

JOHNSON COUNTY

# ICON

December 16, 2023-January 5, 2024 • myJCICON.com

Our  
**ICONic**  
community  
PAGE 5

## REBELS WITHOUT A CLAUS

Two mischievous elves keep a  
Center Grove's family on their  
toes this Christmas

- Page 4 -



ICON of the Month  
Monica Anderson

PAGE 15

PRE-SORT  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN  
PERMIT NO. 1394

ECRWSS  
Residential Customer  
Local

### COMMUNITY

Kids Say the Darndest  
Things ... About Christmas

PAGE 6

### SOUTHSIDE BUSINESS LEADER

The electric bicycle  
race to Indiana

PAGE 8

### MONTHLY BOOK REVIEW

'Faking Christmas'

PAGE 14



## ICONic image



The Johnson County Community Foundation (JCCF) has presented grant checks to 14 nonprofit organizations serving Johnson County. The total of the grants is \$86,950 and range from \$3,000 to \$10,000 each. The grants awarded include: \$10,000 to Advocates for Education of Indianapolis for the Justice-Involved Youth Outreach Program; \$7,500 to Aspire Economic Development + Chamber Alliance of Greenwood for the Aspire School to Work; \$7,500 to Firefly Children & Family Alliance of Whiteland for Safe Babies in Johnson County; \$6,800 to Girls Inc. of Johnson County of Franklin for Girls Inc. Outreach Expansion; \$7,500 to Great Harvest Food Pantry of New Whiteland for Weekend Feeding Program JC Elementary Schools; \$5,000 to Joy's House of Indianapolis for Adult Day Scholarship Program; \$5,000 to KIC-IT of Franklin for Youth Ally for Homeless Education and Prevention; \$10,000 to the Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson United School Corporation for CREEK Manufacturing; \$3,000 to Piper's Purpose of Bargersville for Piper's Purpose mission; \$5,000 to Recover Out Loud of Columbus for Sober Social Services; \$6,500 to Resources of Hope Inc. of Whiteland for Teen Connect; \$3,000 to Society of St. Andrew, Inc. of Indianapolis for The Indiana Gleaning Network; \$5,150 to Stone's Auto Service of Greenwood for Tuesday Nights Auto Service; and \$5,000 to The Salvation Army Red Shield Center of Greenwood for Emergency Assistance for Transportation. JCCF's grants committee, chaired by JCCF board of directors member David Payne of Greenwood, consists of seven persons who are members of the JCCF's board of directors or other community volunteers. (Submitted photo)

### Contact the Managing Editor

Have any news tips? Want to submit a calendar event? Have a photograph to share? Email Nicole Davis at [nicole@myiconmedia.com](mailto:nicole@myiconmedia.com). And remember, our news deadlines are several days prior to print.

### Want to Advertise?

Johnson County ICON reaches a vast segment of our community.

For information about reaching our readers, call Mark Gasper at (317) 716-7839 or email him at [mark@myiconmedia.com](mailto:mark@myiconmedia.com).



Rick Myers, *Publisher Emeritus*  
(1962-2021)

Amanda Babinec, *President*

Rebecca Thie, *Director of Operations*

Nicole Davis, *Managing Editor*

Nancy Hammerstrom  
*Content Editor*

Mark Gasper  
*Director, Business Development*

Treva Patterson  
*Production Manager | Graphic Designer*

Carey Rudicel, *Administrative Assistant*



ESTABLISHED NOVEMBER 2012

ICON Media, LLC ©2023  
All Rights Reserved

## ICONic rewind

### Greenwood welcomes The Coldest Night of the Year on Feb. 24, 2024

The Refuge is encouraging Johnson and Marion County residents to bundle up and raise cold, hard cash for The Coldest Night of the Year (WALK). A family-friendly winter fundraising walk for Johnson and Marion County homeless, hungry and hurting, the WALK takes place on the evening of Feb. 24, 2024. Thousands of participants will be safely taking part in the WALK in an anticipated 40 cities across the United States. By walking together in the chill of the night, participants will better understand the experience of being on the streets during a cold American

winter, while raising funds to aid the work of The Refuge in providing much-needed support. The walk begins and ends at Center Grove Church, located at 2340 S. State Road 135, Greenwood. Participants will walk a 2K or 5K route, can warm up with toasty drinks at rest stops along the way, and will be able to celebrate their efforts together at the finish line. All those who raise over \$150 (or \$75 for youth) will also don iconic CNOY toques (hats) as they face the cold night. This is The Refuge's first year taking part in the Coldest Night of the Year, and they're aiming to raise \$20,000 for their work with people experiencing hunger, hurt, and homelessness in Johnson and Marion County. To register, visit [cnoy.com/location/greenwood](http://cnoy.com/location/greenwood).

## ICONic briefs

### Gov. Holcomb appoints Greenwood resident to state board

Governor Eric J. Holcomb today announced several appointments to various state boards and commissions, including Private Investigator & Security Guard Licensing Board. The governor made one new appointment to the board, who will serve until Oct. 31, 2027: Laura Brown, of Greenwood, executive coordinator at Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP.

P.O. Box 814  
Danville, IN 46122  
Ph: (317) 300-8782



**The Johnson County ICON** is published by Grow Local Media, LLC. Content published alongside this icon is sponsored by one of our valued advertisers. Sponsored content is produced or commissioned by advertisers working in tandem with Grow Local Media's sales representatives. Sponsored content may not reflect the views of *The Johnson County ICON* publisher, editorial staff or graphic design team. *The Johnson County ICON* is devoted to clearly differentiating between sponsored content and editorial content. Potential advertisers interested in sponsored content should call (317) 300-8782 or email [mark@myiconmedia.com](mailto:mark@myiconmedia.com)

**More expertise per patient.**  
That's worth celebrating.



**At Johnson Memorial Health, we believe every patient deserves the best care possible.**

That's why we're proud to be celebrating one year as a member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network. It's a collaboration that allows us to amplify our own expertise with the knowledge, experience and resources of Mayo Clinic. Which means you get exceptional care, close to home, at no additional cost. And we think giving our patients that peace of mind is definitely worth celebrating.



**JOHNSON  
MEMORIAL  
HEALTH**

[JohnsonMemorial.org](http://JohnsonMemorial.org)



**MAYO CLINIC  
CARE NETWORK**  
Member

*Great care starts here.*



## Rebels without a Claus

### Two mischievous elves keep a Center Grove's family on their toes this Christmas

#### COVER STORY

By Sherri Coner

Wearing bright green Grinch pajamas, Kieran Lewandowski-Rhoads, 7, answered the door while spluttering excitedly about an unexpected visit from a couple of elves named Billy and Millie.

"They said they liked the way I decorated my bathroom," said this first grader at North Grove Elementary School. "They said I did it really good."

With a knowing smile, Kieran's mom, Jamie Lewandowski said, "Every time he likes something new, we decorate his bathroom like that."

#### An elf-taught Christmas decorator

This year Kieran's love for a game called Garten of Banban caused Mom to break out some additional creativity. After she couldn't find shower curtains or decorative items to go along with Kieran's new theme, Jamie ordered a plain white shower curtain and vinyl stickers of the characters. After she and Kieran decorated the shower curtain, he drew pictures of his favorite Garten of

Banban characters and painted them for Mom to hang on the bathroom walls.

"He did a really, really good job," Jamie said with a smile. "He's my little artist."

Kieran didn't want anyone to forget that his really good job was rewarded by Billie and Millie's surprise visit. They not only wrote a note; they also left a surprise sweet treat.

Although this visit was problem-free, this mom and son team of Christmas lovers never have any idea what Billy and Millie will get into when they visit.

#### Elf-destructive behavior

"They toilet papered my toy room one time," Kieran said with a giggle.

Another time, those bratty elves ziplined from one light to another.

According to Kieran, the bad-behaving elves have used the kitchen sink as a bathroom before and also snuck over to

his mommy's workplace, where she is the Center Grove High School attendance secretary.

Another time, they mailed themselves to Kieran's papa's house.

Actually, no one can blame Billy and Millie for spending a lot of time at this Center Grove address.

Outside the home, Santa is celebrated all around the yard and even on the roof.

Their dad always made a big, magical deal at Christmas.

In fact, once gifts were opened and the girls thought Santa's job was complete, Raymond surprised his daughters with one more gift, Jamie said with a smile.

She carries this tradition on for Kieran. Always, Jamie said she has loved to decorate for holidays, especially Christmas.

But when her only child came along, December decorating took on a whole new purpose ... for a little guy with big bright eyes and ever-lasting energy.

#### Bad Santa

Billy and Millie are not the only mess makers when they visit.

Someone else is also kinda sloppy.

"He leaves the milk spills on the table," Kieran said of the mysterious big guy in red. "And he leaves crumbs around the plate from the cookies."

But Kieran has an understanding attitude about the mess.

"Santa has to do his job before everyone wakes up. He has to eat quickly," he said with a smile.

*"They toilet papered my toy room one time."*

— KIERAN LEWANDOWSKI-RHOADS

#### Sleigh'ing it with holiday decor

Inside, stuffed Christmas animals line the stairway. Bookshelves are filled with colorful decorations. Santa jackets cover dining room chairs. A huge talking Santa hangs around near the fireplace. And the mantel is lined with stockings.

Jamie's father, Raymond Lewandowski, who passed away in October 2022, raised her and older sister Shannon Procter of Greenwood, alone.



(Left) After a surprise visit from a couple of elves, Kieran Lewandowski-Rhoads, 7, of Center Grove poses with his artwork to decorate his bathroom. | (Right) At the Center Grove home of Jamie Lewandowski and her son, Kieran Lewandowski-Rhoads, the month of December is all about decorating and discovering what a couple of elves can get into while Kieran is sleeping. Even the family dogs, Boomer and Bandit, show off their Christmas spirit. (Photos by Sherri Coner)

Decorating her Center Grove home each December is one of Jamie Lewandowski's favorite ways to make her son Kieran Lewandowski-Rhoads' face light up with Christmas joy. (Photo by Jamie Lewandowski) (Cover) Not long after the turkey mess from Thanksgiving is cleared, there's a winter wonderland inside and outside too, at the Center Grove home of Jamie Lewandowski and her son, Kieran Lewandowski-Rhoads. (Photo by Sherri Coner)

## Our ICONic community

**We love Our  
Johnson County  
communities.**

*If you have something you believe we  
should know about, please send to  
nicole@icontimes.com.*

## ROMAN NUMERALS



100+ Women Who Care Johnson County awarded its 2023 Q4 Grantee - Turning Point Domestic Violence Services of Johnson County - with a check for \$13,900 ... "no-strings-attached" ... to support its work toward the prevention and elimination of domestic and dating violence. The grant would support staffing and survivors' needs ranging from safety items, legal fees, and personal items, to re-housing assistance. For more information, visit [turningpointdv.org](http://turningpointdv.org) or [jccf.org/100-women](http://jccf.org/100-women).

## ICONic rewind

### Greenwood Christian Academy celebrates National Honor Society inductees

Greenwood Christian Academy recently inducted new members into the National Honor Society. New members are pictured from left bottom row, Brooke Wiese, Faith Kresge, Evelyn Byrd, Elle Schnake, Addisyn Yoder, Danielle McLaughlin, Ana Blow, Larissa Cox; Middle, Laura Knauss, Olivia Miller, Ben Comerford, Daniel Kuzniar, Hayden Johnson, Caleb Schmidt; and Back, Noah Miller, Noah Reed, Eli Jackson, Zach Haynes, Austin Hoffee. Not Pictured: Joseph Ellis.



GCA's National Honor Society inductees. (Submitted photo)

## Bret Schulz of CGHS named Teacher of the Year by Air & Space Forces Association

By Sherri Coner

When an educator's personal mission centers around constantly expanding their own knowledge while providing students with amazing learning opportunities, that educator is not only noticed but also honored.

So it is no surprise that Bret Schulz, Center Grove High School's Project Lead the Way teacher and Engineering & Technology Department Chair, was recently named Teacher of the Year by the Air & Space Forces Association.

As a child, he was mesmerized while watching his dad operate a radio-controlled aircraft, Schulz explained.

When an opportunity to build an aircraft of his own eventually came around, Schulz immediately knew which direction his future was headed.

"I had a passion for building and flying and sharing aerospace," he said.

After graduating from Ball State University, Schulz accepted a position in the technology department at Franklin Central High School.

During that eight-year stretch, he completed a master's degree in Special Education and then switched to teaching for three years in Special Education classrooms.

"This time allowed me to learn the art of teaching while incorporating aerospace into the curriculum," Schulz said.

Another career step came soon after that. "In 2014, I transitioned to Center Grove High School to teach the national curriculum of the Project Lead the Way's Aerospace Engineering course."

As class interest expanded and students exhibited interests in specific areas, Schulz began to realize that he not only wanted to keep them excited and interested in the topics; he wanted to introduce them to the ways aerospace engineering translates into careers.

He started reaching out to the community, forming relationships at Endress+Hauser, Republic Airways, Greenwood Municipal Airport and the LIFT Academy and many others.

After attending the Experimental Aircraft Association air show in 2018 in Oshkosh, Wis., Schulz started applying for STEM grants, so the program had more resources.

"Some of my hobbies and interests outside of the classroom still relate to what I'm doing in the classroom at times," Schulz said. "I enjoy flying and building

radio-controlled airplanes, helicopters and small unmanned aerial vehicles (sUAV/ drones). I enjoy taking and learning about aerial imagery with sUAVs and I'm currently working on my FAA part 107 license to do this commercially."

Woodworking, completing home projects and working out are also important to him.

But what seems to make this Teacher of the Year even more amazing?

He manages all of these responsibilities and interests around parenting his five children and being present for their individual interests, which range from sports to music to art.

As he nears two decades of teaching, Schulz pays attention to how students grow and change and what they value from their educational experiences.

"Over my years of teaching, I've come to realize that I'm preparing the students for after high school, but when they look back at their high school career, students don't reflect on the specific content they cover each day. They reflect and remember those fun flight simulator days or flying sUAVs outside and getting to do that an extra day or even shooting off rockets and one not going according to plan," Schulz said. "It's these moments throughout the school year I capitalize on and practice in my daily life as well with my family."



Bret Schulz, Project Lead the Way teacher and Engineering & Technology Department Chair at Center Grove High School. (Submitted photo)



## Kids Say the Darndest Things ... About Christmas

Compiled by Sherri Coner

- When asked for some inside information about the most popular guy in December, Marilyn Garski, 9, daughter of Mitchell and Jonnette McGowen of New Whiteland, offered these tidbits.

***"Santa was born in the 1950s in the North Pole. All the elves are his kids and he has millions of them. I know it's crazy sounding!"***



Marilyn Garski.

- Of all the decorations to choose from in her home, Madi Garski, 11, daughter of Mitchell and Jonnette McGowen of New Whiteland, pointed at a certain string of lights.

***"There's probably 250 lights on those two trees. But I like the look of the mushroom ones. My mom told me there's a connection between mushrooms and Christmas trees."***



Madi Garski

- Elle Garski, 13, daughter of Mitchell and Jonnette McGowen of New Whiteland, knows one secret about making anything special at Christmas.

***"You see how plain something is but when you add lights, magic is put in it."***



Elle Garski

- Scarlett Garski, 7, daughter of Mitchell and Jonnette McGowen of New Whiteland, knows an elf who got in big trouble:

***"One time an elf broke Santa's glass reindeer. It was a gift from his grandma and grandpa. So that elf was grounded for three weeks and 10 days."***



Scarlett Garski

- Kieran Lewandowski-Rhoads, 7, son of Jamie Lewandowski of Center Grove knows quite a bit about Santa's personal life.

***"Santa's been married for about 10 years and Mrs. Claus keeps the elves being good. She makes sure the reindeers keeps their power and she lets them have chocolate chip cookies and milk before bedtime. She fixes Christmas cookies and milk for Santa for breakfast but only on Christmas Day."***



Kieran Lewandowski-Rhoads

- Mari Shertzer, 3, daughter of Liz Shertzer of Franklin, has her Christmas list for Santa ... in detail.

***"Dollies and toys and princess dresses ... a pink princess dress. I need to tell Santa that."***



Mari Shertzer

- Corbin Shertzer, 5, son of Liz Shertzer of Franklin, understands Santa's job stress on Christmas Eve and how the reindeer might misbehave.

***"The reindeer have to go to New York and Franklin and Bloomington. So they are in trouble if they fly in the wrong direction."***



Corbin Shertzer

- According to Harper Adams, daughter of Cara Orner and Trevor Adams of Franklin, Santa enjoys his time off.

***"Santa stays at home in summer. He likes to watch Rudolph on TV and play Connect 4 with his elves."***



Harper Adams

- When Santa needs a little something to tide him over on Christmas Eve, Raven Fernandez, 3, daughter of Andres and Candice Fernandez of Whiteland, knows exactly where he stops the sleigh.

***"Santa likes to get chicken nuggets at Burger King and he uses frosting for dip."***



Raven Fernandez

- When it comes to understanding how Santa starts his day, this shy young man has the inside scoop. Jaxon Adams, 4, son of Charles and Taylor Adams of Franklin.

***"Santa eats three pancakes for breakfast, and he drinks juice."***



Jax Adams

(Submitted photos)

## Johnson County family celebrates the new year with a cuddly new tradition

By Sherri Coner

Accidental, impromptu moments very often turn into perfect ideas.

That is exactly what happened in Jennie Paton's family.

Before adult fun and responsibilities came around for their daughters, Caitlin and Chelsea, Paton and her husband, David Paton happily ordered pizza, spent the evening with their kids and always took family photos on New Year's Eve at that magical midnight moment.

"Then the girls got older and started doing their own thing," Paton said.

Even though the girls often stopped by to say hello, they didn't hang around anymore until midnight.

That was definitely a downer for her, but kids grow up.

So before Caitlin and Chelsea left the family home to celebrate with friends, Jennie jumped into action to have an earlier photo session.

"Pictures mean everything," this sentimental mom said.

"I take pictures like it's my job."

Three years ago, when daughter Caitlin Fruits and her husband, Austin Fruits of Whiteland, and daughter, Chelsea Olson of Greenwood stopped by on New Year's Eve, the Patons were already in bed, watching a TV show.

Someone had the spontaneous idea to simply pile on the bed and get the annual photo, especially since it was near bedtime for the Paton's first grandchild, Oaklyn Fruits.

And that was that.

A brand-new tradition was born for New Year's Eve.

Great pizza, some TV, a lot of laughter and a photo of everyone in the family piled happily onto Mom and Dad's bed.

Another face will be added to this New Year's Eve moment.

"Owyn was in her mommy's tummy last year," Paton said of Oaklyn's 10-month-old sibling.



Son-in-law, Austin Fruits; daughter, Caitlin Fruits; Jennie Paton, husband, David Paton; granddaughter, Oaklyn Fruits; and daughter, Chelsea Olson. (Submitted photos)



## They know the drill

### New Whiteland parents create a crafty Christmas for their children

By Sherri Coner

While other people topped off their Halloween candy supply for trick-or-treaters, Jonnette McGowen's vision had nothing to do with black and orange.

When she grabbed a hammer and nails, this artsy, fun-loving mom was clearly on a mission.

But drafting Mitchell was an important first step in the process.

Pretending to be an unassuming husband might work for other guys.

But Mitchell knows a few things about sharing life with his Christmas elf.

First, if Jonnette has a vision – especially if that vision has anything at all to do with Santa – Mitchell knows there is no way to avoid helping her.

And second, the level of magic and love Jonnette gives to their children is worth any amount of time she forces him into grabbing the toolbox.

And so, that is the backstory for how Mitchell and Jonnette ended up on the floor, arranging pieces of reclaimed wood.

By the way, that Santa-inspired mission occurred this past Oct. 27.

"I wanted a wood backdrop," Jonnette said with a shrug.

Behind her, Mitchell's handiwork had turned into an accent area of aged wood. It reached from the fireplace to the ceiling of their New Whiteland home.

Tiny twinkling lights followed the length of the mantel where family stockings hung.

"I wanted it to be like a country backdrop for my trees," Jonnette explained about the project she and Mitchell completed.

"I'm from Michigan originally, and flocked Christmas trees remind me of all the snow," she said. "They feel like the country, but they also feel like winter to me."

Somewhere around Halloween, at least one of their family's five Christmas trees is upright and decorated, said oldest daughter, Elle Garske.

"We didn't really have the means to decorate when I was little," his December-loving mom said.

"So when I had kids, I guess I went a little crazy."

While recently visiting relatives in Michigan, adults and children, too, sat down together to create snowflakes, Jonnette pointed toward several of the paper pretties dangling above kitchen cabinets.

"I brought them all home and I'm saving them," she said with a grin. "We will keep making snowflakes every year and hanging them up around the house."

In a dining room corner, a slightly smaller tree is standing but with naked green branches.

That tree belongs solely to the kids. The theme on the branches is usually Disney.

"There's also an elf around our house," Jonnette said in a low tone. "But he doesn't come out until the kids decorate their tree. That's how he knows Christmas is coming."



Madi Garske, 11, Marilyn Garske, 9, Jonnette McGowen, Elle Garske, 13, Saul McGowen, 3, Mitchell McGowen, Scarlett Garske, 7, and Jasper, one of the two family snakes, pose with two of the family's five Christmas trees. These two were decorated three days before Halloween. Jonnette admits that yes, she is a little bit over the top about all things Santa. (Submitted photo)

In this family, decorations – no matter how early they appear – are not what is most important to this mom.

It's about the memories she and Mitchell make with their children, including Saul, the baby of the family and the only boy, who seems to be doted on in stereo.

December festivals are also about traditions, such as the annual cookie

baking weekend Jonnette plans with their daughters.

"I want our kids to be able to expect amazing things," she said. "I hope it all stays with them and they want to do fun things at Christmastime with their own families."

"I am 100% sure they will all remember," Mitchell said with a smile and a nod.

## Needing ideas? Check out items from some local businesses:

### CUSTOM ENGRAVED CUTTING BOARDS

Turn your favorite hand-written recipe (or note) into a life-long memory that can be cherished for years with our custom engraved cutting boards.



Price: Starting at \$40  
 Bella Rose Design,  
 1001 N State Road 135,  
 Suite B3, Greenwood  
 (317) 358-0191  
 bellarosedesign.com

### WELLY CAMP MUG

Choose between a white, black, or the new red Welly Camp Mug and pair a bag of Coffeehouse Five coffee beans for a great gift for coffee lovers!



Cost: \$28  
 Coffeehouse Five,  
 323 Market Plaza,  
 Greenwood;  
 10 Plummer Ave.,  
 Bargersville;  
 41 W. Monroe,  
 Franklin  
 (317) 300-4330  
 coffeehousefive.com

### FRAMED PAINTING

Greenwood Happy Haunts specializes in custom crafted fall and Halloween decor, but it also has Christmas items with a spooky twist!



Price: \$45  
 Greenwood  
 Happy Haunts  
 248 Market  
 Plaza,  
 Greenwood  
 (317) 442-8149

facebook.com/p/Greenwood-Happy-Haunts-100082951461526/

## PERSONNEL MATTERS

## What defines your criteria for hiring remarkable leaders

By Mike Heffner

One of my favorite leadership authors is Jon Gordon. He focuses his books, energy and posts on how to be a positive leader. In a recent social media post, Gordon listed his nine-item checklist for hiring a good leader. That list inspired me to expand my thoughts on the five that have been important to cultivating leaders within our business.

**Culture Builder** – Leaders are the lifeblood of creating and nurturing an organization's culture. They set the tone, embody the values and ignite a shared passion for the mission. It's about leading positively, fostering accountability and creating an environment where everyone thrives.

**Integrity** – This is one of our teams' key values. This isn't integrity – solely focused on truthfulness. It's about doing what is right. A remarkable leader leads not by rules but by unwavering values, even in the absence of others or personal gain.

**Big, Bold Vision** – A leader must inspire the passion and development of their team. They cast a vision for the team and a vision for each person that keeps them growing, developing and steering everyone toward a shared goal. Not only do they cast the vision, but they keep it in front of them, so everyone's actions are based on the vision and values.

**Leads with Love and Accountability** – Often, leaders struggle with how to lead with both traits at the same time. I always look at how I parent. There should never be a time my kids do not feel that I love them, even

when I hold them accountable. However, they don't always like me in all of my parenting because I hold them to our families' values. A true leader nurtures connections, builds trust and ensures that team members feel both cared for and aligned with the organization's aspirations. A team with a loving leader will come together and find ways to stay accountable.

**Takes Zoom-focused Action** – I tend to think of this as a "get'r done" mentality. A leader must know how to make sure action is taken and things get accomplished. They know how to utilize good processes and procedures so others can move forward and get things done without everything having to funnel through the leader. This brings people together, creates trust and keeps everyone rowing in the same direction.

I believe that when an organization hires leaders that serve their teams positively with these five characteristics, they will have a strong leadership team that is aligned, focused and holds each other accountable. My hope in sharing these key attributes is to inspire you to create your own list as you pursue excellence in your business.



This article is written by Mike Heffner, the owner of the local Greenwood Express Employment Professionals franchise. Contact Mike at Mike.Heffner@expresspros.com, @IndySouthMike on X (formerly Twitter), Instagram or visit ExpressIndySouth.com.

## ICONic briefs

### Home sale prices continue to increase in Johnson County

Center Grove's residential real estate market was stable in November with home prices continuing their upward trend. According to F.C. Tucker Company, the average sale price for a home in Center Grove increased 7.9% to \$448,612, compared to this time last year, and the average price per square foot decreased – down 19% to \$146.84. Center Grove homes spent 17 days longer on the market than in November 2022, selling in 45 days on

average. Home sale prices and available inventory continued to increase in Johnson County in November. According to F.C. Tucker Company, the average year-to-date home sale price for a home in Johnson County increased 3.4% to \$340,609. Also in Johnson County, available housing inventory increased 3.5% compared to this time last year, while pending home sales in the county decreased 9.8% compared to November 2022.

## Professional Recruitment

### Your Next Career Is Here

Administrative • Customer Service •  
Data Entry • Office Services • Sales

**Express**  
EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS

Career  
Specialists



Kimberly Kuehr



Janice Koester

[ExpressIndySouth.com](http://ExpressIndySouth.com) | (317) 888-5700

## PEER TO PEER

### The electric bicycle race to Indiana

By Howard Hubler

Recently I bought a bike with an electric assist; the harder and faster you pedal the more the bike assists you. For example, I cruise at about 17 miles an hour when I'm peddling. When I am on an electric bike, I tend to cruise at about 20 or 21 mph. It's a more enjoyable experience for many seasoned bikers.

I have read enough about transportation and its environmental impact in the future that it is going to take a variety of lifestyle changes all coming together to make carbon footprint reduction work. One of them is clearly the bicycle. The movement to electric bikes has brought biking to a whole new market. It opens up for those that are not very athletic, it also opens riding to healthy older people.

Central Indiana leaders must realize that if they are to make an impact, they must provide meaningful paths for its citizens. I ride on paths that weren't even there four or five years ago. This is exciting. However, in most cases, they are in areas that don't go anywhere. They put one by a variety of new subdivisions, and I get a good,

safe workout going to and from home on these new bike paths. However, I want to go someplace meaningful. Maybe a restaurant or a strip mall. Yes, I enjoy the workout riding on new paths because I can go 10 or 15 miles away safely. But to lure the average person, they have to do something on their bike journey that they would've never otherwise considered to compel them to start riding a bike.

This would be the start of more carbon reductions without making anybody feel that they had to pay a price. Hoosiers, we have some great bike paths that go to some great places. That's just a start; we need to have Monon Trail-like excitement throughout our city. We just need to dial up the process. The easiest way to dial down the carbon footprint is to lure Hoosiers to do something that is fun that they would not do on their own accord otherwise. On the journey, if they are carbon neutral, that's just a plus.



Howard Hubler can be reached at [howard@hubler.com](mailto:howard@hubler.com).



**PLANNER OF NOTE**

**Aspire Johnson County  
New members**

**Bill McIntire - Indiana Farm Bureau**

99 N. Morton St., Franklin  
(317) 736-6128

**Brown's Tree Service**

201 S. Morton St., Franklin  
(317) 738-0627

**Franklin Duck Pin Bowling**

27 W. Monroe St., Franklin  
(317) 739-3578

**Franklin Jewelers**

98 W. Madison St., Franklin  
(317) 412-0978

**Generations Custom Auto and  
Collision Inc**

599 Earlywood Drive, Franklin  
(317) 736-6900

**Grace United Methodist**

1300 E. Adams Drive, Franklin  
(317) 736-7962

**Greenwood Christian Academy**

835 E. Worthsville Road, Greenwood  
(317) 215-5300

**Indy Rolloffs**

P.O. Box 604, Bargersville, IN 46106  
(866) 648-7271

**Law Office of Matthew M. Cree, LLC**

310 E. Main St., Suite 205, Greenwood  
(317) 883-7350

**Norris Family Plumbing**

2648 E. State Road 144, Franklin  
(317) 662-0635

**Pasborg Enterprises**

2363 Harvest Moon Drive, Greenwood  
(954) 803-3718

[aspirejohnsoncounty.com](http://aspirejohnsoncounty.com)



**Torch**  
AWARDS  
**BBB** for **Ethics**

**2023 WINNERS** SM

HEAR THEIR  
STORIES AND  
APPLY FOR THE  
2024 AWARDS



[bit.ly/bbbtorch23](https://bit.ly/bbbtorch23)

**CHARACTER**



**CULTURE**



**CUSTOMERS**



**COMMUNITY**



**THANK YOU**



**AND TO ALL BBB TORCH AWARDS SPONSORS**



# ICONic briefs

## Peterman Brothers offers tips for winter electrical safety

Peterman Brothers, a leading HVAC and plumbing company serving the Greater Indianapolis area, advises area residents to take steps now to ensure safe, reliable operation of their home's electrical systems during the holiday season. "We want customers to be able to enjoy this time of year without worrying about excessive energy costs or creating unnecessary risk of a fire or power outage," said Chad Peterman, president of Peterman Brothers. "Taking a few easy preventive steps now and following best practices throughout the season can help them have peace of mind and focus on spending meaningful time with family and friends."

Peterman recommends homeowners take the following steps for a safe and comfortable winter:

**Inspect your system:** Take a few minutes to check your home's electrical outlets and circuit breaker for signs of excessive wear or damage. Spend additional time monitoring cords and appliances.

**Avoid overloads:** Limit your use of extension cords and opt for power strips with surge protection over multi-outlet adapters.

**Unplug holiday lights:** Make sure holiday lights and other decorations are disconnected when you're not at home. Never leave them on unattended.

**Invest in a generator:** A home generator can provide backup power and peace of mind in case of weather-related or other winter power outages.

**Schedule a professional tune-up:** Electrical systems are complex and potential problems may not always be apparent. A trained professional can inspect your home's system and identify potential issues, provide preventive maintenance service and recommend new equipment or upgrades.

Peterman Brothers is available to help with any electrical, HVAC or plumbing needs. For more information, call (260) 201-3070 or visit petermanhvac.com.

# Bob Rohman's **INDY** Athlete of the Month **HONDA** Logan Bell

By Mark Ambrogi

Roncalli High School junior volleyball player Logan Bell has shown the versatility to excel at a number of positions.

"Logan is a dynamic player," Roncalli coach Christina Erasmus said. "She's aggressive and she's confident. Every skill in volleyball she does well, that is what makes her so good. She has a great work ethic. She understands what it takes to be an elite player and she has done those things. She's a good teammate and great to coach as well."

The 5-foot-10 Bell, who plays outside hitter for the Royals, has committed to play volleyball and beach volleyball at the University of Oregon.

"They're giving me the opportunity to shine wherever I fit in with the team best," Bell said of the Oregon coaching staff.

"They're giving me the opportunity to play libero or outside hitter. I don't want to be underestimated as a hitter because of my height. That's why I'm looking to improve my vertical and get stronger."

Bell's mother, Jessica Bell, a Roncalli assistant coach, had trained her to be a setter when younger. Bell played volleyball at Miami (Ohio) University.

"The need for us was for her to be more of a hitter," Erasmus said. "She's a great athlete, so she was able to switch spots. She is a six-rotation player, so she plays in the back row and does great. She could be a libero for any team in Indiana."

Roncalli finished 30-4, losing in the Class 4A semistate. The Royals also lost in the semistate when Bell was a freshman.

"It definitely gives me motivation to work hard (to get to the state final)," Bell said. "We're going to come back ready for next year, that's for sure."

Erasmus said Bell, a three-year starter,

has become a real student of the game.

"During the course of the three years, I've really improved on all of my skills," Bell said. "I always want to improve on being an all-around player and not being just super good at just one thing."

Bell said she has specifically worked on improving her serve receiving skills.

"I think it's important to pass as well as being good at hitting," she said.

Bell said she usually does a CrossFit regimen three times a week to improve strength.

She enjoys playing all the sports on the court.

"What has helped me become a better all-around player is I've played every position at one point," Bell said. "I didn't start hitting until freshman year. It was new to me, and I wanted to be better at it, so it helped to be able to set and everything else."

Bell also plays a six-rotation outside hitter for Circle City Club.

She started playing beach volleyball in tournaments. She plays in two-person tournaments with Center Grove senior Sophia Sabol.

"I grew to love it even more," Bell said. "Oregon offered me and I thought it was a great opportunity to do both."



Logan Bell, a Roncalli junior outside hitter, has committed to play indoor and beach volleyball at the University of Oregon. (Photo courtesy of Logan Bell)

### THE BELL FILE

**NAME:** Logan Bell

**AGE:** 16

**HEIGHT:** 5-foot-10

**SCHOOL:** Roncalli High School

**CLASS:** Junior

**HOBBIES:** Working out, hiking, swimming, beach volleyball, hanging out with friends.

**COLLEGE PLANS:** Play indoor and beach volleyball at the University of Oregon.

**FAVORITE SUBJECTS:** Art and math

**FAVORITE ATHLETES:** Purdue University volleyball player Chloe Chicoine and former Oregon player Brooke Nuneviller

**FAVORITE VACATION SPOT:** Boyne Mountain, a ski resort in Michigan.

**PARENTS' NAMES:** Jessica and Kory Bell

## 2024 Honda 2024 CR-V Loyalty Lease

**\$500 toward the lease of  
a new 2024 CR-V Petrol**

when you lease with Honda  
Financial Services® (HFS)

Available to current owners  
of any 2014 or newer Honda  
Expiration Date 1/02/2024



**INDY  
Honda**

8455 U.S. 31 S.  
Indianapolis, IN 46227

**317-225-4777**

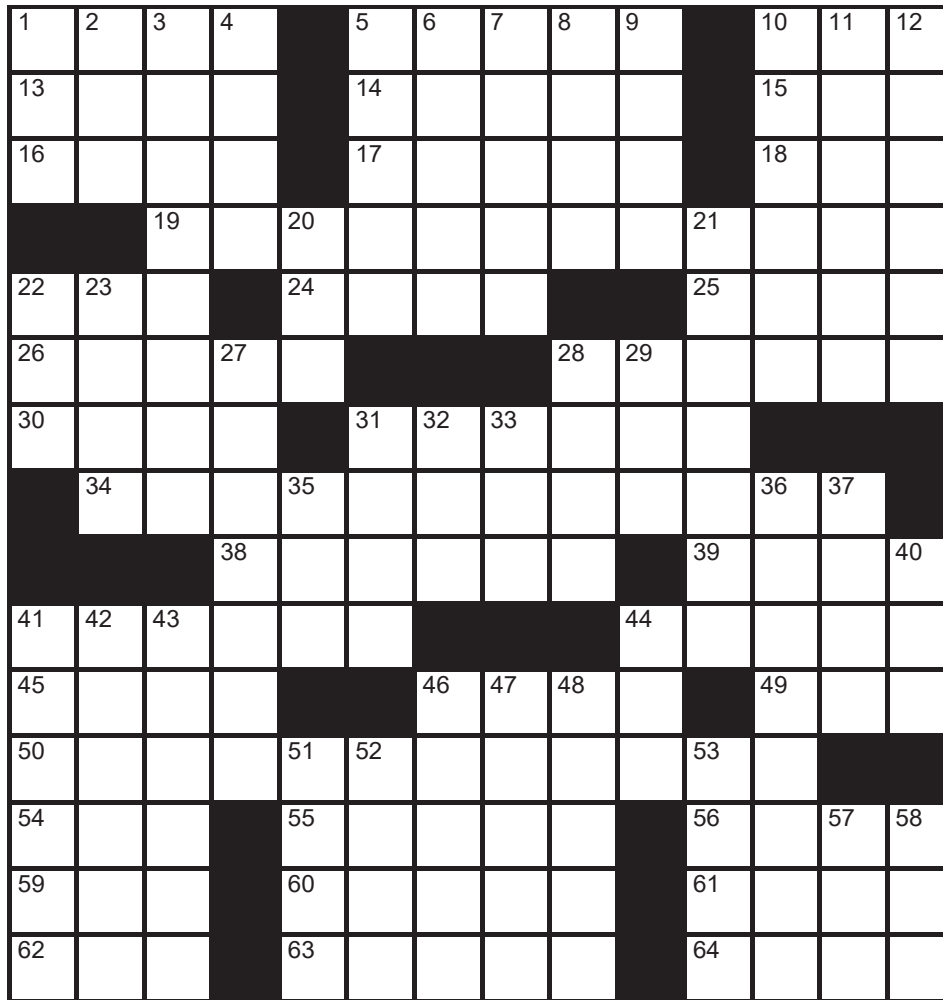
**IndyHonda.com**

Eligible through 1/02/2024. \$500 toward Cap Cost Reduction with the lease through Honda Financial Services of a select new and not previously reported sold 2024 CR-V to qualified current owners of any 2014 or newer Honda. Excludes Hybrid. Must provide proof of ownership of eligible vehicle in the form of a current vehicle registration or proof of valid auto insurance. Not redeemable for cash. Incentive paid to dealer and requires dealer participation. Not all customers will qualify. See dealer for details.



**ACROSS**

- 1 Jekyll's alter ego
- 5 Daviess County low-tech sect
- 10 ICON printer's supply
- 13 Foot part
- 14 Edinburgh outlet store: \_\_\_ Hilfiger
- 15 Spy org.
- 16 Head light
- 17 Recap
- 18 Japanese sash
- 19 Not old enough temps?
- 22 "\_\_\_ about time!"
- 24 Hoosier Park horse height measure
- 25 French miss (Abbr.)
- 26 Leveling wedges
- 28 Web developer
- 30 Night light
- 31 Piled high
- 34 Leftover river transports?
- 38 Woman's bow



- 39 Office phone nos.
- 41 Coded message
- 44 Bring about
- 45 Hybrid fruit
- 46 Sow's mate
- 49 Numero \_\_\_
- 50 Johnson County sheriff ... and an anagram of 19- and 34-Across
- 54 The "G" of LGBTQ
- 55 Tooth type
- 56 Work the bar
- 59 Greenwood-to-Pittsburgh dir.
- 60 Protractor measure
- 61 Mideast ruler
- 62 Young fellow

- 63 V-formation fliers
- 64 Moistens

**DOWN**

- 1 LBJ's veep
- 2 Indiana House vote
- 3 Erroneous belief
- 4 X's Musk
- 5 On a cruise
- 6 Feel sorrow
- 7 "Grr!"
- 8 Overly confident
- 9 Publicity
- 10 "Maybe, if you ask nicely"
- 11 Tiny bite
- 12 \_\_\_ roll

- 20 Players who only bat, briefly
- 21 Wee bit
- 22 Doctrine suffix
- 23 Biblical pronoun
- 27 US Secretary of the Treasury (2017-21)
- 28 "Fix" a pet
- 29 \_\_\_ capita
- 31 Munich mister
- 32 Center Grove summer hrs.
- 33 Belly muscles
- 35 Bring action against in Johnson County Court
- 36 Words said after a burp
- 37 Flabbergast
- 40 Sellout letters

- 41 Billy club, e.g.
- 42 Tropical lizard
- 43 Got in the Colts game
- 44 Anger
- 46 Protuberance
- 47 Franklin College verbal exams
- 48 Concur
- 51 Online 'zine
- 52 Dog biscuit shape
- 53 One-dish meal
- 57 Minor criticism
- 58 St. Francis Hospital VIPs

*Puzzle Time*



6 Winds

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4 Tableware

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5 Spherical Things

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3 Indiana State Parks

\_\_\_\_\_

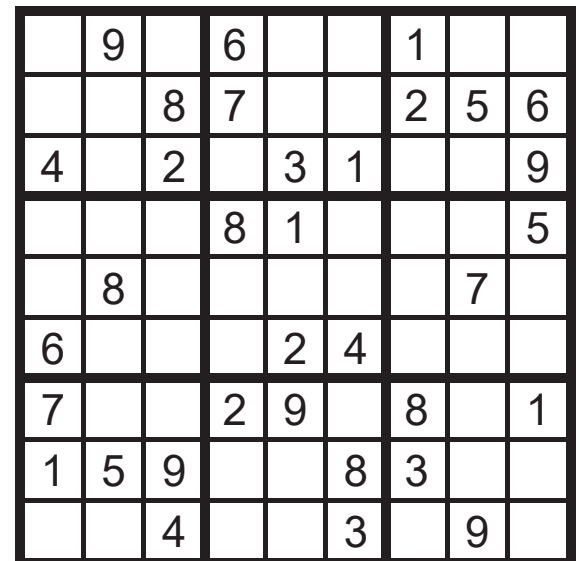
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Area Wineries

1 Recent Indy Opera Performance

\_\_\_\_\_





# NIGHT & DAY LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT ENTERTAINING

## EVENTS calendar

**Festival of Lights and Live Nativity** • View the decorated homes sparkling with thousands of lights, listen to carolers, enjoy complimentary hot cocoa and cookies at the gatehouse while they last, get a free photo with Santa in the Duke Homes model home and follow the signs to the Live Nativity at the Aberdeen barn. | When: Dec. 16, 2 - 6 p.m. | Where: Aberdeen Community, 3840 N. 500 W., Bargserville. | Info: facebook.com/AberdeenLiving

**Messiah Singalong** • Franklin Symphonic Council is bringing a conductor, vocalists and musicians to perform songs from Handel's Messiah. The public is invited to sing along or simply enjoy the concert. Tickets are \$10 for this event, which is a fundraiser for Franklin Symphonic Council. | When: Dec. 17, 2 - 4 p.m. | Where: Grace United Methodist Church, 1300 E. Adams Drive, Franklin. | Info: fscindiana.org/

**Christmas Traditions Around the World** • Learn how other countries celebrate Christmastime. | When: Dec. 20, 6 p.m. | Where: Franklin Branch Library, 401 State St., Franklin. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9147942

**Free Showing of The Polar Express** • Join Empower Johnson County for a free movie, popcorn, a drink and candy. Doors open at 3:30 p.m. | When: Dec. 20, 4 - 7 p.m. | Where: The Historic Artcraft Theatre, 57 N. Main St., Franklin. | Info: eventbrite.com

**Free Showing of Elf at The Artcraft** • Join Empower Johnson County for a free movie, popcorn, a drink and candy. Reserve free tickets at the link. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the movie will start at 7:30 p.m. This event is open to middle and high school students. | When: Dec. 20, 7:30 - 10 p.m. | Where: The Historic Artcraft Theatre, 57 N. Main St., Franklin. | Info: eventbrite.com

**Polar Express Pajama Party** • Join in your PJs and read "The Polar Express," sip hot chocolate and create crafts. | When: Dec. 21, 10 a.m. | Where: White River Branch Library, 1664 Library Blvd., Greenwood. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9079699

**Artisan Mini Market** • Come to MashCraft Greenwood for holiday music, beer and talented local artists and artisans offering you

a chance to purchase last-minute gifts and stocking stuffers. | When: Dec. 21, 6 - 9 p.m. | Where: Mashcraft Greenwood, 1140 N. State Road 135, Greenwood. | Info: facebook.com/MashCraftBrews

**Live Musical Tribute to Charlie Brown** • Come enjoy an evening of live Christmas music favorites with Jerry Navarro and Friends performing Charlie Brown Christmas on stage. Doors open at 6 p.m. | When: Dec. 21, 7 - 8:30 p.m. | Where: The Historic Artcraft Theatre, 57 N. Main St., Franklin. | Info: historicartcrafttheatre.org

**The 78's at Whit's Inn** • Enjoy live music from a songwriting duo that plays originals and covers. | When: Dec. 22, 7 - 10 p.m. | Where: Whit's Inn, 1020 N. U.S. 31, New Whiteland. | Info: facebook.com/WhitsInnBar

**Pet Photos with Santa** • Get a professional photo with Santa for \$10 and enjoy giveaways, hot chocolate, shaved ice and pup cups. Proceeds support Leann's Animal Rescue. | When: Dec. 23, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Where: Carefree Club, Inc., 1202 Leisure Lane, Greenwood. | Info: facebook.com/LeannsRescue/events

**Christmas Dinner** • Grace United Methodist Church is inviting the public to a free Christmas Dinner. | When: Dec. 25, 2 - 6:30 p.m. Delivery is 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. (call by Dec. 20 to request delivery). Carry-out is 2:30 to 4 p.m. Dining in is 5 to 6:30 p.m. | Where: Grace United Methodist Church, 1300 E. Adams St., Franklin. | Info: franklingrace.org

**Shop the Blocks** • More than 25 stores and restaurants in downtown Franklin will be open late for this fun shopping and dining event. | When: Dec. 28, 5 - 8 p.m. | Where: 100 E. Jefferson St., Franklin.

**Card and Palm Reading Party** • Gather for snacks, drinks, good times and card or palm readings. | When: Dec. 30, 12 - 3 p.m. | Where: Bella Rose Design, 1001 N. State Road 135, Greenwood. | Info: bellarosedesign.com

**Bah Thumbug – Professional Thumb Wrestling Match** • Did you know professional thumb wrestling existed? See four pros battle it out. Tickets required. | When: Dec. 30, 1 - 3 p.m. | Where: Sakura Event Center, 126 E. Main Cross St., Edinburgh. | Info: eventbrite.com

**Jason Dizier Acoustic** • Greek's Pizzeria & Tapp Room 2, 1642 Olive Branch Parke Lane, Greenwood. | Info: facebook.com/greeks-greenwood/events

**New Year's Eve Gaming and Karaoke Party** • Enjoy games, snacks, karaoke and more. Tickets are \$20. | When: Dec. 31, 6 - 11:59 p.m. | Where: Sakura Event Center, 130 E Main Cross St., Edinburgh. | Info: sakuraeventcenter.com

**A Night in Hollywood New Year's Eve Party** • Celebrate New Year's Eve with live music and food at the Garment Factory. Tickets are \$95. | When: Dec. 31, 6:30 p.m. - 12:30 a.m. | Where: Garment Factory, 101 E. Wayne St., Franklin. | Info: eventbrite.com/e/a-night-in-hollywood-tickets-763038898887

**New Year's Eve Celebration** • Tickets, which cost \$20, are on sale now for this 18 and older event which features reserve seating and, snacks, party favors, a champagne toast, and music from Evajo and Keith. Music starts at 8:30 p.m. Attendees may bring their own side dish. | When: Dec. 31, 7:30 p.m. - 12:30 a.m. |

Where: Greenwood Moose Lodge, 813 W. Smith Valley Road, Greenwood. | Info: facebook.com/gml2079/

**New Year's Eve at Bojak's** • Ring in the new year with an epic celebration, featuring state-of-the-art DJ production, a countdown experience, drinks, party favors, a photographer and more. This year's theme is neon glow. The event is from 8 p.m. on Dec. 31 to 3 a.m. Jan. 1. | When: Dec 31, 8 p.m. - 3 a.m. | Where: BoJak's Bar & Grille, 377 E. Jefferson St., Franklin. | Info: facebook.com/bojaksbar/events

**New Year's Eve at Whit's Inn** • Celebrate New Year's Eve with food, live music by Highway 36 and fun. | When: Dec. 31, 9 p.m. - 11:59 p.m. | Where: Whit's Inn, 1020 N. U.S. 31, New Whiteland. | Info: facebook.com/WhitsInnBar

**Davis and Devitt at Mallow Run Winery** • Enjoy music and wine on the indoor patio. | When: Jan. 6, 2 - 4 p.m. | Where: Mallow Run Winery, 6964 W. Whiteland Road, Bargserville. | Info: mallowrun.com

### Puzzle Time Answers – ON PAGE 11

#### Answers to HOOSIER HODGEPODGE:

**Winds:** BLAST, BREEZE, DRAFT, GALE, GUST, SQUALL;

**Spores:** BALL, BUBBLE, GLOBE, MARBLE, ORANGE;

**Tableware:** BOWL, DISH, PLATE, SAUCER;

**Parks:** CLIFTY FALLS, SHADES, TURKEY RUN;

**Wineries:** MALLOW RUN, BUCK CREEK;

**Opera:** CARMEN

H	Y	D	E	A	M	I	S	H	I	N	K
H	E	E	L	T	O	M	M	Y	C	I	A
H	A	L	O	S	U	M	U	P	O	B	I
				U	N	D	E	R	A	G	E
I	T	S	H	A	N	D	M	L	L	E	
S	H	I	M	S			S	P	I	D	E
M	O	O	N	H	E	A	P	E	D		
				U	N	U	S	E	D	B	A
						C	U	R	T	S	Y
C	I	P	H	E	R				I	N	C
U	G	L	I			B	O	A	R		U
D	U	A	N	E	B	U	R	G	E	S	
G	A	Y		M	O	L	A	R		T	E
E	N	E		A	N	G	L	E		E	M
L	A	D		G	E	E	S	E		W	E

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

# NIGHT & DAY LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT ENTERTAINING

## AN OPTION

### Blue Cactus Tacos & Tequila Bar

As you catch up with friends and family over the holidays and make plans to ring in the new year, you might consider the bar for a lively evening of drinks or enjoy some flavorful eats in the dining area with the kids. "My husband and I had a great date night trying the margarita flights and the street taco plate," stated a Facebook reviewer. "It was hard picking our favorites from both. My only regret is not trying Blue Cactus sooner!" A Google reviewer added, "The chips were crispy and fresh, and the salsa was a bit chunky with lots of fresh roasted tomato and pepper flavors and vibrant as well. The queso had a bit of a spicy kick to it that all of us enjoyed. My son ordered the Arroz Con Pollo off the kid's menu and loved every bite. My wife couldn't stop raving about the Carne Azada specialty plate." Customers also enjoy the Tacos de Flor de Calavaza, Veggie tacos and Barbacoa and appreciate the gluten-free options.

**Hours:** Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Address: 188 W. Jefferson S., Franklin. For more information, call (317) 868-5200 or go to [bluecactustacosandtequilabar.com](http://bluecactustacosandtequilabar.com)



Make a toast to the new year with a margarita flight!  
(Photo courtesy of Blue Cactus Tacos & Tequila Bar)

## SPOTLIGHT

### Gingerbread house making

Gingerbread houses can be a true work of art. They can also make a sugary mess of your home as you try to carefully assemble and decorate these tasty treats. Come to Bella Rose Design to relax, and have fun creating your own gingerbread house masterpiece without having to clean up the mess on Sunday, Dec. 17 from 1 - 3 p.m.! The houses come fully pre-assembled with Theresa of RockNCakes Cakery. Plus enjoy gourmet hot chocolate from Amy's Ice Paradise! The cost for this event is \$65 per house. This class is open to children as well, but parent must be present. Bella Rose Design is located at 1001 N. State Road 135, Suite B3, Greenwood. For more information, visit [facebook.com/BellaRoseDesignsMore](https://facebook.com/BellaRoseDesignsMore).



## FAITH

### Remember that every day is a gift from God

#### DEVOTIONAL

By Pastor  
Chris Philbeck

Without question, one of the most popular gifts each Christmas is the "gift card." As I write this devotion, the Christmas Wish List from my family includes gift cards for video games, spa experiences, Home Depot, Amazon, J Crew, Nordstrom Rack, TJ Maxx, and the list goes on. We love gift cards because they are easy and because they give the person receiving the gift of flexibility when it comes to redemption.

There is, however, a downside to gift cards. On Feb. 2, a CNN Report shared that Americans have a collective 21 billion dollars of unspent gift cards. Almost two-thirds of American consumers have at least one unspent gift card tucked away in a drawer, pocket, wallet or purse. And half of those consumers lose a gift card before they use it.

There's a clear application of what hap-

pens with gift cards to what often happens with the gifts we receive from God. You can begin with the free gift of salvation; something that's available to anyone who puts their faith and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. And yet, so many people choose not to respond, no matter how many times the gift is offered. It's easy to neglect the spiritual gifts we are given through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. These are gifts God gives us for serving and building up the Body of Christ, but it's easy to tuck them away somewhere and forget about them. And what about the gift of God's faithful provision? Why is it so easy to forget about this gift we've received over and over again, when we face difficulties in life?

I love gift cards, and as a pastor, I receive a lot of them. So, I have a system for storing them and using them. I file most of them in a drawer where I separate and categorize them, and I keep some of them

with me at all times. What gift from God have you been ignoring or forgetting about this Christmas season? James 1:17 says, *Every good gift and every perfect present comes from heaven; it comes down from God ...*

This Christmas let's remember that every day is a gift from God, and we honor Him when we receive the gifts He gives us with thankful hearts and use them in a way that honors Him. Merry Christmas!



Chris Philbeck is senior pastor of Mount Pleasant Christian Church. You may email him at [inquiry@mpccministry.com](mailto:inquiry@mpccministry.com) or call (317) 881-6727.

**CHANGE THEIR WORLD BY OPENING UP YOUR OWN.**

Foster with Firefly.  
Visit [foster.fireflyin.org](http://foster.fireflyin.org) to learn more.

**FIREFLY**  
Children & Family Alliance



## 'Faking Christmas'

### Quick and cozy holiday rom-com for fans of Hallmark movies

#### BOOK REVIEW

By Stefanie Davis

Kerry Winfrey's rom-com "Faking Christmas" is a fluffy Hallmark-type re-telling of "A Christmas in Connecticut." In this story, one small misunderstanding during an interview leads Laurel Grant's boss to believe that she owns and runs Meadow Rise farm. The farm, however, is her twin sister Holly's, and Laurel in fact does not know how to cook, care for goats or make goat soap, nor does she have a husband and kids. She plans on telling her boss the truth until she learns that his wife left him for his accountant, which causes him to inadvertently invite himself over and for her to agree. Now, she must figure out how to keep this ruse up to keep her job. Will she be able to maintain the ruse when she finds out her sister has asked her archenemy Max Beckett to be her pretend husband? When a

snowstorm traps them all, including her boss, in for the entire Christmas weekend, her dedication to maintaining this fib and fairytale life will be put to the ultimate test. Will she survive with her job and pride intact? This sweet tale with likable and well-developed characters touches on themes of loneliness and self-esteem while still reading like your favorite quick and cozy holiday rom-com. If you're looking for a light read for the holidays, this is it! For other titles like this one, check out "The Holiday Swap" by Maggie Knox, "Lovelight Farms" by B.K. Borison, "Book Lovers" by Emily Henry, and "Snowed in For Christmas" by Sarah Morgan.



This review is written by Stefanie Davis, the adult services librarian of the Johnson County Public Library – White River Branch. She enjoys reading, water aerobics and spending time with her German Shepherd. Contact Stefanie at sdavis@jcpclin.org.

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Adult:

"Christmas Presents" by Lisa Unger

"Three Holidays and a Wedding" by Uzma Jalaluddin

"A Winter in New York" by Josie Silver

"This Spells Love" by Kate Robb

#### Teen:

"Tim Burton's the Nightmare Before Christmas" by Megan Shepherd

"Love in a Winter Wonderland" by Abiola Bello

"Finding My Elf" by David Valdes Greenwood

"When You Wish Upon a Lantern" by Gloria Chao

#### Children's:

"Juniper's Christmas" by Eoin Colfer

"Dino-Hanukkah" by Lisa Wheeler

"The Vanderbeekers' Ever After" by Karina Yan Glaser

"Baby-sitters Winter Vacation" by Ann M. Martin

## Bacon: the way to a man's heart this Christmas

#### HUMOR

By Dick Wolfsie

Christmas morning 2023 will be a big disappointment for me. Not one of my presents will be bacon related. I just know it. It's hard to imagine how Mary Ellen could have perused the current merchandise catalogs thick with bacony items and not realized that there should have been something under the tree that had at least a whiff of this American food addiction.

I used to belong to a bacon club where they send you a different slab of bacon each month. My wife kept trashing the package, maybe because the name of the company was The Strip Club.

Everyone loves bacon. When it's frying in the pan, you can almost hear a splattering of applause coming from the heavens. We wrap a \$50 filet in a strip of bacon to make it even better, and "No one has ever gone to see a Kevin Hot Dog movie," said comic Jim Gaffigan. Nor would we even know what a water chestnut is if it weren't for bacon. To get a taste of their newest gift ideas, I went to one manufacturer's website.

Their premier item is bacon shaving cream. The company suggested ordering early to be sure customers have a festive pork-scented holiday, which apparently is every man's fantasy. The ad claims the shaving cream delivers "maximum bacon scent when you need it most." When that is, I have no idea, but they had me worked into a lather just thinking about it. By the way, the company lightheartedly warns that while using this product, "you can be eaten by bears," making some of the side effects of my Lipitor pale in comparison.

Overall, I was very impressed with the company's selection of pork-related products and their customer-friendly approach in their follow-up correspondence. They even asked if I'd prefer to not receive their frequent email solicitations, because in their words, "No one likes spam." They had a point. I'll try their bacon-flavored popcorn, but the idea of spam lip balm makes me a little nauseous.

How about a container of bacon infant formula? The product was launched several years ago accompanied by claims that the fat in pork is very important in the development of a newborn's brain. Now, it turns out this particular promotion was nothing but an April Fool's Day joke by the manufacturers. Yes, everyone is laughing except the 112 people who fell for this and still wait by the mailbox every day, hoping the product delivered before the baby is delivered.

Finally, my favorite (and this one is real): The bacon-scented oxygen inhaler. You've had a long day at the office; you're at the half point in a marathon or suffer from COPD (Chronic Overt Pork Deficiency). Pick up your mini-inhaler, hold the device up to your snout and breathe in. You'll never be out of breath again, but you will experience periodic grunting.

And so, Christmas morning will come and go. There will be no bacon salt, no bacon candles and no bacon-flavored envelopes. Not even a package of bacon-scented stickers to slap on friends who might enjoy sniffing themselves at work for a quick bacon high. I will sit at the breakfast table somewhat consoled when my wife serves a bacon quiche. I will savor several pieces. I figure she might get some gift ideas for next year if I make a pig of myself.

Dick Wolfsie lives in Indianapolis with his wife of 43 years. Dick is usually in the basement trying to think up something funny to write. He can be reached at: wolfsie@aol.com.

## Harken yon holiday heraldry: forgotten phrases from Christmases of yore

#### GRAMMAR GUY

By Curtis Honeycutt

As Andy Williams reminds us once per hour on the local Christmas radio station: It's the most wonderful time of the year. I agree — the holiday season is full of warmth and tradition, with a dash of mirth for good measure. I can't wait to see my kids' faces light up as they open their presents on Christmas morning (I got them their own selfie ring lights).

Within the fond traditions of the holidays, we find some quirky and sometimes head-scratching lyrics in our favorite songs. It's time to clear up a few of these carol conundrums.

In the oft' forgotten third verse of "Deck the Halls," we find the line, "Laughing quaffing all together," followed by a hearty refrain of "fa la la la la la la." What, pray tell, is "quaffing"? For my beer aficionados out there, you probably know that quaffing refers to drinking vigorously.

The holidays are a great time for that. I recommend the wassail.

Let's jump to verse two of "Jingle Bells." I'm not referring to the elementary school version in which the Joker got away; instead, I want to focus on "... and then we got upsot." In the story of "Jingle Bells," the song's hero is stealing away with one Miss Fanny Bright, when, all of a sudden, the subpar horse leading the sleigh causes the vehicle to overturn, leaving the sleigh capsized in a snowbank. The word "upsot" usually gets switched to "upset" in modern versions of the song, but here "upsot" means "capsized." Perhaps the horse and its driver were quaffing prior to their winter escapades.

Have you listened to "Ding Dong Merrily on High" yet this season? I highly recommend the Rend Collective version (look it up on Spotify). In "Ding Dong," as the kids today call it, we hear some old-timey lyrics, including "Matin chime" and "evetime." While you can

probably surmise, an "evetime song" is a song sung in the evening. A "Matin chime," then, refers to bells ringing in the morning, as "Matin" refers to the morning prayers of the Anglican church.

Let me just tell you right now — if you drop this Noel knowledge on your friends, family and coworkers at your ho-ho-holiday get-togethers this season, you'll be the life of the party. You may even get to go home with a brand-new leg lamp. Just do me a favor and call an Uber for grandma — she's prone to getting into unfortunate accidents while walking home.



Curtis Honeycutt is a syndicated humor columnist. He is the author of Good Grammar is the Life of the Party: Tips for a Wildly Successful Life. Find more at curtishoneycutt.com.

# Monica Anderson

Franklin Community Schools counselor named 2024 Middle School Counselor of the Year

## By Sherri Coner

After recently being named the 2024 Middle School Counselor of the Year by the Indiana School Counselor Association, Monica Anderson said, "It's been a whirlwind. I'm very humbled and kind of shocked."

As the child of educators, Anderson grew up in Columbus.

After high school, "I attended Franklin College and just never left," she said with a laugh.

Her 22-year career began with six years of experience as an elementary school counselor, followed by six more years in

that role with high school students.

She found her forever office at Franklin Community Middle School.

"Reflecting on all three levels, middle school is my niche," Anderson said. "I really love how individual and unique they are. So much growth and development, physically, mentally and emotionally takes place during middle school years."

Married for 23 years to husband, Brian, their home life is a constant blur of activities.

The couple's oldest son, Max, 19, now attends Herron School of Art and Design.

But she and Brian are still rushing Reid, 12, and Graham, 11, to basketball, soccer

and every other interest while they also keep up with homework.

Though free time is definitely limited, Anderson cherishes downtime with the boys and visits with family.

She also treasures finding some quiet time to do some gardening, curl up with a book or quietly create and complete a new craft project.

After these years of working with students, Anderson continues to be genuinely interested in student dreams and helping them set and accomplish goals. She carefully watches them learn from mistakes and choose to make better decisions.

Along with her dedication to students' individual needs and concerns, Anderson launched a mentor program called Cubs to Grizzlies, which matches eighth graders with high school juniors. Already having an established trust with a high school student greatly alleviates the anxieties of starting the freshman year of high school.

"Monica sees her students not only as middle-level learners but as the future adults they will become," said Franklin Middle School principal Rita Holman. "She believes in them, sees their full potential and continuously advocates for the whole child."

## What do you consider your greatest virtue?

Being able to see the good in everything and everyone.

## What human trait do you most dislike?

Selfishness

## What do you like most about living in Johnson County?

The people, the history, the opportunities.

## If you had to live somewhere other than in Johnson County, where would it be?

Most likely Brown County; Nashville specifically.

## If you could begin life over, what would you change?

I would have traveled more.

## If money were no issue, how would you spend it?

I would take care of any debt that my family members and friends had accumulated, and then I would set up funding for peer mentoring programs in middle/high schools.

## What makes you happiest?

My family, friends and my students.

## What is your favorite vacation spot?

Anywhere there is a lake!

## What do you do with free time?

What's free time? Just kidding ... read, garden, crafting.

## What is it that makes you angry?

People being inconsiderate and disrespectful.

## What do you do to escape from reality?

Read, garden, bubble baths.



## What or who is the greatest love of your life?

My family

## What is the quality you most like in a person?

Genuineness

## Which living person in Johnson County do you most admire?

Lori Myers, program director of the Johnson County Juvenile Detention Center and owner/lead trainer of Connect.ed

## What is your greatest extravagance?

Jewelry

## What are your fears, phobias?

Something happening to my children, and I'm not able to help.

## What has been the happiest time of your life?

The birth of my three children and being their mom.

## Which talent would you most like to possess?

Thicker skin? I've always been very sensitive.

## What do you most value in your friends?

Honesty, dependability and loyalty.

## Which historical figure do you most identify with?

Mother Teresa

## What is your greatest regret?

Not accepting God into my life sooner.

## What principle do you live by?

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about.





**NOMINATE**  
**2023 MOST**  
**INFLUENTIAL WOMEN**  
**OF JOHNSON COUNTY**



**SEND IN YOUR NOMINATION:**  
**[amanda@myiconmedia.com](mailto:amanda@myiconmedia.com)**



*The* Southside Times **JOHNSON COUNTY**  
**ICON**

**WE ARE**  
**HIRING**

**MANAGING EDITOR -**  
**WRITERS -**

**CONTACT US**

**[AMANDA@MYICONMEDIA.COM](mailto:AMANDA@MYICONMEDIA.COM)**

