

The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371

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Administrator returning to work

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

A Jay School Corporation administrator accused of violating students' Fourth Amendment rights in two lawsuits will return to duty following an independent legal review.

Jay Schools superintendent Jeremy Gulley in a press release issued early Wednesday afternoon said the administrator — Brad Milleman (though he is not named in the release) — will return Thursday to his position as assistant principal/dean at Jay County Junior-Senior High School.

Milleman had been on administrative leave since Jan. 19. The American Civil Liberties Union

Milleman reinstated after independent legal review into allegations in lawsuits

of Indiana filed the second lawsuit against him Jan. 18.

Also named in the suits are school nurses Rebecca Hudson and Nancy Snyder.

Jay School Corporation was not named in either suit.

The Commercial Review learned Jan. 18 that a tort

claim was filed against the school corporation in connection with the initial lawsuit against Milleman and Hudson. A tort claim is a notification of intent to pursue legal action against a government agency.

The lawsuits, filed a week apart in January, allege that

searches of female students were invasive and violated rights against unreasonable searches and seizures by the government. Among the allegations is that during searches the girls were asked to pull out the front of their bra away from their body. One of the suits alleges that through that procedure, the girl's breasts were exposed.

At the request of the school corporation, Fort Wayne law firm Burt Blee conducted a legal review of the incidents in question. The review included interviews with the employees involved and a review of documents related to the incidents, Gulley said Wednesday afternoon.

The details were presented to Jay School Board during its executive session Tuesday. The board heard from the attorneys who conducted the review and were able to ask questions.

Following the review, Gulley says in the release that he has concluded that the students' Fourth Amendment rights were not violated and that the school employees did not ask students to expose their bras or breasts.

He said Thursday that administrators have received additional training regarding school board policy, administrative guidelines and required documentation of student searches.

See Returning page 2

Concept offered



The Commercial Review/Bailey Cline

Rundell Ernstberger Associates is planning potential development of the county-owned 68 acres on the western edge of Portland. Pictured above is a concept design for housing, which would call for 76 single-family homes, eight duplexes and 154 multi-family units. The project — it would be completed in 10 phases — is estimated at a total of \$25.5 million.

Plan for 68 county's acres calls for various housing options to be developed in 10 phases

By BAILEY CLINE
The Commercial Review

A concept design for developing a portion of county-owned land has been created.

What the county will do with it, only time will tell.

Jay County Council heard an update Wednesday from Rundell Ernstberger Associates of Indianapolis about development plans of the county's 68 acres on the western edge of Portland. (The county purchased the on the north side of Votaw Street — Indiana 67 — a year ago from Christopher and Tracy Muhlenkamp for about \$1.1 million.)

Council approved a \$395,000 contract with Rundell Ernstberger Associates in September — Jay County Commissioners approved the contract a month prior — to begin planning development of the 68 acres. Wednesday marked the first major update from the company shared at a council meeting since the work began.

Rundell Ernstberger Associates partner and landscape architect Cecil Penland referenced the ongoing Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative 2.0 (READI 2.0), a statewide grant

program available to regions across Indiana. He pointed to housing as a key focus of the grant and said Rundell Ernstberger Associates has submitted information as part of the East Central region's application. He shared a presentation with council members, showing two potential development concepts for the 68 acres, emphasizing the less-condensed option as a better fit for Jay County. Both concepts would be completed in phases.

The first option calls for 76 single-family homes, eight duplexes and 154 multi-family units and is estimated at a total of \$25.5 million for all 10 phases. The project's initial phase — it's estimated at just under \$7.3 million — would involve setting up the initial framework for utilities, connecting to Industrial Drive Park's pump station and creating a primary road off Votaw Street (Indiana 67) running diagonally through the property.

Subsequent phases would include establishing another road connecting Votaw Street to the primary road, setting up more utilities, constructing various types of homes, relocating a large portion of the exist-



The Commercial Review/Bailey Cline

Rundell Ernstberger Associates partner and landscape architect Cecil Penland walks through a concept design for county-owned land during Wednesday's Jay County Council meeting. His firm was hired to develop options for the property the county bought about a year ago.

ing wetland to the north side of the property and building a boardwalk on top of it and developing a public park area.

The second option — its cost estimates and other specifica-

tions were not shared during the presentation — calls for 88 single-family homes, 14 duplexes and 409 multi-family units.

See Concept page 2

House votes for a ban of TikTok

Legislation calls for ByteDance to split from company

By ASHLEY MURRAY
States Newsroom

WASHINGTON — Citing major national security concerns, the U.S. House on Wednesday overwhelmingly passed a bill that effectively bans TikTok unless the company splits from its Chinese owner ByteDance.

The 352-65 vote occurred just a week after lawmakers introduced the bipartisan proposal and days after the powerful House Committee on Energy and Commerce unanimously advanced the legislation, an unusual speed for the 118th Congress.

The bill required a two-thirds majority because House leadership placed it on the floor under a fast-track procedure called suspension of the rules.

The legislation, dubbed the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act, now heads to the Senate, where concerns over singling out a private company in legislation may slow momentum.

"The overwhelming vote today is a strong signal to the Senate that they need to act," Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, the Washington Republican who chairs the Energy and Commerce Committee, said after the vote.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said in a statement late Wednesday morning that the body "will review the legislation when it comes over from the House."

See Ban page 2

In review

Jay County Solid Waste Management District will have recycling trailers available from 8 to 11 a.m. Saturday across from Pennville Fire Station and 9 a.m. to noon in the parking lot at 220 Lincoln St., Portland.

Weather

Jay County had a near-record high temperature of 72 degrees Wednesday. The low was 46.

Temperatures are dropping, with a low in the lower 30s expected tonight. Skies will be mostly sunny Saturday with a high in the upper 50s.

See page 2 for an extended outlook.

In review

The Asbury United Methodist Church Easter egg hunt and activities that were originally scheduled for Saturday will instead be held from 2 to 4 p.m. March 30.

Coming up

Saturday — A look at progress on projects at the JCHS football field.

Tuesday — Photo coverage of this weekend's Easter egg hunt at Persimmon Ridge.



Concept ...

Continued from page 1
In mid-December, Rundell Ernstberger Associates hosted focus groups and an open house seeking public input for the project, drawing about 54 attendees overall. They included a range of community members, such as local city and county government employees and officials, local developers, adjacent business or property owners. Participants were asked questions about what they would like to see come out of the project. They also utilized visual surveys and questionnaires. According to Rundell Ernstberger Associates's presentation Wednesday, attendees requested various ideas for the property, including more local eateries, multiple-story buildings with residential areas or additional office space and more retail businesses or grocery stores. Penland pointed out that participants also noted a need for subsidized housing in Jay County but voiced desires to create more market-rate housing for young professionals. There were also requests for more park space, according to Rundell Ernstberger Associates's presentation, with additional trails and a water feature at the top of the wish list. Penland also noted earlier in the presentation he has been coordinating plans to set up a public forum and rehash the information with local residents. Penland suggested the date could be sometime later this month or in April. Also Wednesday, council members Dave Haines, Faron Parr, Randy May, Jeanne Houchins, Towell and Bracy, absent Matt Minnich, approved \$30,000 in additional appropriations for Pennville Park Board's revitalization project. Dollars will be split from economic development income tax (EDIT), American Rescue Plan and wind farm economic development dollars. (Pennville Park Board is looking into an agreement with the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority and Patronicity, a crowdfunding business that would match up to \$50,000 toward the project for a \$2,500 administration fee. Patronicity requires funding to split from various sources.) Jay County Commissioners agreed in February to contribute an additional \$5,000 from EDIT funds for Pennville Economic Development in order to meet the grant requirements. Pennville Park Board is looking into a three-phase plan for its park, starting with a project estimated at \$100,800 that involves removing the park's baseball diamond and converting it into three soccer fields, renovating basketball courts on the north side of the park and installing a pump track. Also, council agreed, with Towell dissenting, to move forward with allotting \$15,000 in EDIT dollars as a portion of Arts Place's match for the Our Town Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The organization was approved for a \$75,000 matching grant through NEA for "master regional arts planning and collaborations," according to Arts Place executive director Carolyn Carducci. The grant will work in three phases. Initial plans include designing and constructing a portable art studio to be used by any organization in Jay County, Blackford County or Auglaize County, Ohio. The next phase is meant to identify the arts and their location in Jay County. The third phase will serve to create a regional arts master plan for Jay County. (The plan won't be specific to Arts Place and may be used by anyone.) Per the grant, Arts Place is raising \$25,000 from each of its served counties in order to meet the NEA grant's matching funds. Carducci noted The Portland Foundation has allocated \$10,000 toward Jay County's match. In other business, council: •Heard about a potential resolution to allow council members to participate virtually in meetings. (As long as a governing body member can be seen and heard, they are considered present per the resolution, according to county attorney Wes Schemenaur.) Following state guidelines and ideas lined out in an identical resolution passed by Portland City Council, the resolution would allow a council member to attend up to two consecutive meetings virtually, with a few exceptions. •Made the following additional appropriations: \$6,000 in fees for court-appointed doctors and psychological evaluations; \$2,500 for a new scanner to upload records online in Jay County Recorder's Office; \$2,280 for pauper counsel; and \$1,275 for a new laptop in Jay County Prosecutor's Office.

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CR almanac

Table with 5 columns: Saturday 3/16, Sunday 3/17, Monday 3/18, Tuesday 3/19, Wednesday 3/20. Includes weather icons and temperature forecasts (e.g., 57/35, 45/27, 37/23, 42/26, 49/32).

Lotteries

Table listing lottery games: Powerball, Mega Millions, Hoosier, Daily Four, Ohio, and their respective estimated jackpots.

Markets

Table listing market prices for various commodities like Cooper Farms, Fort Recovery, ADM Montpelier, POET Biorefining, The Andersons, etc.

Today in history

In 1917, Russia's last emperor, Tsar Nicholas II, abdicated after the February Revolution. In 1933, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was born in Brooklyn, New York. In the 1970s, arguing before the court in landmark cases such as Frontiero v. Richardson and Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld. In 2016, Portland Park Board hired Missy Bader as the manager of Portland Water Park.

Citizen's calendar

Table listing community events for Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, including school board meetings and council sessions.

Some counts are dismissed

By TAMAR HALLERMAN and BILL RANKIN
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Tribune News Service
ATLANTA — Fulton Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee on Wednesday struck down six counts of the August indictment that

alleged felonies by former President Donald Trump and 18 others, saying they lacked sufficient detail. In a nine-page ruling, McAfee dismissed counts lodged against Trump, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, lawyer John

Eastman, former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and attorneys Ray Smith and Bob Cheeley. The indictment handed up in August contained 41 felony counts; there are now 35 counts that remain. Trump is still facing 10

felony counts, down from the 13 originally filed against him. Prosecutors can re-indict with another grand jury to correct the flaws in the six struck counts or ask an appeals court to review McAfee's decision.

Returning ...

Continued from page 1
Milleman will receive that training upon his return, and the release added that other "relevant staff" may as well. "As this is a personnel matter subject to ongoing litigation, appropriate information will be communicated to the extent, and at such time, as is consistent with the School Corporation's confidentiality obligations," Guley said in the release. "We are committed to maintaining a safe and secure learning environment, while preserving due process rights of our students and employees." Following Milleman's return, all administrators will return to their regular positions, Guley said. Assistant principal for curriculum and instruction James Myers, who

was dean from 2014 through 2022, had stepped in as dean again on an interim basis and director of e-learning Katie Clark had been reassigned to the junior-senior high building to provide additional support. (In addition to the administrative leave, junior high assistant principal and assistant athletics director Chris Brown left Jay Schools for another job in January, leaving the junior-senior high short-staffed.) The first lawsuit, filed Jan. 9 in U.S. District Court Northern Division of Indiana (Fort Wayne), alleges that Milleman removed a seventh grader from class and took her to the nurse's office, where she was ordered to pull up her shirt to expose the waistband of her pants and her midriff and then lift up her sweatshirt and shirt and pull the

bottom of her bra away from her body. The second suit, filed in the same court Jan. 16, details two alleged incidents involving a sophomore girl being asked to pull down her shirt to show her bra straps as well as to pull out the front of her bra and shake it out. The complaint says doing so exposed her breasts to Milleman and Snyder. "The searches being conducted at Jay County Jr. Sr. High School are completely unreasonable and have caused emotional harm to these young girls," said Ken Falk, legal director at the ACLU of Indiana, in a press release following the filing of the second suit. "Schools are not constitutional dead zones and we are hopeful that the court will hold these school officials accountable."

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Felony arrests

Domestic battery
A Dunkirk man was arrested Wednesday for domestic battery. James M. Starr, 51, 366 W. Washington St., was preliminarily charged

with a Level 6 felony for the alleged crime, as well as a Class B misdemeanor for disorderly conduct. He was being held on a \$4,000 bond in Jay County Jail.

Ban ...

Despite Biden's support of the bill, his re-election campaign joined TikTok last month as a way to reach Gen Z voters. While broad support swells from both sides of the aisle, the legislation has been met by fierce opposition from TikTok users — totaling some 170 million in the U.S. — and from a coalition of young House lawmakers. "Not only am I a 'no' on tomorrow's TikTok ban bill, I'm a 'Hell no,'" Rep. Maxwell Frost, a Democrat representing Florida, said at a Tuesday press conference where he questioned which companies are large enough to acquire TikTok. Frost is the youngest member of Congress at 27.

Leaders on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said they are "united" in concern about a platform that has "enormous power to influence and divide Americans whose parent company ByteDance remains legally required to do the bidding of the Chinese Communist Party." "We were encouraged by today's strong bipartisan vote in the House of Representatives and look forward to working together to get this bill passed through the Senate and signed into law," committee chair Mark Warner, a Virginia Democrat, and vice chairman Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican, said in a joint statement. President Joe Biden, whose administration had a hand in crafting the bill, is expected to sign the measure if the upper chamber approves it.

Advertisement for Gun & Knife Show at Delaware County Fairgrounds, March 16-17. Includes details about admission (\$6) and contact information.

Large advertisement for The Graphic Printing Company, featuring a graphic of a newspaper roll and text: "GREAT SELECTION of newspaper roll ends FOR SALE! Stop by our office or call TODAY! The Graphic Printing Company The Commercial Review 309 West Main Street Portland, IN 47371 260-726-8141 Office Hours: Tuesday - Friday 10 am - 4 pm"

Library offering brackets

March Madness is here. Jay County Public Library's annual March Madness bracket competition begins in full swing Monday. This year brackets are available for both men's and women's basketball.

Brackets will be available starting Monday and need to be filled out and returned by 11 a.m. Thursday.

The people with the most accurate bracket for men's and women's basketball will each win a \$25 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of March Madness.

Events scheduled

Red-tail Land Conservancy in Muncie has several events scheduled for the spring and early summer.

The conservancy will host a seed swap and giveaway at Minnetrista on Saturday.

The organization, which is based at 125 E. Charles St., Muncie, will also hold an Earth Day Tree Planting at McVey Memorial Forest in Randolph County on April 20, a Wildflower Workshop at Phyllis & Frank Yuhas Woods on April 30 and a Wildflower Celebration at Yuhas Woods on May 5, and a Water Ecology and Quality Workshop at Munsee Woods on May 29.

For more information, visit fortheland.org/events.

Taking Note

Deadline extended

Ball State University has extended its national enrollment confirmation deadline for 2024-25 to June 1.

The university made the change after an announcement from the U.S. Department of Education about a delay in institutions receiving student financial aid information through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It has resulted in financial aid packaged offers being delayed as well, with eBSU planning to send award letters in mid- to late-April.

"Pursuing higher education and achieving a degree can have a transformative impact on one's life. Therefore, it's crucial not to rush such a significant decision," said Paula Luff, vice president for enrollment planning and management at Ball State, in a press release. "This extension provides students and their families the opportunity and flexibility to carefully evaluate their financial aid options and make well-informed choices."

For more information, email askus@bsu.edu.

Seeking samples

Purdue University is looking for farms from which it can take soil samples for the Diverse Corn Belt project.

The project is a five-year effort that will explore impacts of diversified farming systems beyond corn and soybeans in Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. It is seeking "concrete options for diversification and understanding the agronomic, economic, social, infrastructure and policy changes that could make them viable."

Conventionally farmed, no-till and pasture fields are being sought for the research.

For more information, email asangota@purdue.edu.

Hosting market

Minnetrista of Muncie is hosting an indoor farmers market on Saturday.

Indoor markets are held from 9 a.m. to noon at the Center Building at Minnetrista, 1200 N. Minnetrista Parkway, Muncie. Participating vendors accept SNAP, WIC, IU Health Bucks and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

More indoor markets events are slated for April 6 and April 20.

For more information, visit minnetrista.net.

Daughter kept out of the loop



Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: Three years ago, our 40-year-old daughter, "Tanya," suddenly accused me of abusing her during her childhood. She also accused my husband, her dad, of enabling this abuse. Abby, the abuse never happened!

Could some therapist have planted these ideas in her head? Tanya has problems with alcohol (which she blames on me) and has been divorced from two wonderful men who she claims also abused her. She can't maintain friendships with women because as soon as they do something that makes Tanya mad, she cuts them off.

Our other daughter, "Nadia," is three years younger. She doesn't have an alcohol problem and has a great husband and a toddler. Tanya has cut her off as well and has never met her brother-in-law or nephew. Nadia says her childhood was idyllic. Neither child lives near us.

My husband is living with incurable cancer, which Tanya knew before she excommunicated us. I don't know if I should inform her when her father dies, or let her find out through others on Facebook. My husband and I and Nadia don't use Facebook, but relatives do, and I am sure they will make it known.

I am torn about this. Tanya has hurt all of us repeatedly for

so many years that we all agree that life is more pleasant without her around us. However, I'm afraid not telling her will cause more problems. Advice? — DAMNED BOTH WAYS IN ILLINOIS

DEAR DAMNED: You stated that Tanya has "excommunicated" you, her father and her sister. She appears to be an angry and bitter woman who needs to find someone other than herself to blame for her unhappiness. She's unlikely to improve without professional help or an alcohol intervention.

When your husband passes, I'm hoping you will write her a brief letter explaining that you want her to know her father loved her. Give her the date of his passing, his obituary and the location of his final resting place. If you do, your conscience should be clear. What, if anything, she decides to do with that information is up to her.

Birth announcements

Maxwell

Alexander Butch, a son, was born Jan. 26 at St. Vincent Randolph to Brittlynne Maxwell of

Portland. He weighed 7 pounds, 11 ounces.

Grandparents are Nick and Gabrielle Maxwell of Portland.

Alexander Butch Maxwell's great-grandparents are Richard Maxwell, Lorie Maxwell, Jim Walker and Christi Walker.

Community Calendar

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

Today

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.

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.

CINCINNATUS

LEAGUE — Will meet Friday, March 15, at the Harmony Café in Portland.

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.

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.

Sunday

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 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.

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.

PORTLAND EVENING OPTIMIST CLUB — Will meet at 6 p.m. the first and third Monday of each month at Richards Restaurant.

GRAVEL HILL CEMETERY — Will host its annual meeting at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 18, at the cemetery memorial building, 650 N. 50 West, Bryant. Lot owners are urged to attend. 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.

Tuesday

BRYANT COMMUNITY CENTER EUCHRE — Will be played at 1 p.m. each Tuesday. The public is welcome.

A BETTER LIFE - BRIANNA'S HOPE — A faith-based recovery group for substance abuse. Meal starts at 6 p.m. and the meeting is from 6:30 to 8 p.m. every Tuesday at the Nazarene Fellowship Building across from the

Nazarene church, 249 E. Center St., Dunkirk. 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.

Wednesday

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

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

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

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.



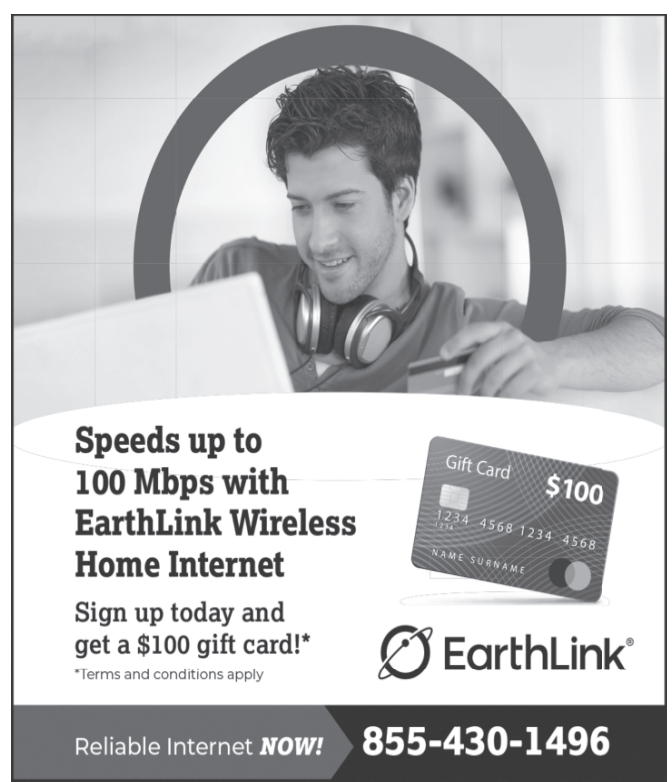
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Sudoku

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

Level: Advanced

Thursday's Solution

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

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Support the cancer society

To the editor:
The Jay County Cancer Society committee is excited to share that the organization has been supporting Jay County since 1965.

Letters to the Editor

The cancer society assists Jay County residents with prosthetics, medication, wigs and mileage to help with gas getting to and from doctor's appointments and treatments.

In 1965, we were able to assist our patients with \$200 toward their uncovered costs. Jay County has supported us so much, we are now able to help up to \$2,500.

The cancer society is funded by your contributions to United Way of Jay County, memorials and our annual cruise-in event.

Remember that 100% of the money donated to the Jay County Cancer Society remains in Jay County helping our neighbors and friends with their uninsured cancer related expenses.

Also, don't forget to get your tickets for our 2nd Annual Dueling Pianos event on Saturday, April 6, in the Bubp Building at Jay

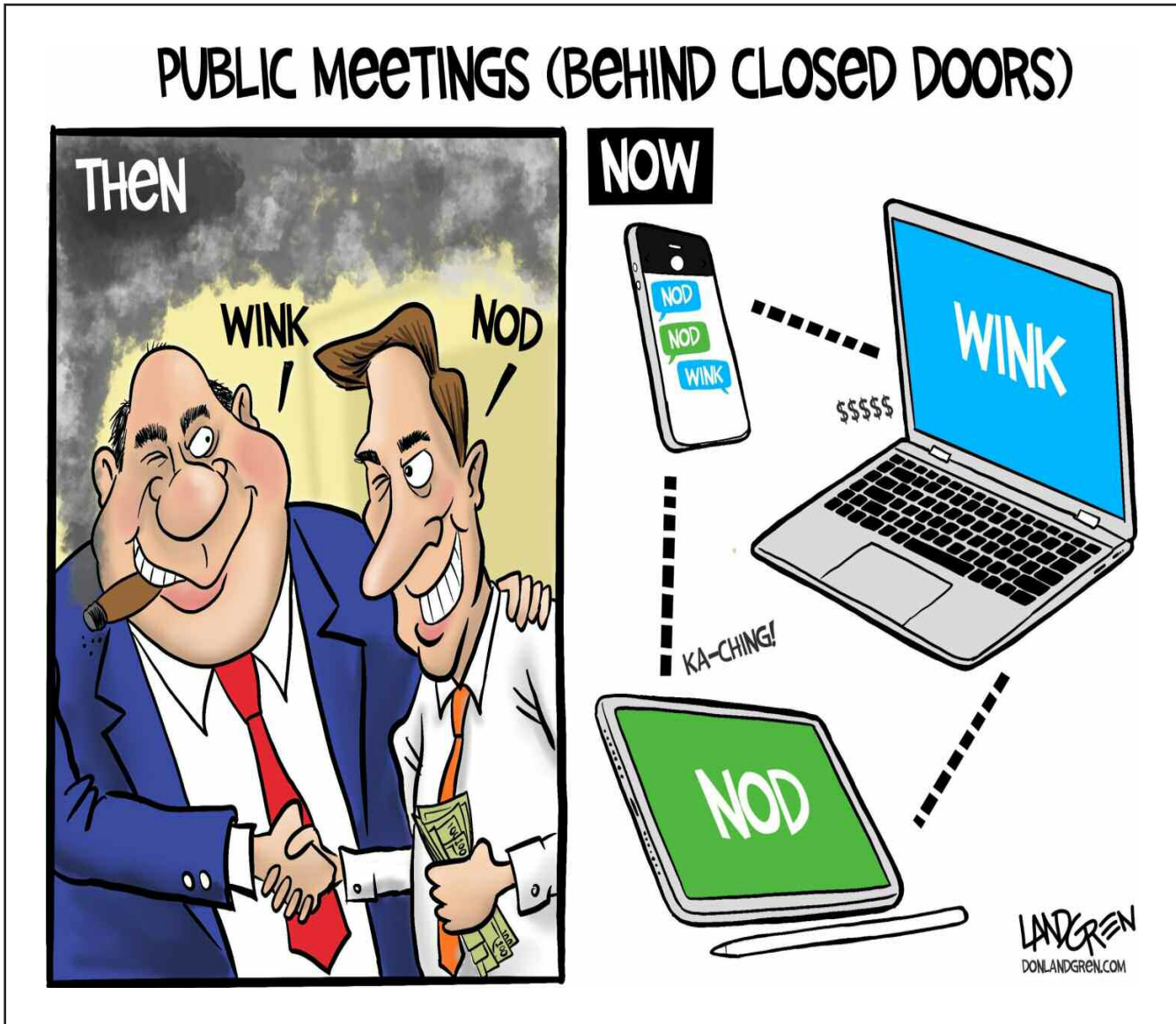
County Fairgrounds. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Come early to enjoy several local food trucks.

Reserved Tickets are sold out. Get your general admission tickets for \$25 now, or \$30 day of the show. Don't wait, this event is sure to sell out.

Donations are always welcome at Jay County Cancer Society, P.O. Box 614, Portland, IN 47371, through The Portland Foundation, Jay County Cancer Society Endowment Fund or visit our webpage at jaycocancersociety.org.

Each donation will ensure that the cancer society can continue to provide financial assistance to cancer patients in Jay County long into the future.

Thank you,
Tisha Gierhart
Jay County Cancer Society



Promote local journalism

By GENE POLICINSKI

Sunshine Week is March 10-16, and this year, there's an even greater need for you to get involved.

Sunshine Week annually celebrates freedom of information laws in every state. It also salutes efforts by good government advocates and journalists to use and ensure the effectiveness of those laws to get the information we need as self-governing citizens.

The name is a play on the commonsense words spoken more than a century ago by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, that "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants."

Brandeis' remark was not made in a court opinion. It was in a 1913 article published in the news magazine Harper's Weekly. Along with its observations on culture and events, Harper's was part of the "muckraking" news era, with journalists holding business and government accountable for corruption, waste and illegal activity.

As a special treat of each Sunshine Week, we get to see current examples of news reporting on behalf of the public, the type of journalism that the nation's founders had in mind when they adopted strong First Amendment protection for a free press.

Sunshine Week was started in 2005 by the American Society of News Editors. The Joseph L. Brechner Freedom of Information Project at the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications is coordinating Sunshine Week for the first time this year.

Each year, we celebrate the thousands of local, state and national print,

TV, radio and online reports that tell us what the government or others are doing and how they are doing it; reports that explore and expose otherwise-unseen information we need to know to make good decisions at the ballot box, when petitioning for change or simply things we should know about our communities.

Just a few examples, from a 2023 New York Times report:

- In the Hunter Hills neighborhood of Atlanta, idle freight trains blocked a main road, sometimes for more than 30 hours, potentially blocking ambulances and fire trucks.

- In Colorado, a libertarian "food freedom" movement has re-energized a long battle over the safety of unpasteurized milk.



- A city manager in DuBois, Pennsylvania, gave himself raises and allegedly took hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars.

- After bus issues caused school closures in Jefferson County, Kentucky, two reporters followed one school bus trying to complete an impossible route.

- An investigative report of wage theft in New York State uncovered rampant abuse in the horse racing industry, with repeat offenders owing workers more than \$4.4 million.

But this year as we celebrate that work being done on behalf of democracy, there is an increasingly needed partner in that work: You and your support for local journalists.

The number of journalists continues to plummet, from more than 75,000 newsroom jobs in 2005 to 31,860 in 2022, according to the Medill Local News Initiative. Far too many of us now live in "news deserts," areas across the nation where not a single news outlet exists. Medill reported that in 2023, that out of 3,143 counties nationwide, 204 counties had no newspapers, local digital sites, public radio newsrooms or ethnic publications, and another 228 counties were at substantial risk of losing all local news media.

Even where there are established news media outlets, economic pressures have resulted in staff cuts that mean there is less coverage of local government institutions like the city council, school board and local courts.

We need to face the fact that there just aren't enough journalists to do the job of monitoring and reporting on government, business and others.

To be sure, journalists and free press advocates are working to cut those losses and to buttress the flow of information to the public. There are new projects to fund local reporting or produce statewide or local reports, including the American Journalism Project; the Indiana Local News Initiative; Signal, a nonprofit organization in Ohio;

and Houston Landing, a recently launched Texas publication.

Student-operated news media at several universities are reporting on their communities as well as their campuses. Student journalists are sometimes providing the only full-time reporting in some communities. Innovative nonprofit statewide news operations such as Wisconsin Watch, South Dakota News Watch and The Maine Monitor report, investigate and examine issues in their states.

Among notable national efforts: Freedom Forum funds two reporters in partnership with Journalism Funding Partners, who are dedicated to the First Amendment beat. The Lenfest Institute for Journalism provides tools and resources for local journalism leaders. The Knight Foundation has been a longtime advocate and supporter of efforts to energize local news outlets and nonprofit journalism operations.

But even with all those initiatives, more help is needed. Let's turn again to Brandeis, who said in that Harper's article, "The individual citizen must in some way collect and spread the information" through civic groups and the press, which he believed would lead to "remedial action."

This does not necessarily mean filing a Freedom of Information request. There are ways to help hold government accountable beyond this direct action.

Whether you are red or blue, progressive or conservative, Democrat, Republican or independent, you need to support those who do that investigative work on a daily basis.

Get behind and get engaged with those who use FOI laws and shoe-leather journalism to bring you the facts required for real self-governance. Take that information and make up your own minds about the concerns of the day where you live — and perhaps give the national pundit class a rest.

Open your eyes, your minds — and, yes, perhaps your wallets too — and bring a little sunlight into your life. Celebrate Sunshine Week. Justice Brandeis would be pleased, and you and your fellow citizens will be better off for the effort.

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Policinski is a journalist and First Amendment advocate. He is one of the founding editors of USA TODAY and is senior fellow for the First Amendment at Freedom Forum.

Biden's speech failed the moment

By NOLAN FINLEY

The Detroit News
Tribune News Service

Joe Biden still has a pulse. And he proved in his State of the Union address he still can stand and rage for an hour without forgetting where he is or keeling over.

That and the fact he is not Donald Trump will be enough to soothe a lot of voters who've been concerned about the president's age and mental acuity.

But Biden affirmed something else Thursday night: He is not a leader. Biden is a political weather-vane, and always has been.

His poll-driven remarks played into the fears, anger and anxieties of the American people. A speech that was supposed to lift and unite the nation instead sought to capitalize on its suspicions and resentments.

He was Trump-like in his combativeness and determination to touch every raw nerve. Rather than appeal to our better nature, Biden urged us to the pitchforks.

It begged the question: Are we tired of demagoguing presidents yet?

The speech was the perfect depicter of the coarseness of modern politics, which has lost all traces of class and nobility. One of the lowest points came when the president scolded the Supreme Court justices, seated together in their robes in front of the podium, for their ruling overturning Roe v. Wade.

"With all due respect, justices, women are not without ... electoral or political power," Biden snarled. "You're about to realize just how much..."

Biden didn't get to finish his veiled threat because he was interrupted by Democrats who sprung to their feet to cheer. While he's busy defending democracy, Biden, who bragged of bypassing the court's rejection of his student debt relief plan, should remember our democracy rests on

Nolan Finley



respect for separation of powers.

Biden intentionally baited Republicans into a heckling match and they foolishly swallowed the hook. Americans were treated to the embarrassing spectacle of their president and their Congress taunting each other with insults. That couldn't have inspired confidence in the competence of our leadership.

We have been through hell in this country over the past four years, with the pandemic, economic chaos and tremendous uncertainty in the world.

What we needed to hear from our president is that we are going to be OK, that he has a solid plan for making things better and is working on behalf of all Americans.

What we got Thursday night was raw politics, a speech with the sole purpose of abetting Joe Biden's reelection bid.

His hyper-partisan remarks painted a picture of two Americas. The president all but declared those who aren't on his side of the line as the enemy.

Biden intends to run as the defender of democracy. But democracy isn't defended by dividing. A functioning democracy depends on a modicum of unity among its citizens. Like his opponent, division is Biden's primary skill.

It's true Biden is not Donald Trump. But he is not enough not-Trump to offer any hope he will put an end to the hateful politics that have shredded our faith in the future.

We need a president who embodies America's goodness and ideals.

What we don't need is two angry old men on our presidential ballot.

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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In review

Breakfast is Tuesday

The Jay County Ag Day breakfast is scheduled for 5 to 9 a.m. Tuesday at Bob Schmit Memorial Exhibition Hall at Jay County Fairgrounds.

The breakfast will include eggs, sausage, toast and various beverages. The cost is \$1 and carry-out is available.

There will also be booths featuring IU Health Jay, Ivy Tech Community College, Jay County 4-H, Jay County Farm Bureau, the local U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency office and others.

Seeking samples

Purdue University is looking for farms from which it can take soil samples for the Diverse Corn Belt project.

The project is a five-year effort that will explore impacts of diversified farming systems beyond corn and soybeans in Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. It is seeking "concrete options for diversification and understanding the agronomic, economic, social, infrastructure and policy changes that could make them viable."

Conventionally farmed, no-till and pasture fields are being sought for the research.

For more information, email aalka@purdue.edu or asangota@purdue.edu.

Loans available

Indiana State Department of Agriculture is offering loans for small meat processors.

The Indiana Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program has \$15 million available to assist meat and poultry packers and processors with expansion projects. Opportunities available include 3% interest for scalable loans from \$100,000 to \$5 million and 2% interest for wastewater projects with 15-year terms.

For more information, email dcoates@isda.in.gov.

Cultivating rehabilitation

Gardening program helps the formerly incarcerated

By **LINDSEY BEREBITSKY**
Purdue Ag News

When he thinks of his childhood, Jacobo Mora recalls rows of fruit trees and colorful squash at Kercher's Sunrise Orchard in Goshen, Indiana. Mora worked and saved up as a young man to buy a house with three apple trees in the backyard, hoping to eventually start his own humble orchard and farmstead. He looked forward to a place for his family to grow their own food. A place where he could teach himself and his children to be self-sufficient and resilient. A place, a dream that was one of many things he lost when he was incarcerated.

Leaving his old life behind, Mora struggled with the isolation he experienced in prison. But, through the Chain O'Lakes Community Re-Entry Center, he and others have found their way back to communities through nature.

Eleven out of 13 lakes connect in Noble County, Indiana, and form the Chain O' Lakes State Park that attracts both kayakers and fishermen. The re-entry center's residents maintain the park as part of their transition back to society.

The three vegetable gardens in the park were started by Bruce Kennedy, a Purdue Extension Master Gardener, caseworker Doug Foley and the residents of the re-entry center. The gardens have evolved as their caretakers learn more about horticulture, agronomy and botany through classes taken at the facility.

"My mother has a little garden in the backyard, and she's always talked about it. I just became interested in it because



Photo provided

Six residents from the Chain O'Lakes Community Re-Entry Center graduated from the Master Gardener Basic Training course this year and had several people cheering them on.

of what I learned here," resident Jeff Hatcher said of his experience at the re-entry facility. "Now, of course, my mother says she has a lot of work for me to do in her garden."

Noble County Master Gardeners have taught classes at the facility for 15 years, but it was the residents who applied their skills beyond the park. After seeing lines of people waiting for food, residents connected with the Central Noble Food Pantry, where they now donate at least two tons of fresh fruits and vegetables from their gardens every year.

The residents, including Nathan Dimmock, have seen the impact their produce has had on the food pantry. Dimmock said, "It's really cool when we go there to work. People come and get the fresh produce, and they're so happy to have it. Sometimes you take things like that for granted."

That initiative to create positive change also inspired Ann Kline, coordinator and instructor for the Master Gardener Program in Noble County, and Charles Bowen, a re-entry center warden, to welcome residents into another class. Every fall, Noble and Whitley counties host a basic training program for prospective Master Gardeners. Of the 16 individuals from

Noble, Whitley and Allen counties who completed the course this year, the six residents from the re-entry center felt that they had an unfair advantage on the final exam.

Resident Daniel Collar said, "Bruce teaches a class here, and he knows so much about everything. When we took the test, we all pretty much aced it because we had already received so much knowledge from him."

Not everything came easily. The residents from the re-entry center had to pay the same \$175 fee as everyone else. Even with scholarships, the residents had to save their pay from work assignments to take the class.

As Master Gardener interns, they also have to complete 40 hours of volunteer work to earn certification. They'll be volunteering at the food pantry, growing and donating food and teaching the winter gardening course at the re-entry center. Plus, they'll still be expected to attend some Master Gardener meetings, but that's more of a bonus to them.

"We attended an all-day symposium, along with 120 other gardeners and Master Gardeners, in Whitley County a couple of weeks ago," resident Andy Spriggs said. "I've been locked up for five years now and being out in the community like this is really

good for my soul. It encourages me to want to do more."

In the middle of the course, Mora graduated from the re-entry center and moved an hour away. Although no longer obligated to attend, he arranged for rides back to the class every week, including some from the Master Gardener who he started with at the re-entry facility, Kennedy.

"I wanted to do something good for myself, and gardening gave me that," Mora said. "It was like a hobby, like knitting—it calmed my mind. And the classes were great because I found the right people at the right time. It was easy to ask them questions, be vulnerable and comfortable."

Kline, the instructor of the course, was struck by the residents' motivation to learn and invest in their future. "The motto of the Master Gardeners is 'Helping Others Grow.' Not only did we help the residents grow, but they are going to reach and grow so many others."

Resident Jose Ortiz is especially interested in taking his newfound knowledge back to his community. He understands the barriers to educational resources for those who don't speak English and wants to start breaking down these walls in gardening and plant sciences.

"This program has been therapeutic by allowing me to give back to the community," Ortiz said. "Knowing that we are making a difference in society and an impact in helping feed those who are less fortunate gives me a purpose. I'm proud to have learned this. I want to teach this to other people, especially the Hispanic community, who don't know English. I think this will have a big impact on them, too."

No matter the residents' next path in life, they will carry their knowledge with them. Mora provides proof of that: while working with his uncle to restore homes, he's actualizing the dream of a mini farmstead in his backyard. He's already started a chicken coop and plans on planting a garden in the spring. And, although Mora has the basics down, he knows he can reach out to his fellow Master Gardeners whenever he has questions.



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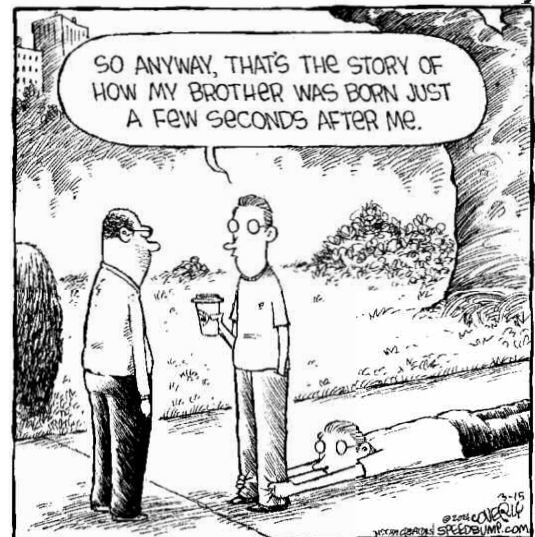
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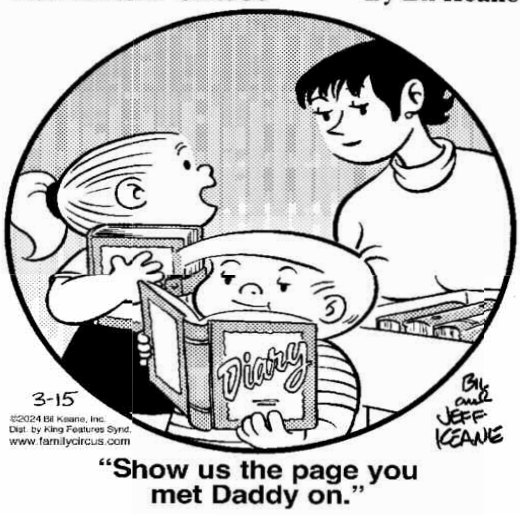
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Tomorrow: Plan ahead. ©2024 King Features Syndicate Inc.

3-15 CRYPTOQUIP

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ZHJ POVPS QSJO IH! Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHAT COULD YOU CALL HAND MOTIONS PEOPLE MAKE WHILE THEY'RE JOKING AROUND? JESTERS' GESTURES. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals Y

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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Fort Recovery baseball has first scrimmage tomorrow, see Sports on tap

Sports

Renna Schwieterman's freshman season ends, see Collegiate check-up

Defamation suit dismissed

By LANA FERGUSON
The Dallas Morning News
Tribune News Service

DALLAS — The defamation lawsuit filed by a woman who says Jerry Jones is her biological father, alleging the Dallas Cowboys owner and his associates worked to portray her in the public as an “extortionist,” was dismissed by a judge Wednesday.

Cowboys owner, Jerry Jones, dismissed in federal court

The lawsuit sought a multimillion dollar payout.

Alexandra Davis, a 27-year-old congressional aide, said in the lawsuit that Jones and his team of lawyers and media and marketing professionals concocted a plan to destroy her reputation by publicly attacking her as a “shakedown artist” motivated by greed and money.

Also listed as defendants in the lawsuit are Cowboys spokesman James Wilkinson; Wilkinson’s employer TrailRunner International; Jones’ friend and attorney Donald Jack Jr.; and the Cowboys.

U.S. District Court Judge Robert Schroeder wrote in Wednesday’s ruling that Davis had not “sufficiently pleaded that defendants acted with actual malice.”

“I am not at all surprised by the dismissal of the claims against Mr. Jones and his co-defendants,” Jones’ attorney Levi McCathern said in a statement to The Dallas Morning News. “These claims were false and had no merit from the very beginning. Unfortunately, one of the downsides of

being a public figure is that you become a target for frivolous lawsuits by people whose sole purpose is to enrich themselves and their attorneys.”

The lawsuit was first filed in a U.S. district court in Texarkana in March 2023 but partially dismissed when the judge said some of the alleged defamatory statements about Davis were either true or “not defamatory.” He also ruled that Davis qualified as a “limited public figure,” which requires proof the defendants were acting with malice.

Davis’ attorneys refiled the amended version of the lawsuit in November.

“We are disappointed in the ruling and intend to appeal and believe we will be successful,” Davis’ attorneys Andrew Bergman and Jay Gray said in a statement to The News. “Of course this ruling has no impact on the paternity suit or Mr. Jones having to submit to genetic testing.”

See **Dismissed** page 7



The Commercial Review/Andrew Balko

Final reps

Carson Fullenkamp, a Fort Recovery High School sophomore, gets in a couple of discus throws at the end of practice Wednesday. The Indians open their season March 26, before the home opener on April 2.

Deacons send Notre Dame home

By STEVE WISEMAN
The Herald-Sun (Durham, N.C.)
Tribune News Service

WASHINGTON — With its postseason hopes uncertain, Wake Forest strengthened its NCAA case Wednesday.

The No. 5 seed Demon Deacons toppled No. 12 seed Notre Dame, 72-59, in an ACC Tournament second-round game, moving Wake Forest into a key game with No. 4 seed Pittsburgh on Thursday.

Having not played in the NCAA Tournament since 2017, Wake Forest (20-12) saw a three-game losing streak during the last two weeks of the regular season damage its hopes for an at-large bid. The first of those losses came Feb. 27 at Notre Dame, which edged the Deacs, 70-65.

Wake Forest halted its losing streak with an 81-76 win over Clemson in the regular-season finale on Saturday and now has back-to-back wins entering Thursday’s game, which has important NCAA selection ramifications.

Pittsburgh (21-10) is also in the running for an at-large bid, barring an ACC Tournament championship. The winner of the Wake-Pitt quarterfinal game will feel far better about its chances while the losing team will have a nervous weekend awaiting Sunday’s bracket reveal.

Against Notre Dame on Wednesday, Kevin “Boopie” Miller scored 17 points while Andrew Carr produced 12 points and 11 rebounds for the Deacs.

An important win away from home

Wake Forest built its tournament resume on a sterling home record. It finished 16-1 at the Joel Coliseum, including an 83-79 win over Duke on Feb. 24 that preceded the three-game losing streak.

But Wake Forest has the reputation as home court heroes because they went 2-9 in true road games this season. That doesn’t figure to sit well with the selection committee.

Wednesday’s neutral-court win helps. Wake Forest is now 2-2 in neutral-court games, which is, of course, where NCAA Tournament games are played.

Slowing Burton early

The Notre Dame player that hurt the Deacs the most when the teams played in South Bend, Indiana, had Wake Forest’s full attention this time.

Burton, voted the ACC’s rookie of the year this season, scored 31 points last time against the Deacs. On Wednesday, Wake held him to nine first-half points while building a 40-34 half-time lead. A 42.7% shooter this season, Burton made just two of his first 11 shots on Wednesday and didn’t break into double figures until 12:30 remained in the game.

Burton finished with 21 points, scoring 12 at the free throw line where he didn’t miss on Wednesday. But he only made 4 of 16 shots from the field, including 1 of 6 on 3-pointers.

Wake survives Sallis struggles

Wake’s leading scorer with 18.3 points per game this season, all-ACC guard Hunter Sallis was on his game in the game’s first eight minutes. He scored 10 of Wake’s first 20 points as the Deacons jumped to a 20-9 lead.

Sallis trailed off dramatically, missing six shots in a row after making three of his first five. But it didn’t stop Wake from advancing thanks to strong games from Miller and Carr.

Schwieterman's freshman year ends in semis

Renna Schwieterman had a solid freshman campaign for the Purdue Fort Wayne women’s basketball team, but it came to an end in the semifinal round of the Horizon League tournament.

Schwieterman scored four points as the third-seeded Mastodons fell to No. 2 seed Green Bay 64-55 on Monday.

The 2023 Jay County High School graduate played 14 minutes in the contest and hit two shots inside the arc, while shooting 0-for-2 from distance. Schwieterman also grabbed five rebounds off the bench, three on the defensive glass and two offensive boards.

She also played 15 minutes in the quarterfinal round, in which Purdue Fort Wayne demolished Detroit Mercy 66-35.

In the victory, Schwieterman hit a three, dished out two assists and snagged one rebound.

Collegiate check-up

As a freshman, Schwieterman scored 198 points over 32 games to average 6.3 points per game, which was the sixth leading scorer for the Mastodons.

The JCHS grad started 10 games throughout the season and averaged 16.1 minutes per game.

Schwieterman shot 34.5% from the field (6-194) and 28.7% from 3-point range (31-108). She also garnered 90 rebounds, 27 steals and 21 assists.

Schwieterman was named to the Horizon League All-Freshman Team. She was earned Horizon League Freshman of the Week twice in the season as well.

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