

The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371

www.thecr.com

\$1

A new look



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

Jay County Junior-Senior High School student council members cut the ribbon celebrating renovations to the school's commons area during a ceremony Wednesday morning. The \$738,000 renovation project includes new wall decor featuring Jay County and Jay Schools history and a collage of sports photos near the entrance to the gym.

Jay County Junior-Senior High celebrates completion of commons renovation project

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

When students returned from winter break Wednesday, they arrived to find a commons area with two banks of four big-screen TVs, booth seating and various displays highlighting their school's past and present.

"The reaction on their faces was fun to watch," said Jay School Corporation superintendent Jeremy Gulley. "The word 'wow' was used many times."

Jay County Junior-Senior High School celebrated its commons renovation project with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday morning.

"I just think that overall it looks really nice," said student council copresident Nick Lyons, who cut the ribbon during Wednesday's event. "It was a big shock to

come in this morning and see it."

"It's a really nice, refreshing change to give our school a little bit of an update," agreed co-president Brenna Haines. "Now people will walk into our school and be impressed with what it looks like ..."

The project, which was substantially completed during the two weeks students were away from school for winter break, includes a variety of new seating including a row of booths running down the center of the space. There are also bar-height tables and other seating in various shapes and sizes. (All of the seating is movable to accommodate events that occur in the commons.) Serving and trash units were also incorporated into the new look.

See Look page 2



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

The commons renovation project at Jay County Junior-Senior High School includes a variety of new seating, including two rows of booths that run down the middle of the space. There are also tables at bar height, seating for individuals and tables with charging stations.

AP is closing Auglaize Mercer Center

Arts in the Parks will continue in Ohio communities

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

Arts Place is closing one of its locations. The regional arts organization based in Portland announced in a press release Wednesday that it will shut down its Mercer/Auglaize Center located in St. Marys, Ohio, effective Jan. 15.

The release indicates that Arts Place will continue to host its summer Arts in the Parks program in Fort Recovery, St. Henry, Coldwater, Celina, Minster, New Bremen and St. Marys.

"Arts Place thanks all our community board members, supporters, teaching artists, the City of St. Marys, as well as the entire community for the opportunity to provide the arts in St. Marys and surrounding communities," the press release says.

Arts Place has operated a site in St. Marys since 2005, when The Mecca Collective became a program of Arts Place. Then known as The Collective Center, it hired its first center director in 2006.

The City of St. Marys and the St. Marys Community Improvement Corporation led the purchase of the former Party Shoppe in 2015. Following renovations, the site at 207 E. Spring St. — its current location — was dedicated as the Auglaize/Mercer Center of Arts Place a year later.

The organization operates in two other locations — the Jay County Campus at its headquarters in Portland and Blackford County Arts Center in Hartford City.

In addition to Arts in the Parks, Arts Place offers art and music education through its ArtWorks and MusicWorks programs, hosts concerts and other performances, and provides performance space for outside organizations.

State graduation rate improved in 2023

By CASEY SMITH
Indiana Capital Chronicle
indianacapitalchronicle.com

Nearly 89% of Indiana's high school seniors graduated last year — the most since pre-pandemic days, according to new state data.

The latest numbers released last week by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) show a post-COVID rebound in which 88.98% of Hoosier students in the Class of 2023 graduated.

That's up from 86.52% in 2022 and is the second-highest percentage of graduates since the state first began collecting data in 2012. Indiana's highest graduation rate was in 2016 at 89.1%.

The 2014 graduation rate of 90.1% was the highest since Indiana began tracking graduations, according to IDOE.

"Earning a high school diploma is essential to unlocking a suc-

In Indiana, 89% of high school seniors graduated, the most since before the coronavirus pandemic

cessful future," Gov. Eric Holcomb said in a statement. "In the years since the pandemic, educators across the state have worked hard to ensure our students — our state's future leaders — are more prepared than ever to emerge from high school and thrive. Through this work, Hoosier educators are helping students gain the knowledge and skills, as well as the confidence they need to determine their destiny."

The graduation rates for all stu-

dent subgroups except for American Indian and Native Hawaiian or other pacific islander students increased from the 2022 rates.

Statewide, graduation rates for Black students increased from 77.52% in 2022 to 82.43% in 2023.

Hispanic students saw a bump from 83.86% in 2022 to 86.41% in 2023. The English learner graduation rate additionally grew from 85.6% in 2022 to 87.72% in 2023.

Even bigger gains were reported among students in special education — from 76.39% in 2022 to

83.24% in 2023 — and those receiving free and reduced price meals, from 83.74% in 2022 to 88.74% in the last school year.

Students in non-public schools in Indiana graduated at a 91.97% rate while students in public schools graduated at a rate of 88.8%.

Still, students at traditional public schools in Indiana graduated at a higher rate than those at charter schools. State data shows that 91.29% of traditional public school students graduated in

2023, compared to 55.07% in charter schools.

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

The 2023 class also had fewer students using a waiver to earn a diploma. The state's non-waiver graduation rate — the number of students who complete all their diploma requirements without needing a waiver — improved from 80.58% in 2022 to 84.92% in 2023.

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

See Graduation page 2

Deaths

Steven Griffis, 81, rural Union City
Tammy Velasco, 58, Parker, Colorado
Details on page 2.

Weather

Jay County had a high temperature of 34 degrees Wednesday. The low was 28. Tonight's low will be in the mid 20s with a chance of light snow after midnight. Expect mostly cloudy skies Saturday with a chance of snow again and a high in the upper 30s. 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 shopping center at 220 Lincoln St., Portland, the parking lot east of Redkey Post Office and the parking lot south of Salamon Fire Station.

Coming up

Saturday — Coverage of this week's Portland Board of Works meeting.

Tuesday — Results from the Class 2A boys wrestling team state tournament.



Obituaries

Steven Griffis

June 2, 1942-Dec. 31, 2023
Steven M. Griffis, age 81, of rural Union City, Indiana, passed away on Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023, at his residence.

He was born in Yellow Springs, Ohio, on June 2, 1942, the son of Lester and Louise (Darner) Griffis. He was married on April 14, 2016, to Nora Parsons, who survives.

Steven was a retired teacher having taught in Mississinewa School Corporation. He was a member of the Pleasant Hill Church.

Surviving are his wife Nora; son Christopher Parsons (wife: Ambra) of Portland; granddaughter Addallee Parsons; and niece Carol Ketting.

Memorial services will be held on Saturday, Jan. 6, at 11 a.m. in the Pleasant Hill Church, 9945 N. 800 East, Union City, Indiana. Baird-Freeman Funeral home in

Portland is handling the arrangements.

Memorials can be made to Pleasant Hill Church.

Condolences may be expressed at bairdfreeman.com.

Tammy Velasco

Sept. 9, 1965-Jan. 1, 2024

Tammy Lynn Velasco, 58, of Parker, Colorado, passed away Monday morning, Jan. 1, 2024, at Parker Adventist Hospital in Parker, Colorado, following an unexpected medical event suffered the previous evening.

She was born on Sept. 9, 1965, in Decatur, Indiana, to Norval and Donna (Pettibone) Lehman. Tammy was united in marriage to Kyle Velasco on March 17, 1990, in Berne, Indiana.

A 1984 honors graduate of South Adams High School, Tammy earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Indiana University in 1989, and she went on to achieve a master's in counseling at IU South Bend in 1996.

Tammy was a dedicated educator for 35 years, touching the

lives of countless students, families and peers in both Indiana and Colorado. Most recently, Tammy served as a guidance counselor at Sand Creek Elementary in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. Additionally, Tammy shared her expertise as a financial advisor for World Financial Group.

Tammy found joy in the simple pleasures of life, from playing tennis to making a splash in the swimming pool, caring for her dogs, cheering on her Hoosiers and playing cards with her family. The bond Tammy shared with her four college friends was unbreakable, a friendship that stood the test of time and distance. Above all, Tammy's commitment to her faith was the cornerstone of her life. A true prayer warrior, she found solace and strength in her daily prayers, her Bible studies and her dedication to living a life anchored in her beliefs.



Velasco

Tammy was a faithful member of The Bridge Community Church.

Tammy's love for her two sons was immeasurable; they were her pride and joy, her greatest accomplishments. Vacationing with her family was not just a pastime but a cherished opportunity to create memories that would last a lifetime. In every moment spent with her loved ones, Tammy radiated love and happiness, leaving an indelible mark on their hearts.

She is survived by her husband, Kyle Velasco of Parker, Colorado; son Daniel John Velasco of Tucson, Arizona; son Andrew James Velasco of Omaha, Nebraska; parents Norval and Donna Lehman of Berne, Indiana; brother Trent (Cathy) Lehman of Berne, Indiana; and mother-in-law Jane Velasco of Berne, Indiana.

A funeral service for Tammy will be held at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2024, at the First Mennonite Church in Berne, Indiana, with Pastor Jim Schwartz officiating. Bur-

ial will follow at Mazelin Cemetery in rural Berne, Indiana.

The family will receive friends from 3 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024, at the Zwick & Jahn Funeral Home, Yager-Kirchhofer Chapel, in Berne and from 9:15 to 10:15 a.m. Tuesday prior to the service at the church.

Tammy was very passionate about Haiti. The family would request memorial contributions be made to Mission of Hope (missionofhope.com) to assist with the relocation of both the orphanage and elder living facilities.

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

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The Commercial Review publishes death notices for those with a connection to our coverage area free of charge. They include the name, city of residence, birth/death date and time/date/location of services.

There is a charge for obituaries, which are accepted only from funeral homes or mortuary services.

CR almanac

| Saturday 1/6 | Sunday 1/7 | Monday 1/8 | Tuesday 1/9 | Wednesday 1/10 |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| | | | | |
| 37/29 | 37/26 | 38/31 | 43/29 | 35/27 |
| There's a 50% chance of snow. Skies will otherwise be cloudy with a high of 37. | Skies will be mostly cloudy with a slight chance of snow and a high of 37 degrees. | Expect mostly cloudy skies with temperatures sticking in the 30s all day and night. | Tuesday's forecast shows rain and snow, with temperatures dropping to 29 at night. | Snow is likely Wednesday under mostly cloudy skies. The high will be in the mid 30s. |

Lotteries

Powerball
30-31-38-48-68
Power Ball: 8
Power Play: 10
Estimated jackpot: \$35 million

Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$140 million

Hoosier
Wednesday
Midday
Daily Three: 4-1-8
Daily Four: 6-2-5-3
Quick Draw: 4-7-10-11-14-16-17-20-24-25-26-30-40-46-50-58-59-74-75-77
Evening
Daily Three: 7-7-9

Daily Four: 5-0-5-3
Quick Draw: 4-6-19-20-21-22-29-30-33-38-49-51-55-59-60-63-67-71-76-80
Cash 5: 6-15-30-32-36
Estimated jackpot: \$80,000

Ohio
Wednesday
Midday
Pick 3: 7-5-6
Pick 4: 7-8-4-6
Pick 5: 5-4-8-7-6
Evening
Pick 3: 0-7-6
Pick 4: 1-2-3-2
Pick 5: 6-6-5-0-5
Rolling Cash: 8-10-25-30-34
Estimated jackpot: \$120,000

Markets

Cooper Farms Fort Recovery
Corn.....4.56
Feb. corn4.56
Wheat5.28

POET Biorefining Portland
Corn.....4.56
Feb. corn4.59
March corn4.61

The Andersons Richland Township
Corn4.51
Feb. corn4.61
Beans12.42

Feb. beans12.52
Wheat 5.67

ADM Montpelier
Corn.....4.41
Feb. corn4.45
Beans12.37
Feb. beans12.41
Wheat5.61

Heartland St. Anthony
Corn.....4.43
March corn4.48
Beans12.19
Feb. beans12.22
Wheat5.23

Today in history

In 2022, two candidates — Becky Heshner and Melanie Upp — filed to seek the Republican nomination for Jay County recorder. Heshner would later withdraw her candidacy, leaving Upp uncontested in both the primary and the general election. —The CR

Citizen's calendar

Friday
6 p.m. — Redkey Town Council, park cabin, 200 S. Mooney St.

Monday
9 a.m. — Jay County Commissioners, auditorium, courthouse, 120 N. Court St., Portland.
10 a.m. — Portland Redevelopment Commission, Community Resource Center, 118 S. Meridian St., Portland.
3:45 p.m. — Jay County Election Board, voting room, courthouse, 120 N. Court St., Portland.

4 p.m. — Jay County Public Library Board of Trustees, community room, library, 315 N. Ship St., Portland.
5 p.m. — Jay School Board, General Shanks, 414 E. Floral Ave., Portland.
6 p.m. — Dunkirk Board of Works, city building, 131 S. Main St.
6 p.m. — Fort Recovery School Board, community room, high school, 400 E. Butler St.
7 p.m. — Dunkirk City Council, city building, 131 S. Main St.

Graduation ...

Continued from page 1
The waivers are intended to help students with special circumstances, including for those who transfer to a new school, or in cases where a student has attempted to pass competency tests at least three times.

Reducing the number of waivers used by Indiana high schoolers continues to be a focus point for state education and policy leaders.

Adopted during the 2023 legislative session, HEA 1635 established new

caps on the percentage of graduation waivers that can be counted toward a school's state and local graduation rate beginning with the 2024 graduation cohort.

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

"As a state, we have worked very

hard to reduce our waiver rate and keep our focus on ensuring students graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life and in their career," said Katie Jenner, Indiana's Secretary of Education, in a news release. "Looking ahead, we will continue to make improvements to ensure Indiana has a diploma that maintains rigor while also increasing seamless pathways for students as they pursue employment, enrollment or enlistment leading to service."

Look ...

Continued from page 1
Each of the walls of the commons features new displays.

The wall that once sported the Patriot mural now features Portland's arch bridge, symbolically positioned between displays of photos of current students and those from decades past. Adjacent to the hallway that leads to the teacher's lounge is a feature honoring the eight high schools — Portland, Dunkirk, Redkey, Pennville, Bryant, Madison, Gray and Poling — that served the county prior to the consolidation into Jay County High School in 1975.

"We also wanted kids to see themselves in this space," Gulley said. "So as you enter the gym you'll see a collage of photographs of our students playing all the major sports that go on inside our gym. ... And that background is a graduating class."

The renovation included a new speaker system to better serve the space during events. There's new decorative drop lighting and various Jay County logos on the walls and tables. And there are

the big-screen TVs that will be utilized for a variety of purposes, including livestreaming events that are occurring in the gym next door.

Student council historian Chloe Ruiz and Haines both said it was those giant screens that first caught their eye when they walked into the renovated commons for the first time Wednesday morning. Ruiz also mentioned the new area designated for concessions during athletic events. Lyons noticed all of the various new displays on the walls.

"I think that's super cool," he said. "It helps make us unique compared to other places."

Jay School Board started evaluating options for the commons in late 2022. The bidding process began in May, with the board awarding the project to C&T Design and Equipment of Fort Wayne in August.

The \$738,015.12 project was funded via the school corporation's food service fund, which is supported by federal dollars and had built up a balance of about \$1.2 million. Federal rules require that such funds be reinvested into the school corporation's food service area.

Gulley thanked all those involved in the project, including the school board, school staff, food service provider Chartwells and Jay County Historical Society for its help with the displays.

"We wanted to bring a space that was a little more special and looked like a nice place to go eat with a family, or what it might look like at a dining court ... or in a college or university setting," said Gulley.

"Kids win today," he added. "This is really about them and for them."

The early reviews Wednesday morning were positive.

"I think it looks a lot more functional as a lunch room," said Lyons, admitting that he spent much of the morning scoping out where he might like to sit during lunch. "I'm excited."

"I've honestly never seen a school that has a lunch room like this," added Ruiz.

SERVICES

Friday
Dietz, Lois: 3 p.m., Baird-Freeman Funeral Home, 221 N. Meridian St., Portland.

Saturday
Griffis, Steven: 11 a.m., Pleasant Hill Church, 9945 N. 800 East, Union City.

Monday
Daugherty, Eileen: 1 p.m., Swiss Village Chapel, 1350 W. Main St., Berne.

Wednesday
Velasco, Tammy: 10:30 a.m., First Mennonite Church, 566 W. Main St., Berne.

Jan. 14
Williams, Helen: 4 p.m., New Life Ministries, 415 S. Helen St., Portland.

Service listings provided by
PROGRESSIVE DEL TORO OFFICE PRODUCTS
120 N. Meridian St.
Portland, Indiana 47371
(260) 726-9201
progressiveofficeproducts.com

Your Voice Matters: Public Listening Receptions

Saturday, January 6th
from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm
Dunkirk Pizza King, 231 S. Main St., Dunkirk

Jay County resident Blake Watson is in the final exploratory phase of running as a 2024 Candidate for Jay County Commissioner, South District. Watson looks forward to meeting with you to discuss what your Jay County vision and priorities entail. These listening receptions are informal, as attendees are encouraged to join us anytime within the hour. A limited amount of soft drinks & pizza will be offered for FREE to attendees at the January 6th listening reception. Watson is a 7th generation Jay County resident and a proud 2001 graduate of Jay County High School. He has been actively engaged in multiple community-wide civic activities in Jay County for over 25 years. If Watson decides to run for Jay County Commissioner, South District, he will be on the Jay County Democratic Party primary ballot.

Paid for by Watson.

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Drive pulls 55 donors

Fifty five donors gave blood Dec. 26 at the American Red Cross blood drive at Jay Community Center.

Donors were Joseph Boggs, Denise Glentzer, Nikita Adams, John Hart, Marlene Runyon, Daniel Schmitz, Billy Sipe, Joyce Eldridge, Douglas Watson, Jack Freeman, Michael Timmerman, Michael Schmidt, Jill Hemmelgarn, Rebecca Kun-

kler, Brian Kunkler, Paula Barron, Jason Minnich, Kay Westgerdes, Herbert Westgerdes, Terri Burk, Samuel Grubb and Jed Misner.

Also Freeda Osenbaugh, David Osenbaugh, Bart Rice, Doris Muhlenkamp, Joyce Koenig, Lorrissa Bousman, Douglas Shidler, Stephen Fennig, Terry Fennig, Sarah Jellison, Elizabeth Schoenlein, Joseph

Reinhard, Lindzy Upp, Ronald Laux, Pam Rogers, Eric Rogers and Mackenzie Weesner.

Also Tim Morris, Cindy Morris, Cameron Paxson, Isabella Puusepp, Carla Pogue, Michael Eads, Mary Laux, Nichole Parks, Timothy Danielson, David Hendrickson, Jeffrey Pogue, Susan Myers, Amy DeVoss, Dave Garringer, Rose Howell and Anthony Smith.

Mother having second thoughts

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I moved near the ocean last year. I have two sons, 21 and 17. My older son moved across the country with some friends. The younger son, "Cody," chose at the last minute to stay with his dad.

Dear Abby



Abby, it has been awful. Cody dropped out of high school and did not keep up with his home-school work. He quit his jobs, and he's on depression medication. This week, both boys moved where I am. My house is small, so I got them an apartment in my name. The landlord thinks I'm going to be living there.

My question is, how often should I go there and clean, make dinner and visit? I feel like I'll want to be there all the time — before work, after work and on weekends. My husband thinks I should back off, but Cody is only 17 and going through a lot.

They moved into the apartment today, so this is still new. Also, is it crazy that I paid to put them in their own apartment? I felt like it was an OK choice since our house is so small. They both are planning to get jobs, and the younger one wants to start college classes. But they're lazy and messy, and I feel like I need to step in to help more. Any suggestions? — MOM OF BOYS IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR MOM: Your older son is an adult. Your younger one is on the verge of becoming one. It's time for both to learn the skills they need to take care of themselves. Going there every day to cook, clean, do laundry and visit would be counterproductive to teaching them how to become independent.

If your older son has a job, he should contribute to the rent and groceries. Your younger son will never get into college if he doesn't do the homework he's ignoring. Having a small home doesn't mean he couldn't live with you until he establishes a healthy routine. Although it's tempting, please do not deprive them of this learning opportunity.

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.

Campaign offering election advice

Folks considering a run for office in local government have a chance to learn more about the process next week.

Jay County Purdue Extension Office is partnering with Jay County Clerk's Office in an effort to share advice with local residents about the process for running for local office, along with information about requirements and positions up for election in 2024.

The program — it's also a collaboration with local political parties and current elected officials — will start at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at Jay County Courthouse.

Those interested may register with the extension office by calling (260) 726-4707.

Program continues

Indiana Department of Natural Resources is continuing this year.

Taking Note

The program allows Hoosier hunters to take their field-dressed deer to one of more than 50 meat processing sites in the state. The processor then butcher's the meat and donates it to area food banks.

Indiana Hunt for Hunger pays all processing fees. Participating meat processors in the area include Farmland Locker, Fisher Packing in Pennville, Glick's Butcher Shop in Williamsburg, Knightstown Locker, Maddie Moos Custom Meats in Middletown, Manley Meats in Decatur, Oliver's Butcher Shop in Union City, Win-

chester Custom Meats and Wright Brothers Buckstop in Redkey.

For more information, visit on.IN.gov/huntforhunger or contact jquillen@dnr.IN.gov or (317) 232-0658.

Seeking feedback

Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) is asking for feedback regarding how the state should spend federal grant funds to improve Indiana's air quality.

IDEM received a \$3 million initial grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency to conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and develop a plan, and may be eligible to apply for additional funding to implement strategies.

At on.IN.gov/cprg, Hoosiers can find an overview of the grant and other details as well as a link to a survey regarding how the funds should be spent.

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. For more information, call (260) 251-3259.

DUNKIRK HISTORICAL SOCIETY — Is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the first and third Friday of each month in the former W.E. Gaunt Jewelry building, 113 S. Main St., Dunkirk.

SOFT SHOULDERS — A support group for anyone suffering from memory loss, will meet at 10:30 a.m. the first Friday of each month in the Fireplace Room at Edelweiss Place at Swiss Village in Berne. For more information, call (260) 589-3173.

CINCINNATUS LEAGUE — Will meet at noon Friday, Jan. 5, at Harmony Cafe in Portland.

Saturday

DUNKIRK HISTORICAL SOCIETY — Is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first and third Saturday of each

month in the former W.E. Gaunt Jewelry building, 113 S. Main St., Dunkirk.

MUSEUM OF THE SOLDIER — Is open from noon to 5 p.m. the first and third Saturday and Sunday of the month. It is located at 510 E. Arch St., Portland. The website is museumofthesoldier.com.

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.

ROAD RIDERS FOR JESUS — Will meet at 10 a.m. on the first Saturday of each month in the West Walnut Church of Christ, 204 W. Walnut St., Portland. (Please enter from the door facing the alley on the north side of the building.) For more information, call (260) 726-8463.

Sunday

A BETTER LIFE - BRANNA'S HOPE — A faith-based recovery group for all kinds of addictions, will meet from 6:30 to 8 p.m. each Sunday at The Rock Church, 1605 N. Meridian St., Portland. Come early for a meal. For more information, call (260) 766-2006.

Monday

PORTLAND BREAK-

FAST 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.

DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP — Meets at 3 p.m. on the second Monday of each month at Mercer Health in Coldwater, Ohio.

JAY COUNTY DRUG PREVENTION COALITION — Will meet at 3:30 p.m. the second Monday of each month at Portland Fire Department, 1616 N. Franklin St. For more information, call (260) 251-3259.

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.

PREGNANCY CARE CENTER — Free pregnancy testing with ongoing support during and after pregnancy. The center is located at 216 S. Meridian St., Portland. Hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information or to schedule an appointment, 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.

REDISCOVERING JOY — The support group of widows and widowers meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second Monday of each month at R & R Fabrications, 601 E. Washington St., St. Henry, Ohio. For more information, email rediscoveringjoy@yahoo.com.

Tuesday

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

BRYANT COMMUNITY CENTER EUCHRE — Will

be played at 1 p.m. each Tuesday. The public is welcome.

A BETTER LIFE - BRANNA'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. For more information, call Amanda Price at (765) 283-2107.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 7 p.m. at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 218 E. High St., Portland. For more information, call (567) 279-8352 or (260) 729-7000.

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Sudoku

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3 | | | 9 | | | | |
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Level: Advanced

Thursday's Solution

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

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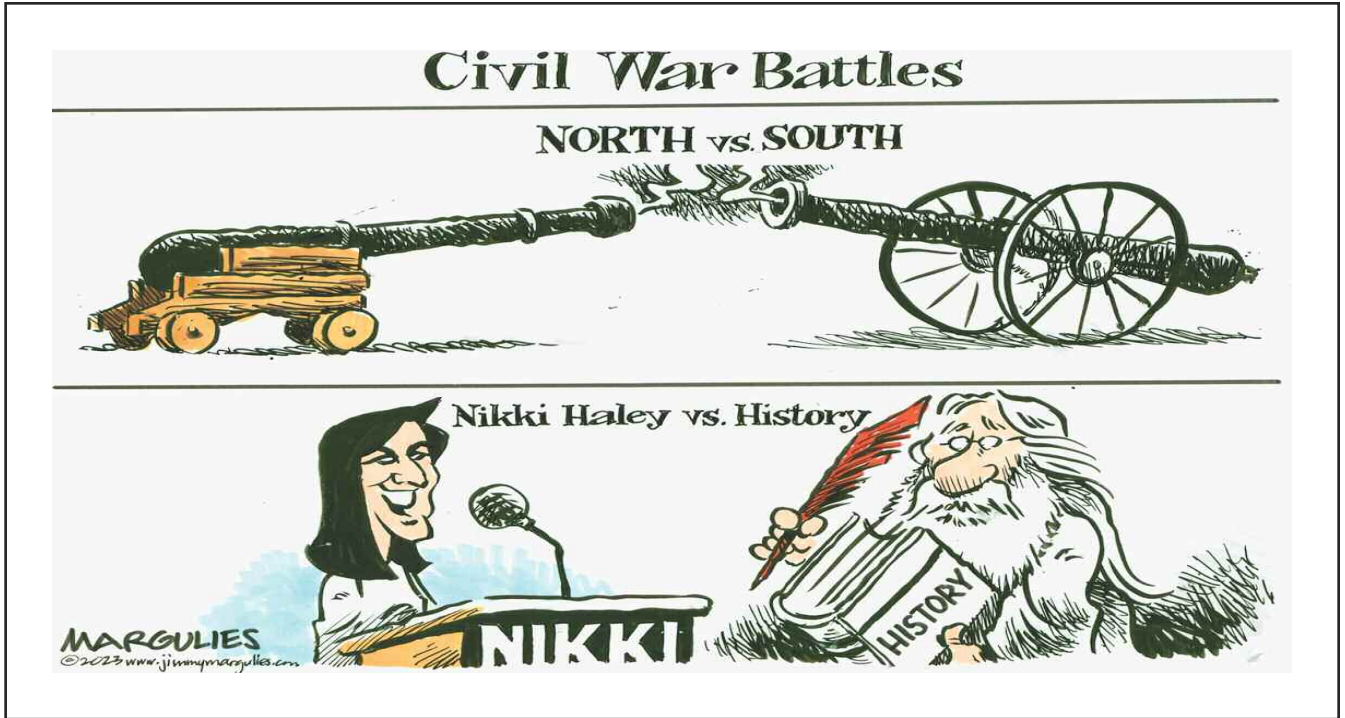
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Portland, Jay should be proud

To the editor:
Recently, we were back in Portland for a funeral. We stayed at the Holiday Inn Express. We could not have been more pleased with the cleanliness and service. Portland should be very happy to have this hotel. While there, we had a chance to tour the fairgrounds and see the spectacular Christmas decorations. Congratulations to the fair board and others who make this possible. We also enjoyed driv-

Letters to the Editor

ing down Meridian Street to see the Christmas lights and decorations. The City of Portland and Jay County should be very proud. Portland will always be home. Portland proud, Dick and Loretta Corle Cape Coral, Florida



Education is the path

By MICHAEL J. HICKS

I've been married now for a bit more than half of my life. One thing I've learned is that when my wife says I'm explaining something poorly, she's probably right. Last week she suggested I do a better job of explaining what I mean about the rising demand for college-educated workers, and what it means for students, parents and state policymakers.

The U.S. started collecting monthly data on employment by education level in 1992. Since then, more than eight out of 10 new jobs have gone to college graduates. Two out of 10 of these new jobs went to people who had some college-level training. For everyone else, there are fewer jobs today than there were 30 years ago. But what does this really mean?

Well, it could mean that there has been a lot of 'credential creep,' or a growing share of new jobs that require a college graduate when they might not need one. One of my mentors, Professor Richard Vedder, made this argument many years ago. It is plausible, but that hypothesis also requires that the wage premium for college graduates must shrink. A credential alone doesn't make anyone more productive or actually boost wages. However, the wage premium for college graduates is substantially higher today than in 1992.

The more plausible explanation is that jobs are increasingly complex, or at least more dynamic in the sense that the required skills changed more often. This is exactly the type of job that would require more formal education and offer fewer rewards for experience. My favorite example comes from my first career as a professional soldier.

The premier technical skill of an infantry officer of my generation was land navigation. This required use of paper maps and compasses. We learned to use an analog watch as a compass in the daytime, stars at night, and a sextant in the desert. Most of all, this took practice. On foot, through forest swamps and cities, on wheeled and tracked vehicles and in helicopters. I was so good at this that I navigated over 60 miles in one night, through a roadless desert, in combat, and arrived within a few hundred yards of my destination.

Today, young infantry officers still need to develop some of these skills, but most of their land navigation is done with GPS and Lorans, through several different technologies. Those items are

Michael J. Hicks



In 2022, about half of jobs required post-secondary education, most of which require at least a four-year degree.

faster, better, offer more redundancies and reduce the risk for everyone. To put this in temporal context, an infantry captain from General Washington's army of 1776 would've mastered my maps and compass with only few minutes of explanation.

In contrast, the past 30 years have seen more technological innovation in navigation than the previous 300 years, or maybe 3,000 years. The navigation of my youth valued practice and practical experience over almost everything else. Today, mastering the newest technology quickly and effectively is more essential. To do it well requires a good grasp of algebra and geometry, digital interfaces and the ability to adjust to changing software.

That sort of change has played itself out across every occupation from fast food cook and ranch hand to plumber and bricklayer, to nursing and physical therapy. This doesn't mean experience is unimportant. Polanyi's Paradox makes clear that in human knowledge, "we know more than we can tell." That is, experience still matters. But today, formal education is much more important than at any time before. It will become increasingly important in the decades ahead.

In 2022, about half of jobs required post-secondary education, most of which require at least a four-year degree. The nation's top researchers on these issues forecast that by 2030, 72 percent of jobs will require training past high school, with most of it clustered at the four-year degree level. This forecast is entirely consistent with the past half century of occupational and educational change. None of this is controversial among economists. Even strong critics of current higher education markets conclude that demand for education will grow.

This growth in demand for education does not require some rapid change in technology. Even a period of slower technological advancement — which seems unlikely — will do little to reduce the demand for better educated workers. So what does this mean for individuals and places?

For young people the answer is pretty clear. Today, you can get a job without post-

secondary education training. It might pay reasonably well, and give you lots of experience. Just don't expect that job to last as a career that will span five decades. Somewhere, in a business or laboratory, someone else is trying to find ways to eliminate labor costs in your industry.

Neither should you expect significant wage growth over your career. Real wages for non-college graduates peak in the early 30s, and decline thereafter. In contrast, college graduates tend to see real wage increases until retirement.

Fortunately, educational attainment is growing in most of the nation. At the current rate, the demand for educated workers nationwide will outpace supply. This will maintain, if not widen the college wage gap. It will also increase political pressure to increase the immigration of better-educated workers.

For young people, I think the evidence points heavily towards continuing education after high school. I recognize there are loud voices in the state saying "you don't need to go to college." I think these voices are terribly misinformed, or they have the interests of someone other than the student in mind. It is easy to find examples of happy, successful people without a college degree. Most of life doesn't depend on career or financial success.

Still, for young people who want a path to middle class earnings, there are few pathways other than college. The good news is that the cheapest time to attend college, or any other type of post-high school education, is right after high school. That is also the time when that additional school has the largest lifetime benefit to both earnings and job security. This is the message kids need in elementary, middle and high school. Any other message is just not supported by the evidence.

Hope in face of grim outlook

By TRUDY RUBIN
The Philadelphia Inquirer
Tribune News Service

Trudy Rubin



Almost everything I hope for when it comes to foreign policy in 2024 seems outlandishly Pollyanna-ish. But a person has the right to dream, don't they? So here goes.

I hope that Ronald Reagan will pay a supernatural New Year's visit to Washington, to enlighten MAGA isolationists on how Vladimir Putin is brilliantly playing them and Donald Trump. (Maybe this hope is based on just rewatching Cary Grant in that great Christmas classic, "The Bishop's Wife," in which he comes to Earth to rescue a failing family.)

Reagan — for all his weak spots — understood how to play hardball with the Kremlin and would be astonished at the blindness of his current GOP confreres. Reagan would never have embraced Trump's delusions that he could hand Ukraine over to Putin without strengthening the Russian dictator in his dangerous belief that America is a spent global power.

In case Reagan's ghost doesn't materialize, I'm also hoping President Joe Biden finally grasps that he must enable Ukraine to destroy Russian forces this year — before the GOP delivers Kyiv to Putin. Biden deserves kudos for helping Kyiv hold off Moscow's superior forces for two years, but the slow drip of U.S. aid has left Ukraine's ground forces in a stalemate.

Yet, Ukraine's daring fighters have scored dramatic successes against Russia's Black Sea navy; last week they destroyed a Russian ship at a port in occupied Crimea. Early 2024 is the moment for Biden to finally deliver the long-range ATACMS missiles he keeps refusing, as well as the F-16s and everything else Kyiv needs to push the Russians out of Crimea and ensure their defeat.

I am hoping that sane Senate Republicans and Democrats come up with a desperately needed formula for asylum reform on the southern border, but, in my dreams, it shouldn't be tied to Ukraine aid.

Meantime, I am hoping (but not hopeful) that the government of Israel's highly unpopular Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will fall. Otherwise, the Israeli leader's policies are likely to drag his country into a disastrous reoccupation of Gaza and ensure that most Israeli hostages are killed in the fighting while laying waste to the entire Gaza Strip.

Yes, Israel needs to punish the Hamas terrorists for their heinous attack on Oct. 7. Yet the current war strategy is

unlikely to destroy Hamas' vast underground tunnel network or catch its top leaders, even as it kills thousands of Palestinian civilians.

Even if Biden puts more pressure on Netanyahu to end the war sooner, I fear he will refuse. As his many Israeli critics point out, the longer the war extends, the longer Netanyahu can avoid taking responsibility for the government's prewar security failures. And the longer he can stave off his multiple trials for corruption.

Not only do Netanyahu's policies undermine his country's future security, but they dash any hope that this brutal war can lead to a diplomatic formula that addresses the broader issues that underlie the fighting — the political future of the Palestinian people or even the future of the Gaza Strip.

Most of all, however, I'm hoping a majority of U.S. voters in 2024 will recognize that, like the emperor in the old fairy tale, the wannabe dictator Trump "has nothing on" except his ego. When it comes to foreign policy, he failed miserably on almost every issue as president.

Openly admiring dictators, he was fooled by Putin and by North Korea's Kim Jong Un — who built up his nuclear arsenal even as Trump bragged of the "love letters" between them. Trump's policy on China, based only on raising tariffs, failed to make any progress on wider security issues.

It was Trump who signed the surrender agreement with the Taliban. Trump's Mideast policies wrongly assumed that the Palestinian political issue could be ignored indefinitely. His proposed draconian trade tariffs would cost American jobs, raise prices, and further antagonize allies.

Putin is openly rooting for a GOP victory in 2024 because he expects Trump's global policies will undermine democracies around the world and strengthen dictators like him. I hope his expectations will be proven categorically wrong.

Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Readers may write to her at: *Philadelphia Inquirer*, P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, PA 19101, or by email at trubin@phillynews.com.

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Midwestern meat lockers thrive

By **CHRISTOPHER VONDRACEK**
Star Tribune
Tribune News Service

CONGER, Minnesota — This tiny farm town near the Iowa border has lost the bank, cafe and hardware store through the years.

The bar remains, for obvious reasons, as does the local meat locker.

“We’ve grown every year since 2004,” said Darcy Johnson, who co-owns Conger Meat Market with her husband, Jeremy.

That was the year they took helm of the shop from the family who’d run the place since 1935. The Johnsons possessed no meat-processing experience but bought the recipes along with the building.

The ye olde shop kept selling prized wieners, ring bologna, summer sausage and special dinner-plate cuts of meat until the pandemic “blew it up exponentially,” Johnson said.

When grocery stores ran bare of bacon, the market’s phone rang off the hook from farmers and customers alike well beyond Conger’s 146-person population.

Almost four years later, there’s still a brisk demand, as meat-eaters across America are looking for locally sourced options in a big-box world. That’s especially true around the holidays, when families and friends gather for extravagant feasts and can pin down their argumentative uncle on the price of a quarter-beef.

If you’re interested in buying meat in bulk to stock your freezer and save some money — or if you’re just interested in eating more farm-to-table fare — here’s advice on where to start from meat mavens:

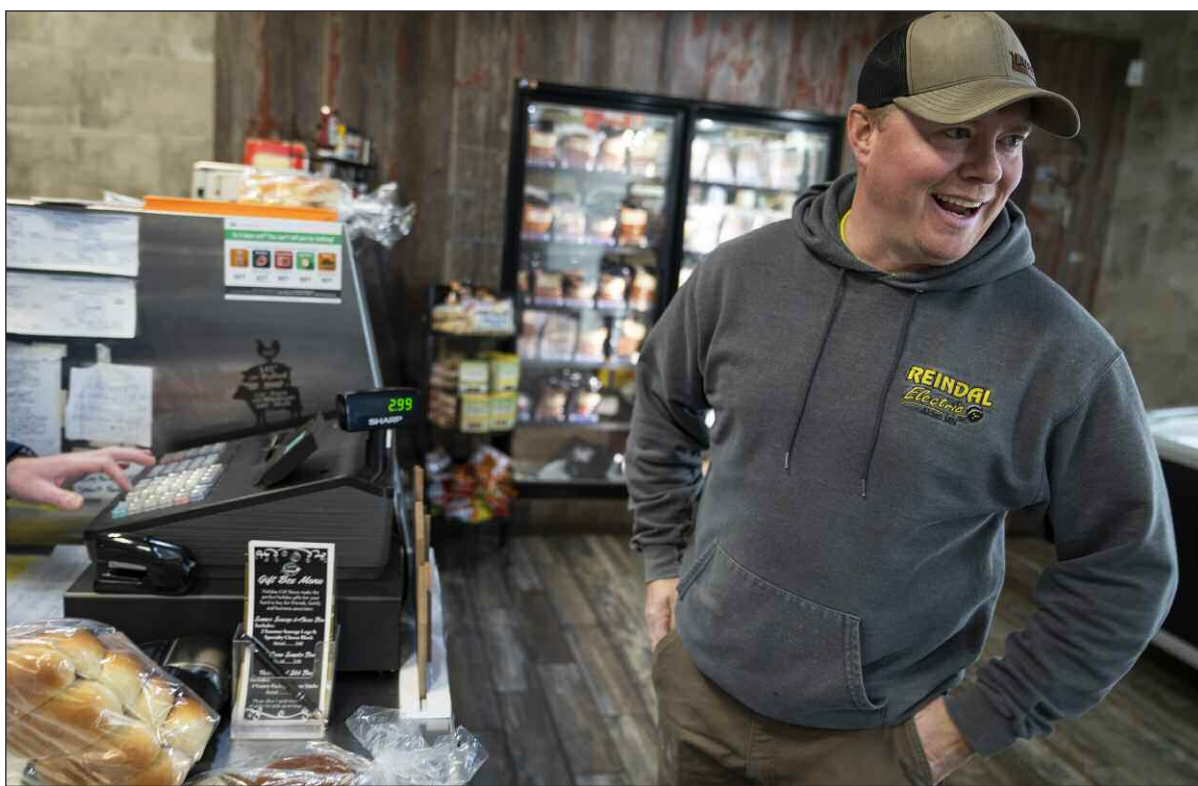
Find your source

The rationale for choosing a local meat locker can vary as widely as flavors of smoked beef sticks.

Some came after the pandemic’s supply-chain fragility. Others desire keeping dollars local. Still more want the wagyu beef grown 2 miles south of Conger behind a hoar-frosted fence-line.

Darcy Johnson said there are a few farmers a month that have cattle and pork ready all the time. She’ll liaise with them to schedule animal deliveries as at the meat market; she’s usually selling about a month ahead of time.

Butchers might crack jokes about PETA informants as they



Tribune News Service/Minneapolis Star Tribune/Leila Navidi

Greg Ladwig buys some meat, bread and cheese Dec. 11 at Conger Meat Market in Conger, Minnesota. Almost four years after the coronavirus pandemic shutdowns, there’s still a brisk demand at Midwestern meat lockers as meat-eaters across America are looking for locally sourced options in a big-box world.

give you a tour, but lockers are slaughtering animals, and if they don’t do so sanitarily, that’s a big no-no. In Conger, an inspector with the U.S. Department of Agriculture watches animals pre- and post-mortem.

“There’s a lot of trust involved,” Jeremy Johnson said.

If folks want to skip the locker retail altogether, they can go straight to a farmer themselves. Many community supported agriculture (CSA) farms can sell cuts of meat — or that half-a-hog — straight from their website.

Choose an animal

Now that you know where you’re placing your order, you need to consider what, as in, what animal, what cut and how much.

At Conger, aside from that one visit from yaks, two species are generally the focus: pigs and cattle. Pork is sweet, beef savory. But there’s plenty of nuance in between, like Angus or wagyu — a Japanese breed of cattle rich in omega acids — that’s akin to a sommelier detecting hints of oak in a chardonnay.

Same with hogs. Some places, like the St. Paul Meat Shop in St. Paul, Minnesota, sell heritage-breed pigs such as red wattles, which are an entirely “different animal,” said Nick Mangigian, the shop’s retail operations director.

“If you just come in with the parameters of what you’re trying to do, we can be the matchmakers,” Mangigian said.

Spend time prowling the glass for options, too: duck, chicken, lamb or venison.

Pay for quality

The market price for Angus runs about \$3 a pound at the moment. Conger adds another \$1 for processing, aka, breaking it down into edible portions, from steaks to ground beef to soup bones. The market boxes up the meat for pick-up or delivery (even to the Twin Cities).

With a quarter-beef weighing around 250 pounds, that \$1,000 might seem hefty. But 1 pound of meat generally feeds four people, so this food could last an average-size family into March Madness and beyond. But you can split the

cost (and meat) with friends to ease the sticker-shock.

You also might want to consider buying another freezer if you don’t already have one, as you’ll have quite a lot of meat to keep fresh (unless you’re interested in canning). That’ll cost you at least \$100.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s retail report, boneless rib roast at the supermarket ran generally below \$20 a pound this past month. That cut was more expensive at the St. Paul and Conger shops.

But the independent butcher is not purchasing in bulk. Plus, the meat is hand-cut, often on-site. In Conger, the team breaks down about five to six animals a day. They all chip in, deboning, grinding or packaging.

On a Monday three weeks ago, Luverne Brune said he’d been grinding hamburger for a couple of decades.

“It’s a lot easier now than in the old days,” said Brune, hefting a blue tub of pink meat.

Take a cut

For cattle, flank steaks are the

abdomen. Chuck is shoulder. In pork, there’s spare ribs and back bacon. Jerky, for example, comes from the “round,” or the hindquarters.

“Honestly, you can’t do a lot else with it,” Jeremy Johnson said. “It does most of the work.”

Prime rib and rib-eye both come from the rib. But if you’re thinking of the massive stack attached to Fred Flintstone’s vehicle, that’s probably a bone-in rib.

Mangigian rattles off the steer’s anatomy, noting synonymous terms like the Americans’ “sirloin cap” as the picanha in Brazil. Some customers ask for offal (organ meats) for stews.

“The chuck tender is not very tender,” Mangigian said. “But the teres major is pretty tender, and it gets a lot more blood flow than a filet mignon.”

Butchers will also smoke, age or season the meat. At Conger, they’ll age the beef for 14 days. To demonstrate, Jeremy Johnson pushed back the thick door of the freezer, where pink carcasses dangled from harnesses.

“There’s actually 40 beef hanging in the cooler,” he said. “What we harvest today, we’ll cut two weeks from today.”

In Conger, there’s a small ramp out back for the hogs and cattle dropped off during the day, plus the glistening retail center out front, where glass cases carry stacks of fat, red steaks and jerky.

Preparation for the holiday season involved roughly 1,000 pounds of aged prime rib.

“If you’re looking to fill your freezer with locally raised beef and pork, a lot of them will call us,” Darcy Johnson said. “I just reassure them: I only buy from farmers I know.”

Larry Hegel, a retiree from nearby Emmons, Minnesota, said his own parents used to shop at the Conger market, which he and his wife now frequent.

Meat lockers aren’t all the same, but they share a butcher’s ethos in bridging a gap for the customer. Mangigian said he just wants to “facilitate that relationship” between farmers and consumers.

“More and more people don’t have a connection to a farm anymore,” Darcy Johnson said. “We’re lucky in this area. We’re surrounded by very successful cattle and pork producers.”

Sentiment is stable

By **ERIN ROBINSON**
Purdue Ag News

U.S. farmers’ sentiment changed little in December compared to the preceding month.

The Purdue University-CME Group Ag Economy Barometer recorded a reading of 114, just one point lower than a month earlier. Both sub-indices of the barometer, the Index of Current Conditions and the Index of Future Expectations, also fell one point below their respective November readings. The Current Conditions Index for December was 112, while the Future Expectations Index was 115. All three indices were weaker than in December 2022, with the Ag Economy Barometer falling 10% below a year earlier. Additionally, the current and future indices were 17% and 6%, respectively, below last year. Looking ahead to 2024, U.S. farmers inflation expectations are markedly lower than they were at the start of 2023. The December Ag Economy Barometer survey was conducted from December 4-8, 2023.

In December, farmers perceived continued improvement in their farms’ financial performance as the Farm Financial Performance Index rose by 2 points compared to a month earlier. Since late summer, the index has climbed 11 points and was 21 points higher than in May when the index reached its low point for the year. This month’s improvement in the financial performance index coincided with USDA’s upward revision in late November of their forecast for 2023 net farm income. Although USDA still forecasts a sharp drop in net farm income from 2022’s record high level, the November estimate for 2023’s inflation-adjusted net farm income was \$10 billion higher than the forecast USDA issued on August 31.

Inflation expectations are markedly lower

The Farm Capital Investment Index was virtually unchanged in December, holding at a reading of 43, just one point above the previous month. Respondents who said that now is a good time to make large investments in their farm operation pointed to “higher dealer inventories” and “strong cash flows” as key factors to support this perspective. Although the percentage of respondents choosing “strong cash flows” as a reason to invest rebounded from last month, it remained less popular than in July and August. On the other hand, the percentage of producers in December citing “higher dealer inventories” as a primary reason to invest was more than double the percentage who felt that way in July.

High input costs continue to be the primary source of concern for U.S. farmers. However, over the course of the year, there was a marked shift regarding producers’ apprehensions. In January, only 16% of farmers in the barometer survey pointed to the risk of “lower crop and/or livestock prices” as one of their biggest concerns. This changed as 2023 unfolded, and by December, just over one-fourth of respondents (26%) said the risk of lower prices for crops and livestock was a big concern. The other major concern for the upcoming year cited by producers was “rising interest rates,” chosen this month by 24% of survey respondents. The December survey queried farmers regarding

their expectations for both consumer inflation and prime interest rates in the upcoming year. Producers’ inflation expectations have moderated since December 2022. A year ago, 50% of the producers anticipated consumer inflation in the upcoming year to be 6% or higher, with just 13% indicating they expected inflation to be less than 3%. Those results sharply contrast with responses received this December. In this year’s survey, 13% of producers said they expect inflation in the upcoming year to be 6% or higher with 70% of respondents looking for inflation in 2024 to be less than 4%. Concerning interest rates, about one-third (34%) of respondents said they look for interest rates to decline in the upcoming year, with an additional 22% expecting the prime rate to remain unchanged in the upcoming year.

Both the long and short-run farmland value indices experienced moderate declines in December. The Short-Term Farmland Value Index fell 4 points to a reading of 121 while the long-term index declined 2 points to 149. Compared to a year ago, the short-term index was down 3 points while the long-term index was 9 points higher than in December 2022. The moderation in producers’ interest rate expectations since late 2022 could help explain the relative improvement in the long-term farmland value index.

Read the full Ag Economy Barometer report at purdue.ag/agbarometer.

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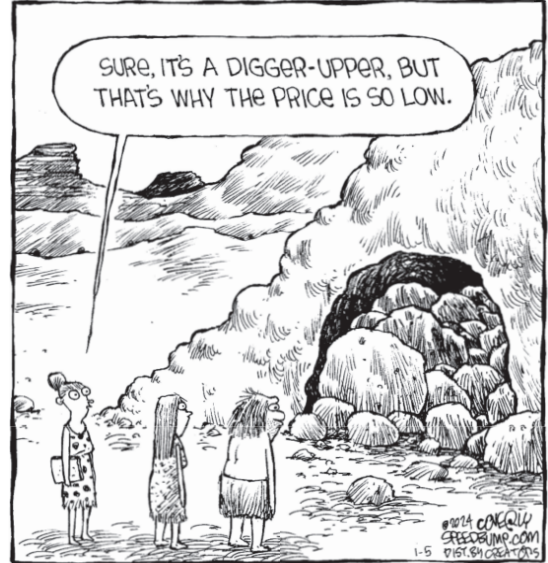
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Forcing or nonforcing?

Below are four unrelated bidding sequences. In each case, you are to decide whether the last bid in the sequence is forcing (compelling partner to bid again) or nonforcing (allowing partner to pass). A bid that merely invites partner to bid again should be treated as nonforcing.

Opener
1. 1♠
2♥
2. 1♥
2♣
3. 1♥
2♦
4. 1♥
3♣

Responder
2♣
3♣
1♠
2♦
2♣
2♦

1. **Nonforcing.** Responder has indicated 10 or more points by going into the two-level in a new suit, but he has now said that unless opener has significant extra values, or greater length in the two suits he has bid, he believes a partscore in clubs is the best contract. Opener is thus warned that to continue bidding with a minimum hand will almost surely get the partnership overboard. It follows that if responder has a game-going hand, he should find some bid other than three clubs at his second turn. A typical hand for responder in this sequence might be: ♠7 ♥13 ♦K82 ♣AQ109752.

2. **Forcing.** This is in keeping with the general principle that when responder names a new suit, it is a forcing bid. Thus, in the given auction, both one spade and two diamonds are forcing. Note that opener's two club bid — because it is a change of suit by opener as distinguished from a change of suit by responder — is not forcing (responder could pass with six or seven points and a preference for clubs). Only a rebid of three clubs (a jump-shift) by opener would be forcing.

3. **Forcing.** Here, because opener has not limited his point count, it would not make much sense that responder — who has promised upward of 10 points — could pass. Further bidding will be needed to determine whether the partnership has enough points for game, and whether the game is in a suit or notrump.

4. **Forcing.** Three clubs promises well above a minimum opening, since opener, with no assurance of a fit in any suit, has voluntarily climbed into the nine-trick level. The bid shows roughly 17 points or more. Opener should have at least five hearts and four clubs but could easily have greater length in either or both suits.

Tomorrow: Heads I win, tails you lose.
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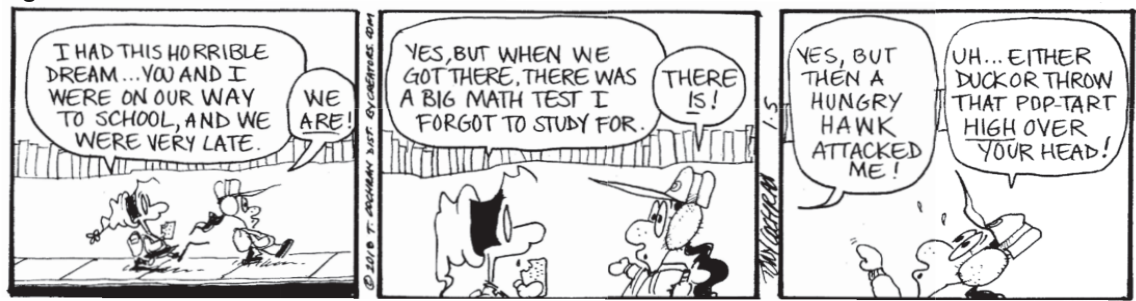
Peanuts



Rose is Rose



Agnes



Hi and Lois



Between Friends



Blondie



Snuffy Smith



Beetle Bailey



1-5 CRYPTOQUIP

L V T P O J I V P C D A J O T I J Y U J R
U K U H C N V J H D M H T N P D H ' R
S T K D H J P U I U Y H U D S O A R J N ?
V J M M D M .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: COMMEMORATIVE IRANIAN COIN RELEASED FOR A HUNDRED-YEAR ANNIVERSARY: THE RIAL OF THE CENTURY.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals G

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

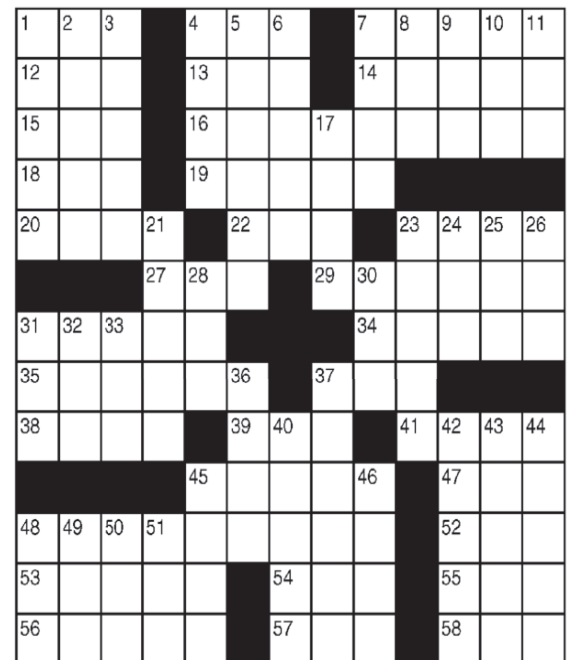
ACROSS
1 Fella
4 Cowboys' org.
7 Spanish resort isle
12 Literary collection
13 Flamenco cheer
14 Got along
15 Glacial
16 Beyond control
18 Eastern "way"
19 Poker pot
20 Whirled
22 "Spring ahead" hrs.
23 Periodontist's concern
27 Online chats, briefly
29 Puccini works
31 Supreme Court Justice Kagan
34 City in Provence
35 Blockage
37 "Tasty!"
38 Long tale
39 Past
41 Con job

DOWN
1 Entices
2 Open a tooth-paste tube
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4 Cranny
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Yesterday's answer 1-5



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The Commercial Review/Andrew Balko

Weaving through

JCHS freshman Hallie Schwieterman splits three defenders to get to the rim in the Patriots' 59-37 win over Concrodia Lutheran on Tuesday.

Pearson ...

Continued from page 8
Something that excites Pearson about competing in college is the opportunity to compete in different events. At the high school level, the only jumping events are long and high jump. Events like the triple jump and the standing long jump will provide Pearson with a variety of options to try out and see what she is best at.

"I'm excited to just try things out," Pearson said. "If I get to do them, it's OK. If I don't get to do them it's OK too. It's just having the

freedom to try new things, instead of doing the same thing every single day."

For now, Pearson gets to focus on her indoor and outdoor seasons and enjoy the final go-around without being worried about being recruited and planning for the future.

"I think this past year, just how much fun I had during my state compared to my other two years was just huge," Pearson said. "So I really think this year, I can just find what makes me happy, and I can really just improve off of that."

Collegiate ...

Continued from page 8
**Renna Schwieterman
Jay County — 2023**

Scored 12 points in her first game off the bench since mid-November.

After the Jay County High School graduate struggled in a pair of wins for the Purdue Fort Wayne women's basketball team, she came off of the bench in a 72-46 loss to the Green Bay Phoenix on Monday.

Schwieterman started to find her stroke from distance, cashing in on four

3-point shots to tally 12 points. She also recorded two assists and one steal for the Mastodons (9-5, 3-1 Horizon).

In a 10-point win against Milwaukee on Saturday, Schwieterman only played 11 minutes while struggling to score, finishing 1-for-9 with two points. She rebounded well in the game with four boards.

Schwieterman had eight points, six rebounds and one assist in Purdue Fort Wayne's 77-43 win against Aquinas on Dec. 21.

Sports on tap

Local schedule

Today
Jay County — Girls wrestling semi-state at Rochester — 4 p.m.; Swim hosts Jay County Invitational diving — 6 p.m.; Girls basketball vs. Bluffton — 6 p.m.; JV boys wrestling at Centerville — 5 p.m.
Fort Recovery — Boys basketball vs. Versailles — 6 p.m.

Saturday, January 6
Jay County — Boys wrestling team state at Jay County — 9 a.m.; Swim hosts Jay County Invitational — 10 a.m.; Boys basketball (including freshman) at Adams Central — 5 p.m.
Fort Recovery — Girls bowling vs. Coldwater at

Speedway Lanes — 9:15 a.m.; Swim at Jay County Invitational — 10 a.m.; Boys bowling vs. Coldwater at Speedway Lanes — 1 p.m.; Boys basketball vs. Botkins — 6 p.m.

TV sports

Today
5:30 p.m. — High school basketball: Thorton vs. Richmond Heights (ESPN2)
6 p.m. — Women's college basketball: Iowa at Rutgers (BTN)
6:30 p.m. — Men's college basketball: UConn at Butler (FS1)
7:30 p.m. — NBA: New York Knicks at Philadelphia 76ers (ESPN2)
8:30 p.m. — Men's college basketball: Illinois

at Purdue (FS1)
10:30 p.m. — Men's college basketball: Boise State at San Jose State (FS1)

Saturday
12 p.m. — Men's college basketball: North Carolina at Clemson (ESPN2); Rutgers at Iowa (BTN); DePaul at Georgetown (FS1); Mississippi State at South Carolina (CBS); La Salle at Fordham (USA)
12:30 p.m. — Men's college basketball: Kentucky at Florida (ESPN)
1 p.m. — Men's college basketball: St. John's at Villanova (FOX)
1 p.m. — Women's college basketball: Alcorn State at Jackson State (CBS)
2 p.m. — Men's college basketball: TCU at

Kansas (CBS); Providence at Creighton (FS1); Auburn at Arkansas (ESPN2); Saint Louis at George Mason (USA)
2:15 p.m. — Men's college basketball: Nebraska at Wisconsin (BTN)
3:30 p.m. — Men's college basketball: Alcorn State at Jackson State (CBS)
4 p.m. — Men's college basketball: Missouri State at Bradley (Bally Indiana); UNLV at San Diego State (CBS); George Washington at VCU (USA)
4 p.m. — Women's college basketball: Creighton at DePaul (FS1)
4:30 p.m. — NFL: Pittsburgh Steelers at Baltimore Ravens (ABC)
4:30 p.m. — Women's college basketball: Purdue at Maryland (BTN)

6 p.m. — Men's college basketball: UCF at Kansas State (ESPN2)
6 p.m. — Women's college basketball: St. John's at Providence (FS1)
7 p.m. — NBA: Boston Celtics at Indiana Pacers (Bally Indiana)
8 p.m. — Men's college basketball: Texas Tech at Texas (ESPN2); Ohio State at Indiana (FOX)
8 p.m. — AMA Supercross: Monster Energy Series (USA)
8:15 p.m. — NFL: Houston Texans at Indianapolis Colts (ABC)
9 p.m. — Men's college basketball: San Diego at Gonzaga (NBC)
10 p.m. — Men's college basketball: Cincinnati at BYU (ESPN2)

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90 SALE CALENDAR

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90 SALE CALENDAR

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Public Notice

The East Ohio Gas Company d/b/a Dominion Energy Ohio Case No. 23-0894-GA-AIR Schedule S-3, Newspaper Notice of Application by The East Ohio Gas Company d/b/a Dominion Energy Ohio for Authority to Increase Rates and Charges for its Gas Distribution Service and for Approval of an Alternate Form of Regulation.

PUCO Case Nos. 23-0894-GA-AIR, 23-0895-GA-ALT, 23-0896-GA-AAM, 23-0897-GA-ATA

Pursuant to R.C. 4909.19, The East Ohio Gas Company d/b/a Dominion Energy Ohio (DEO) gives notice that it filed an Application with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio ("Commission") on October 31, 2023, requesting authority to amend its tariffs to adjust the rates and charges for its natural gas distribution and transportation services; to make various changes to how Dominion provides distribution and transportation services to customers; and to incorporate various minor formatting and stylistic changes; and to modify its accounting methods as necessary to effectuate its Application. Dominion also applied, under R.C. Chapter 4929, for approval of an alternative rate plan to modify and extend its existing Pipeline Infrastructure Replacement ("PIR") Program and Cost Recovery Charge, Capital Expenditure Program ("CEP") Rider, Automated Meter Reading ("AMR") Cost Recovery Charge, Tax Savings Credit Rider ("TSCR"), and Transportation Migration Rider ("TMR"). The Application affects rates and charges and terms and conditions for natural gas service for all Dominion customers in each of the Ohio counties where Dominion offers service.

Anyone seeking more detailed information regarding Dominion's Application may inspect a copy of the Application, including its supporting schedules and Dominion's current and proposed rate sheets, by any of the following methods:

Visiting the offices of the Public Utilities Commission, 180 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3793;

Visiting the Commission's website at <http://dis.puc.state.oh.us>, in-putting 23-894 into the Case Lookup box, and selecting the application filed on 10/31/2023;

Visiting Dominion's website <https://www.dominionenergy.com/ohio/rates-and-tariffs>

Dominion has not filed for an increase to base rates since 2007. DEO's Application utilizes a 2023 calendar test period with a date certain at 12/31/2023 for its proposed increase in distribution revenues, and includes the following changes:

Reflect date-certain AMR, CEP and PIR plant investments in base rates
Eliminate the Transportation Service for Schools ("TSS") rate schedule, add a volumetric block to the Daily Transportation Service ("DTS") rate class, and move the CEP and PIR riders to a per bill charge for the DTS class on future rider filings.
Recover historical expenses that the Commission had authorized Dominion to defer, utilizing a shortened amortization period for recovery.

Eliminate the Transportation Migration Rider — Part A ("TMR-A") charge to certain transportation customers, along with updating the volume banking and imbalance fees.
Adjust proposed revenues to reflect approximately \$15 million per year spent on Pipeline Safety Management Programs.

Prorate a customer's fixed service fee when a bill is generated for a partial billing period during the initial and final bill periods.
Create a revenue sharing mechanism that would provide customers with a credit through the Operational Balancing Rider (historically known as Transportation Migration Rider — Part B ("TMR-B")) based on levels of certain non-traditional revenue.

The proposed changes to the basic monthly charges, monthly service charges, and non-rider delivery charges are identified in the schedules filed with the application. The schedules also list the proposed changes to Volume Banking Service fees, Gross Receipts Tax Rider, and other fees and charges, along with the elimination of the Transportation Surcredit Rider. Dominion is also proposing various revisions to non-rate terms and conditions contained in its tariffs, including modifications to the terms and conditions applicable to transportation service and Energy Choice pooling service. Dominion's current base rates were determined pursuant to the Commission's order dated October 15, 2008. Dominion's Application states that the current rates and charges do not provide a just and reasonable rate of return on Dominion's used and useful property as of December 31, 2023 (the date certain in this case). The Application further states that Dominion requires a distribution revenue increase to provide Dominion an opportunity to earn a fair return on its assets and recover its costs of operation. Any person, firm, corporation, or association may file, pursuant to section 4909.19 of the Revised Code, an objection to such proposed increased rates by alleging that such proposals are unjust and discriminatory or unreasonable. Recommendations which differ from the application may be made by the Staff of the Commission or by intervening parties or in response to such recommendations and may be adopted by the Commission.

Dominion has requested the following increases/decreases in distribution revenues for its rate classes.

| Rate Class | Proposed Distribution Revenue Increase |
|------------------|--|
| GSS-R / ECTS-R | 28.7%* |
| GSS-NR / ECTS-NR | 41.9% |
| LVGSS / LVECTS | 41.9% |
| GTS | 0.0% |
| DTS | 41.9% |
| FSS | 0.0% |

*The proposed increase for the average overall monthly bill of a DEO residential customer would be approximately 16.8% (inclusive of gas costs and riders).

CR 1-5-10-2024-HSPAXLP

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Sports

Pearson headed to Marshall



Fort Recovery High School senior Mara Pearson signed her national letter of intent to join the Marshall University track team on Dec. 23. Pictured in the front row from left are club coach Dake Patterson of Push Athletics, FRHS coach Christy Diller, Mara and FRHS assistant coach Charlie Vasey. In the back row is Mara's family: brother Clayton, sister Brooke Gaerke, brother Ross, mother Beth and father Steve.

Photo provided

Fort Recovery senior signs national letter of intent

By **ANDREW BALKO**
The Commercial Review

Mara Pearson quickly made a name for herself on the Fort Recovery track team.

After she hangs up the purple, she will have the opportunity to do it again in green.

The Fort Recovery High School senior signed her national letter of intent to compete with the Marshall University Thundering Herd track team after high school.

"It was really nice and super relieving," Pearson said. "Especially with having all the stress of evaluating what would fit me best academically, what would fit me best athletically?"

"I think it was really nice to choose this before going into the meat of my indoor meets, as well with outdoor season coming up."

Pearson found immediate success as a long jumper, reaching the state finals in her freshman year.

In her sophomore season,

Pearson broke through to medal, finishing seventh.

Her career took off during her junior season, after making the decision to stop playing basketball in favor of joining the indoor track team to get more opportunities to work on her craft. As a result, Pearson put herself in a position to be the top seed at the state meet last year, and ended up placing second by only three-quarters of an inch.

"She is relentless in terms of trying to find ways to improve," FRHS track coach Christy Diller said. "She seeks out those other avenues to try and make herself as good as she can, and that's clearly paid off in the last year."

"Sometimes that gets to be the situation where you have too many cooks in the kitchen, but she does a really nice job of assimilating all of that and focusing on the key things."

"She's already a great jumper, but I have no doubt that she'll continue to get better and better."

For Marshall, the seed was planted right after the state meet when she connected with its assistant coach according to Pearson. From there, she had a visit in the summer and that seed grew.

"Once they brought me in for a visit around August, I felt a really good connection with the team and the atmosphere," Pearson said. "I felt really comfortable with where I was and that really helped seal the deal."

Along with the connection she felt with the team, Marshall was attractive from an academic standpoint for Pearson. She currently plans on majoring in electrical engineering, a program that not all schools offer. Finding a school that fit her athletically and academically was important to her, and with updated engineering facilities, and a strong electrical engineering program helped satisfy the schooling side.

See Pearson page 7



The Commercial Review/Andrew Balko

Mara Pearson flies through the air on one of her attempts during the state finals at Jesse Owens Memorial Stadium at Ohio State University. Pearson finished second with a jump of 18 feet, 5 inches.

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Patch scores career high 11

Olivia Patch played her career high in minutes on Dec. 16.

The senior followed up the performance by setting a new career high in minutes and points.

The Fort Recovery High School graduate played 18 minutes and broke double digits in scoring for the first time in her collegiate career as the Hillsdale College Chargers took down Davenport Panthers 66-61 on Dec. 28.

Patch was 3-for-6 from the field. She was fouled on two of her buckets, giving her opportunities for three-point plays. She made two more trips to the foul line, shooting 5-

Collegiate check-up

for-7 from the stripe.

She helped fill out the rest of the stat sheet as well, ripping down six rebounds, dishing out two assists, recording a block and stealing the ball once.

In a 94-52 loss at Division I Toledo, Patch played 13 minutes, in which she snagged one board while going 0-for-2 from the floor.

See Collegiate page 7

OSU fends off Scarlet Knights

By **DAVID TRINKO**
The Lima News (Ohio)
Tribune News Service

COLUMBUS — Bruce Thornton had 24 points, Jamison Battle scored 22 and made six 3-pointers, and Ohio State held off Rutgers 76-72 on Wednesday night.

Thornton sank 9 of 15 shots and added seven assists for the Buckeyes (12-2, 2-1 Big Ten Conference), who have won four in a row while improving to 8-0 all-time at home against the Scarlet Knights (8-5, 0-2).

Battle made 8 of 12 shots, including 6 of 9 from 3-point range. Battle, a transfer from Big Ten foe Min-

nesota, has made 42 shots from beyond the arc, tops in the conference. Roddy Gayle Jr. scored all 11 of his points in the second half and grabbed seven rebounds.

Derek Simpson scored 23 on 9-for-16 shooting with two 3-pointers and eight rebounds for Rutgers. Noah Fernandes had 17 points, while Mawot Mag scored 11. Aundre Hyatt pitched in with nine points and 10 rebounds.

Battle hit his first six shots, five of them from 3-point range, and scored 17, Thornton sank his first five shots with both of his 3-pointers and scored 15.