

The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371

www.thecr.com

\$1

Lairson died in crash Saturday

By BAILEY CLINE
The Commercial Review

A Portland man died Saturday in a head-on vehicle collision in Jay County.

Hunter L. Lairson, 23, was pronounced dead at the scene after suffering blunt force trauma in the collision.

The other driver, Alexis B. Sheffer, 26, Fairborn, Ohio, suffered injuries as well.

Police responded to two 911 calls about 4:40 a.m. Saturday near the intersection of county roads 300 North and 450 East. Sheffer was driving her 2016

Collision occurred on county road 300 South

Chevrolet Malibu west and Lairson was driving his 2024 Honda Civic east on county road 300 North, according to a Jay County Sheriff's Office report.

Lairson was driving at an

excessive speed, the report says, and entered into the west-bound lane as he crested a hill. Sheffer crested the hill at the same time. She attempted to veer north but was unable to avoid a collision with Lairson's

vehicle, according to the report.

Sheffer's vehicle went off the north side of the road. Lairson's vehicle continued about 100 feet south of the road.

Lairson suffered fatal injuries and was trapped inside his vehicle.

Sheffer was also trapped inside her vehicle and had to be removed by emergency responders. She complained of leg, chest and arm pain and was in and out of consciousness after the crash. Sheffer was flown to Lutheran Hospi-

tal in Fort Wayne for treatment of her injuries.

Lairson and Sheffer were administered alcohol and drug blood tests. Results are pending.

The 911 calls were made by Crash Detection, an Apple smart device feature that detects crashes and, if the user is unable to respond, automatically calls emergency services and shares the user's location and medical information.

Both vehicles were towed, with damage estimated between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

HVAC project planned for this summer

Board OKs advertising for bids for work at FR school

By BAILEY CLINE
The Commercial Review

Hopes are to begin work on Fort Recovery Elementary and Middle School's heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) project this summer.

Fort Recovery School Board took another step toward making that goal a reality Monday.

School board approved a resolution authorizing school officials to seek bids for the project estimated at just under \$1 million. Board members also hired Wes Wenning as head high school football coach and as an elementary and middle school intervention specialist for the 2025-26 school year (see related story page 8) and approved a resolution allowing easements with the Village of Fort Recovery for the sidewalk project planned along Sharpsburg Road.

Last month, the school board entered into an agreement with Garmann Miller of Minster for architectural and engineering services related to upgrading the school's HVAC equipment. (The company conducted a facilities assessment on the district's assets last year, sharing its findings in October with board members about various building repairs the district could expect to make in the next 25 years.)

Superintendent Tony Stahl explained in December the elementary and middle school building has variable air volume boxes controlling airflow. Original to the building constructed more than 20 years ago, the boxes are outdated and difficult to find replacement parts for.

Plans call for replacing the boxes and related controls. Bids were set to be posted today and opened at 2 p.m. March 18.

See HVAC page 2

Shifting to centers



The Commercial Review/Bailey Cline

Commissioners Doug Horn, Chad Aker and Duane Monroe look at a map Monday shared by Jay County Highway Department superintendent Bob Howell. Commissioners are moving forward with creating a temporary no-truck route along parts of county roads 50 West, 650 North and 250 West, which will serve as a detour amid bridge work on Indiana 18 just west of Bryant. In addition to the temporary change, commissioners also approved making Jay County a vote center county. The next step in the process is forming a study committee and drafting a plan.

Commissioners approve voting change

By BAILEY CLINE
The Commercial Review

Registered voters in Jay County may be able to cast ballots at any county designated location in 2026.

Jay County Commissioners approved a resolution Monday designating the county as a vote center county. Their decision follows Jay County Council's approval Feb. 19.

Next steps include forming a study committee, drafting a plan and seeking public comment on

the choice to move to vote centers instead of polling places for each precinct.

Jay County Election Board has been looking into making the switch, with county clerk Missy Elliott approaching council Feb. 19 and commissioners on Monday.

More registered voters have been casting their ballots early as opposed to on Election Day in the last few years, explained Elliott.

Vote centers are an alternative

to traditional precinct-based voting in which voters are assigned a voting location in their area. Vote centers allow registered voters to cast a ballot at any county polling location on Election Day.

Currently, the county has eight polling locations. Elliott estimated the county will implement between three and four vote centers.

Indiana has allowed counties the option of vote centers since 2011. More than 70% of Indiana counties use vote centers,

including most of those adjacent to Jay.

Elliott explained last week to council that the election board decided to move forward with the change now because it's an off-year for elections. (Jay County has purchased new polling equipment in recent years, meaning there would be no added cost for required upgrades.) She noted Monday there would be some cost to notifying voters about the change.

See Centers page 5

Stewart Brothers work underway

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

DUNKIRK — One project is underway.

Another is working through the land purchase process.

Dunkirk City Council heard updates on various projects and purchases during its meeting Monday.

Mayor Jack Robbins told council members that demolition work is currently underway inside the Stewart Brothers

building at 304 S. Main St. He said he expects windows to be installed next month.

The work is part of a partnership between

Dunkirk Industrial Development Corporation, which owns the building, and private investors Rock Fuqua, Jesse Walter and Dr. Oakland Gaerke. The

goal is to create apartments upstairs with retail space on the first floor. Fuqua, Walter and Gaerke would eventually take ownership of the building.

Robbins also said the purchase of about 10 acres on the south side of the city for a housing project is still in process. He has talked with consultant Ed Curtin of CWC Latitudes regarding creating a residential tax increment financing (TIF) district for the property.

Council president Jesse Bivens reported that the city's new vacuum truck, the purchase of which was approved at the council's Feb. 10 meeting, has already come in handy as it was used to fix a recent water leak at the intersection of Washington and Main streets. He said it has already saved the city money as it was not necessary to hire an outside firm to help with the repair.

See Work page 5

Deaths

Bonnie Rowles, 76, Salamina
Charles Keller, 86, Fort Recovery
Shirley Stump, 78, Geneva
Details on page 2.

Weather

The high temperature in Jay County hit 51 degrees Monday. The low was 34. Expect a low in the mid 30s tonight with a 50% chance of rain. Skies will be mostly cloudy Thursday with a high in the mid 40s. See page 2 for an extended outlook.

In review

The Jay County High School show choirs will perform their shows on their home stage at 7 p.m. Monday, March 10. Admission will be \$5.

Coming up

Thursday — Results from the JCHS boys basketball game at Winchester.

Saturday — Results from the JCHS boys basketball game against Belmont.



Obituaries

Bonnie Rowles

Sept. 27, 1948-Feb. 23, 2025
Bonnie J. Rowles, age 76, of Salamina passed away on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025, in IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital in Muncie. She was born in Portland on Sept. 27, 1948, the daughter of Ralph and Esther (Franks) DeVoe. She was married in 1980 to James Rowles who survives.



Rowles

Bonnie had worked at CTS and Chalet Village both in Berne. She attended Evangelical Methodist Church and loved caring for animals, cooking, spending time with family and garage sales.

Surviving is her husband Jim; two sons, Troy Masonbrink (wife: Dawn) of Portland and Mark Masonbrink (wife: April) of Geneva; three daughters, Nicole Bowman of Bluffton, Chasica Davis of Johnsonville,

Tennessee, and Tracie Stovall (husband: Steven) of Elkmont, Alabama; two stepchildren, Patrick Rowles (wife: Niki) of Portland and Tami Beeks (husband: Larry) of North Webster; 17 grandchildren; and 26 great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by a sister, Dixie Auker.

The family will have a gathering on Wednesday, Feb. 26, from 10 a.m. to noon in the Baird-Freeman Funeral Home.

Memorials can be made to the Jay County Humane Society.

Condolences may be expressed at bairdfreeman.com.

Charles Keller

Dec. 12, 1938-Feb. 24, 2025
Charles J. Keller, age 86, of Fort Recovery, Ohio, passed away peacefully on Monday, Feb. 24, 2025, at the Gardens at St. Henry.

He was born on Dec. 12, 1938, in Dayton, Ohio, to the late Alvin and Mary (Sanderell) Keller.

Charlie is survived by his wife

of 63 years, Mary Jane "Janie" (Hilgeford) Keller; his children, Connie (Doug, deceased) Randall of Celina, Ohio, Pam (John) Ebbing of Coldwater, Ohio,



Keller

Joan (Doug) Muhlenkamp of Trinity, Indiana, Gary Keller of Fort Recovery, Beth (Les) Roberts of Portland, Indiana, Irene (Frank) Meyer of St. Henry, Ohio, Chuck (Terri) Keller of Fort Recovery and Kim (Joe) Siefring of Fort Recovery; his 23 grandchildren; one deceased grandson, Isaac Randall; 52 great-grandchildren; his siblings, Joe (deceased) (Mary) Keller of Fort Recovery, Ronnie (Carolyn) Keller of Celina, Larry (Diane) Keller of Fort Recovery, Carolyn (Ken) Gaerke of Celina, and infant sister, Ann Marie Keller (deceased); and his in-laws, Arnie (Martha) Hilgeford of Portland, Indiana, Alice and Rich Balster (both deceased), Margie (Ray) Sud-

hoff of St. Anthony, Ohio, and Joan (Ray) Garke of St. Henry.

Charlie was raised in Fort Recovery and attended Fort Recovery High School. He enlisted in the United States Army in 1957 and served his country honorably until he was discharged in 1960. Charlie worked for New Idea and then Fort Recovery Industries.

He enjoyed the great outdoors and loved to go hunting, trapping and fishing. In his free time, Charlie enjoyed playing cards and riding around on his golf cart. Charlie also enjoyed gambling from time to time. He was a member of Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church, Fort Recovery American Legion, Fort Recovery VFW, the Coldwater Eagles, Ohio Progressive Sportsman Club and Fort Recovery Gun Club.

A Mass of Christian Burial will take place at 10:30 a.m. Friday, Feb. 28, 2025, at Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church, Fort Recovery. Burial, with military honors, will follow in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Guests may visit with Charlie's family on Thursday, Feb. 27, 2025, from 3 to 7 p.m. and again on Friday from 9 to 10 a.m. at Brockman Boeckman Funeral Home, Fort Recovery. An American Legion prayer service will be held at 6:45 p.m. on Thursday at the funeral home.

Memorial contributions may be given to EverHeart Hospice or the Mercer County Council on Aging.

Condolences may be shared with Charlie's family by visiting brockmanboeckmanfh.com.

Shirley M. Stump, Geneva, July 14, 1946-Feb. 19, 2025. No services are scheduled.

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

| Thursday 2/27 | Friday 2/28 | Saturday 3/1 | Sunday 3/2 | Monday 3/3 |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| | | | | |
| 47/29 | 56/34 | 37/20 | 36/23 | 48/38 |
| Thursday's forecast shows mostly cloudy skies with a high in the upper 40s. | Mostly sunny on Friday, when the high may reach the 50s. | Another day of mostly cloudy skies on Saturday, with the low dipping into the 20s. | Mostly sunny on Sunday. The low temperature may hit the mid 20s. | Mostly sunny skies are in the forecast for Monday when the high will be in the mid 40s. |

Lotteries

| | |
|---|--|
| Powerball Monday 10-11-34-59-68 Power Ball: 14 Power Play: 3 Estimated jackpot: \$248 million | Daily Four: 4-0-2-9 Quick Draw: 7-14-15-16-17-18-27-32-35-44-45-46-50-54-57-61-65-67-71-78 Cash 5: 4-12-15-29-41 Estimated jackpot: \$95,000 |
| Mega Millions Estimated jackpot: \$181 million | Ohio Monday Midday Pick 3: 4-0-0 Pick 4: 7-0-8-4 Pick 5: 1-0-0-5-5 Evening Pick 3: 7-5-7 Pick 4: 0-1-2-1 Pick 5: 9-3-4-3-0 Rolling Cash: 5-16-26-29-35 Estimated jackpot: \$120,000 |
| Hoosier Monday Midday Daily Three: 0-8-2 Daily Four: 9-8-4-2 Quick Draw: 5-10-12-17-20-21-26-29-31-32-37-39-50-53-62--64-67-77-79-80 Evening Daily Three: 2-0-4 | |

Markets

| | |
|--|--|
| Cooper Farms Fort Recovery Corn.....4.75 March corn4.92 April corn4.98 | March beans10.39 Wheat 5.48 |
| POET Biorefining Portland Corn.....4.88 March corn5.91 April corn5.03 | ADM Montpelier Corn.....4.85 March corn4.85 Beans10.25 March beans10.29 Wheat5.43 |
| The Andersons Richland Township Corn4.88 March corn4.88 Beans10.39 | Heartland St. Anthony Corn.....4.71 March corn4.71 Beans10.08 March beans10.13 Wheat5.24 |

Today in history

In 1932, musician Johnny Cash was born in Kingsland, Arkansas. He's known for his country songs, including "Ring of Fire," "I Walk the Line," and "Hurt."

In 1991, computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee presented the world's first web browser, "WorldWideWeb," to the public.

In 1993, a car bomb exploded under the World Trade Center in New York, killing six people.

In 2013, Fort Recovery Indians' season came to a close after a 47-43 loss to Marion Local in the opening round of the Division IV sectional tournament. They beat the Flyers in the final game of the regular season a few days prior. The Indians closed to within two after trailing by as many as 16 points in the third quarter on this day, but couldn't get any closer.

— The CR

Citizen's calendar

| | |
|---|---|
| Today 6 p.m. — Dunkirk Park Board, city building, 131 S. Main St. | chambers, fire station, 1616 N. Meridian St. |
| Monday 5:30 p.m. — Portland City Council, council | Tuesday 5:30 p.m. — Portland Park Board, council chambers, fire station, 1616 N. Meridian St. |

HVAC ...

Continued from page 1
Officials aim for construction in student areas such as classrooms to be completed by August.

The school board approved the resolution. It also approved transferring \$1 million from the general fund to the permanent improvement fund for the project.

Relatedly, the school board also transferred \$1 million from the general fund to the capital project fund for high school facilities and \$500,000 from the general fund to the capital project fund for athletic facilities. (The board OK'd establishing the capital project funds last month.)

Also Monday, the school board approved a resolution authorizing school officials to accept easement proposals with the village.

Plans are in the works to install 625 feet of sidewalk along the east side of the elementary and middle school and connect it to Sharpsburg Road in early 2026. The

project is 90% funded through the Safe Routes to School program.

Stahl explained Monday the district will accept a temporary easement for property east of the building along Sharpsburg Road and an easement in perpetuity at the entrance into the parking lot from Sharpsburg Road. (With the latter easement, Stahl noted the district will still own the property but the village will have access for repairs and other necessities.)

In other business, school board members Don Wendel, Nick Wehrkamp, Greg LeFevre, Sean Kahlig and Mitch Fullenkamp:

- Approved the following: Fort Recovery Cross Country team to take an overnight field trip from July 27 to July 28 at Chenoweth Trails in Greenville, Ohio; Fort Recovery FFA members to attend State Wildlife Contest from March 28 through March 29 at Hocking Technical Col-

lege in Nelsonville, Ohio; Fort Recovery FFA members to attend state FFA convention from April 30 to May 2 at Ohio State Fairgrounds in Columbus, Ohio; third grade teacher Kimberly Pohlman's resignation, effective March 14; paying the following staff for their additional duties, third grade level chair Tami Winner, \$227.69, elementary book club advisor Anna Bergman, \$101.20, and elementary student council advisor Sophia Homan, \$632.49; continuing membership in the Ohio High School Athletic Association for the 2025-26 school year; and revisions to the 2025-26 calendar.

- Heard from high school principal Ryan Steinbrunner all seniors in the Class of 2025 are on track to graduate.
- Learned from elementary principal Laura Brandt 75 students are currently signed up for kindergarten in the fall.
- Heard from elementary and middle school

guidance counselor Miranda Gerlach and high school guidance counselor Amy Kaiser. Gerlach discussed Lunch Club, a mentorship program for youth to meet with a high school student twice a month. Kaiser talked about different facets of her work, including designing career portfolios with students over the course of their high school careers.

- Recognized Fort Recovery girls bowling team for its second year as co-Midwest Athletic Conference champions.

- Accepted \$256 in donations.

Capsule Reports

Second in science

The Jay County High School academic team took second place for science at its most recent competition.

In the Feb. 18 competition at Winchester, the science team of Jensen Avery, Keira Corwin, Cameron Paxson and Adamaris Ruiz-Herrera finished in second place. JCHS took third for English, social studies and interdisciplinary.

The team had two previous meets, earning first place for science in a virtual competition Feb. 5 as well as second for math and social studies.

It took third place for fine arts, science and English in a virtual meet Jan. 22.

Jay County's academic team will compete again Monday in the Eastern Indiana Academic League meet at Knightstown.

Lost control

Damage is estimated between \$10,000 and \$25,000 after a Portland man lost control of his vehicle and drove off county road 600 South, causing an accident about 8:20 p.m. Sunday.

Jacob A. Wall, 34, was driving his 2000 Ford F-150 west on the road near county road 700 West at a high rate of speed when he went off the north side of the road, according to a Jay County Sheriff's Office report. Wall's vehicle hit a boulder at Richard Louck's property, 7262 W. 600 South, Redkey, and damaged Louck's yard. His vehicle was towed.

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SERVICES

Today

Schwartz, Daniel: 9 a.m., Graber residence, 1730 E. 900 South, Geneva.

Lairson, Hunter: 7 p.m., Williamson-Spencer and Penrod Funeral Home, 208 N. Commerce St., Portland.

Thursday

Fuller, Jereldene: 2 p.m., Williamson-Spencer and Penrod Funeral Home, 208 N. Commerce St., Portland.

Friday

Keller, Charles: 10:30 a.m., Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church, 403 Sharpsburg Road, Fort Recovery.

Heston, Herbert: 11 a.m., MJS Mortuaries, 109 S. Meridian St., Redkey.

Wilhelm, Debbie: 2 p.m., Goodway Baptist church, 14065 W. 400 North, Medaryville.

Saturday

Evans, Robley: 10:30 a.m., First Presbyterian Church, 215 E. Dustman Road, Bluffton.

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Try hand at beef pies

By GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
Tribune News Service

When it comes to hand-held foods, tacos are often a first choice for busy cooks — especially on action-packed school nights — since they're fairly easy to assemble and can include any combination of meat, cheese and vegetables. They're even great for breathing new life into leftovers.

Yet if you have an extra half-hour to mix, rest and roll out homemade pastry dough, it's also fun to try your hand at making hand pies.

Just like tacos, these flaky, miniature pies that (mostly) fit in the palm of your hand are extremely versatile when it comes to what you might stuff inside, working just as well with sweet fillings like cooked apple or diced peaches as they do for savory packages that meet one's daily requirement of veggies, dairy and protein.

These buttery pies are wrapped around ground beef and diced potato cooked with garlic, onion and warming spices. Shredded Monterey Jack cheese helps bind the filling in cheesy fashion and it also includes chopped fresh cilantro for a touch of green.

Hand pies can be served hot, right out of the oven, or at room temperature. They're easy to pack into a lunch box and make great couch food on those nights you're binge-watching your favorite TV show.

For a salty finish, I added a generous sprinkle of everything bagel seasoning after brushing the tops of the pies with beaten egg (it adds a shiny, golden-brown color), but that's completely optional. Serve with side salad or your favorite dipping sauce.

Spicy Beef, Potato and Cheese Hand Pies

PG tested
For pastry crust
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon fine salt
2 sticks cold unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1/4 cup ice water
For filling
1 pound ground beef



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette/Tribune News Service

Flaky pastry circles stuffed with a spicy mix of ground beef, potatoes and cheese are a quick and easy hand-held meal.

1/2 yellow onion, diced (about 1/2 cup)
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 small potato, peeled and diced (about 1/2 cup)
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
Dash of Worcestershire sauce
1/4 cup chopped cilantro
2 cups finely shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
All-purpose flour, for dusting
1 egg, beaten
Everything bagel seasoning or toasted sesame seeds, for garnish, optional

Make pastry: In a food processor, pulse flour, sugar and salt. Add butter, pulsing until mixture resembles coarse meal, with a few pea-size pieces of butter remaining.

Add water, pulsing until dough is crumbly but holds together when squeezed (if necessary add up to 2 tablespoons water). Wrap dough in plastic and refrigerate at least 1 hour (or up to 2 days).

While dough is resting, make filling: Heat a large nonstick skillet over high. Add ground beef, onion, garlic and diced potato.

Cook until meat is starting to brown, about 7 minutes. Stir in spices and a dash of Worcester-

shire sauce. Continue cooking for another minute or two, then stir in chopped cilantro.

Remove pan from heat and allow meat to cool, then stir in 1 1/2 cups of shredded cheese.

Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions, place 1 rimmed baking sheet on each, and heat oven to 425 degrees.

Divide dough into 8 equal pieces. With your cupped hand, form each piece into a smooth, tight ball.

Working with 1 dough ball at a time, roll each one on lightly floured surface into 7-inch circle. (Don't worry if it's not perfect.)

Place a scant 1/4 cup meat filling in the center. Brush edges of dough with water and fold it over filling. Press to seal, trim any ragged edges, and crimp edges with tines of a fork dipped in flour. Brush tops with beaten egg, then pierce the top of each pie once with fork or knife. (This allows steam to escape during baking.) Sprinkle bagel seasoning or seeds on top, if using.

Carefully place half of the hand pies on each prepared sheet and bake until golden brown, 20-25 minutes, switching and rotating sheets halfway through baking. Transfer pies to wire rack and let cool.

Makes 8 large hand pies.

Infidelity comes out years later

DEAR ABBY: I have been married for 52 years. While looking for a tax document, I found a manila envelope that had a note written on the outside. It said, "If something happens to me, please destroy this, because I don't want to hurt anyone." I opened the envelope and found nude pictures of my husband and another woman taken 30 years ago.

When I confronted my husband, he said it happened a long time ago and it's my fault for opening the envelope. I never received an apology, and I no longer want to be intimate with him. I need advice on how to get past this. — PHOTO-FINISHED IN GEORGIA

DEAR PHOTO-FINISHED: That your husband wouldn't offer an apology only adds insult to injury. What a fool. He left a "time bomb" and didn't have

Dear Abby



enough common sense to consider what would happen if, after his death, you or your children sifted through his souvenirs. Because you want to get past this, it's time to consult a licensed marriage and family therapist.

If your husband refuses to go with you, go alone — or pray for amnesia.

.....

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.

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Community Calendar

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

Today

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

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

PORTLAND ROTARY CLUB — Will meet at noon each Wednesday in the cafe at John Jay Cen-

ter for Learning, 101 S. Meridian St., Portland.

EUCHRE CLUB — Will meet at 2 p.m. the fourth Wednesday of each month at Chalet Village Health and Rehabilitation in the North Lounge.

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

PORTLAND EAGLES — Will meet at 6 p.m., on the second and fourth

Wednesday of the month at the Eagles' lodge, 320 N. 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. For more information, call (260) 726-8229.

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

Those interested in participating should sign up in advance at the library, 315 N. Ship St., Portland, or by calling (260) 726-7890.

DEMENTIA SUPPORT GROUP — Meets at 5:30 p.m. at Persimmon Ridge Rehabilitation Centre, 200 N. Park St., Portland.

Friday

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.

Thursday

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

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

LAWYERS IN LIBRARIES — Free and confidential consultations with a lawyer are available from 10 a.m. to noon at Jay County Public Library, 315 N. Ship St., Portland. Consulting is available on topics including divorce, custody, guardianship, tenant-landlord issues, bankruptcy, debt collection, estates and immigration.

Sudoku

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

Level: Intermediate

Tuesday's Solution

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

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

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Mandy's annual dinner is Friday

To the editor:
Ten years.
It's hard to believe that it's been that long ago we lost Mandy.

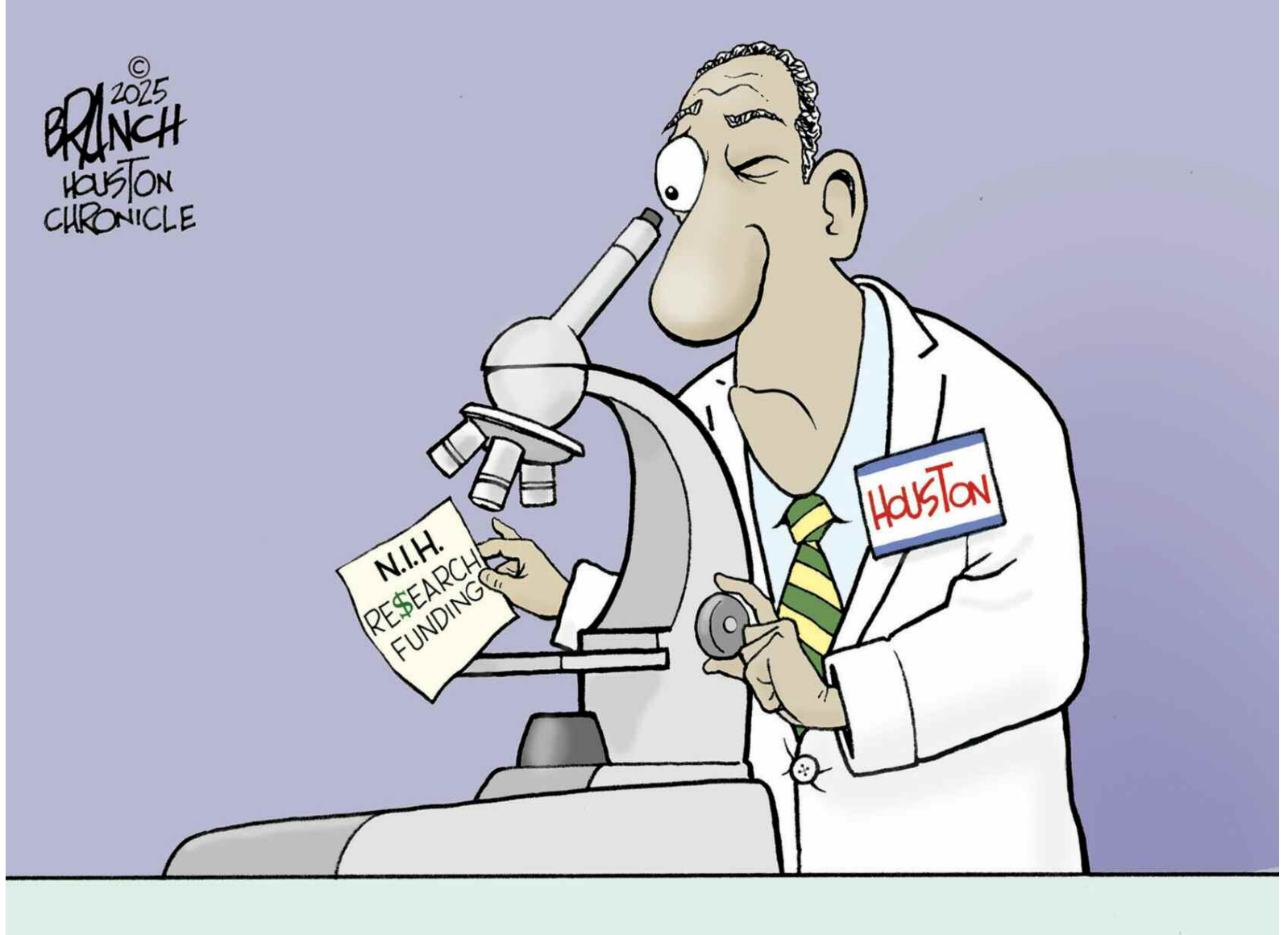
Every year since, we as a family and community have raised money in her memory to help those in need. It is that time again.

Jay Community Center in Portland will be the place to get a delicious meal from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 28, consisting of shredded beef, cheesy potatoes and green beans. Various desserts will also be available.

Dine in or carry out.
And the cost? A donation.
All money raised will stay in our amazing community.

Please plan to join us as we remember our daughter and help those in need.
Charlene and Roger Theurer
Madison Township in Jay County

Letters to the Editor



Seattle can show the way

By CINDY BLACK
The Fulcrum
Tribune News Service

Jan. 21 marks the 15th anniversary of the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling, a decision that opened the floodgates for unlimited corporate spending in elections. Since that ruling, super PACs and outside spending have skyrocketed and the voices of everyday voters have been drowned out by wealthy donors and corporate interests. The impact of Citizens United is clear: The political system is increasingly controlled by the rich, while ordinary voters are left behind.

According to recent data from OpenSecrets, the numbers are striking. In 2008, outside spending in U.S. elections totaled \$574 million. By 2012, that number had more than doubled to nearly \$1.3 billion, and by 2024, outside spending exceeded \$4.5 billion, much of it spent by super PACs and outside groups. In 2008, the top 100 individual donors contributed just \$80.9 million, a small fraction (1.5%) of the overall \$5.3 billion spent on federal elections. By 2024, that share had ballooned, with the top 10 donors alone contributing at least \$42.3 million each — led by Elon Musk's record-breaking \$280 million.

While the rest of the country struggles to rein in the influence of big money, Seattle has charted a different course. In response to Citizens United, we introduced the Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) in 2017 — an innovative effort to empower everyday voters and reduce the dominance of big-money donors. The program provides all Seattle residents with four \$25 vouchers, which they can donate to the candidates of their choice. It's a tool designed to give Seattle's voters a direct role in funding local elections, ensuring that political power remains in the hands of the people, not corporate PACs or the wealthiest individuals.

The results have been encouraging. Before the DVP,

Cindy Black



only 1.3% of Seattle residents contributed to City Council races. In 2021, that number jumped to 7.6%, with over 48,000 residents participating. The program has been particularly effective in engaging first-time voters, with 88% of participants in 2017 having never donated to a local election before. What's more, the DVP has democratized the donor pool, making it more reflective of Seattle's diverse electorate. People of color and low-income residents, who historically have been underrepresented in political donations, are now contributing at much higher rates.

The DVP has also dramatically reduced the influence of out-of-state and corporate donors. Since its introduction, donations to Seattle City Council races from out-of-state sources have decreased by over 80%. This is a powerful reminder that it is possible to reduce the impact of big money in elections while empowering local voters to make their voices heard.

The DVP has also led to greater diversity in Seattle's candidate pool. Nearly half of first-time candidates in recent years have cited the Democracy Voucher Program as the reason they decided to run. By removing financial barriers, the program has opened up the political arena to candidates who might not have otherwise had the resources to run. Seattle's elections are now more competitive, with a greater range of perspectives and backgrounds.

However, as we look toward 2025, Seattle faces a critical challenge: The property tax levy that funds the Democracy Voucher Program is set to expire. Without renewal, we risk losing a vital tool in the

This is a powerful reminder that it is possible to reduce the impact of big money in elections while empowering local voters to make their voices heard.

fight against the influence of big money in local elections.

As the rest of the nation struggles to reverse the damage done by Citizens United, Seattle has the chance to continue leading the way. The Democracy Voucher Program has proven that it is possible to reduce the influence of big donors and create a more inclusive and equitable democracy. But to maintain that momentum, we must renew the levy that funds the program in 2025.

The 15th anniversary of Citizens United serves as a reminder of how far we've come in the wrong direction. But it's also an opportunity for Seattle to show the country that there's another way — one where ordinary voters, not wealthy special interests, control the political process. Let's renew the Democracy Voucher Program and continue our leadership in the fight for a more democratic, people-powered future.

.....
Black is the executive director of Fix Democracy First. She is active with several state and national coalitions, addressing voting access, money in elections, alternative voting systems, and increasing civic participation.

Remote changed the conversation to music

Editor's note: This column is being reprinted from Feb. 24, 2010. Jack had quite the eclectic taste in music, which seemed to be on his mind in late February. In addition to this column from 15 years ago, Jack also wrote about musical nostalgia in the form of Jimi Hendrix for his final column of February in 2015.

By JACK RONALD
The Commercial Review

It started with a click of the remote control.

One second we were watching Purdue pull away from Illinois, the next we were watching a challenger on Iron Chef America trying to put away the insufferable Bobby Flay.

The secret ingredient was some sort of fish I'd never heard of, and the challenger was trying to improve upon it by adding some shellfish. He was adding cockles and mussels. And without missing a beat, my wife and I turned to one another and sang, "Alive, alive oh!"

Over nearly 39 years of marriage, we've been struck more than once by the similarities in our family backgrounds. There were plenty of differences, to be sure. My father was in the garment industry, then the newspaper business and finally was a college administrator; hers was a professor of English literature.

There were similarities as well. Our fathers were born the same year. Both families camped when we were kids. The two families had traveled to many of the same places and had even eaten in the same restaurants. But on Saturday, we realized we sang from the same songbook. Literally.

Those of you with an ear for folk tunes will have recognized the lyric from the old Irish song "Molly Malone."

"In Dublin's fair city, where the girls are so pretty," it begins before telling Molly's sad tale. The chorus has her selling "cockles and mussels, alive, alive oh" through the streets of Dublin.

I couldn't tell you for sure what the heck a cockle is, and I swore off shellfish a couple of years ago after receiving some unmistakable signals from my aging body.

But we both knew the song, and as we started talking (both the Boilermakers and Bobby Flay forgotten) we traded childhood memories of the songbook we learned it from.

The book was rich in Ameri-

Back in the Saddle



cana: "Bicycle Built for Two," "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze," "The Streets of Laredo." But it also reached into the American melting pot to bring us songs like "Over the Sea to Skye" and "Loch Lomond" and, of course, "Molly Malone."

And there were labor songs as well: "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night."

It was possible, of course, that we were talking about two different books. But then we started comparing notes on the illustrations. They were highly stylized, like woodcuts, and many of them were in vivid color.

It was, in fact, the same book: The Fireside Book of Folk Songs.

Quaint as it sounds, it wasn't all that unusual at my house when I was a kid to gather around the piano and sing together. It's not something we did often or on a regular basis, but we did sing together.

By doing so, in the middle of the 20th century, we were reaching back to my parents' childhood and my grandparents' lives, to the era before radio, before TV, before computers, before video games, before the Internet, and before Americans were — in the words of Neil Postman — "amusing ourselves to death."

My wife's family probably used their songbook less often. They didn't have a pianist of my mother's caliber available. The songbook was known for its piano arrangements of classic folk songs, and my mother liked nothing better than to throw in some boogie-woogie bass line while we sang "Won't You Come Home, Bill Bailey."

In many ways, that songbook was simultaneously a link between our two families, our two childhoods, and a link to prior generations.

So, Saturday night I did the logical 21st century thing: I looked for it on eBay.

It should be arriving any day now. If you hear me humming "Molly Malone," you'll know it got here.

The Commercial Review



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

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—Thomas Jefferson

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Tribune News Service/Getty Images/AFP/Ahmad Gharabi

Hostages released

People cheer as an Israeli Air Force CH-53 military transport helicopter carrying newly released Israeli hostages Omer Shem Tov and Eliya Cohen arrives at Beilinson Hospital in the Rabin Medical Centre in Petah Tikva in central Israel on Saturday. Three more Israeli hostages were freed by Hamas militants at a ceremony in central Gaza after two others were released in the southern part of the Palestinian territory.

Work ...

Continued from page 1
Robbins also reported that the city needs to handle some paperwork for its existing street sweeper before it can be traded in. He shared documents with city attorney Wes Schemenaur.

In other business, council members Christy Curts, Dan Watson, Donna Revolt, Randy Murphy and Bivens:

- Heard questions from resident Gary Gillette regarding the cost of a recent stormwater project, the amount of funding brought in via the city's stormwater utility fee and when the fee would be removed. Robbins answered Gillette's questions and said the fee — \$120 per year — is unlikely to be removed. "The stormwater fee is for the whole city," said Robbins, listing several other projects that need to be completed.

- Agreed to make an additional appropriation of \$39,900 for the purchase of a street sweeper.

- Learned from Curts that the city's fire department is still looking to hire a full-time firefighter.

- Discussed taking bids to sell a 2015 police vehicle.

- Was introduced to new community coordinator Darlesia Lee.

- Approved the payment of \$223,096.16 in claims.

Felony arrests

Drug possession

Three Redkey residents were arrested Monday for drug possession and related charges.

Matthew O'Ryan Conn, 44, Blake I. Crabtree, 22, and Jordan M. Moreillon, 23, all of 410 W. Main St., were each preliminarily

charged with a Level 6 felony for possession of methamphetamine, a Level 6 felony for possession of legend drugs, a Class B misdemeanor for maintaining a common nuisance, a Class B misdemeanor for possession of marijuana and a Class C misdemeanor

for possession of paraphernalia. They were each being held on \$4,500 bonds at Jay County Jail.

Criminal confinement

A Portland man was arrested Monday for criminal confinement.

Brandon L. Fisher, 42, 2824 W. 75 South, is charged in Jay Circuit Court with a Level 5 felony for the alleged crime, along with a Level 6 felony for strangulation and a Level 6 felony for domestic battery. He was being held on a \$5,500 bond in Jay County Jail.

Centers ...

Continued from page 1
Now that council and commissioners have declared Jay County as a vote center county, the implementation process includes creating a study committee, devising a plan, holding a public hearing and public comment period and implementing public comments into the plan. From there, the county election board must vote unanimously to adopt the plan.

Answering a question from commissioners president Chad Aker about potential vote center locations, Elliott said most vote centers are within 10 miles of voters. She noted vote centers must also be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility guidelines.

Also Monday, during the drainage board meeting, commissioners OK'd drafting a resolution to designate county tiles measuring at 8 inches or larger as legal drains.

County surveyor Brad Daniels explained commissioners made a resolution in 1992 to that effect. (Prior to the 1992 resolution, tiles had to be made a legal drain through the court system and had to impact more than one landowner.) Daniels pointed out that resolution was tweaked in 1997 to designate county tiles at 10 inches or larger as legal drains.

He said he would like to return to the 8-inch tile designation, explaining that many of the county's tiles measuring 8 inches and larger are mutual drains and need to be maintained.

Also Monday, commissioners agreed to move forward with an ordinance establishing a temporary no-truck route along a detour in Jay County.

Indiana Department of Transportation plans to replace a bridge deck along Indiana 18 just west of Bryant beginning in April. A detour for local traffic will be routed along county road 50 West, 650 North and 250 West.

Commissioners discussed creating and enforcing a temporary ordinance banning truck traffic from the detour, instead requiring them to stick to the state highways. They asked county attorney Wes Schemenaur to move forward with drafting the legislation.

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

- Approved the following: a \$47,214 service

agreement between Jay County Health Department and Purdue University, effective retroactive Jan. 1 through Nov. 30, for Purdue to provide programming that aligns with state requirements for Health First Indiana funding; \$182,297 pass-through claim from LifeStream Services; an updated contract with geographic information system company Beacon — it recently bought out Elevate — subject to meeting commissioners' ordinance regarding contract requirements; a \$176,875 claim from Civil-Con of Jeffersonville for engineering work in replacing the bridge on county road 600 West north of Indiana 26 with a culvert; a \$87,774 claim to purchase vehicles for Jay County Sheriff's Office from Thomas Dodge Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram of Highland and a \$85,017 claim to purchase a van for the sheriff's office from FR Conversions of Westminster, Maryland; \$851.85 for food services provided to Jay County Jail from Canteen Services; and a \$200 claim for establishing a petty cash fund for Jay County Country Living.

- Approved claims totaling \$58,810 for Priority Engineering to replace a book scanner at Jay County Recorder's Office and claims totaling \$24,660.33 for Hays + Sons Complete Restoration of Muncie to make water damage repairs at Jay County Courthouse. Auditor Emily Franks passed on hopes to have repairs to the recorder's office completed by the end of next week. (Recorder's office employees have been working out of the commissioners' room on the second floor since a water leak in September. Damage also impacted some workspaces in Jay County Prosecutor's Office.)

- OK'd Jay County Highway Department to trade in a 2024 Dodge (\$34,000) with electrical issues for a 2024 Silverado 500 (\$48,500) at Kelley Automotive Group of Fort Wayne.

- Thanked the highway department for its work in keeping the roads plowed over the winter.

- Heard Jay Emergency Medical Services' financial breakdown for December from director Gary Barnett. The department had \$144,119.17 in expenses and \$76,970.88 in income.

- Accepted \$200 in donations to Jay County Country Living.

HEALTHCARE

The importance of wellness exams after 50

Seniors are a growing and increasingly prosperous demographic. As the senior population increases, a greater emphasis must be placed on keeping aging individuals healthy. Wellness checks are important at any age, but they bear even more significance as individuals grow older.

Age brings with it many things, including experience and wisdom. But age also brings an increased risk for health problems. Aging men and women are vulnerable to chronic conditions like heart disease, COPD, cancer, and arthritis. It's noteworthy that many chronic health conditions fail to produce any symptoms until they have progressed to a point where treatment is difficult.

Annual wellness exams can help older adults take charge of their health and stay as healthy as possible. It's possible for a person to preserve his or her health (and possibly life) through check-ups and easy tests. Here are some common screenings and health recommendations that come up in the prime of one's life.

- **Colorectal cancer screening:** A colon cancer screening is recommended for everyone at age 45. Colon cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, and risk increases at age 45. Although people seldom look forward to a colonoscopy and the required prep, putting off this test due to a little discomfort may result in missing colon cancer at its earliest stage when it is most treatable.



- **Cholesterol screening:** This simple blood test can help evaluate the risk for heart disease. High cholesterol can contribute to the buildup of plaque in the arteries, making them narrower and less flexible, according to Sharecare, Inc.

- **Mammogram:** Most health organizations recommend annual mammogram screenings from age 40 until menopause. Then it may be possible to have a mammogram every other year for those who are at average risk. It is important for women to discuss mammogram frequency with their doctors, particularly if there is a family history of breast cancer.

- **Diabetes:** ChenMed says diabetes may be more common in older adults, so regular screenings for this illness can enable early diagnosis and management.

- **Testicular cancer screening:** This test generally is not recommended without symptoms. Some organizations suggest men with a family history or

other risk factors consider performing self-examinations.

- **Vaccination needs:** Doctors can alert patients to recommended vaccinations during wellness exams. Seniors should receive an annual flu shot and updated COVID-19 vaccination as available. Pneumococcal vaccine can protect against pneumococcal disease that can lead to pneumonia, meningitis and bloodstream infections. Adults over 50 also should receive a vaccination for shingles, which can occur in older age in those who have previously experienced chickenpox.

There are additional advantages to routine health checkups. Doctors can inquire about fitness routines, stress, sleep, and diet to see if patients are within the guidelines for healthy living.

Older age may make a person wiser, but the risk for various health issues and certain diseases increases with age. Routine health check-ups can keep doctors and patients on the same page.

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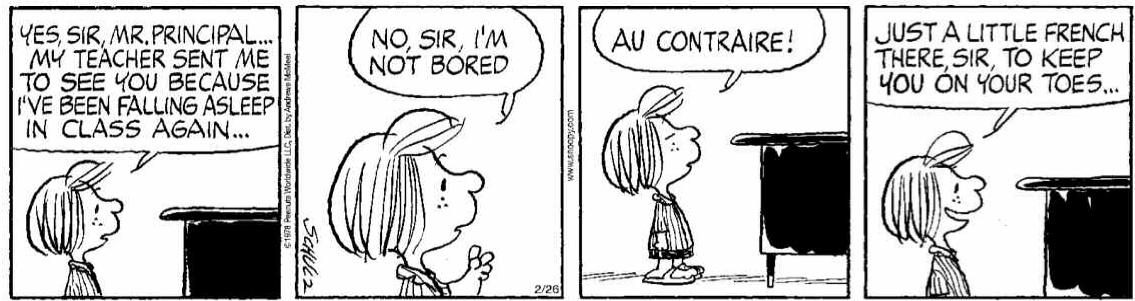
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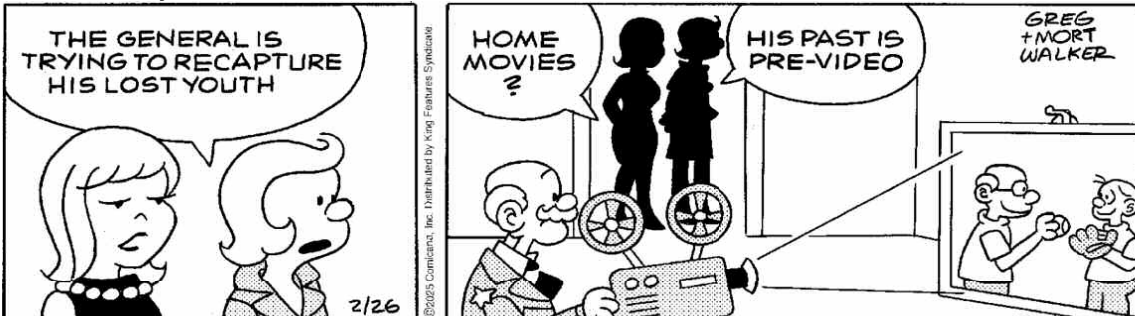
Blondie



Snuffy Smith



Beetle Bailey



THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



Contract Bridge By Steve Becker

Delicate defensive play. North dealer. Both sides vulnerable. NORTH: K 9 6 2, 6 2, A Q 5, K Q J 10. WEST: 8 3, Q J 5 4, J 10 8 2, A 5 3. EAST: 5, A K 10 9 8 7, K 9 4, 7 6 4. SOUTH: A Q J 10 7 4, 3, 7 6 3, 9 8 2. The bidding: North 1♠, East 1♥, South 3♠, West 2♥. Opening lead — queen of hearts. Good defense often requires perfect teamwork, as in this deal where South was in four spades. West led the queen of hearts, East playing the seven and South the three. It is true that in most leagues a seven is regarded as a come-on signal, and many West players would therefore lead another heart. This would have been fatal in the present case because, after ruffing the heart and drawing trump, declarer would drive out the ace of clubs and score 10 tricks. But West shifted to the jack of diamonds at trick two, recognizing that East had played his lowest heart (the 6-5-4-3-2 were all in plain sight) and that East would have played a heart higher than the seven had he wanted the suit continued. Declarer finessed the diamond queen, losing to the king, and East, aware that another heart lead might be ruffed, returned the nine of diamonds. South won with the ace, drew trump and led a club. West took the ace and now had to decide whether to try to cash a diamond or a heart. Had he led a heart, hoping declarer had another card in the suit — West could not know whether East had five or six hearts — South would have gotten home safely. But West played the ten of diamonds and so defeated the contract. This was not simply a lucky shot; the solution lay in East's earlier nine-of-diamonds return. By convention, had East started with four diamonds, he would have returned his fourth-best diamond after taking the king to show his length in that suit. By returning the nine, he indicated that he had fewer than four diamonds, which in turn told West that declarer had another diamond to lose.

Tomorrow: A guide to good bidding. ©2025 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

CRYPTOQUIP

2-26 BJSR E JUTJ-NADLRT BSS OJUJY BERASY AM NOJMMI JUN NUNASD, BJE A JEVVRSY? AJS AELA AMA AELTJA.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF KUWAIT'S RULER PAID HIS BEST WORKERS A PALTRY SUM OF MONEY, COULD THAT BE EMIR PITTANCE? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals H

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Chum, 4 "Zounds!", 8 Nile, 12 Yucatan, 13 "Bravo!", 14 "Amen!", 15 Prefix with natal, 16 Chinese philosopher, 18 Streisand title role, 20 NBC show since 1975, 21 En-grossed, 24 Triangular letter, 28 Pompeii volcano, 32 Gumbo or bisque, e.g., 33 German pronoun, 34 Continental cash, 36 Hwy., 37 Go sight-seeing, 39 "Finlandia" composer Jean, 41 — house (free), 43 iPod type, 44 "— had it!", 46 Sound system name, 50 Railroad magnate Vanderbilt, 55 Leg, in slang, 56 Regarding, 57 Small-scale, 58 Telly network, 59 Smooch, 60 "The Da Vinci Code", 61 Bubble —, 3 Author Uris, 4 Isolated community, 5 Sticky stuff, 6 New England, 7 OED entries, 8 Travels by bike, 9 Luau memento, 10 — Claire, Wisc., 11 Surprised cries, 17 German conjunction, 19 Capote nickname, 22 Name of 12 popes, 23 Shroud city, 25 Actress Singer, 26 Ballet attire, 27 Tarzan's clique, 28 Corleone patriarch, 29 Nobel Prize subj., 30 Close, 31 Japanese noodles, 35 Submits Wisc., 38 Horned beasts, 40 Brit's rest-room, 42 Night before, 45 Stately trees, 47 Pride parade initials, 48 Innocent one, 49 Pool site, for short, 50 Taxi, 51 Buckeyes' sch., 52 ACLU concerns, 53 Sundial numeral, 54 Popular card game.

Word search grid with clues and solutions. Solution time: 23 mins. Yesterday's answer 2-26.

Large crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-61.

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Bowling ...

Continued from page 8
The top eight teams will advance to bracket play, in which teams will bowl a best-of-five Baker games. In the 2025 tournament, the Tribe finished ninth with 3,017 pins, just 13 short of the final advancing team, Rootstown.

Fort Recovery's primary goal this time around is to finish in the top eight to give itself a chance at bracket play. The Tribe's 3,824-pin performance at the district was the third-best mark of any team in the field, trailing only Versailles (3,849) - which won the Southwest District tournament - by 25 and the Northwest District champion Napoleon (3,844) by 20. Based off of the district scores, FRHS has a 260 pin cushion on 2024 state runner-up Mechanicsburg, which had the ninth-best performance.

Should the Indians advance to bracket play, they will shift their sights at the state title. To finish as the top team in Division II, the Tribe will likely need to go through a fellow Midwest Athletic Conference opponent in the Versailles Tigers.

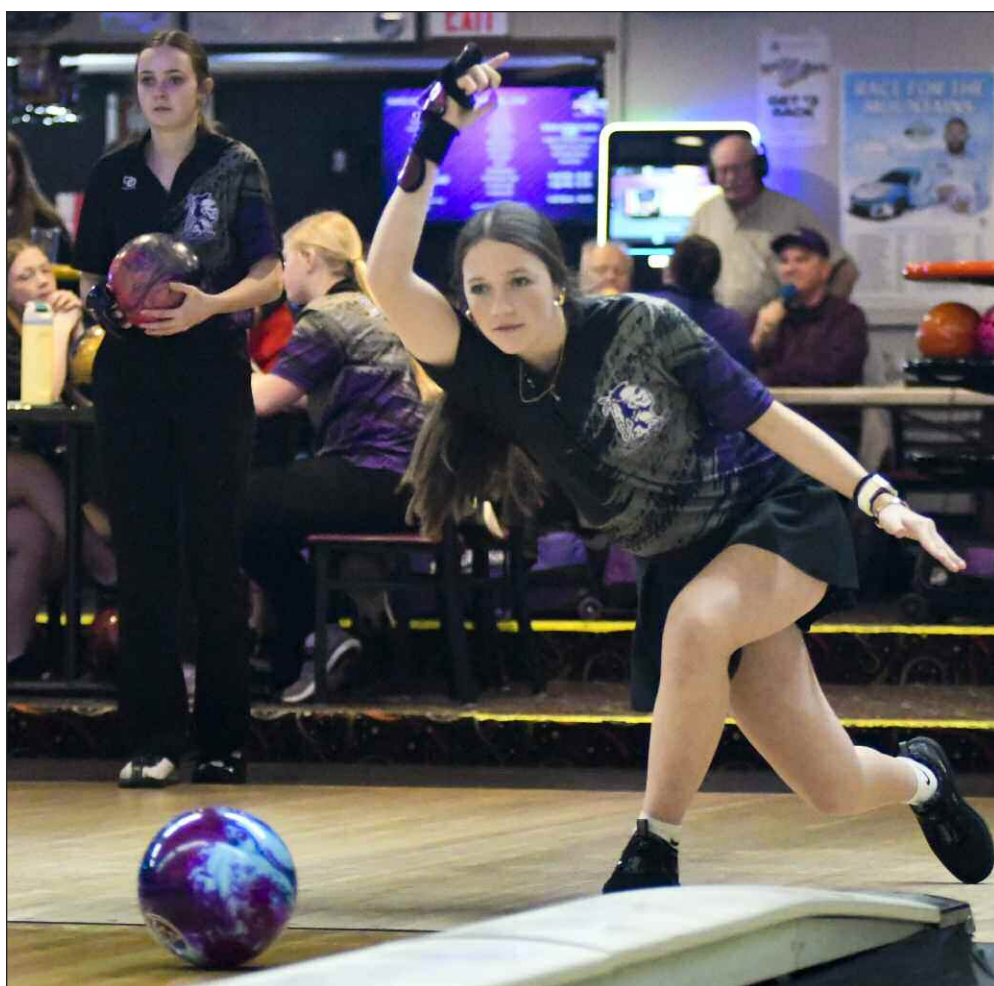
The two teams have developed a friendly rivalry over the past two seasons. This year, the

teams have traded success, as the Indians came out on top during the regular season and in the sectional, while Versailles won in the MAC tournament and the district. Should that pattern keep up, it would set Fort Recovery up to take down the Tigers.

"(Versailles coach Tyler Philipot) and I were talking at districts that we'd love to see two MAC teams make it to the top," Rosegrant said. "As much as we want to beat Versailles, we also cheer them on and want to see them succeed. So if it can be us top two at the end that would be fantastic. ... It would feel pretty darn good (to beat Versailles). I think these girls deserve it."

Along with Versailles - the Tigers finished sixth in the bracket play last season - five more teams that finished in the top eight will return to state. Mechanicsburg was the runner-up and Napoleon finished fifth. Memorial placed third a season ago and is slated to finish in the top eight again with the fifth best district performance.

A year of experience will give the Indians an advantage as they won't be as blinded by the luster of making it to state.



The Commercial Review/Andrew Balko

FRHS freshman Jadyn Wyerick rolls her White Dot spare ball during practice at Miracle Lanes on Monday. Wyerick is one of the three Indians making her first state appearance as the Tribe makes its second consecutive trip.

"Last year, we were just excited to be there," said senior Emily Lauber. "(This year) we need to

figure out where we're standing and our marks as soon as possible. Then we just have to stay moti-

vated and stay pumped and (we'll place higher than we did last year)." Joining Lauber at state

will be seniors Ella Schoen, Kayla Heitkamp and Saidy DeRoo, sophomore Deanna Brown and freshmen Lilah Thien, Jayden Wyerick and Maddie Weigel.

Thien and Schoen both made the first team all-district, finishing sixth and eight respectively. Brown and Lauber each bowled in all three individual games while Heitkamp started in game No. 1 before Wyerick handled the second and third. DeRoo also saw district action, filling the second spot in the lineup during the first three Baker games.

Both Rosegrant and Lauber mentioned winning the mental game will be a key for the Indians to achieve their state aspirations. Should Fort Recovery not beat itself mentally, the Tribe feels good about its chance to achieve some of its state goals.

"We just have to be there for each other," Lauber said. "I know when I'm bowling and I start to struggle, I need to know how to pull myself out ... and just stay positive. We're all great together. We all stick together the whole time and just have fun and our laughs."

Returning ...

Continued from page 8
"At the end of the day, there's no place like home," Wenning said. "I think we just made the call as a family that if all the stars aligned with this job, that it's time to go home. I threw my name in the mix and thought that Fort Recovery did an outstanding job. They blew me away with their interview process."

Wenning succeeds Brent Niekamp, who served as the Indians' head coach for 21 years. Niekamp led the Tribe to three playoff appearances. Wenning was a wide receiver for the first two playoff teams (2014 and 2015) including the state championship team from 2015. (The other playoff berth came in Niekamp's last season

as the Indians accepted a berth following a pair of other teams declining to compete.)

He finished with an 81-131 (38.2%) while climbing up as high as third in the Midwest Athletic Conference standings in 2015.

Wenning will look to draw on what he's learned from Niekamp, while reinvestigating

the culture surrounding Fort Recovery football.

"Coach Niekamp has just played such a pivotal role in developing (me and my friends) and so many of us classes that have gone through Fort Recovery," Wenning said. "There's so many things that he's facilitated that were far beyond wins and losses in his

coaching philosophy that culminated (into) a state championship. ...

"I still remember some of those things he input for my senior class that were phenomenal, chemistry building, culture building, etc. So really looking to, as I step into this role, is reignite that fire for culture excitement."

Sports on tap

Local schedule

Today
Fort Recovery — Boys basketball district semifinal vs. Riverside at Troy - 6 p.m.

Thursday
Jay County — Junior high wrestling at Southern Wells - 5:30 p.m.

TV sports

Today
3:15 p.m. — Premier League soccer: Liverpool at Newcastle United (USA)
6:30 p.m. — College basketball: Georgetown at UConn (FS1); Michigan State at Maryland (BTN)
7 p.m. — NBA: Toronto Raptors at Indiana Pacers (FSDN Indiana); Philadelphia 76ers at New York Knicks (ESPN)
7 p.m. — College basketball: Ole

Miss at Auburn (ESPN2)
8:30 p.m. — College basketball: Villanova at Seton Hall (FS1); Penn State at Indiana (BTN)
9 p.m. — College basketball: Texas at Arkansas (ESPN2)
9:30 p.m. — NBA: San Antonio Spurs at Houston Rockets (ESPN)
10 p.m. — NHL: Vancouver Canucks at Los Angeles Kings (TNT)
10:30 p.m. — College basketball: Utah State at Boise State (FS1); Ohio

State at USC (BTN)
10:30 p.m. — SheBelieves Cup women soccer: United States at Japan (TBS)

Thursday
3 p.m. — Premier League soccer: West Ham United at Leicester City (USA)
6 p.m. — Women's college basketball: Purdue at Penn State (BTN)
7 p.m. — College basketball: North Texas at Florida Atlantic (ESPN2)

7 p.m. — Women's college basketball: North Carolina at Duke (ESPN)
7 p.m. — NHL: Columbus Blue Jackets at Montreal Canadiens (FOX); St. Louis Blues at Washington Capitals (FSDN Indiana)
8 p.m. — NBA: Denver Nuggets at Milwaukee Bucks (TNT)
8 p.m. — PVF volleyball: Vegas Thrill at Indy Ignite (FS1)
8 p.m. — College hockey: Michigan at Ohio State (BTN)

8:30 p.m. — NBA: Charlotte Hornets at Dallas Mavericks (ABC)
9 p.m. — College basketball: Cleveland State at Wright State (ESPN2)
9 p.m. — Women's college basketball: South Carolina at Ole Miss (ESPN)
10 p.m. — CONCACAF Champions Cup soccer: Vancouver Whitecaps at Deportivo Saprissa (FS1)
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To have an event listed in "Sports on tap," email details to sports@theocr.com.

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Returning to the Fort

Former state champ Wes Wenning returns to FRHS to coach football team

By **ANDREW BALKO**

The Commercial Review

FORT RECOVERY — Ten years ago, Wes Wenning caught a touchdown to help lead the Indians to their first and only state championship over the second-ranked Mogadore 33-14.

Now he's coming back to the Fort to lead the Tribe once again.

Fort Recovery Local Schools board unanimously approved Wenning to take over the varsity football program on Monday.

"Just first and foremost, over the roof excited," Wenning said. "This has been a job that's been in the back of my mind coming up through this program and being a part of this community that has poured so much into me and developing me into becoming who I am. Then going out for a while to college and moving to Akron, to having this kind of full circle opportunity that we get to jump in and reignite a culture at Fort Recovery is truly a blessing and an honor. And I'm very excited to do so."

Wenning is a 2016 graduate of Fort Recovery High School, and competed on the state champion football team, basketball team and was a state qualifier in track.

After high school, Wenning played football at Ashland University, a Division II school in northern Ohio. Wenning graduated from Ashland in 2020 and started as an intervention specialist at Archbishop Hoban in Akron, while serving as an assistant on the football team under Tim Tyrrell for the last four seasons. (In 2024 he was promoted to associate principal and dean of student life.)

Wenning's Fort Recovery roots and resume helped him



The Commercial Review/Chris Schanz

Members of the Fort Recovery High School football team celebrate in Columbus, Ohio, after winning the school's first state football championship in history over second-ranked Mogadore 33-14 in 2015. Wes Wenning (No. 7 in the photo) who was a wide receiver on the state championship team will take over as the Tribe's football coach in 2025, following the retirement of Brent Niekamp.

stand out to FRHS athletics director Aimee Pottkotter and the hiring committee.

"We have our three core values of our athletic department ... and those are commitment, integrity and relationships," Pottkotter said. "We just thought he had embodied a lot of those values and has a lot of good

ideas to bring those values to our community, into our football program. And we just liked a lot of the things he had to say about leadership and what he would like to see for our football program going forward."

One of the major points that Wenning emphasized was encouraging student involve-

ment. He wants more kids to try and be three-sport athletes while still focusing on academics and an outside job.

Wenning said he's thought about eventually becoming the Indians' coach for a long time, so when he got the opportunity to throw his hat in the ring, he jumped on it. While moving

away from a bigger city like Akron will come with some adjustments for his family – he is married to Kendra Seifring Wenning, who also graduated from Fort Recovery in 2016, and has two children with her – he is excited to return home and be closer to his family.

See **Returning** page 7

FRHS girls bowling looking to make top 8

By **ANDREW BALKO**

The Commercial Review

The Indians and Tigers have developed a rivalry over the past two seasons.

In the 2023-24 regular season, the Indians claimed the regular season matchup before the Tigers got revenge in the Midwest Athletic Conference tournament.

The Tigers also got the better of the Tribe at the

state meet that year, finishing four spots higher.

The Indians repeated the regular season result this year, but once again couldn't take down the Tigers in the MAC tournament.

The Tribe toppled the Tigers on Feb. 11 to earn its first sectional title.

They had a chance to do the same at the dis-

trict, but they couldn't beat the cats, falling by less than 30 pins.

But luckily for the Indians, they have earned themselves another chance to be victorious against Versailles.

The Fort Recovery High School girls bowling team will travel to Columbus on Friday to compete in the OHSAA

Division II State tournament at H.P. Lanes and will be looking to improve upon their ninth-place finish from last season.

The Indians earned their first state berth in 2023-24 and only graduated one bowler (Brooklyn Wyrick) from that squad, setting up a return visit in 2025. A

runner-up finish in the Southwest District tournament clinched a return trip.

"It's very exciting," said FRHS coach Alison Rosegrant. "The thing I was the most nervous about was, this season we had expectations. Last year was exciting. We knew we were good enough to make it to state

the previous years, but making it was great and now we had to live up to it again. So just really excited that the girls did what they had to do and made it back."

Bowling will start with the qualifying round at 10:45 a.m. with three individual games and three Baker games.

See **Bowling** page 7



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