

# The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371

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## Interrogation evidence

### Prosecution turns to video; Stephen is testifying today

By **CHRIS SCHANZ**  
The Commercial Review

The state has presented its case.

The jury has only one more testimonial to hear — the defendant's.

Jay County prosecutor Wes Schemenaur rested his case Wednesday in Jay Circuit Court on day three of the scheduled five-day murder trial of Esther J. Stephen, 30, Portland.

Stephen is one of three women charged in the Jan. 12,

2020, murder of 31-year-old Shea Briar of Portland. The trial resumed at 8:30 a.m. today with Stephen taking the witness stand.

The bulk of Wednesday's session revolved around a Jan. 14, 2020, interview conducted by Jay County Sheriff's Office detectives Mitch Sutton, who is now retired, and captain Ben



Stephen

Schwartz.

Jurors — 12 total with two alternates composed of eight women and six men — were presented with a more than 120-page transcript of the nearly two-hour interrogation of Stephen, who court documents allege plotted to kill Briar along with 19-year-olds Shelby Hiestand, Portland, and Hannah Knapke, Fort Recovery, over a custody dispute. (Stephen and Briar shared a child.)

Hiestand and Knapke have

also been charged in the case. Hiestand's trial is set for August, while Knapke's is scheduled for September.

In the Jan. 14, 2020, video, in which Stephen's statements are difficult to decipher at times, she first denies having had recent contact with Briar or any knowledge of who might want to kill him.

As interrogators reveal they had Briar's phone records and that his device made contact with Stephen's, she argued her phone dialed his number unin-

tentionally. She later admitted she actually spoke with Briar for a brief period of time.

"I'm scared. I didn't do it," she can be heard telling police.

Then, Stephen went on to backtrack on that statement.

During interrogation, Stephen confirmed Kristi Sibray's testimony from Tuesday that Stephen and Hiestand had talked with Sibray about how to "get rid of" Briar because "things would be easier without him."

See **Interrogation** page 2



Special to The Commercial Review/Sue Brunson

### Foggy reflection

The sunrise reflects off the pond at the Aden Schwartz farm on county road 650 north, west of Bryant, on a foggy St. Patrick's Day morning Wednesday.

## Federal funding could cover project

By **RAY COONEY**  
The Commercial Review

The first phase of the Portland airport runway extension will be constructed at no cost to the city.

Now the hope is that the second phase will be fully federally funded as well.

Portland Board of Aviation on Wednesday heard from its engineering firm representative that the federal American Rescue Plan Act includes millions in funding for airport projects.

The board also approved an updated quote for a new driveway at the airport and learned that Tavzel Aviation will have a full-time flight instructor.

Jason Clearwaters of Butler, Fairman & Seufert, the airport's engineering firm, reported to the board the American Rescue Plan Act, passed by Congress last week, includes \$608 million that is earmarked to cover the state and local costs for airport grants this year.

See **Funding** page 7

## Jay is rated 'blue' again

*Rate of cases in county has stayed low for last five weeks*

The county's cases per 100,000 residents went up for the second week in a row, coming in at 68. The number was 48 last week and had been as low as 24 in the March 3 update.

The local positivity rate dropped to 2.42% from 2.7% last week.

Adams, Wells and Blackford counties all moved back to "yellow" (moderate risk) after being blue last week. Randolph and Delaware counties were blue again.

The state map became slightly more blue this week as 65 counties were rated blue, up from 61 last week. The remaining 27 counties were yellow. None were rated "orange" (high risk) or "red" (severe).

Jay County has had 26 cases of COVID-19 confirmed this month.

See **Blue** page 2

By **RAY COONEY**  
The Commercial Review

The positivity rate went down while overall cases went up.

Still, the county was in the blue again.

Jay County was rated "blue" (low risk) for the fifth consecutive week Wednesday as Indiana State Department of Health released its update on coronavirus metrics.



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

### Reaching out

Members of Jay County High School's Patriot Edition show choir perform during a special concert Monday night. Pictured, from left, are Blake Caldwell, Ryan Vancise, Caleb Darnell, Ben Heath, Logan Zimmerman, Andy Brinkerhoff, Hunter Young, Josh Hilty and Phil Hartman. The group closed its season Saturday by winning the Garrett Railroader Rush Invitational after placing third at the DeKalb Choir Festival (Feb. 13), the Homestead Classic Showcase (Feb. 20) and the Huntington North Midwest Showcase (Feb. 27).

#### Deaths

- John Hammitt**, 92, rural Bryant
- Nilah Hudson**, 79, Salamina
- Brian Brown**, 52, Willshire, Ohio
- Robin Stults**, 57, Bluffton  
Details on page 2.

#### Weather

Jay County had a high temperature of 64 degrees on St. Patrick's Day. The low was 32. About a third of an inch of rain had fallen by 8 a.m. today, with more in the forecast until 8 p.m. tonight and winds gusting to 45 miles per hour. Expect sunny skies Friday with a high of 44. See page 2 for an extended outlook.

#### In review

Portland Police Department has proposed purchasing the current Jay School Corporation administrative offices for use as a new police station. What are your thoughts on the proposal? Send letters to the editor to r.cooney@thecr.com. There is a 700-word maximum.

#### Coming up

**Friday** — Coverage of Thursday's Redkey Town Council meeting.

**Tuesday** — Coverage of Monday's Jay County Commissioners meeting.





# Color guard clinic is set

Local youth will have an opportunity to get an introduction to color guard.

Jay County High School's color guard will host its 2021 Kids Clinic on April 17.

### Taking Note

The event is open to students in grades kindergarten through 12. It will run from noon to 4 p.m. at East Jay Elementary School.

Registration forms are available at local schools or by visiting [jcmarching-patriots.com](http://jcmarching-patriots.com). The registration deadline is April 1.

### Hosting workshop

Jay County Purdue Extension will host a lawn care workshop at 6 p.m. April 8. It will be at Jay County Public Library.

Purdue Extension educator Justin Curley will lead the free session. To RSVP, call the extension office at (260) 726-4707.



Photo provided

## Nelson honored

Kathy Nelson of West Jay Optimist Club was recently honored with the Indiana North Optimist Humanitarian Award. The ward recognizes "outstanding contribution in promoting & participation in humanitarian activities within the community and Indiana." Presenting the award to Nelson (left) is Sandy Rogers, president of the West Jay club and governor elect of Indiana North District Optimists.

# Grief, depression threaten the future

DEAR ABBY: My fiancée and I have been together for four years.

I have lost A LOT of people in my life, so I am used to death. She, on the other hand, didn't experience it until two years ago, when she lost her grandfather. The next year, her mother passed, and last year we lost a child — her oldest — my stepson.

Abby, she is so lost. She's no longer the same person she once was, and I totally understand that. I'm sad and depressed, too, but she's bad.

I love this woman like I have never loved any other. I can't picture life without her, but lately I have begun to wonder how it would affect me, her and the kids if I left. I'm not equipped to deal with someone else's depression on top of my own. I have been trying, but I'm finding myself getting more and more angry.

What should I do? — TORN IN THE EAST

DEAR TORN: You mentioned that you, too, suffer from depression. Are you receiving treatment for it? If you are seeing a psychologist (and being medicated), discuss this

Dear Abby



with the person who is working with you. You may need a change in your medication.

It isn't surprising that with so much loss all at once in her life, your fiancée is grieving and depressed. Frankly, while I might suggest she join a support group for help in coping with the loss of her child, she may also need help from a licensed mental health professional.

Although you are tempted, I don't think now is the time to abandon your fiancée and her children. Once she is stabilized, you may not want to leave at all.

.....

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](http://DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

## Sudoku

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

Level: Intermediate

### Wednesday's Solution

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

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

## Community Calendar

Notices will appear in Community Calendar as space is available. To submit an item, email [news@thecr.com](mailto:news@thecr.com).

### Thursday

CINCINNATUS LEAGUE — Will meet at noon Friday at Harmony Cafe in Portland. Members are encouraged to wear a mask and practice social distancing.

SENIOR CITIZENS CARD CLUB — Will meet at 1 p.m. on the first, second, third and fifth Thursday of each month at Jay Community Center.

EN AVANT CLUB — Meets at 1 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

ORGAN TRANSPLANT SUPPORT GROUP — Will meet at 3 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month in the IU Health Blackford main conference room.

JAY COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY — Will meet at 5:30 p.m. the third Thursday of each month at Jay County Public Library. The public is welcome.

AMERICAN LEGION POST 211 AUXILIARY — Will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday, March 11 at the American Legion building, 211 W. Walnut St., Portland.

CELEBRATE RECOVERY — A 12-step Christian recovery program meets at 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.

PORTLAND LIONS CLUB — Will meet at 6:30 p.m. the third Thursday of the month at Portland Lions Civic Center, 307 W. 100 North.

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 Thursday at The Rock Church, 1605 N. Meridian St., Portland. Come early for a meal. For more information, call (260) 766-2006.

WABASH CANNONBALLS 4-H CLUB — Will meet at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 18, at Trinity Catholic Church.

FORGET-ME-NOT — A support group for parents, friends and relatives who have lost a baby through miscarriage, birth or illness will meet from 7 to 9 p.m. at St. Vincent Randolph Hospital, Winchester, in community room 1. For more information, call Kimberly Sibery at (765) 964-6075 or Nikki Bosworth at (765) 584-6452.

### Saturday

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 10 a.m. upstairs at True Value Hardware, Meridian

Street, Portland. For more information, call (260) 729-2532.

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](http://museumofthesoldier.com).

### Monday

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

BRYANT AREA COMMUNITY CENTER — Walking from 9 to 10 a.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

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

EUCHRE — For those 55 and older from 12:30 to 3 p.m. at West Jay Community Center in Dunkirk.

PREGNANCY CARE CENTER — Free pregnancy testing with ongoing support during and after pregnancy. The center is located at 216 S. Meridian St., Portland. Hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (260) 726-8636. Walk-ins accepted.

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

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# Rethink education bill, expansion

To the editor:  
I have two items to discuss today. One involves the Indiana legislature's attempt to spend tax money on private schools and the other involves the stone quarry.

In the matter of the schools, our taxes are paid to support public schools, among other items. If we were to apply some of that money to private schools, then there would be lower support for public schools and lower

## Letters to the Editor

quality education, followed by, we taxpayers could pay for college courses, too.

I can't even imagine the uproar that would cause.

If parents and the rest of us had to pay those bills, none of us could afford to live in Indiana, that's for sure.

I believe that if parents desire a better education for their children, that should be paid from their own pockets, not the pockets of the community. That's why private schools have been only for the privileged few. You would be asking regular families to help pay for private schools for others, even thought you

can't afford it for your own.

Now, the stone quarry. The new area it wants to expand to would create all kinds of hardships for the City of Portland.

I drive through a lot of that expansion area all the time. It will be a traffic nightmare for anyone who lives near it.

It will also completely ruin property values for anything near it, and cut the chances for Portland to grow. It's like cutting off that whole area of town.

Plus, I can't even imagine the damage to the cemetery, as it is also close by.

U.S. Aggregates needs to look for property at least 5 miles from cities and other busy areas. This location is totally not compatible with what its needs are, and I suggest it look at other areas.

I realize being near to where they already are sounds good, but it's a no go.

Verna R. Loper  
Portland

## Newspapers excel as your eyes, ears

By JIM PUMARLO

My days of sitting behind an editor's desk have passed, but I'll never lose my newspaper blood. I regularly enjoy my first cup of coffee while scanning newspaper websites. It's a great way to keep current on what's happening in communities.

Public affairs have always been a passion, so I pay particular attention when the broad arena of issues is addressed. The role of newspapers as watchdogs of the dynamics in both the public and private sectors bears underscoring during Sunshine Week, March 14 through 20, and its theme, "Your Right to Know."

Some recent headlines: From the Chanhassen Villager: "Build, invest or tear down are all options for some District 112 elementary schools."

From the Rochester Post-Bulletin: "Court records show troubling past of Wabasha County administrator applicant."

From the International Falls Journal: "Campus officials talk gap years, hopes for fall enrollment."

From the Duluth News Tribune: "Do Duluth's legislative priorities reflect the community's?"

From the St. Cloud Times: "What are local economists expecting in 2021?"

These headlines, though from Minnesota newspapers, are representative of the breadth of public affairs reports delivered regularly by newspapers.

Some stories are firsthand meeting reports. Some reflect enterprise initiatives. Some are the result of digging beneath the initial set of facts. Some take the additional step of offering editorial perspective.

And they all are delivering news that is valuable but not always readily available to readers.

The examples reflect a personal philosophy. Community newspapers, at their best, are stewards of their communities. The news columns are a blend of stories that people like to read and stories they should read. The advertising columns promote and grow local commerce. And the editorial pages are a marketplace of ideas.

The news media landscape has never been more fractured. Newspapers have never been more challenged due to the economic impact of COVID-19.

Yet, the need for trained journalists to gather, deliver and interpret the news — the need for citizens' "right to know" — is more important than ever as we navigate the effects of the coronavirus. I



remain a firm believer that local newspapers have an advantage in today's crowded media terrain by being the premier clearinghouse of information in your communities. They deliver the news on a range of platforms from print to digital.

The value of trained journalists in collecting and interpreting information is especially important within the context of local public affairs.

Citizens are increasingly challenged to keep abreast of actions of a city council, school board, county board, or any of the numerous other local governing bodies. Then they have to decipher what the decisions, singularly and collectively, mean in their personal and business lives.

You have an advocate in your community newspapers.

Make no mistake. Editors and reporters are challenged as well in gaining access to everyday sources during the pandemic. At the same time, they have the tools that others may lack.

Journalists have relationships with government officials and staffs.

Journalists have been trained in the routine. They know how to flesh out information that is not readily volunteered or available. They know who to contact. They know where to look. They know the questions to ask.

Bottom line, journalists are undeterred in their role as your community's collective set of eye and ears. They thrive on delivering the news; it's their full-time job. Readers can rest assured that editors and reporters will continue to present a full menu of news during the ordinary and extraordinary times.

Sunshine Week is a great reminder that energized newspapers are at the foundation of energized communities.

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*Pumarlo writes, speaks and provides training on community newsroom success strategies. Email him at jim@pumarlo.com.*



## Meeting has a lot at stake

By JOHN R. BOLTON

Special To The Washington Post

Today, the Biden administration will conduct its first high-level meeting with China. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan conferred with senior Communist Party Politburo member Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Anchorage, Alaska. Sullivan has said he and Blinken would explain how the new team "intends to proceed at a strategic level," conveying its interests and values, and its concerns with Chinese activities.

President Joe Biden issued an "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance" earlier this month, "as we begin work on a National Security Strategy." That leaves the administration's preparedness for the meeting unclear, but even "guidance" in the absence of a full strategy is a start.

Biden has spoken once with Chinese President Xi Jinping, although China's readout of the conversation portrays Xi as doing most of the talking about what he expects from Washington. Last week, Biden held the first summit (virtually) of the "Quad" (Japan, India, Australia and the United States), a unique, still-evolving forum to foster a "free and open Indo-Pacific." Just before Anchorage, Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will meet their South Korean and Japanese counterparts.

This is elemental choreography, reassuring allies and signaling that "regular order" in diplomatic process is back in Washington.

But process is not substance, and certainly not a strategy for dealing with unacceptable Chinese behavior. A by-no-means-comprehensive list of Beijing's transgressions that require U.S. attention would include: meddling, blatant and subtle, with U.S. public opinion; building military bases in the disputed South China Sea; menacing Taiwan, Vietnam and India; increasing strategic nuclear forces; and egregious global cyberwarfare; empowering North Korea's nuclear weapons program; concealing the origins of COVID-19; stealing

John R. Bolton



intellectual property and forcing technology transfers; and genocide against Uyghurs and the repression of Hong Kong.

But listing points of friction is also not strategy. Considerable risk lies ahead if Biden's most important China objective, however understated, is to "explore whether there are other avenues for cooperation," as Blinken recently testified. This is equivalent to saying, "Let me tell you what our weak points are."

Despite the administration's denials, zeal for a climate deal may be first on the list.

Even if "other avenues for cooperation" is only a diplomatic nicety, Blinken and Sullivan must stress to the Chinese that Biden's policy will differ fundamentally from his predecessors'. U.S. public opinion, as in many industrial democracies, has turned decidedly negative toward Beijing because of its conduct regarding covid. China's manifold noxious actions, noted above, have also increased public disapproval.

That ought to tee up the most important point Blinken and Sullivan should make: This is not the Obama era. The good times (for China) are not going to roll again without massive changes in Beijing's behavior — and not just by making promises, as was so often the case in years past. The United States today cannot afford to revive former president Barack Obama's blinkered acquiescence in China's conduct.

Given Biden's few campaign pronouncements on foreign policy, his eight years as Obama's vice president and a new administration overflowing with Obama alumni, Beijing could be excused for hoping that (his criticism of the Uyghur genocide notwithstanding) Biden will be the successor to Obama that Xi had

expected Hillary Clinton to be in 2017. Biden would do well to disabuse Beijing of that idea.

Distinguishing himself from Obama may be hard for Biden. Ironically, distinguishing himself from Donald Trump's transactional propensity for short time horizons and splashy deals may also prove difficult. If reaching climate change agreements with Beijing is as urgent as the vibes emanating from Biden's special envoy John Kerry suggest, it could be impossible. Trump's unpredictable gyrations are gone, but his fascination with big deals regardless of the cost to the nation may unfortunately remain.

Blinken and Sullivan must be clear, if they can be, that Biden, unlike Obama, recognizes China as at least an adversary, if not an enemy — and that the United States will tailor its policies accordingly. And that, unlike Trump, Biden will think and act strategically.

In Anchorage, the U.S. officials need not be bellicose in making these points, but they must be as confident and assertive as their Chinese counterparts will undoubtedly be in advancing Beijing's interests. If Blinken and Sullivan fail to press hard for, say, less-belligerent Chinese behavior in the South China Sea to avoid jeopardizing what appear to be higher-priority objectives on climate change, Yang and Wang will sense it instantly. And Xi will not hesitate to try to exploit any opportunity presented.

This first high-level Washington-Beijing encounter will not resolve any major issues, and no one expects it to. If Blinken and Sullivan emphasize that Biden is developing a coherent strategy to resolutely oppose China's objectionable behavior, that alone would be a vital difference from the past 12 years. If not, however, the China question will become an increasingly important focus of America's domestic political debate, and one where Biden is unlikely to fare well.

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*Bolton served as national security adviser under President Donald Trump.*

# The Commercial Review

HUGH N. RONALD (1911-1983), Publisher Emeritus



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We welcome letters to the editor. Letters should be 700 words or fewer, signed and include a phone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit letters for content and clarity. Email letters to news@thecr.com.

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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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**PUBLIC AUCTION**  
Located: Bubb Exhibition Hall, Jay County Fairgrounds, Portland, IN Saturday, March 27th, 2021  
9:30 am  
Antique-Old & Collector items-Guns-Household: Walnut tall ornate bed, Walnut wardrobe, Oak round table with 6 chairs, Standard and Kendall double sided signs, Ohio Farms Ins Co 1924 statue, Indian Statue, Stevens Bicycle Rifle, Italy 50 cal black powder muzzle loader, Stevens Rolling Block 22, Marlin 22 S/L LR pump, Cross bow, School bells, Mayonnaise churn, Fenton several pieces including Favrene, Crockery and Stoneware, Model T lights, Weather vane arrows, Mower and Tools, John Deere x540 Multi Terrain riding mower with 54" deck and 900 hours. Many other items not listed.  
Auctioneers Note: Al and Janet have sold their home and are downsizing. The auction offers a great variety of quality items. Auction preview will be held on Friday March 26th from 2:00 to 5:30 p.m. Please visit Auction Zip for photos or contact our office at (260) 726-2700 with any questions.  
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**30 LOST, STRAYED OR FOUND**

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**40 NOTICES**

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**ACROSS**  
1 Low-diet  
5 Sharif of "Funny Girl"  
9 Sweetie  
12 Abbr. on a phone  
13 "Arrivederci"  
14 Conceit  
15 "A Farewell to Arms" author  
17 Club  
18 Rust and the like  
19 Leers at  
21 — and behold  
22 Mideast peninsula  
24 Dull pain  
27 June honoree  
28 Comfy-cozy  
31 Nemesis  
32 "Strange Magic" gp.  
33 "The Raven" monogram  
34 Pyramid, maybe  
36 Gore and Pacino  
37 Former polit. divisions

**DOWN**  
1 Silver salmon  
2 Pinnacle  
3 Notes after "do"  
4 Horse's headgear  
5 PTA and NEA, e.g.  
6 Trim the grass  
7 Docs' bloc  
8 Synthetic fabric  
9 Fashion trends that rise and fall  
10 Curved molding  
11 Auction signals  
16 "The Matrix" role

**20 Tank filler**  
**22 Charlie Brown's sister**  
**23 Altar vows**  
**24 Toward the stern**  
**25 Bill's partner**  
**26 Plant-based drink**  
**27 Campus bigwig**  
**29 Eg. and Syr., once**  
**30 Family docs**  
**35 Garden buzzer**  
**37 Hit the road**  
**39 Different type**  
**40 Evergreen**  
**41 Celestial bear**  
**42 Taboo**  
**43 "Hey!"**  
**44 "Rule, Britannia!" composer**  
**45 Classic Fords**  
**46 Attempt**  
**49 Geological period**  
**50 Swab the decks**

**Solution time: 24 mins.**

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STUCCO	CANCER									
	HTS	HUGH								
IMP	OOF	FEEDS								
BOAT	LAP	RTES								
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	RARA	ARF								
SLICES	STEEL									
COCO	PATENTED									
ARIZ	ESE	CAGE								
DDAY	NPR	ETON								

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Yesterday's answer 3-18

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# Sports

## Bader sets pool records

Alex Bader was often among one of the best in the conference as a Patriot.

She earned the accolade for the first time in college.

Bader, a 2018 Jay County High School graduate, was named Mid-American Conference swimmer of the week back on Feb. 17.

The Ball State junior helped the Cardinal women's swim team's 200-yard medley relay set a Llewellyn Aquatic Center record of 1 minute, 42.24 seconds, which is the sixth-fastest time in program history. That effort came on Feb. 13 against Xavier.

The same meet she also clocked a 1:01.92 in the 100 breaststroke to set another pool record, shattering the previous mark of 1:03.04. Bader's record was the second-fastest time in program history, the third-fastest swim in the MAC at the time and was 88th nationally.

On Saturday against Akron, Bader won the 100 breaststroke in 1:02.9, marking the fifth time this season she's won that particular race.

### Vivienne Kunkler Jay County - 2019

Set two program records and earned three NAIA national cuts as the Bethel University women's swim team finished fourth in the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference championships Feb. 4 through 6.

Kunkler set a program record of 2 minutes, 25.8 seconds in the 200-yard breaststroke, finishing runner-up and earning NAIA 'B' cut. She had a 'B' cut as well in the 100 breaststroke, placing third, and helped the 400 medley relay team take second with a school-record and NAIA cut time of 4:02.5.

She was also part of the third-place 200 medley relay.

The NAIA national championships were scheduled for March 3 through 6 in Columbus, Georgia, but were canceled.

### Will Homan Fort Rec. - 2018

Reached the end zone again for the University

## Collegiate Check-up

of Saint Francis football team on Saturday in a 24-21 road loss to Concordia.

The sophomore scored on a 1-yard run with 47 seconds left in the second quarter as the NAIA No. 9 Cougars stopped a streak of 21 straight points for No. 13 Concordia.

Homan, who had two touchdowns in leading the Cougars (1-1) in a season-opening win March 6, finished tied a career-high of 11 carries for 49 yards. He also lost a fumble.

### Cade Wendel Fort Rec. - 2018

Suffered the loss pitching for the Lake Erie baseball team in an 8-7 setback to Mercyhurst on Saturday.

He gave up two earned runs on one hit and a walk while only recording two outs in a relief effort.

Four days earlier, he got the start for the Storm but did not factor into the decision. He tossed three innings, allowing three earned runs on four hits with three strikeouts and one walk.

### Collin Haines Jay County - 2018

Led the Indiana University-South Bend men's golf team as it placed ninth in the Pinehurst (North Carolina) Invitational.

The junior shot 79 on March 2 in the second day of the tournament for a team-best 166 score over the two days. The Titans totaled 683 for ninth out of 10 teams.

Campbellsville won with its total of 603.

### Nick Hayden Jay County - 2017

Trailed Haines by one shot in the Pinehurst Invitational while competing for the IU-South Bend men's golf team.

Like Haines, Hayden shot 87 during the first day of the tournament on March 1. He improved seven strokes on day two, finishing with a total of 167 for the invitational.



The Commercial Review/Chris Schanz

## Bright backhands

Olivia Bright of the Jay County High School softball team reaches to make a backhanded stop on a ground ball near third base as part of a drill during practice Wednesday afternoon at JCHS. The Patriots will open their 2021 season at 5 p.m. April 5 against Blackford.

## Izzo, MSU in new spot as first 4

By CLIFF BRUNT

AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Michigan State and coach Tom Izzo are in an unfamiliar position.

Last time there was an NCAA Tournament, the Spartans reached the Final Four in 2019 — the most recent of eight trips under Izzo.

This time, Michigan State needed a late surge just to get into the Big Dance, and they'll have to win an extra game, too. The Spartans (15-12) will face UCLA (17-9) on Thursday in a First Four matchup of No. 11 seeds in the East Region.

Izzo is just thankful to be playing, all things considered.

"You know and I know that three

weeks ago nobody gave us a chance, including probably most of you and probably even me," Izzo said. "We fought our way through, and that took some courage and guts, and I'm proud of them for that."

It's fitting that the Spartans will have just a little bit tougher road ahead than most of the qualifiers. Even in the most difficult of years, Michigan State faced extra challenges.

Izzo contracted COVID-19 early in the season, yet the Spartans opened with six straight wins. They started Big Ten play with three straight losses on their way to dropping nine of 13 overall, but they eventually bounced back late in the season with victories

over Ohio State, Michigan and Illinois — which all finished in the top seven of the final AP poll.

Now, the Spartans will need to win Thursday's matchup in West Lafayette to reach the final 64 and play No. 6 seed BYU on Saturday. That winner will face No. 3 seed Texas or No. 14 seed Abilene Christian on Monday.

"I'm not worried about facing anybody in this tournament," Izzo said. "I don't feel comfortable with UCLA and BYU or Texas, but I don't feel afraid of UCLA, BYU or Texas or anybody else because we truly, truly have played the best teams in the country on a night-in and night-out basis, and especially in the last two to three weeks."

## On tap

### Local schedule

Today  
Fort Recovery — Baseball scrimmage at Tri-Village — 5 p.m.; Softball scrimmage at Perry — 5 p.m.

### TV schedule

Thursday  
5:10 p.m. — Men's College Basketball: NCAA Tournament — Texas Southern vs. Mount St. Marys (truTV)  
6:27 p.m. — Men's College Basketball: NCAA Tournament — Drake vs. Wichita State (TBS)  
8:40 p.m. — Men's College Basketball: NCAA Tournament — Appalachian State vs. Norfolk State (truTV)  
9:57 p.m. — Men's College Basketball: NCAA Tournament — UCLA vs. Michigan State (TBS).



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