans call for continued replacement over the next two years.

- Heard from Revolt that new signs are being purchased for the city’s parks.
- Approved the following payment of \$7,442.50 to Jones and Henry for engineering services related to the wastewater treatment plant and payment of \$220,249.95 in claims.
- Received an update on plans to modify the city’s zoning ordinance. The city will be working with civil engineering and planning firm Abonmarche. A kick-off meeting will be held in December with the process expected to be complete in the spring.
- Heard from Watson that Engineering Resource Inc. has completed the city’s asset management plan for its streets. The plan is required in order to apply for Community Crossings grant funding through Indiana Department of Transportation.

Capsule Reports






Ready for bids

Jay County Solid Waste Management District Board agreed Monday to set dates for receiving and opening bids for a new facility.

The district has been working on plans to construct a building on about nine acres along Tyson Road for more than a year and a half. It would replace the district’s current office at 5948 W. Indiana 67, rural Portland. That building is leased from Waste Management, which operates Jay County Landfill. Having a larger space will allow the district to offer a recycling center. Schematics shared Monday include drive-thru doors for Jay County residents to unload materials inside, additional storage for recyclables and more office space.

Its board agreed Monday to set dates for requests for proposals. Plans are to advertise beginning Dec. 12, host a special meeting for contractors to ask questions at 3:45 p.m. Jan. 5 and open bids at their regular meeting Jan. 26. Hopes are to award a contract at the board’s meeting Feb. 23.

CR almanac

Thursday 11/27	Friday 11/28	Saturday 11/29	Sunday 11/30	Monday 12/1
				
32/21	31/20	33/29	33/19	23/17
Mostly cloudy skies during the day Thursday when the low may hit the 20s.	Friday's forecast shows mostly sunny skies with a low around 20 degrees.	There's a nearly 70% chance of snow on Saturday. The low may hit just under 30.	Chilly temperatures on Sunday with another 70% chance of snow.	Monday's weather looks to be mostly cloudy with a low in the upper teens.

Lotteries

Powerball Monday 8-16-26-30-58 Power Ball: 14 Power Play: 2 Estimated jackpot: \$681 million	Daily Four: 9-4-9-9 Quick Draw: 5-10-17-18-31-33-34-38-44-49-50-52-54-55-58-68-69-70-76-80 Cash 5: 10-11-14-22-41 Estimated jackpot: \$95,000
Mega Millions Estimated jackpot: \$70 million	Ohio Monday Midday Pick 3: 6-5-3 Pick 4: 4-2-3-4 Pick 5: 9-7-8-3-6 Evening Pick 3: 1-0-4 Pick 4: 4-5-9-8 Pick 5: 5-8-7-1-9 Rolling Cash: 12-17-18-32-33 Estimated jackpot: \$110,000
Hoosier Monday Midday Daily Three: 7-7-3 Daily Four: 2-1-1-9 Quick Draw: 2-3-7-12-13-18-33-34-36-37-38-43-47-54-64-68-71-72-73-76 Evening Daily Three: 1-8-4	

Markets

Cooper Farms Fort Recovery Corn.....4.48 Jan. corn4.45 Feb. corn4.47	Dec. beans11.09 Wheat 4.92
POET Biorefining Portland Corn.....4.52 Jan. corn4.42 Feb. corn4.42	ADM Montpelier Corn.....4.33 Dec. corn4.33 Beans11.06 Dec. beans11.10 Wheat4.94
The Andersons Richland Township Corn4.37 Dec. corn4.37 Beans11.04	Heartland St. Anthony Corn.....4.38 Dec. corn4.38 Beans10.80 Dec. beans10.80 Wheat4.74

Today in history

In 1789, President George Washington declared a Day of National Thanksgiving in his first presidential proclamation.

In 1883, Sojourner Truth died in Battle Creek, Michigan. Truth was a preacher, abolitionist and women’s rights advocate who also organized supplies for Black volunteer troops during the Civil War.

In 1942, the movie “Casablanca” featuring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman opened in New York. Set during the ongoing World War II, it won the Academy Award for best picture

and Michael Curtiz was named best director.

In 2015, the annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner at Asbury United Methodist Church in Portland celebrated its 25th year. The event provides a meal at the church as well as delivery for those who are homebound.

In 2020, Indiana State Department of Agriculture announced \$4 million in grants to 41 meat processing businesses, including \$150,000 to Portland’s Fisher Packing, through the Indiana Meat Processing Expansion & Development Grant Program.

—The CR

Citizen’s calendar

Today 7 a.m. — Portland Fire Department Pension Board, fire station, 1616 N. Meridian St.	City Council, fire station, 1616 N. Meridian St.
Monday 5:30 p.m. — Portland	7:30 p.m. — Fort Recovery Village Council, village hall, 201 S. Main St., Fort Recovery.

Journey ...

Continued from page 1A

He talked about potential issues with an unfinished water line at Jay County Country Living, saying the organization may be able to coordinate grants and help contribute toward the line’s completion.

Commissioners president Chad Aker pointed to overhead costs with the building, saying he would like to see the organization’s financial information. He suggested a lease with The Journey Home as it takes over utilities and operations. Commissioner Duane Monroe also expressed concerns about the high overhead, with Baker pointing to the potential for capital raises and standards set by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Baker said he hoped Monday’s discussion would determine whether the county is interested in The Journey Home operating out of the Jay County Country Living building. Next steps involve looking into the project’s feasibility.

“I would love to see the facility used for some purpose like it was intended, whether it’s homeless or (veteran affairs), some sort like that,” said Monroe.

Relatedly, commissioners heard that most of the remaining Jay County Country Living residents were set to move out by Tuesday. Jay County Country Living director Stacey Johnson said one resident is still in the midst of placement. She suggested to commissioners that the facility begin reducing its staff accordingly.

Also Monday, commissioners approved legislation to create three new tax increment financing (TIF) districts in Jay County.

The TIF districts would encompass four prospective solar farms — Skycrest Solar in northwest Jay County, Sun Chief Solar northeast of Redkey, Rose

Gold Solar north of Dunkirk and New Jay Solar east of Dunkirk.

Jay County Redevelopment Commission has been working to create the TIF districts for months. Its economic development plan for the districts says the solar projects represent a potential \$473 million in new private investment in rural Jay County.

Eligible uses for TIF dollars, per the plan, could include projects for educational purposes, transportation enhancements and utility infrastructure; a proposed broadband project with Mainstream Fiber Networks; Jay County Highway Department garage improvements; Jay County Solid Waste Management District’s new building; a new public safety building; or the 68-acre infrastructure project on the western edge of Portland.

Next steps involve a public hearing and adoption at the redevelopment commission’s next meeting.

In other business, commissioners Doug Horn, Monroe and Aker:

- Hosted a public hearing and adopted legislation needed to transfer several properties to Dunkirk Industrial Development Corporation. Plans are to remove existing structures on the 19 Dunkirk properties, which had been up for tax sale and had not sold in the last two sales, and either seek developers to build or offer land unsuitable for construction to adjoining property owners.
- Approved a resolution to enter into an agreement with the Fort Wayne Housing Authority for the Hoosier Homes program to be implemented in Jay County. A partnership with the platform Club 720, the program provides an option for residents to seek mortgage loans, down payments and closing costs for buying homes.

See **Journey** page 6A

Felony arrests

Resisting officers

Two Portland residents were arrested Saturday for resisting officers.

Kala L. Grady, 34, 1928 S. Manuels Drive, was preliminarily charged with a Level 6 felony for the alleged crime, a Level 6 felony for possession of cocaine or a narcotic drug, a Class A misdemeanor for battery and a Class C misdemeanor for possession of paraphernalia. She was released from Jay County Jail on a \$2,000 bond.

Juli C. Cruz-Suazo, 34, 639 E. Water St., was preliminarily charged with a Level 6 felony for the alleged crime as well as a Class A misdemeanor for operating a vehicle while intoxicated and a Class C misdemeanor for driving without a license. He was being held on a \$4,500 bond in Jay County Jail.

Common nuisance

A Portland man was arrested Saturday for maintaining a common nuisance.

Caleb S. Grigsby, 24, 820 W. Arch St., was preliminarily charged with a Level 6 felony for the alleged crime, as well as a Class A misdemeanor for possession of marijuana and a Class C misdemeanor for possession of paraphernalia.

He was being held on a \$4,500 bond in Jay County Jail.

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Some of the best days are upon us

By CHRIS SCHANZ
The Commercial Review

We're getting to the fun part.

This time last year, we were experiencing and approaching a multitude of firsts for our daughter.

She had her first trip to a zoo and aquarium, and got to see animals that weren't pets for the first time. We celebrated her first Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. We took her to Ireland for her first birthday.

Each of those firsts was perfect in its own special way. It's just a tad unfortunate she won't remember any of it, nor understand the gravity of the milestones.

(You certainly won't have to pull my leg to go to the Emerald Isle again, so she'll get to know and understand the experience next time.)

I'll forever remember Baby Schanz playing on the floor in a closed-in area

Parental Ponderings



at her aunt Jenna's place on Thanksgiving, hours after her first trip to the emergency room following a fall from a hotel bed.

We'll tease her too about her first Christmas, during which she wanted nothing to do with her aunts and uncles on my side of the family until they gave her presents and toys.

Picking out her first stuffed animal — "Ruffles," as we named him — at Cabela's and hearing her giggle the entire time are core memories she'll never know, but I'll never forget.

Now, however, we've entered what I had long envisioned as the best part

about parenthood: her cognizance of the moment.

The weekend before Halloween, the three of us went down to the Detroit Zoo with Chrissy's sister Jenna and her now-fiance Nate. Although it wasn't Baby Schanz's first time at a zoo, she was aware of the animals and showed excitement watching them. For those wondering, the penguins were her favorite.

And on Halloween, dressed in her adorable bunny costume, our daughter helped us pass out candy to local trick-or-treaters.

The joy in her eyes as she saw all of the other costumes was second to none.

While we're trying our best to limit our daughter's screen time, sometimes it's unavoidable. When we need to distract her so we can make dinner, or straighten up the house, or just do something quickly without being interrupted,

We have plenty of time to continue making memories with our daughter that she'll enjoy and remember on her own as she gets older and looks back on her childhood.

we'll let her sit on the couch to watch one of her two favorites: Bluey or Ms. Rachel.

She knows enough of the songs that she's started to dance and sing along with Ms. Rachel. I'll occasionally catch myself with "Hop little bunny, hop hop hop" annoyingly stuck in my head, but it is always accompanied by the sound of my daughter's innocent giggle as she jumps cheerfully on the couch in unison with the tune.

It's a sign that she remembers the music and what to do when prompted by the YouTube star.

These truly are the greatest days thus far of being a dad.

Gone is our daughter's first Thanksgiving, thankfully, because for about six hours, it was a total nightmare. We'll never get to experience her first Christmas again, either. Or her first tooth. Her first word. Her first steps.

As our second holiday season as parents approaches, there will always be this little family that Chrissy and I have built. We have our home. We have our pets. We have our wonderful, adorable, perfect little daughter.

Most importantly, we have each other.

We have plenty of time to continue making memories with our daughter that she'll enjoy and remember on her own as she gets older and looks back on her childhood.

These are the best days. And they're just getting started.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Chris Schanz is a former CR sports editor living and loving each moment as a first-time father. Send advice to christopherschanz@gmail.com.

Husband invites son to be trip's 3rd wheel

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I married 20 years ago. We have a blended family of eight kids, but it's just us now. Our kids are scattered across the country. Over all these 20 years, we have never taken a vacation just for us. We have always visited family.

Now, after scrimping, saving and planning, our dream trip is finally happening. We are visiting Disneyland! Problem is, our youngest just relocated to L.A. I bought tickets, scheduled tours and reserved meals for just the two of us. But my husband has included our son in everything now — all park visits, dinners, etc. Don't get me wrong — I love my kids, but this was supposed to be "our" time.

I agreed to one dinner with

Dear Abby



our son, but other than that, we are on our own. My husband wants to include him in everything because he lives close by. Now my husband says he doesn't want to go at all. He insists that our son partake in everything we do, but I want this trip to be about us. We deserve this! How do I convince him that we need this trip? — DISAPPOINTED IN OHIO

DEAR DISAPPOINTED:

You shouldn't have to convince your husband to follow through on your dream vacation. He should have consulted you before inviting your son and telling him he will be included in everything. You wrote that you scrimped and saved for years to afford this vacation. How does he intend to pay for all those extra expenses for a third person? If your husband doesn't want an experience "just for the two of you," allow me to suggest it may be time to schedule something just for yourself. You have earned it.

DEAR ABBY: I was engaged to my husband for three years before we got married. A little more than a year ago, he was

told that he had two years to live. Six months later, we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary, and 10 days after that, he passed away.

I have met a man who is two years younger than I am who makes me laugh again. I feel like a schoolgirl when I'm around him. He wants to be a roommate, live with me and sleep upstairs. I sleep downstairs, but I don't know if I should let him or not. Advice? — FEELING A BIT SCARED IN INDIANA

DEAR FEELING: Would this man be paying you rent and buying food, or would you be picking up the tab? If all he wants is to be your platonic roommate, but you are physically attracted to him, I

recommend against proceeding with the arrangement. You would find it increasingly painful and frustrating, and when you finally had had enough pain and frustration, you might have to hire an attorney to help you get him out. What seems attractive now could be a huge pain in the posterior, and I guarantee it wouldn't leave you laughing. Keep things as they are until the relationship becomes more defined.

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 DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Community Calendar

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

Today

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.

Friday

DUNKIRK HISTORICAL MUSEUM — Is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the third Friday and Saturday of each month at Webster Depot, 132 W. Railroad St.

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.

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.

Sudoku

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

Level: Intermediate

Tuesday's Solution

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

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.

We're not talking turkey when we say we hope your Thanksgiving Day is amazing in every way!

Happy Thanksgiving

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We need ‘A Thanksgiving Carol’

Editor’s note: This editorial is being reprinted from Nov. 25, 2005.

Where’s Charles Dickens when we need him? The 19th century British author did a splendid job with “A Christmas Carol.” But what 21st century American needs is “A Thanksgiving Carol.” It wouldn’t star Scrooge, that old skinflint, but instead would feature an all-too-typical middle American with a profound sense of victimhood. You know the sort of person we’re talking about, the kind who’s always moaning about how bad things are, who tends to

Guest Opinion

blame everyone but himself for his shortcomings, who has finely tuned his sense of perpetual grievance. Unlike Scrooge, who counted every farthing and could tell you exactly how much he was worth, this character doesn’t count much of anything. He’s much more interested in what he doesn’t have — and what his

neighbors have — than his own blessings. Instead of three ghosts, this fable could get by with one. Maybe it could take the shape of a pilgrim, or perhaps even a turkey. Its charge would be to take this glass-half-empty character by the scruff of the neck, whisk him supernaturally to a place of greater perspective, and set him down to do some accounting. Our Thanksgiving ghost would remind the unappreciative lout how lucky he is. Lucky to be living in this country, lucky that his home and his community have escaped the ravages of war.

The ghost would point out to him the famine, the brutality, and the pestilence endured by huge chunks of humanity each day. The ghost would talk to him about freedom, his ability to speak his mind, express his opinions, and even sound off about his gripes. The ghost could talk to him about creativity, the marvels of the human mind. Zooming out into space, the Thanksgiving ghost could point to the blackness of dead and inhospitable planets, dying stars, and mysteries beyond comprehension. Then the Thanksgiving ghost

could gesture at earth and its infinite bounty and rich tapestry of nature. If that doesn’t make you feel blessed, the Thanksgiving ghost would say, if that doesn’t make you enormously thankful simply to be alive, to have lived, then you are beyond the help Thanksgiving Day can offer. In our version, with all apologies to Dickens, the ungrateful lout would wake up tomorrow morning a new person, who has added to his blessings a new sense of perspective and appreciation for all that we so shamelessly take for granted. Enjoy each day. — J.R.

Travel the world, talk returns to food

Editor’s note: This column is being reprinted from Nov. 23, 2005. Jack was a world traveler, from backpacking across Europe in his youth to his trip to China in the late 1980s to his various visits to Eastern Europe and Asia to train journalists. Clearly, he enjoyed a variety of food along the way.

By JACK RONALD
The Commercial Review
Inevitably, it seems, the talk turns to food. That’s not just because tomorrow is Thanksgiving. It’s a matter of human nature. Whenever I return from a project like the one which took me to Belarus a few weeks ago, folks can’t help asking that very human question: How was the food? So, for the record, here’s the answer: Different. And sometimes surprising.

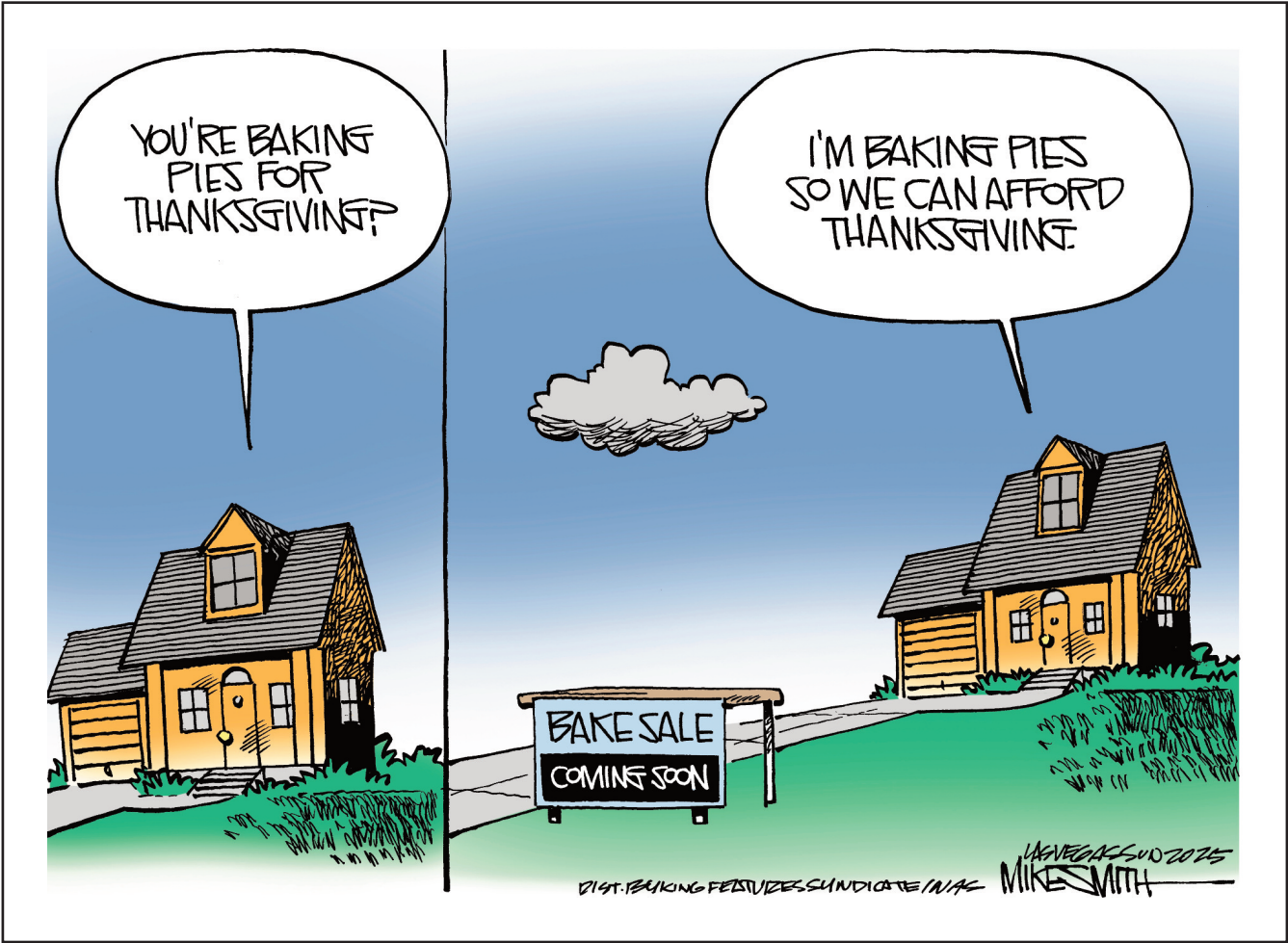
Belarus is located in the northern heart of Europe, sandwiched between Poland and Russia. It’s potato country, so don’t count on making the low-carb diet work while you’re there. Instead, you can expect lots of sour cream, lots of eggs, and — of course — potatoes, boiled, French fried, or pounded into pancakes. Three times during this past visit, I had the pleasure of having dinner in the homes of friends. Each one was different, but each one had followed familiar patterns. Dinner started with salads, lots of them, some with meat, some without. Pickled tomatoes, shredded carrots, and more filled the table. That was followed by a meat course, usually pork but in one case freshwater fish. And, finally, with coffee or tea at the end, there were chocolates. Along the way, there were inevitable offers of vodka, with a bottle on the table as if required by law. Belarusian hospitality is gracious enough to let you off the hook if you want to avoid the stuff, but you can always count on it being offered. A visitor may also be offered homemade moonshine made from pine nuts. It’s not for every palate. While there was a comfortable predictability to food served in the home, restaurants were something else again. You never know exactly what

Back in the Saddle



Belarus is located in the northern heart of Europe, sandwiched between Poland and Russia. It’s potato country ...

you’re going to get when you order. Last spring, for example, while visiting a brew-pub in Minsk with my translator, I foolishly ordered shrimp, expecting something like a shrimp cocktail. Instead, I was handed a plate with three forlorn little shrimp, complete with eyes, tails, veins, and the rest of those unappetizing bits which Americans are used to having removed before being served. This time around, I thought I knew enough to handle the unexpected. Ordering lunch in Baranovich with the managing editor of Intex-Press, a newspaper there, I asked for the grilled chicken. “Would you like vegetables or rice with that?” asked the waiter. Though I know the Russian word for rice, I figured my carbohydrate count would be better with vegetables. The chicken was tasty, but the vegetables — peas, carrots, and cauliflower — were a mystery. Though they looked inviting, they were served ice cold. Even my translator was baffled by that one. Sometimes, even ordering something as predictable as pizza can be a surprise. At a place called Retro Pizza in Grodno, I let my friend Pavel order his favorite. Maybe I shouldn’t have. It featured ham, Swiss cheese, and lots of Dijon mustard. And sprinkled across the top of the pizza was the finishing touch: Green beans. Bon appetit.



Keep politics off the table

By DAN RENE
InsideSources.com
Tribune News Service
There is a familiar saying that you can choose your friends, but not your family. For most of the year, that fact can feel like a blessing and a curse. During the holidays, when we squeeze around crowded tables, eat more than we should, and bring many personalities into one home, it should feel like a blessing. Family members are the people who allow you to be yourself. You can be silly, serious, vulnerable or anything in between. Even when disagreements happen, you should be able to count on your relatives to come back together because of the experiences you share and the mutual respect you hold for one another. Families matter, and they deserve to be protected. Nothing threatens that sense of protection faster than political conversations during a holiday gathering. Families are supposed to be places where people share values and offer one another unconditional love. That is the ideal we all hope for. In real life, though, those bonds can be fragile and easily strained. Add in the stress of the holidays, a few drinks, and months of pent-up frustration from constant news coverage, and it does not take long for things to go off track. In recent years, political conversations have become sharper, angrier and much more personal. Opinions that were once confined to online comment sections now spill into living rooms. Comments that people used to make anonymously from behind a screen now land directly on the feelings of siblings, cousins and in-laws. These moments do not lead to better understanding or healthier debate. Instead, they damage relationships and create lasting hurt. None of it is worth the fallout. Most families enter the holidays already stressed. There is traffic to fight, crowded stores to tolerate,

Dan Rene



budget worries to juggle, school events to attend, decorations to manage and travel hassles to endure. Many of us are exhausted before we even carve the turkey. The last thing anyone needs is our uncle launching into a lengthy complaint about inflation or a sibling presenting her newest conspiracy theory while the stuffing is being passed around. Sure, some disagreement can be typical. It can even be healthy. However, very few political discussions during Thanksgiving dinner turn into healthy exchanges. Especially not today and not in this supercharged environment. What usually happens instead is that anger hides inside what looks like analysis. Attempts to score points replace thoughtful conversations. Judgment pretends to be a conviction. The result of even the strongest of family bonds is extreme pressure. It is worth remembering the amount of effort that goes into hosting a holiday gathering. People spend hours preparing meals, cleaning homes, coordinating schedules and trying to make everything memorable. Even the loud vacuum is part of the ritual (I really despise the noise.) One careless comment can ignite a fight that overshadows the entire day. Suddenly, the person who spent hours basting a turkey is apologizing for raised voices, and two relatives aren’t speaking. There is no reason to invite that kind of trouble into a day meant to bring people together. Instead of trying to win an argument, you can

try something simple and meaningful. Offer kindness. Thanksgiving exists so we can express gratitude, and this is an opportunity to practice that. Tell someone you appreciate them. Compliment the food. Acknowledge the effort others have made. Look for areas where you agree. They are always there, even when politics makes it harder to see them. When in doubt, many other topics can keep conversations warm and safe. Talk about sports, since even rivalries there can be friendly. Share family memories, because we never know who may be missing from the table next year or who may be joining for the first time. Discuss careers, travel, plans, childhood stories, or the latest show everyone is watching. All of these things remind us why we came together in the first place. Families will continue to grow and change. There is no need to speed up that process by making the holidays uncomfortable or by harming the relationships we should be able to rely on, no matter what. Politics will still be waiting tomorrow. The news cycle never stops. Social media is not going to pause for the holiday. Your family gatherings are special and rare. You can create a memory. Protect it. Guard it. Let the holidays be what they were meant to be, which is a reminder that even with everything happening in the world, we still have a group of people who know us and love us and choose to show up. They do this not because they agree with us, but because they are our family. This year, keep your politics to yourself. Pass the potatoes and not provocations. Choose connection instead of conflict. Let Thanksgiving be a time to remember not what divides us, but what and who truly matter. *****
Rene is a strategic communications counselor at Dan Rene Communications.

The Commercial Review



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“Were it left for me to decide whether we should have government without newspapers or newspapers without government I should not hesitate to prefer the latter.”
—Thomas Jefferson

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We welcome letters to the editor, which are accepted by email only to letters@thecr.com. They should be 700 words or fewer, signed, with city/town of residence and include a phone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit for content and clarity.

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Area churches are listed with location, pastor and phone number, services and website or email address. All services are Sunday, unless otherwise indicated.

Asbury United Methodist
204 E. Arch St., Portland
Josh Arthur
(260) 726-8464
Services: 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m.
asburyministries.org

Bellefountain United Methodist
440 S. 600 East
Pamela Freeman
Services: 9 a.m.

Bluff Point Friends
80 E. 650 South
Services: 10 a.m.
Sunday school: 9:30 a.m.

Boundary St. Paul
Corner of Treaty Line Road and county road 300 East
Ava Gannon
(260) 726-2373
Services: 9:30 a.m.

Bryant Wesleyan
209 S. Hendricks St.
Paul VanCise
(260) 997-6231
Services: 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m.
bryantwesleyanchurch.com

Calvary United Methodist
301 N. Main St., Dunkirk
Susan Durovey-Antrim
(765) 499-0368
Services: 10:30 a.m.
susan.duroveyantrim@in.umc.org

Christ Chapel
2535 Wabash Road, Fort Recovery
(419) 733-1469
christchapelfr.com

Church of the Living God (Miracle Missions)
8472 S. 800 East, Union City
Services: 10:30 a.m.
Sunday school: 9:30 a.m.

Church of God of Prophecy
797 N. Creagor Ave., Portland
Nanette Weesner
(260) 766-9334
Services: 10 a.m., 6 p.m.
nanybell@yahoo.com

Church of the Brethren
Floral and Chicago avenues, Portland
Kevin McClung
(260) 729-7295
Services: 10 a.m.

Church of the Living God
South Broad Street, Dunkirk
Services: 7 p.m., 7 p.m. Friday

Collett Nazarene
450 South, 1 mile west of U.S. 27
Billy Stanton
(260) 251-2403
Services: 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m.

Cornerstone Baptist
211 E. Main St., Portland
Wayne Ward
(260) 726-7714
Services: 10 a.m.

Cornerstone Church of Pennville
190 W. Main St., Pennville
Jack Houck
(260) 729-2164
Services: 10:30 a.m.

Dunkirk Nazarene
226 E. Center St., Dunkirk
Tom Fett
(765) 768-6199
Services: 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m.

Evangelical Methodist
930 W. Main St., Portland
Steve Arnold
(260) 251-0970
Services: 10:20 a.m., 6 p.m.

Fairview United Methodist/Jay County
2875 E. 200 South
Pamela Freeman
Lay leader: Beth Stephen
(260) 726-9184
Services: 10:15 a.m.

Faith Community
9560 W. 200 South, Dunkirk
Mark Acree
(260) 251-0987
Services: 10 a.m.

Family Worship Center
200 E. Elder St., Portland
Ronald Willis
(260) 726-4844
Services: 11 a.m., 6:30 p.m. Wednesday
thefamilyworshipcenter.org

Fellowship Baptist
289 S. 200 West
Hugh Kelly
(260) 726-8873
Services: 9 a.m., 11 a.m.
Sunday school: 10 a.m.
pastorkelly@fbc-portland.com

First Church of Christ
1049 Union City Road, Fort Recovery
David J. Nicholson
(419) 375-2860
Services: 10:30 a.m.
fccftrerecovery.org

First Community Baptist
341 S. Meridian St., Redkey
Everett Bilbrey Jr.
Sunday school: 9:30 a.m.
Services: 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; 7 p.m. Wednesday

First Free Will Baptist
12369 W. 600 South, Dunkirk
Sunday school: 10 a.m.
Services: 10:50 a.m., 6 p.m., 6 p.m. Wednesday

First Presbyterian
402 N. Ship St., Portland
Rev. M. Rex Espiritu
(260) 726-8462
Services: 9:30 a.m.
Sunday school: 10:15 a.m.
firstpcportland.org

Fort Recovery Church of the Nazarene
401 E. Boundary St., Fort Recovery
(419) 375-4680
Services: 10:30 a.m.
Kids vision and teen ministries: 6 p.m. Wednesday
frnaz@frontier.com

Fort Recovery United Methodist
309 E. Boundary St., Fort Recovery
Rev. Carol McKay
(304) 617-0101
Services: 9 a.m.

Full Gospel Lighthouse Tabernacle
468 E. Washington St., Dunkirk
Robert Thomas
(765) 348-4620
Services: 6:30 p.m., 6:30 p.m. Thursday

Geneva First United Methodist
100 W. Line St., Geneva
Barry McCune
(260) 368-7655
Services: 9:30 a.m.

Geneva Nazarene
225 Decatur St., Geneva
(260) 525-8609
Services: 10 a.m., 6 p.m.
Sunday school: 9 a.m.
Prayer meeting: 6 p.m. Wednesday

Gilead Church
County road 650 North, one-quarter mile east of Balbec
Services: 10:30 a.m.

Hickory Grove Church of the Brethren
Indiana 1 and Indiana 26
Earl Doll
(260) 731-4477
Services: 10:30 a.m.

High Street United Methodist
435 High St., Geneva
Rev. Joseph Hampton
(260) 368-7233
Services: 9 a.m.

Holy Trinity Catholic
7321 E. Indiana 67, Bryant
Fr. Peter Logsdon
Fr. Martin Sandhage
Services: 8 a.m., 4:30 p.m. Saturday

Hopewell of Life Ministries
County road 200 South, 2 miles east of Indiana 1
Rev. Ruth Funk
(260) 251-8581
Services: 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m.

Immaculate Conception Catholic
506 E. Walnut St., Portland
Fr. Peter Logsdon
Fr. Martin Sandhage
(260) 726-7055
Services: 5:30 p.m. Saturday, 10:30 a.m. Sunday

Kingsley Full Gospel
4030 S. 700 East, Dunkirk
Stuart Phillips
Services: 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m., 7 p.m. Wednesday

Mary Help of Christians
403 Sharpsburg Road, Fort Recovery
Rev. Alexander Witt
(419) 375-4153
Services: 4:30 p.m. Saturday, 9 a.m.

Mount Tabor Community Church
216 W. Pleasant St., Dunkirk
Scott McClain
(765) 768-7273
Services: 9:30 a.m.

Mount Zion United Methodist
County roads 600 East and 200 North
Rev. Darrell Borders
(260) 726-4786
Services: 9 a.m.

New Beginnings Holiness Church of Blaine
4017 W. 200 South
Randy Smith
(260) 251-2406
Services: 10 a.m., 6 p.m.
nbholiness.com

New Covenant Fellowship
1238 W. 450 South
Chuck Myers
(260) 251-0063
Services: 10:30 a.m.

New Life Ministries
415 S. Helen St., Portland
Dr. Kay Fairchild
(260) 223-2961
Services: 4 p.m.
drkayfairchild.com

New Mt. Pleasant United Methodist
5905 S. Como Road
Neil Butcher
(765) 499-7838
Services: 9 a.m.

Noble Congregational Christian
1964 N. 800 East
Aaron Huey
Services: 10:30 a.m.

Oak Grove United Methodist
829 S. Indiana 1
Neil Butcher
(765) 760-9085
Services: 10:45 a.m.

Pleasant Hill
9945 N. 800 East, Union City
Bruce Bryan
(765) 964-3664
Services: 9 a.m., 6 p.m.
mypleasanthillchurch.org

Portland Church of Christ
1217 W. Votaw St., Portland
Bob Graham
(260) 726-7777
Bible class: 9:15 a.m.
Services: 10:20 a.m.
Bible School: 6 p.m. Wednesday
portlandcoc.com

Portland First Church of Nazarene
920 S. Shank St., Portland
Steve Cecil
(260) 726-8040
Services: 10:45 a.m.

Portland Friends
226 E. Main St., Portland
Herb Hummel
(260) 202-9732
Services: 10 a.m.
Sunday school: 9 a.m.

Praise Chapel Church of God
4527 E. 1000 North (Jay-Randolph county line)
Rev. Josh Canfield
(765) 584-7045
Services: 10:30 a.m.

Redeemer Lutheran
Malin and Elm streets, Bryant
Father Dan Layden
(260) 997-6787
Services: 9:30 a.m.

Redkey Faith Ministries
9811 W. Indiana 67, southwest of Redkey
Rev. Craig and Robin Cotherman
(765) 369-2920
Services: 10 a.m.
RedkeyFaith.org

Redkey First Christian
Union and Malin streets
Jeff Hammers
(765) 468-6172
Services: 10:30 a.m.
Sunday school: 9:30 a.m.

Redkey United Methodist
122 W. Main St.
Lori McIntosh
(765) 369-2085
Services: 10:30 a.m.

Redkey Church of the Nazarene
801 W. High St.
Fred Stevens
(765) 369-2676
redkeynaz.org
Services: 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., 6:30 p.m. Wednesday

River of Life
722 W. Main St., Portland
Susan Hathaway
(260) 729-1095
Services: 10:30 a.m.

The ROCK
1605 N. Meridian St., Portland
Matt Ransom
(260) 726-7474
Services: 10 a.m.
matt@therockjc.org

Salamonia Church of Christ
3900 S. 600 East
Bruce Phillips
(260) 335-2017
Services: 9 a.m.

Second Chance at Life Ministries
228 S. Meridian St., Portland
Dave Keen (260) 251-8792
Mike Eads (260) 703-0733
Services: 10:30 a.m.

St. Joseph Catholic
1689 St. Joe Road, Fort Recovery
Rev. Alexander Witt
Services: 7:30 a.m. Sunday

St. Mary's Catholic
346 S. Broad St., Dunkirk
Rev. Kevin Hurley
Services: 5 p.m. Saturday, 5:30 p.m. Thursday

St. Paul Catholic
517 Meiring Road, Fort Recovery
Rev. Alexander Witt
Services: 11 a.m. Sunday

St. Peter Catholic
1477 Philothea Road, Fort Recovery
Rev. Alexander Witt
Services: 9 a.m. Sunday

Sugar Grove Nazarene
3984 N. 550 West, Portland
Pastor Mike Heckman
(615) 517-1017
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Services: 10:30 a.m.
Bible study: 6 p.m. Wednesday

Sugar Grove Church
County roads 600 South and 1150 West, Dunkirk
Scott McClain
Services: 9 a.m.

Temple Baptist
17920 Indiana 167, Dunkirk
John Elam
(765) 768-7708
Sunday school: 10 a.m.
Services: 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., 7 p.m. Wednesday
7pillarsdirector@gmail.com
templebaptistin.com

The Church at Westchester
4487 E. 400 North
(260) 726-6311
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Services: 10:35 a.m.
churchatwestchester.org

Trinity Lutheran
301 N. Wayne St., Fort Recovery
Ron McCallum
(419) 375-4498
Services: 9 a.m. (contemporary service, fourth Sunday)

Trinity ArchBridge Church
323 S. Meridian St., Portland
Dan Vore
(260) 726-8391
Sunday school: 9 a.m.
Services: 10:15 a.m.
portlandtrinity.com

Union Chapel
6200 N. 375 West, Bryant
Interim Pastor Chris Kruckow
(260) 849-0687
Services: 10:20 a.m., 6 p.m.

Union Chapel Church of the Nazarene
County road 900 North (Jay-Wells county line)
Fred Stevens
Services: 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m.

Walnut Corner
County roads 200 North and 500 West
Steve Rogers
(260) 251-1113
Services: 10:30 a.m.
Sunday school: 9:30 a.m.

West Walnut Church of Christ
204 W. Walnut St., Portland
Gil Alicea
(260) 726-4691
Services: 10 a.m.
westwalnutchurchofchrist.org

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
Ron McCallum
218 E. High St., Portland
(260) 726-8832
zionlutheranportland@gm ail.com
Services: 10:30 a.m.

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Journey ...

Continued from page 2A

•Heard an update regarding the proposed recovery home for men, The Vision on Votaw, in Portland. Jay County Drug Prevention Coalition director Kimbra Reynolds explained the project will be completed in phases, with the organization currently accepting bids for the first phase. Plans are to modify the house to accommodate six residents. The second phase will involve expanding the house to allow for up to 16 residents.

•Learned the United States Drug Enforcement Administration performed a surprise inspection in October at Jay Emergency Medical Service. JEMS director Kyle Gerlach explained the federal department advised officials to update

some policies moving forward. He pointed to former director John McFarland’s arrest in April. McFarland was charged in Jay Circuit Court with various drug-related crimes, including two Level 5 felonies for possession of a narcotic drug and two Level 6 felonies for possession of a controlled substance.

•OK’d moving forward with Jay County Development Corporation’s service contract with the county for next year, setting the county’s contribution at \$254,250.

•Agreed to shift commissioners’ March 23 meeting to March 30 instead

•Approved a \$4,190 quote from Second Shift Solutions of Celina, Ohio, to improve building access restrictions and video surveillance at Jay Emergency Medical

Service base in Portland. The price includes installing cloud-based storage cameras around the building as well as access card readers and providing access cards to EMS employees. EMS director Kyle Gerlach explained the project will meet the department’s security needs and satisfy requirements set by the county’s insurance. Answering a question from commissioners, he confirmed the equipment will be transferable to the new public safety facility if constructed.

•Agreed to an updated financial commitment letter to the Federal Highway Administration for reconstructing a bridge along county road 400 North near county road 700 East. Jay County Highway Department

administrative assistant Stephanie Klarer explained the total increased by approximately \$40,000.

•Received copies of Jay County Jail’s annual inspection report. This year’s inspection — it’s comprised of about 250 questions — shows no critical incidents. The jail’s average inmate population sits at 58, with approximately 45 of those incarcerated identified as males.

•Heard a quarterly update from Jay/Portland Building and Planning director John Hemmelgarn. As of the end of October, 280 building permits have been issued, with 171 of those in rural areas of Jay County. There have also been 25 new home permits — 21 are in rural parts of the county — and 37 commercial use

permits with eight of those permits located in rural areas.

•Heard a monthly financial breakdown from Jay Emergency Medical Service director Gary Barnett. It had \$172,058.62 in expenses in October and \$87,948.24 in income.

•Approved the following: Jay County Sheriff Ray Newton to spend \$5,495 out of his budget to install internet equipment in Jay County Sheriff’s Office vehicles; a \$198,829 quarterly claim from LifeStream Services; opening a credit card for new Jay County Courthouse superintendent Monte Shrack.

•Were reminded by Aker about the Community Thanksgiving dinner starting at 1 p.m. Thursday at Asbury United Methodist Church.

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The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

Hundreds of volunteers came out in 2023 to shop at Walmart and then wrap gifts (pictured above in the commons at Jay County Junior-Senior High School) and deliver gifts to those in need as part of the eighth event day for Secret Families Christmas Charity of Jay County. Those interested in volunteering this year can sign up for the Saturday, Dec. 6, event at secretfamiliesjc.org.

Caring ...

Continued from page 1

That community involvement will be on full display for the 10th time on Saturday, Dec. 6.

Volunteers, typically at least 150, will gather at 6:30 a.m. at Walmart to shop for the families that have been identified as being in need of support.

The Christmas gifts and household items purchased there will then be transported to the Bubp Building at Jay County Fairgrounds, where more volunteers — some will be carry-overs from shopping, others will be new — will work at wrapping stations.

Finally, deliveries will begin about 10:30 a.m., with delivery captains leading the charge. Each captain will handle about 10 families, with volunteers encouraged to ride along because a single vehicle can’t handle all of the items.

The entire operation is usually wrapped up by about 3:30 p.m.

Though the number of volunteers has grown, that’s still the area where Secret Families is in the most need of help. Knight and Hall encouraged service groups, clubs, school athletic teams and anyone else to take advantage of the opportunity to get involved.

“I think my biggest thing is if you’re considering coming out, I would urge everyone to go on a delivery,” said Hall. “Join a delivery team and go on a delivery. I think that’s one thing that we could definitely use more volunteers.”

“They often say, we feel as blessed as the family that’s receiving,” agreed Knight, adding that she feels having young people involved opens their eyes to the needs of their community. “Because, you know, those

families, they don’t think that their community really sees them or cares until they see this group of volunteers bringing all these bags to their door. And it’s a very powerful statement from your community or for someone to see when they don’t think they’re gonna get Christmas at all.”

They have seen those feelings and appreciation come full circle.

Knight shared stories about donors who have come forward because they or their families have been among those who received help in the past.

Or, their family might be getting help that year, but is still able to give back in the form of their time.

“That’s not uncommon for us to have volunteers come and say, ‘You helped me before, or you’re helping me this year,’” Knight said. “We have them actually at the wrapping center when they’re getting helped as well this year. And that’s why they come.”

“We have donors that tell us, I’m donating because the only gifts I ever received as a child came from organizations like this,” added Hall. “I hear that all the time.”

Secret Families connects with families in need through local schools, including all of Jay School Corporation, Jay County Christian Academy and Head Start. Volunteers reach out to school secretaries and sometimes principals to learn about families in need.

Each family that is chosen gets gifts for everyone in the house, with a budget of \$90 per person. They also receive household goods such as toilet paper, paper towels and toiletries, a family Bible, a children’s Bible and a gift card to help purchase food for a Christmas dinner.

Distribution of household goods is something the Jay County group brought from its Delaware County roots, but the need is often driven home by the lists of items families request. Recently a mother reached out to Hall to ask for washcloths as a gift. Another woman was excited about the possibility of having a shower curtain.

Families that don’t have a Christmas tree can ask for one as well. It will be delivered by one of the county’s fire departments, which all partner with Secret Families.

The organization is active in fundraising to reach its annual budget that has now cleared \$80,000. In addition to donations, this year’s activities have also included a golf tournament, Singo at Wings and Rings in Portland and an event at Crown City Lanes in Dunkirk. Other organizations also fundraise on behalf of Secret Families.

And on shopping day, volunteers often reach into their own pockets to go above and beyond what is already being provided.

Those interested in volunteering, whether groups or individuals, can sign up by visiting secretfamiliesjc.org. They will receive an email with details about the process and what to expect.

Volunteers are also welcome to just show up at the designated locations on Dec. 6.

“It’s rewarding,” said Knight. “And anybody that volunteers or joins in will feel the same.”

“If they’re there on event day, or they help all throughout preparation, you just can’t help but see the impact that makes on the kids and the family that you’re serving.”

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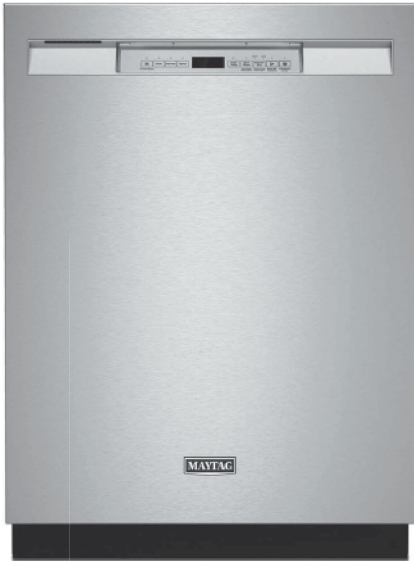
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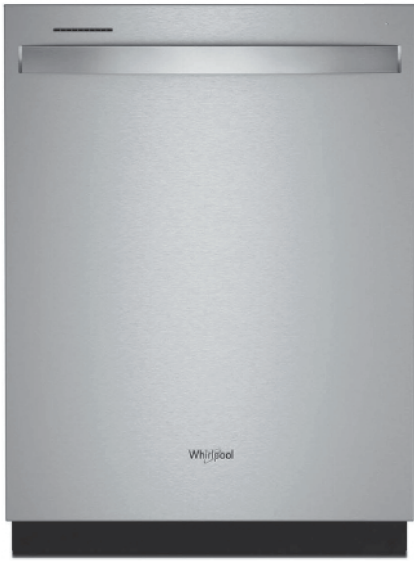
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