

JOHNSON COUNTY

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ICON of the Month
Kim Kasting
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January 20-February 2, 2024 • myJCICON.com

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AND BETTER

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OUTLOOK ON 2024

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ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

Joey Schmitz

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One Word for 2024: Thriving

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Don't live with back pain

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ICONic image



On Jan. 10, the CGCSC Board of School Trustees honored Scott Alexander (pictured, on right) for his service as board president in 2023. The board elected Amy Counts to serve as president in 2024. Rob Daniels will serve as vice president and Gary Robinson as secretary. (Photo courtesy of Center Grove Community School Corporation)

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. And remember, our news deadlines are several days prior to print.

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ICONic rewind

Carrasco files bill for the 2024 Legislative Session

State Sen. Cyndi Carrasco (R-Indianapolis) filed a bill to be considered during the 2024 legislative session at the Statehouse Wednesday, Jan. 3. The bill will help facilitate speedy access to resources in response to emergencies and disasters. "After experiencing the recent tragedies in Johnson County, I felt it necessary to propose this legislation," Carrasco said. "Natural disasters are unpredictable, and this bill would help Hoosiers be better prepared and get the resources they need in a timely manner." Indiana General Assembly will reconvene for a short session on Jan. 8. "I am eager to start the 2024 legislative session," Carrasco said. "My goal for this session is to work hard to deliver impactful results to citizens of Indiana."

ICONic rewind

Franklin College announces Academic Honor Society new class

Franklin College's Alpha Society is the top academic honor society on campus. This year marked the 102nd celebration of the society. The group inducted 17 students and one faculty/staff member in a ceremony held on campus. Established in 1922, Alpha Society promotes and celebrates scholarship at the undergraduate level. Those eligible for membership include students who hold a GPA of no less than 3.50 (on a 4.0 scale). Alpha Society admits students across the college's academic disciplines, but membership is limited to the top 10% of the college's junior and senior classes. Students inducted into the society from Johnson County include: John Hasquin, an exercise science major and fitness minor, from Greenwood; Benjamin H. Marten, a biology and biomedical science major, from Franklin; Christian Blake Talbert, a data science and computer science major, from Nineveh.



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Welcome our new OB/GYN

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Heather Andrews, MD



Emily Cline, MD



John Norris, MD



Carrie Smith, MD



Mandi Harmon, MSN,
APRN, WHNP-BC,
IBCLC



Diana Haymond, MSN,
CNM

We are pleased to welcome David B. Ensley, MD, FACOG, to the Johnson Memorial Health Women's Care group.

Dr. Ensley is joining JMH after more than two decades in private OB/GYN practice on the south side of Indianapolis.

Dr. Ensley earned his medical degree at Indiana University School of Medicine. Throughout his 23 years of clinical practice, Dr. Ensley has delivered nearly 3,000 babies and performed more than 1,000 outpatient surgeries. Dr. Ensley will begin seeing patients at JMH in January.

Schedule an appointment today. [317.738.0630](tel:317.738.0630)

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Outlook on 2024

Looking ahead to the new year, Greenwood and Bargserville share plans for infrastructure, the economy and other developments

COVER STORY

Compiled by
Nancy Hammerstrom
and Nicole Davis

Local city governments are coming out of the election year with optimism and promise for the new year and beginning of a new (and in one case, first,) term. Entering 2024, local Johnson County leaders share their goals and hopes for the coming year here, emphasizing excitement for important infrastructure projects and other plans for the future which will make their neighborhoods an even more inviting place to live. Here's to a great new year!



Mark W. Myers
Mayor, Greenwood

Going into a new term as mayor, what will be some of your top priorities?

We are in the beginning stages of engineering the expansion of Smith Valley Road from State Road 135 to Emerson Avenue. This is an exciting and much-

needed project that will take multiple years to complete. We are also working with an engineering company to look at widening Main Street from Five Points Road to approximately Airport Parkway. We will be coordinating with State Highway on improving traffic flow under I-65 and at Sheek Road.

The city was granted an Excess Tax Levy which will allow us to hire 12 additional public safety employees. We will be working quickly to get the application process going.

What do you feel was the biggest highlight to the city last year?

The completion of the downtown Main Street and Madison Avenue intersection along with the sidewalk widening in those areas has been very successful. It is great to see so many people using our trails system and to see our downtown businesses thriving.

What is the biggest challenge the city overcame in 2023? How did it do so?

The city applied for an excess tax levy in the fall of 2023. In Late December it was denied by the Department of Local

Government Finance. I made a call and was able to get a meeting with the commissioner of that department. He made a special exception and met with my team the day before New Year's Eve. He had his top staff attend and after explaining the need the city filed an addendum to the request and it was approved.

What projects are you most looking forward to this year?

Sports Park at I-65 and Worthsville Road last year. This is a park with four baseball diamonds, four softball diamonds, a playground with splash pad and a soccer field. This should be finished in the spring and the fields will be ready for use in the fall

Dan Cartwright
Town Manager, Bargserville

Going into this new year, what will be some of your top priorities?

Some of the top priorities for the upcoming year in Bargserville are continued residential growth throughout the town, commercial growth on the 135 corridor and at I-69, and the completion of the

new Umbarger Plaza which is our new downtown event venue park.

What projects are you most looking forward to this year?

We're looking forward to the completion of Umbarger Plaza and concentrated expansion of our Downtown District. Also, future growth in our Parks Department including events, more trails, and our new summer concert series.

What do you feel was the biggest highlight to the city last year?

The biggest highlight last year was the creation of our new Parks Department, the opening of our new Kephart Park, and updates to our infrastructure including our streets, water, sewers, and storm drainage.

What is the biggest challenge the town overcame in 2023? How did it do so?

The biggest challenge last year was being selective on development projects. The Town is growing fast and as we grow, we always consider how a project will benefit our citizens, our community, and the future of Bargserville.



(Cover) Residents travel down recently opened Main Street in Greenwood. | (Above) Newly finished intersection of Main Street and Madison Avenue open to residents. (Photo courtesy of the City of Greenwood)



Bargserville's newest park, Kephart Park, opened in 2023. (Submitted photo)



Umbarger Plaza, a \$2 million project, is anticipated to be completed in late 2024. An empty downtown Bargserville lot will be converted into a public greenspace, featuring a stage and on-site restroom facilities. (Submitted photo)



Construction at the Greenwood Sports Park continues ahead of its opening in 2024. (Photo courtesy of City of Greenwood)

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**We love Our
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communities.**

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

**ROMAN
NUMERALS**

XV

Longtime Johnson County Community Foundation CEO, Gail Richards, retired on Jan. 12 after nearly 15 years at the foundation. Richards brought dramatic endowment growth, positive community impact and steady leadership during local and global disasters.

Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Brown of Greenwood becomes Indiana National Guard new state command sergeant major

The Indiana National Guard adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Dale Lyles, announced his new state command sergeant major and senior enlisted leader recently.

Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Brown, of Greenwood, will take responsibility of a position that leads and advises the adjutant general on all enlisted matters including training, discipline, morale, and well-being. The change of responsibility will occur March 15, 2024.

"I am looking forward to Command Sgt. Maj. Brown stepping into this new role and joining our command team," said Lyles. "His enlisted experience and strong leadership development skills are an asset to our organization."

Brown, who began his military career in 1997, most recently helped lead the 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team to Kosovo in support of Operation Joint Guardian during a nine-month deployment in the Balkans.

Brown first served as a rifleman with Company A, 1st Battalion, 293rd Infantry Regiment in Portland. From there he spent more than a decade with the Long Range Surveillance Unit. He rose from team leader to detachment sergeant, first sergeant and finally a command sergeant major in 2015 at the battalion level, then to the 76th Brigade in 2020.

"I am humbled by and grateful for this leadership opportunity," said Brown, who will be the Indiana National Guard's eighth state command sergeant major. "I will strive to positively impact the daily lives of soldiers and airmen, as well as significantly advance the priorities of Maj. Gen. Lyles."

Brown, an Afghanistan combat veteran, also graduated from Airborne, Jumpmaster and Pathfinder schools during his military career, and he was the distinguished honor graduate at his senior leadership courses.

Brown replaces Command Sgt. Maj. Dale

Shetler, who's held the state command sergeant major position since 2020 following a deployment to the Middle East supporting Operation Spartan Shield as the 38th Infantry Division's senior enlisted leader.

"I would like to thank Maj. Gen. Lyles for this opportunity over the past four years," said Shetler. "Command Sgt. Maj. Brown is a great servant leader, and I am excited for him to take on the senior enlisted leader responsibilities of our organization."

Shetler, of Goshen, has served in the military for more than 38 years. During his career he's also served as an enlisted leader at every level from company to battalion to brigade to troop command and division. Shetler plans to return to his home in Goshen, Ind. and profession in information technology.



Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Brown. (Submitted photo)

ICONic rewind

GCA announces Character Award honorees

Greenwood Christian Academy High School announced Character Award honorees for the second quarter and recognized students during its weekly Chapel service for outstanding character in the areas of patience, love, and gentleness. These students include Luke McNichols (Love), Katie Hopley (Love), James Smallwood (Patience), Keira Goins (Patience), Shane Healey (Gentleness) and Audrey Wall (Gentleness).



From left, Luke McNichols (Love), Katie Hopley (Love), James Smallwood (Patience), Keira Goins (Patience), Shane Healey (Gentleness) and Audrey Wall (Gentleness). (Submitted photo)

Indiana employers and schools are working to keep recent graduates in state

By Aspire Economic Development + Chamber Alliance

Indiana is known for its robust college and university system. However, the local workforce is at risk of losing this home-grown talent to “brain-drain,” or the movement of educated and talented workers to career opportunities outside of the state. Employers and schools have made talent retention a major priority to keep recent graduates living, working, and contributing to economic growth in Indiana.

“Aspire continues to engage with higher education partners to connect their students with our businesses, to provide learning opportunities for their students, and a future workforce for our businesses,” said Amanda Rubadue, vice president of Economic Development at Aspire.

In his letter to the editor, Suresh Garimella, executive vice president of Purdue University, addresses the challenge of Indiana losing a significant percentage of its recent graduates to out-of-state job opportunities.

“The outmigration of young, educated talent to other places in the state or to other parts of the United States, remains a significant issue in many counties in Indiana,” wrote Garimella. “More job openings, better career opportunities, and greater exposure to existing opportunities in Indiana would not only keep talent here but also create an inflow from out of state.”

In the heart of Johnson County, Franklin College has been able to buck the trend of educated workers exiting the state.

“I suspect there are Indiana grads who cannot find the career opportunities they are seeking in the state, but that has not

been true for the majority of Franklin College graduates,” said Kerry Prather, president of Franklin College. “Of last year’s graduating seniors, 96% secured employment here in the Hoosier state.”

When addressing the role of colleges and universities, Prather emphasized their contribution to Indiana’s workforce, particularly in meeting the growing demand from high-tech industries.

“Colleges like Franklin whose graduates largely remain in Indiana are a particularly powerful driving force to help attract high-tech industries to the state by providing well-educated and skilled talent to help build and ultimate lead successful Hoosier companies,” he said.

To retain Indiana grads, Prather advised employers to create and market positions that offer attractive prospects for career development. Positions with opportunities

for progression into roles with increasing levels of responsibility and leadership are crucial in keeping graduates.

The college collaborates with both Johnson County and Indiana employers and organizations to create the talent pipeline from education to occupation.

“Our recent graduates are indeed helping fuel the state’s need for college-educated workforce,” said Prather, “we will continue to work with local and state-wide industry leaders to connect our talented alumni with the needs of those companies.”

Employers wanting to tackle the issue of brain-drain and keep talented employees in Indiana should consider resources such as Work and Learn Indiana. Work and Learn Indiana is a free platform for connecting Indiana employers, learners and educational institutions to facilitate work-based learning experiences and boost talent retention.



The majority of Franklin College graduates are finding work in Indiana. (Photo courtesy of Franklin College)

ICONic rewind

Sen. Cyndi Carrasco files for election

State Sen. Cyndi Carrasco has filed as a candidate for State Senate in the 2024 Republican primary to be held on May 7. In the approximately two months fundraising as a candidate, Carrasco raised a total of \$77,524, and 99% of all contributions came

from Hoosiers. In October, Carrasco was overwhelmingly victorious in a caucus of local Republican precinct committeemen and was selected to fulfill the remainder of the late Sen. Jack Sandlin’s term in the State Senate. District 36 covers parts of Marion and

Johnson counties, including Perry Township and a portion of Greenwood. Carrasco lives in Indianapolis with her husband, Robert, and their daughter, Sarah. They attend church at Saints Francis & Clare of Assisi in Greenwood.

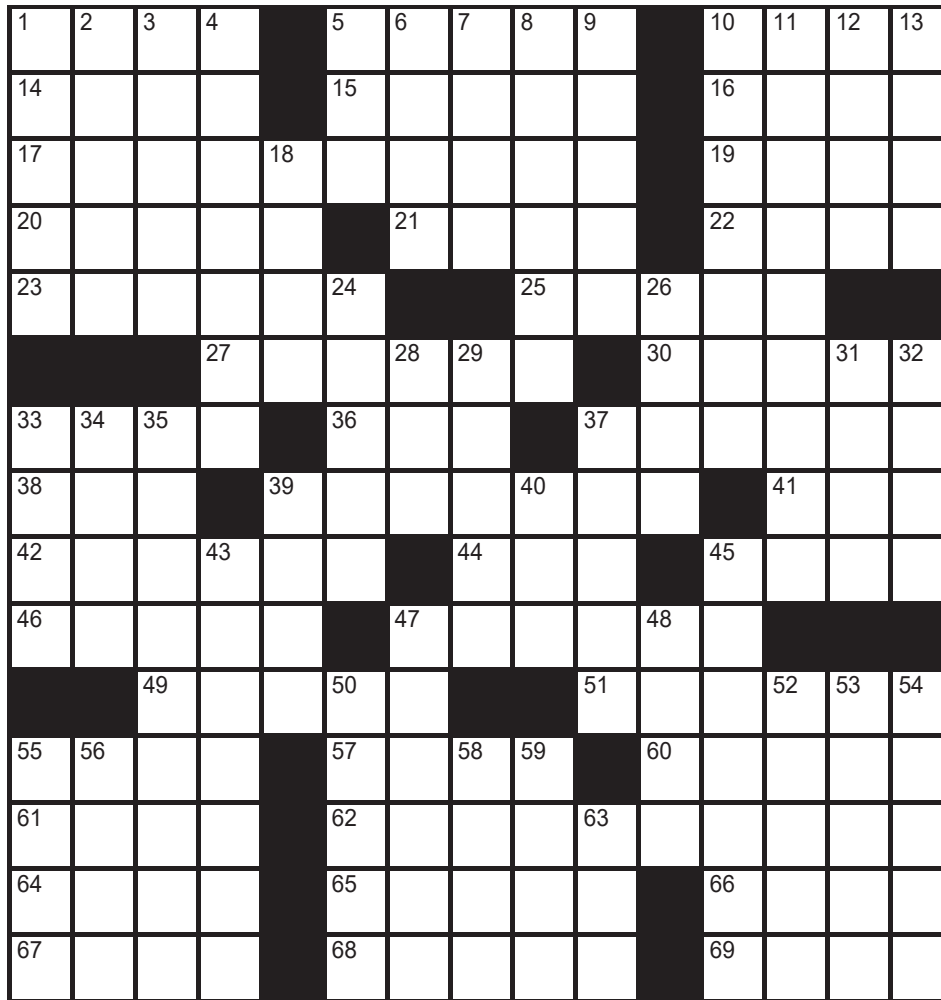
Oops...

In our last publication dated Jan. 6-19, 2024, in the cover story, A League of Their Own, we reported in the article that Center Grove High School’s bowling team was the school’s first league. It is not the first team. It is a new league.

We regret the error.

ACROSS

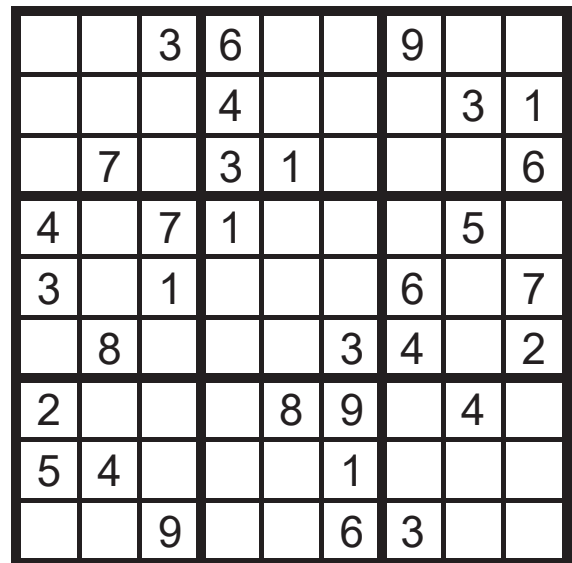
- 1 "Famous" cookie maker
- 5 Desktop debut of 1981, briefly
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- 65 ____ Creek Park
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- DOWN**
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- 2 Greenwood Farmers Market fruit
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- 31 Civil rights org.
- 32 Genie's home
- 33 Pacer foe from Texas
- 34 Revery handout
- 35 Removed covering
- 37 Still sleeping, say
- 39 Ms., in Marseilles
- 40 Tic-tac-toe win
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- 48 Archer's Meats section
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- 52 Closing time for some Broad Ripple bars
- 53 Diacritical squiggle
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Mutual Savings Bank announces new chief financial officer

Mutual Savings Bank, Johnson County's only locally based financial institution, has announced the addition of a new chief financial officer (CFO).

Paul Arab joined the leadership team and will oversee the financial operations of the bank. "People make the difference in a team-oriented company. Our search to fill our vacant CFO position allowed us to meet an incredibly talented individual who has the desire to join a company where his contributions will truly make a difference," stated David A. Coffey, president and CEO. "He has the banking background and credentials to make an immediate impact to our bank. We were fortunate to find such a quality individual to round out our senior management team, and we are thrilled to embrace Paul, his wife, Becca, and their three children to the Mutual Savings Bank family!"

Arab has worked in the banking industry in a variety of positions of increasing responsibility for 15 years. Most recently, he served as senior vice president of Audit and Advisory Services at Home Federal Bank of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tenn. He is a certified public accountant (CPA) and has a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree in economics from East Tennessee State University as well as an AICPA Leadership Graduate (2018).

In addition to being a CPA, he holds certifications as global management accountant (CGMA), internal auditor

(CIA), information systems auditor (CISA), information technology professional (CITP), and data privacy solutions engineer (CDPSE). He excels in his area of expertise and has received two international awards — the Elijah Watt Sells Award for Accounting and the Williams S. Smith Gold Award for Internal Audit — in recognition of his achievements.



Paul Arab, CFO of Mutual Savings Bank. (Submitted photo)

Ivy Tech Columbus announces new Campus Board of Trustees member

Ivy Tech Community College has appointed Jillean Battle, an experienced finance executive, to the Campus Board of Trustees for the college's Columbus service area.

Battle joins the nine-member board that guides the college, which includes approving the campus' budget and serving as student and community advocates. She will represent Johnson County, which is included in the Ivy Tech Columbus service area. Ivy Tech Columbus serves Bartholomew, Decatur, Jackson, Jennings, Johnson and Shelby counties.

"Jillean's extensive professional skills will help elevate our campus board and ensure we are operating with the best intentions for our students and communities," said Ivy Tech Columbus Chancellor Dr. Steven Combs. "We welcome her to the board and look forward to working with her to expand our services in Johnson County and the other communities we serve."

Ivy Tech's State Board of Trustees appoints campus trustees with the aim of keeping the campus in touch with the needs of its service area. Board members represent various economic sectors, including commerce, manufacturing, healthcare, agriculture and education.

"Ivy Tech provides quality education that is accessible to our community members and can help prepare them for a better future," Battle said. "I am excited to serve on the Campus Board of Trustees and will advocate for the students and communities Ivy Tech Columbus serves in an effort to continue the invaluable work of the college."

Battle is a result-focused executive with extensive treasury management and financial reporting experience. She is a licensed attorney and privacy professional

who has served as the Deputy Treasurer of Indiana and Missouri and Chief Privacy Officer of South Carolina.

She earned a law degree from Indiana University McKinney School of Law and a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley. She is a member of the Indianapolis Bar Association, International Association of Privacy Professionals, The Exchange at the IUL and Marion County Bar Association.

Battle also has experience as an Ivy Tech instructor, having previously taught communication courses as an adjunct instructor.



Jillean Battle will represent Johnson County on the nine-member board. (Submitted photo)

ICONic rewind

Johnson County real estate market sees increasing inventory


December was an active month for residential real estate in Center Grove, with home prices decreasing and homes selling more quickly than this time last year. According to F.C. Tucker Company, the average sale price of a Center Grove home decreased 3.1% to \$372,082, and the average price per square foot also decreased – down 19.3% to \$139.23, compared to December 2022. Homes in Center Grove sold more quickly than this time last year, leaving the market two days, or 5.6%, faster. Johnson County's

December residential real estate market saw both home sale prices and inventory increasing, according to F.C. Tucker Company. The average year-to-date home sale price in Johnson County increased 2.8% to \$339,308. Available housing inventory in Johnson County also increased 4.5% compared to this time last year, and pending home sales in the county decreased slightly, down 7.5% compared to this time last year.

ICONic rewind

SNHU announces fall 2023 dean's list

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) recently congratulated students on being named to the fall 2023 dean's list. The fall terms run from September to December. Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.500 to 3.699 for the reporting term are named to the dean's list. Recipients from Johnson County include: Lynn Patterson of Greenwood (46142). Learn more at snhu.edu.

A photograph of an older man and woman smiling and wearing bicycle helmets. They are standing next to two bicycles. The man is on the left, wearing a grey t-shirt and blue shorts. The woman is on the right, wearing a dark blue t-shirt and striped pants. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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ICONic rewind

IMCU contributes \$1,500 to Greenwood Community High School

Indiana Members Credit Union (IMCU) recently presented a check for \$1,500 to Greenwood Community High School as part of an on-going school spirit debit card program. The partnership allows Greenwood fans the opportunity to show their school spirit and support the athletic program by signing up for a Greenwood Woodmen themed debit card. Every time the card is used as a signature based transaction, Greenwood athletics benefits. The more cards that are in use, the larger the contribution. Since beginning the program in 2018, Greenwood Community High School has earned \$7,500 through this IMCU giveback program. David Early, Branch Manager, IMCU

Greenwood Branch, and JD McClary, Universal Member Service Representative, IMCU Greenwood Branch, presented the check to Mike Campbell, Athletic Director, Greenwood Community High School, at the boys varsity basketball game on Nov. 22. The card is available for issue to members at the IMCU Greenwood Branch, 1115 N. Madison Ave., as well as IMCU's other 30 Indiana locations. The IMCU Greenwood Woodmen debit card is free to members with IMCU's free checking account and can be issued immediately through IMCU's Instant Issue program, which allows members to receive their debit card on the spot. Visit the IMCU Greenwood Branch or imcu.com for details.



David Early, Branch Manager, IMCU Greenwood Branch, and JD McClary, Universal Member Service Representative, IMCU Greenwood Branch, present a check to Mike Campbell, Athletic Director, Greenwood Community High School. (Submitted photo)

ICONic briefs

Main Street Hospice offers volunteer training in January

It's a new year, and time to discover YOUR purpose. Main Street Hospice, Franklin, is offering a volunteer training program on Saturday, Jan. 27 from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. at its Franklin office for applicants seeking to provide companionship visits to hospice patients in the nine Central Indiana counties it serves: Bartholomew, Brown, Hancock, Hendricks, Johnson, Marion, Monroe, Morgan, and Shelby. Volunteers are trained to: provide patient visits in private homes, independent living, long-term care, and/or assisted living settings; provide emotional and practical support to caregivers in a private home; and provide clerical/administrative support in the Franklin office.

Each volunteer determines his/her own availability, but a commitment of even one visit a month goes a long way to help those in need. Main Street Hospice provides on-going support to its volunteers by providing monthly educational meetings for those who wish to advance their understanding of hospice and palliative care. To be considered for participation in the upcoming training session, please complete the volunteer paper application at mainstreethospicein.com/ or contact Volunteer Coordinator, Cheryl Mioduski at (317) 736-0055 for more information; or email mshcmioduski@gmail.com.

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Bob Rohman's **INDY** Athlete of the Month
HONDA Joey Schmitz

By Ken Severson

Joey Schmitz has been a vital cog of the Center Grove boys' basketball team for the past two years, helping to engineer victories for the Trojans.

Which is kind of apropos, as the senior wants to be a mechanical engineer after college.

Need a corner three? Need a switchable defender? Need to grease the offensive engine?

Seems that Schmitz has been a main key in turning both the offense and defense for the Trojans.

With a 17.1 scoring average, 1.7 assists per game and 18 steals to lead the 7-4 Trojans, it's easy to see Schmitz has been a team leader.

"My role is to be more a leader by example," Schmitz said. "I want our team to go as far as possible, make semi state and possibly state and I know we can."

Schmitz has been playing hard and leading since his days at Maple Grove Elementary School and Center Grove Central.

While in grade and middle school, Schmitz also played football in addition to basketball, but he made the decision while at Central to forego the gridiron and stick with basketball.

Not a bad decision and one that Center Grove boys' basketball coach Zach Hahn is likely happy Schmitz did, not only for his play but work ethic.

"Joey is our hardest worker daily. He is an absolute gym rat that loves the game of basketball," Hahn said. "He works with

our youth and trains kids on the side as well as coaching an elementary team in the Center Grove Boys Basketball League. He has been a part of the 50/40/90 club (50% or higher in field goals, 40% or higher on three-pointers, and 90% or higher on free throws) as a sophomore and was close as a junior. He will be right there again this season! That alone is a testament to the work he puts in as a basketball player."

The scary thing for opposing teams about Schmitz is that he does the bulk of his damage from anywhere on the floor. Schmitz's versatility gives him an unfair advantage.

Guard him close, he can move and drive. Give him space and he can make you pay, with a basket. Double team him, and Schmitz finds the open man.

And getting the assist and setting teammates up is a big plus for Schmitz.

Especially when the game's outcome could be in doubt.

"At that point in the game, I try to get teammates involved and motivate them," Schmitz said. "I want them to feel they can contribute."

Schmitz does admit the Trojans can do more. Two of Center Grove's losses this season came by one point in overtime to No. 1 Fishers and highly touted Johnson County rival Franklin.

"It's a matter of keeping the pressure on and finishing," Schmitz said. "I have a lot of self-motivation."

One motivating factor was the disappointment of last year when Center

Grove was ousted in the sectional championship by Bloomington North. This coming after a stellar 22-3 record, one of the Trojans' best seasons in school history.

That self-motivation by Schmitz, plus his leadership will be needed by the Trojans if they are to win their first sectional in three years.

"Joey is a tremendous team first guy," Hahn said. "He is a great role model for the kids in CG Schools. We are lucky to have him in our program."

As for the future, Schmitz wants to play basketball in college while he plans to work on becoming a mechanical engineer.

"I hope to play as long as I can," Schmitz said. I have a couple of Division III offers with Rose-Hulman and Trine, but it's also possible I could walk on at either Northwestern or Purdue."



Joey Schmitz. (Submitted photo)

THE SCHMITZ FILE

NAME: Joey Schmitz **engineering**
HEIGHT: 6-foot-2 **FAVORITE SUBJECT:** Math
SCHOOL: Center Grove **FAVORITE ATHLETE:** Damian Lillard
HOBBIES: Basketball, golf and pickleball **FAVORITE VACATION:** Cruising
COLLEGE PLANS: Undecided, but plans to play basketball in college and studying mechanical **PARENTS' NAMES:** Amy Schmitz (mom), Kelly Schmitz (dad)



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PERSONNEL MATTERS

One Word for 2024: Thriving

By Mike Heffner

An annual tradition I started both with my work team and my family is choosing One Word. This exercise uses a word to set as a theme for the year versus a traditional New Year's resolution. It forces you to really look at what has happened over the last couple of years and what you want to see happen in this next year. I picked this up from author/speaker Jon Gordon.

Last year, my One Word was Sustain. We had a great run of growth in the last several years, and I wanted to see us Sustain that and keep it going. What I realized toward the end of the year though was Sustain felt more like settling or just keeping things moving. We ended the year with growth both in our business and in our family. For this year, the One Word that I think better suits what I want 2024 to be like: Thriving.

Last year seemed like the year for managing, avoiding and beating difficulties. I knew it was going to be tough, but it did not seem to leave much room for Thriving. Anyone that can say they ended up on the positive side after 2023 should celebrate. But

at the end of the year, I did not feel like we won – I felt like we managed. I am positioning this year to Thrive.

What does it mean to be Thriving? Many think of being successful, trophies, fame and fortune. I want to define it this way: *prospering and having health in all areas of life – financial, spiritual, and physical.* My desire is to see as many people as possible find success. It means being busy in a good way – busy, making a difference, flourishing, growing and living an abundant life. A life that produces fruit for others and our work is helping others be successful, and that feels like Thriving to me.

I have spent a great deal of time this year learning about mindset. If you want to Thrive, you must have a good mindset. If you want to see personal fulfillment and optimal performance, then you must be mentally, physically and emotionally strong. This past year felt like a year where I spent a ton of time trying not to fail. My belief system was we just needed to sustain through the difficulties.

Erwin McManus said in his book *Mind Shift* that "your mental structures can unlock untapped potential and unleash unimaginable capability." That says to me, if you want to

Thrive, you need to get your mind healthy. If you are simply working to not fail, it's hard to thrive. You need to play offense versus defense. As McManus shared, "your thoughts are the road map to your future. If you transform your thinking, you will transform your life." I believe that with all that I am.

If you plan to Thrive, these three things need to be a part of your outlook:

- **Thriving Relationships** – life is about helping other people succeed and making a difference for others
- **Thriving Growth** – invest in yourself, as well as others. Learn, grow and move forward
- **Thriving Future** – surround yourself with people that are committed to living at the highest level

You may be thinking, *thriving? I am just trying to survive.* I agree that life is hard and full of obstacles and challenges. Make sure the story you are telling yourself, though, is one that allows you to Thrive. It is easy to self-limit our thinking into believing that where we are at is due to something else. I would challenge you that if you want to be Thriving, you need to see the obstacles as opportunities.



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.

PEER TO PEER

When the only sweat you shed is trying to cancel your health club membership

By Howard Hubler

They say January and February are the biggest weight loss and health club months of the year. I bought that deal in the past and found out that my willpower was good for 60 days.

So you plan on starting out on a weight loss program online or a workout program at a local club. Now is the time to deal with it before the proverbial spring break bathing suit reveals. Fast forward to March or April, and you never lifted anything but the spoon to your hot fudge sundae. Let's say you bought a two-month program; unless you canceled it, they were going to assign a new monthly price as you had a two-month introductory price only.

I attempted to cancel my membership and was sent 40-50 pages of information to read first; I couldn't even tell you what they wanted me to do to actually cancel despite a graduate degree from IU. After three attempts to re-initiate a new password to log on, the system was "temporarily down." No joke.

After finally canceling my workout and weight loss programs, I thought I was on my way to giving myself a \$50 a month raise with cutting my monthly living

expenses. A month later I'm going through my credit card expenses. I noticed a few other charges, and they have coded names that make no sense. They've been billing me every month, and I discovered a little-known part of my electronic online banking system that I could find with charges that had "recurring billings." Joe's Health Club Center might be using a credit card billing name of "JHC 123;1." Eventually you cancel another \$20 expense, although the best you can do is cancel the fee to the next billing cycle. You can show the business(es) that for months you never so much as contacted their online service, nor did they contact you with a, "haven't seen you in a while," notice. You won't get a penny back. Businesspeople beware: Do you think you are smarter than this? Perhaps you'll find out sometime around March or April of this year.



Howard Hubler can be reached at howard@hubler.com.

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Three financial resolutions you should make and keep!

By Jeff Binkley

Many financial resolutions made for New Year's never make it past the thought. That's why I'm going to suggest you make the most impactful one first.

Build an emergency fund first.

An emergency fund is just that. It's money set aside in case an emergency happens. Its establishment provides the foundation for any other financial resolution to build upon. An emergency fund is typically one- or two-months' worth of expenses set aside in cash. A recent survey (Forbes.com, Dec. 1, 2023) stated that just over 40% (40.7%) of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck and that three quarters of those (77%) do not have enough money in emergency savings to cover even one month of their expenses. If you don't have one in place, forget about all other financial resolutions other than getting that emergency account fully funded.

Pay down or pay off credit cards.

When I establish a financial plan with a client, I like to find ways we can achieve total return for them. If you have credit card debt, one way of achieving total return in your portfolio is to pay it down or off. The average credit card interest rate is now 27.82%, according to Forbes Advisor's weekly credit card rates report (Dec. 11, 2023). My job has me look for good investment results for my clients. Imagine getting a guaranteed 27.82% rate of return! That's what paying down your credit cards does for you. Yes, when you're in debt, specifically credit card debt, money spent toward reducing that debt gives you a rate of return effectively equal to the interest rate of the debt you're paying off. Guarantee a high rate of return on your money by using it toward paying off those debts.

Contribute (more) to your retirement account.

Finally, but only after your first two resolutions have been met, consider increasing your 401(k) or IRA contributions. These are easy and very effective ways to help ensure the life you lead in retirement is just as fun and fulfilling as the life you lead now.

These are simple resolutions to make and with some discipline, shouldn't be all that hard to implement. But start with building that emergency fund first. Because just like what happens to the "lose weight" resolution when the boss buys your favorite pizza for the crew, if you don't have your emergency fund in place, the "pay off credit cards" and "save for retirement" resolutions quickly go out the window when the water heater breaks down or a tire blows out or your kid needs new basketball shoes and has to have the best. Best wishes for the New Year. Now get busy.



Jeff Binkley is the Founder and Managing Director of Binkley Wealth Management Group, an Independent Fee-Only Registered Investment Advisory Firm. Mr. Binkley is adding a few new select clients from those who qualify. For further information or an appointment contact him at Jeff@thebinkleygroup.com or 317-697-1618.

ICONic rewind

Torabi joins JCBank as Chief Financial Officer

Marvin S. Veatch, JCBank President and CEO, announced the addition of a new senior leader and Chief Financial Officer to the JCBank team. Peymon S. Torabi, an experienced and seasoned financial professional and CFO, has worked in banking throughout his 20-year career, most recently serving as Chief Financial Officer at a \$2 billion institution in northern Indiana. "Peymon's experience, vast skill set in bank accounting and finance, budgeting, and financial reporting, along with his knowledge of strategic planning, has resulted in a proven track record that will positively contribute to JCBank's continued growth and success," Veatch said. Mr. Torabi obtained his Master of Science degree in accountancy and Bachelor of Science degree in management at Purdue University Northwest and is a graduate of the American Bankers Association Stonier Graduate School of Banking. "I am honored to be joining the JCBank team and look forward to contributing my expertise in fostering financial growth and innovation and continuing JCBank's investment in its customers, employees, and communities." For more information, visit jcbank.com.



Peymon S. Torabi. (Submitted photo)

Puzzle Time Answers – ON PAGE 7

Answers to HOOSIER HODGEPODGE:

Roads: AVENUE, COURT, DRIVE, LANE, STREET, WAY;

Symbols: CLEF, FLAT, NOTE, REST, SHARP;

Animals: ORCA, PANDA, SKUNK, ZEBRA;

Words: INDIANA, REPERTORY, THEATRE;

Sides: BROCCOLI, GREEN BEANS;

County: MARION

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

Don't live with back pain

By Linda Barnes, Therapy on Wheels



If you have back pain, physical therapy may be your ticket to relief. Physical therapy can relieve pain, promote healing and restore function and movement.

If you get physical therapy when your back problems first begin, you may even be able to avoid surgery. And if you do need surgery, physical therapy can greatly help you recover.

Getting started

Some spine specialists recommend physical therapy sooner, particularly if the pain is severe. In general, the goals of physical therapy are to decrease pain, increase function and get the patient on a maintenance program to prevent further recurrences.

Depending upon your needs, your physical therapist will come up with a treatment plan to assist you. The first thing they will do is work on treatments to ease your back pain and improve your flexibility including:

Massage: helps relax your muscles, increases circulation and eases pain in your soft tissues.

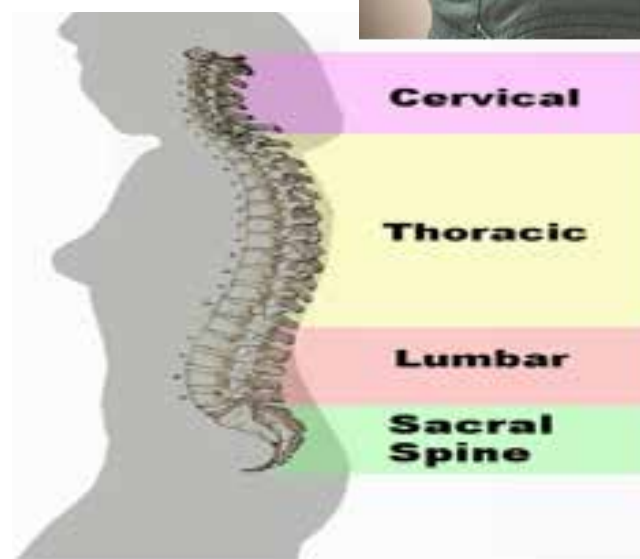
Mobilization: measured movements to move bones and joints into position helping with flexibility.

Manipulation: pressure on your body with the hands or a device ranging from gentle to strong, and slow to fast helping improve strength and endurance.

Therapy on Wheels is one of the few companies that has physical therapists who specialize in the treatment of back pain in the home. All one-on-one therapy is provided in the comfort of your own home

with no homebound restrictions. Therapy On Wheels accepts most insurance plans, including Medicare.

Therapy On Wheels can help you manage your back pain. Contact our office to set up an appointment at 317-332-9861 or visit our website at therapyonwheelsinc.com.



Medicare – it isn't over!

By Linda Begley

NPN 1482386

Independent Medicare Agent



Just when you thought those phone calls and television commercials were ending . . . here we go again.

Be extremely careful — if you receive a phone call telling you that you can get better benefits, it is totally illegal. Agents are not allowed to contact you without your written permission. These calls often result in your Medicare plan being changed, and you did not give permission. Get names and phone numbers (you can be sure that the caller will not give you this information).

So exactly what is the difference between AEP (annual election period, Oct. 15 through Dec. 7) and OEP (open enrollment period, Jan. 1 through March 24)?

AEP runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7. Anyone on Medicare can make any change they choose during AEP. They can change from one Medicare Advantage Plan to a different one or change to Original Medicare only (plus part D for drug coverage). Or choose a supplement.

And then there is OEP — the open enrollment period. Only Medicare Advantage clients may make one change during this three-month period. Some reasons for a change might be:

- Some plans have better dental coverage — better than the one you are currently on.
- Some plans may not include your doctors (how did this happen?) or give you

the best price for your medications.

c. Some plans pay part of your part B (currently at \$174.70 each month).

d. Some plans give you better allowance on groceries (your friends told you about it).

This is what I refer to as “after the fact.” You begin talking to your friends and learn that they have more benefits than you have!

The “half-truths” and “deceptive advertising” that we are all experiencing also applies to Medicare. Find an agent that you trust. If possible, meet face to face. Those of you on Medicaid are probably receiving letters from Medicare or Social Security. My own clients are calling me with these letters; the majority of them are simply changes due to Medicaid, but it still means a plan change is required.

Other letters/advertisements are “fake” and work to convince us seniors (yes, I am 76 and a senior) that we are on the wrong plan. So many seniors are confused and do not know what to do or who to call. That is why it is extremely important to get information before making any changes. If you ask for the name and phone number of the person calling you, he/she will probably hang up!

It is sad to say that there are many people taking advantage of us seniors. Be smart.

I'm always available for questions.

Linda Begley
317-522-7230

Linda Begley is a retired teacher and school counselor. Once she retired and got on Medicare herself, her own questions began. She could not find people with answers. Now she's back to teaching — about Medicare — with her nonprofit, Senior Resource Centers.

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Kim Kasting

Johnson County Community Foundation leader values kindness, adventure, friends and family

By Julie Brackemyre

Kim Kasting serves as president and CEO of the Johnson County Community Foundation. Under her direction, the Johnson County Community Foundation manages more than 350 funds and \$40 million in assets.

Previously, she served the foundation as vice president

of development and director of grants and scholarships. She directed asset development strategies, donor services activities and managed the Color the County mural program. Kim worked closely with donors and community members to help them connect with charitable causes that matter in Johnson County.

Kasting is a lifelong Johnson County resident. She

earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University. She lives in Franklin with her two daughters, Avery and Ellie, and her significant other, Todd. She enjoys being outdoors, traveling and spending time with family and friends.

What do you consider your greatest virtue?

I believe my greatest virtues are kindness and passion in my professional and personal life.

What do you most deplore in others?

Lack of empathy and understanding

What do you like most about working in Johnson County?

I love the sense of community

If you had to live anywhere else, where would it be?

Anywhere warm

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

I'm not sure I would change anything. All life experiences have gotten me to this place in my life, and I am happy and content.

If money weren't an issue, where would you spend it?

Travel, family/friends and community

What makes you happiest?

Being around friends and family

What is your favorite vacation spot?

I really enjoy exploring new places, but to date my favorite vacation has been Turks and Caicos.

What do you do with your idle time?

Anything outdoors

What is it that makes you angry?

Disrespectful behavior



What do you do to escape from reality?

Long walks and slow runs

What/who is the greatest love of your life?

My children, Avery and Ellie

What is the quality you most like in a person?

Compassion

What is your greatest extravagance?

I live a modest lifestyle, but my most favorite luxury is getting my lashes done each month.

What is your favorite restaurant?

It's too hard to pick one! Coffee shop: Main & Madison; breakfast/brunch: Garden Table; steakhouse: Ruth's Chris; Italian – lozzo's; local fine dining: Our Table; best cheeseburger: Grill Bar.

Who is the person most influential in your life?

My mother. She is THE most patient, kind and extremely strong individual.

What are your fears/phobias?

Mice

Which talent would you most like to possess?

Singing

What do you most value in your friends?

Their ability to provide support in any situation

Who is your favorite historical figure?

Again, it's too hard to choose one. Any woman who has significantly impacted history.

What is your greatest regret?

Bangs for most of my childhood. Ha!

What tenet do you live by?

Always Adventure

NIGHT & DAY LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT ENTERTAINING

EVENTS calendar

BARGERSVILLE

Resources of Hope: All In for Foster Youth Casino Night • We are thrilled to announce Takkeem Morgan as our Keynote Speaker. Takkeem spent eight years in the foster care system. Today he is dedicated to supporting foster parents and is an established change maker within Indiana's foster care reform system. Our **ALL IN for Foster Youth** Casino Night will serve as our primary fundraiser tasked with covering a large portion of our annual operating costs, programs and anticipated growth. As we prepare our annual operating budget, we have set our goal at \$30,000. We encourage you to be a part of making that a reality as we ask for your help in supporting foster children in our community. Purchase a table of eight for \$500 or \$75 for an individual ticket. | When: Feb. 17, 6-11 p.m. | Where: The Sycamore at Mallow Run, 7070 Whiteland Road, Bargersville. | Info: resourcesofhope.org/casinonight

CENTER GROVE

Barbie Party • Celebrate all things Barbie with crafts, music, and, of course, Barbie! Dress up, bring your best doll friend, and be ready to have a fun time! | When: Jan. 24, 4:30 p.m. | Where: White River Branch Library, 1664 Library Blvd., Greenwood. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9075406

Stuffed Animal Sleepover • Ever wondered what goes on in the library at night? Your stuffed animal can find out when they stay over at the library. Join us for storytime and leave your stuffed friend. Pick them up the next day. | When: Jan. 26, 4:30 p.m. | Where: White River Branch Library, 1664 Library Blvd., Greenwood. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9079670

FRANKLIN

Cultural Exchange: Hungary and Moldova • Meet an international exchange student in person to discover a new culture. Learn about their traditions, food, clothing and

more. | When: Jan. 21, 2 p.m. | Where: Franklin Branch Library, 401 State St. Franklin. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9058873

Tiny Tots Storytime • Enjoy books, bounces, songs, rhymes and more. | When: Jan. 25, 10 a.m. | Where: Franklin Branch Library, 401 State St., Franklin. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9102757

Shop the Blocks • More than 25 stores and restaurants in downtown Franklin will be open late for this fun shopping and dining event. | When: Jan. 25, 5-8 p.m. | Where: 100 E. Jefferson St., Franklin. | Info: 317-739-3862 or go to festivalcountryindiana.com/shop-the-blocks-5

GREENWOOD

Southside Art League Presents Jo Atkinson • Southside Art League presents the art of Jo Atkinson. There is no charge to enter the gallery. | When: Jan. 3-27, Wednesday through Saturday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. | Where: Southside Art League, 299 E. Broadway St., Greenwood. | Info: (317) 882-5562 or go to festivalcountryindiana.com/southside-art-league-presens-jo

Trivia Night at Our Lady of Greenwood • Gather a team or eight to 10 for a fun night of trivia. Tickets are \$25 and include food, beer, wine and other drinks. RSVP by contacting the phone number or email. | When: Jan. 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m. | Where: Our Lady of Greenwood, 229 S. Meridian St., Greenwood. | Info: 317-777-4454 or email ryan@samuelsinsons.com



The Bishops at Ale Emporium • The Bishops are well known for their high-energy, multi-genre performances. Find great music, food and drinks at this event. | When: Jan. 26, 8:30-11:30 p.m. | Where: Ale Emporium, 997 E. County Line Road, Greenwood. | Info: 317-300-1560 or go to thebishopslive.com/calendar

Purse Bingo • Tickets on sale \$35 starting Jan. 20, 9-11 a.m. at The Social of Greenwood, 550 Polk St. Greenwood, cash or check only. | When: Feb. 8, doors open at 5 p.m.; Bingo starts at 6:30 p.m. | Where: The Barn at Bay Horse Inn, 1468 W. Stones Crossing Road, Greenwood. | Info: (317) 882-4810; thesocialofgreenwood.org

Soup-er Bowl and Chili Cookoff • Cost: \$5 admission; includes samples and a bowl for your favorite(s). \$20 cook-off contest entry includes admission. Fun, games and a silent auction. Half-time entertainment by Mid-Life Crisis. Cash bar available. Proceeds from event to be donated to the 2024 Regional 11 ABC State Charity Event. *Cash, check or App payments must be received by Feb. 3. Judging to begin at 11:15 a.m.; guest sampling/eating to begin at 11:30 a.m.; games and entertainment from 12:15-1:45 p.m. Awards ceremony: 1:45 p.m. | When: Feb. 10 (a day before the NFL Super Bowl), 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. | Where: VFW Greenwood Post 5864, 1842 Veterans Way, Greenwood. | Info: Contact Crissy at (317) 529-4341 or via email at Smedley11@sbcglobal.net

WHITELAND

Family Storytime • Enjoy stories, songs and more with your family. | When: Jan. 20, 10 a.m. | Where: Clark Pleasant Branch Library, 350 Clearwater Blvd., Whiteland. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9178521

The Adventures of Flat Stanley • Flat Stanley has been on many adventures but think of all of the places he can go with you! Hear his story, see some of his adventures and make your own Flat Stanley. | When: Jan. 23, 4:30 p.m. | Where: Clark Pleasant Branch Library, 350 Clearwater Blvd., Whiteland. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9058377

Couponing 101 • Learn how to maximize your money by couponing! Utilize reward programs and discover what apps to download for the best savings. Discover the best places to find coupons, how to score free items and more. | When: Jan. 23, 6 p.m. | Where: Clark Pleasant Branch Library, 350 Clearwater Blvd., Whiteland. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/8928732

Naloxone Community Training • Layperson Naloxone training teaches you to recognize the signs of an opioid overdose and administer the reversal drug Naloxone to save a life. | When: Jan. 29, 6 p.m. | Where: Clark Pleasant Branch Library, 350 Clearwater Blvd., Whiteland. | Info: jcplin.libnet.info/event/9192666

Notice is hereby given to our members that JCREMC will be implementing a decrease of \$0.000124 per kWh to reflect a change in the power cost tracker from \$0.017059/kWh to \$0.016935/kWh. The decrease will be effective for electric usage beginning January 1, 2024.

NIGHT & DAY

LOCAL Entertainment ENTERTAINING

AN OPTION

Pho Lai

As you continue your resolutions to stay healthy this year but need a few more options with the colder weather, try some steamy vegetables served with noodles or Stir-Fried Chicken with Dried Chili. "I'm an avid lover of Asian food and most recently of Vietnamese Pho, so when I saw this place, I wanted to stop in to try their Pho," stated a Tripadvisor reviewer. "The price is reasonable at \$8.49 for a generous-sized bowl of Pho with steak." "For those who like things a little spicier I recommend the Shan Noodles," added a Google reviewer. Other popular options include the vegetarian Samosas, the Beef Pho (with beef balls, brisket and tripe), Tea Leaf Salad and Rangoon tea. Try the Steamed Fish, Sweet and Sour Tofu with mixed vegetables, Lo Main or Fried Rice Noodles, Kyaee Oo (thin, rice noodles with meatballs and bok choy), Ginger Salad or Chicken Barini. Reviewers also appreciated the attentive small-business owners, noting their kind, welcoming demeanors.

Hours: Tuesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; closed on Monday. Address: 1000 N. Madison Ave., Greenwood. For more information, call (317) 534-2155 or go to zmenu.com/pho-lai-restaurant-greenwood-online-menu/



When your days and nights get a little too cold for your liking, warm up with a bowl of Veggie Pho. (Photo courtesy of Pho Lai)

SPOTLIGHT

Leaving Lasting Legacy

The Franklin College Art Department welcomed artist Tiffany Black to campus to teach "Public and Community Art: Mural Creation" during Immersive Term this January. The class has taken 23 students, step-by-step, through the stages of how to create a community mural. The students' dedicated work also included a public component in which community members, alumni and fellow students were invited to help complete the paint-by-number mural. The "Spirit of Community" mural will consist of four panels, each depicting a different aspect of Franklin College history: Tradition, Athletics, Innovation and Diversity. The design also weaves in the present and hints at the students' imagined futures. On Monday, Feb. 26, Black will give a lecture followed by a ribbon cutting and a reception. The lecture will take place in the B.F. Hamilton Library Auditorium. Guests may enter through the main door of the library on the north side of the building. The mural will be on permanent display in the skywalk following the ribbon cutting. The heart of this Immersive Term course lies in creating a mural that pays homage to Franklin College's history. Black and the student artists worked with several departments and groups on campus to prepare the mural. Through engaging, hands-on activities, the art students learned about Franklin College's history by delving into the undergraduate research previously prepared by Franklin College history students, which was conducted with the support of the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) Humanities for the Public Good initiative and the Community-Engaged Alliance (CEA) Faculty Fellows Grant. This spring semester, additional art students will build upon the mural project. Frye will guide them as they begin to incorporate augmented reality components into the mural. To learn more about Black, visit tblack.co/about.



Black is the sixth visiting artist to visit Franklin College's campus during Immersive Term, thanks to a \$50,000 grant from the Allen W. Clowes Foundation to establish the Clowes Visiting Artist Endowment Fund. (Submitted photo)

FAITH

Make time for joy this year as a New Year's resolution

DEVOTIONAL

By Pastor
Chris Philbeck

My wife, Sandy loves to celebrate her family's birthdays. When our children were growing up, she made their birthdays memorable. We celebrated with ice skating parties, swim parties, movie parties, bunko parties, and on and on. She would ask each of our kids what kind of birthday cake they wanted, and then, without any special cake pan or any kind of model, she would go to work creating a masterpiece. The house was always decorated with balloons and streamers, and there was lots of laughter. Birthdays were always special.

As our family got older, our kids got mar-

ried and grandkids were added to the mix. We suddenly found ourselves with five birthdays between the end of November and the end of December (the other four are more spread out). Because it's easy for December birthdays to get lost in the celebration of Christmas, Sandy decided we needed to add something special to our birthday celebrations. As a result, she came up with the cake flip. We celebrate birthdays on Sundays because we're all together for lunch. Each birthday boy or girl gets to choose their birthday lunch and dessert, then they get a birthday cake to flip. It's exactly what it sounds like. Sandy places a cake on a board, and the cake is flipped.

In the beginning, it was pretty simple. But in recent years, there's been the addition of blindfolds and lit candles (sparklers). It's silly, unpredictable and sometimes messy but always fun. We video each cake flip and post them on our social media; they are everyone's favorites.

As we begin a new year, let's remember that life should be filled with joy. Psalm 16:11 says, *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy.* Proverbs 17:22 says, *A joyful heart is good medicine.* Romans 15:13 says, *May the God of hope fill you with all joy.*

We honor God when we take time for joy. Not only that, but we cultivate a sense

of gratitude and a deep appreciation for all God has done for us. Someone once wrote, "The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything." So, let's make a New Year's resolution to make time for joy in 2024. If you want to know how simple that can be, check out my Pastor Chris Philbeck Facebook page or my Instagram @cphilbeck and look for the cake flip. Blessings!



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

'Yellowface'

An exciting and 'haunting' tale of plagiarism

BOOK REVIEW

By Stefanie Davis

"Yellowface," by R.F. Kuang, is a fast-paced, compelling read regarding the harsh realities of the publishing world. Protagonist June Hayward loses her friend and colleague, Athena Liu, to a freak accident. While in Athena's apartment, June notices her pages of writing and thinks she'll just take a look. A month or so later, June publishes a top-selling World War I novel called "The Last Front." This novel is unlike anything June has written before, and it's not long before online critics point out the uncanny similarities to Athena Liu's other works. Her literary agent, Brett Adams, encourages her to quickly publish a new story that will shut down the claims of plagiarism. June pulls out another set of papers she took from Athena's desk and begins to write her next story. Her next book is a novella called "Mother Witch," and again two weeks after its publication, her critics claim it is another plagiarized work from her friend Athena. This time she has copied word for word the

first paragraph of one of Athena's works in progress and is forced to apologize and change the entire first paragraph. The critics don't quiet down though, they get louder and more vicious in their attacks. Soon June even sees a ghost around town that looks just like Athena, and it seems to be following and haunting her every move. June, determined to find out if by some miracle Athena is still alive, follows the ghost to the "exorcist steps" near the Georgetown campus. Will her lies be uncovered, what will happen to June and her career? Read this book to find out the answers. If you like this book, you may also like: "The Book of Goose: A Novel" by Yiyun Li, "The Plot: A Novel" by Jean Hanff Korelitz, "Who is Maud Dixon?" by Alexandra Andrews and "Potboiler" by Jesse Kellerman.



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@jcpln.org.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Adult:

"Fourth Wing" by Rebecca Yarros
"First Lie Wins" by Ashley Elston
"The Djinn Waits a Hundred Years" by Shubnum Khan
"Family Family: A Novel" by Laurie Frankel

Teen:

"Snowglobe" by Soyoung Park (translated by Joungmin Lee Comfort)
"Ellie Haycock Is Totally Normal" by Gretchen Schreiber
"Ariel Crashes a Train" by Olivia A. Cole
"Meet Me in the Fourth Dimension" by Rita Feinstein

Children's:

"Elijah's Easter Suit" by Brentom Jackson and Emmanuel Boateng
"The Wandering Hour" by Zack Lorán Clark and Nick Eliopoulos
"Between Two Brothers" by Crystal Allen

Need a break? Try an adults-only all-inclusive resort!

TRAVEL

By Amy Maharas

As we trudge through January here in Indiana, it's always good for our mental health to plan for some rest and relaxation during the year. Having a vacation to look forward to does wonders for getting through the cold, dreary winter. Having an adults-only vacation planned is even better!

If you are new to all-inclusive resorts, you are probably curious about the benefits. While these do vary, in general all of your food and beverages (yes, even alcohol), resort activities, Wi-Fi and tips are included. Typically, you'll pay extra for spa services and excursions, although some resorts allow you to bundle these into a package. Some resorts even include airport transfers and water sports and allow you to include airfare. If you really want to relax, book a room with butler service (and plan to tip the butler).

Some things to consider when choosing your all-inclusive getaway include location (safety, cost of airfare, number of flights), brand reputation, room types, quality of beaches and resort inclusions. You'll also want to consider whether you prefer a quiet, relaxing resort or more of a party atmosphere.

Hesitant to try an all-inclusive resort because they seem designed for young, beautiful honeymooners? While some resorts cater to this type of guest, others appeal more broadly to guests of all ages and shapes and sizes. There is truly an option for everyone!

Does it seem daunting to choose a resort? Contact a local travel planner for help!



Amy Maharas is a travel planner with Hi Ho Vacations. Contact her at Amy@HiHoVacations.com



Deep roots and circuitous routes

GRAMMAR GUY

By Curtis Honeycutt

The Beatle's 1970 album "Let It Be" features the band "getting back" to their roots — jamming on the roof and finally releasing a version of "One After 909." However, there are a few notable exceptions to this "roots" style. For instance, the overproduced "Long and Winding Road" tells the story of a complicated route back to a former lover. Its instrumentation is dubbed and overdubbed by the infamous producer Phil Spector. I prefer the "Let It Be... Naked" album version, as the mix gets stripped down to only the Fab Four's backing instruments.

I like to shoehorn The Beatles into columns as often as possible, and this time is no different. Just as I contrasted the "roots rock" of the "Let it Be" album with the complicated route described in the schmaltzy "Long and Winding Road" song, it's time to break down "root,"

"route" and other similar words.

"Root" has several definitions, and I'm going to cover the most common usage of the word. In botany, a root is the underground part of a plant that absorbs soil, water and nutrients. A plant's roots also help stabilize the plant in the ground so it can better withstand wind. Root is also used in mathematics to refer to a number that — when multiplied by itself a certain number of times — equals another number. Sorry about adding math into a grammar column.

A "route," on the other hand, is a path from one place to another. When I use my phone's mapping software, it tends to be reliable until the last few turns. At that point, the robotic navigator tends to direct me into the nearest lake. Additionally, a route can be the name of a specific highway, like "Route 66." One time, I found this great shoe store between Chicago and L.A.; now, I get all

my kicks on Route 66.

Now it's time for the lightning round — I'm rooting for you! A rutabaga is a root vegetable in the turnip and cabbage family. A rut is a groove in the ground caused by a vehicle taking the same route over and over again. The Rutles are a fictional band that spoofed The Beatles in the 1978 film "The Rutles."

My final wisdom for you, reader, is to plant some roots. Find somewhere that feels like home and create deep relationships that will keep you stable in tumultuous seasons of life. A community like this can make any long and winding road feel like a raucous road trip with great friends.



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.

The Christmas Rose

GARDENING

By John Chapin

A few years ago, in addition to poinsettias, Christmas cactus and amaryllis, white-blooming hellebores started showing up at garden centers in December. These beautiful plants are now commonly offered even in grocery stores. Unlike all the other flowering Christmas plants, hellebores are hardy perennials, and can be planted in your flower gardens or landscaping.

The most commonly available, in fact the only one I've ever seen for sale at Christmas, is the beautiful variety 'Ivory Prince.' All hellebore "blooms" last for months because the true blooms are the small yellowish center parts that are surrounded by large white bracts, back-blushed with pink. Just like poinsettias, after the true flower parts wither and fade, the bracts remain attractive literally for months. Although labeled "Christmas Rose," 'Ivory Prince' is a variety of "Lenten Rose" (*Helleborus Orientalis*), which are more hardy and easier to grow than the true "Christmas Rose" (*Helleborus Niger*), which does bloom earlier, but is rarely available. 'Ivory Prince' is the result of a complex breeding program, with upward facing clusters of blooms and attractive, nearly evergreen leaves.

Although most hellebore varieties have downward-facing flowers, intensive breeding has resulted in a rainbow of colors (except blue), bi-colors, speckled, very dark shades and blushes. It's exciting that many double-

flowering varieties are now available, usually at premium prices, but well worth it! A breeding goal is upward-facing, double blooms which would be truly spectacular. I'm sure the plant breeder wizards will be able to develop them eventually. Note: Hellebores are so floriferous, that even the "drooping" flowers make a beautiful display for months and are very welcome sights in late winter, blooming even unbothered by late snows and frosts.

Hellebores thrive wherever hostas are happy. Once planted, they don't like to be disturbed, but can be transplanted or divided in the fall if need be. Deer, rabbits and voles won't bother hellebores. Although the leaves are nearly evergreen, they should be removed before new growth in early spring for best flower display.

If you've received or bought a hellebore for the holidays, keep it near a window, but out of direct sunlight, to enjoy the blooms. It will probably start to grow new leaves, which are too tender to survive normal winter freezes until next winter. Around Mother's Day, it's safe to plant it outdoors where it will thrive for decades with little care.

Happy Gardening!



John Chapin is a retired school teacher and sole proprietor of Chapin Landscaping. He has over 30 years' experience in the landscaping business. Contact him at jchapinlandscaping@gmail.com



A kernel of truth: the right way to eat popcorn

HUMOR

By Dick Wolfsie

Mary Ellen and I went out to see a movie last week with our friends Bob and Cathy.

"Are you going to get popcorn again, Mary Ellen?"

"I have to. It's been a movie tradition for me since high school."

"So was necking in the balcony, but you cut that out completely after we got married."

Once we reach the theater, the tension rises.

"Dick, I'll find seats for the four of us. You wait in line for the popcorn."

"Why do I have to wait in line? I don't even like popcorn. And when I come into the movie theater, you'll forget to look around for me. Then I walk aimlessly up and down the aisles while people stare at me. Everyone assumes I'm all alone and have no one to sit with. Or I'll wave my cell phone flashlight to get your attention and all three of you slump down in your seats while you laugh hysterically. At the Tom Cruise movie I never found where you guys were sitting, but I did get my 10,000 steps in searching for you.

Of course, I do wait in line and buy the popcorn as directed. It drives me crazy that you pay about six bucks for a bucket of air. What a rip-off. And I won't let my wife forget it.

"Did you know, Mary Ellen, that when I was a kid, popcorn in the theater was only a quarter?"

"Yes, and here's another update: the actors in films are talking now."

"And then there's eating the popcorn. Mary Ellen takes one piece from the top of the box with two fingers, then bites off half at a time. Yes, two bites per

kernel. She claims that this helps her rhythm and draws her into the movie. Out of the corner of my eye, I watch my wife's arm go down to the box, up to her mouth. Up and down. Up and down. Up and down. For two hours. AHHHHH!

"She pretty much follows a similar routine at home. After we have searched for a good flick or series on Netflix, Mary Ellen is at the stove to make popcorn the old-fashioned way. Just oil and popcorn in a pot which she meticulously jiggles at the right speed, so every kernel is popped. The movie starts and the routine begins. One piece at a time, every 10 seconds for the entire show. About 500 times. If she preferred M&Ms, she'd weigh 400 pounds.

Here's the right way to eat popcorn in a movie: Dig way down into the container, which spews the popcorn all over the person in the seat next to you. Take an entire handful, shake the kernels up in your fist like a pair of dice and throw several into your mouth at one time. Then while still chewing, reload and prepare to fire again. This is how Orville Redenbacher wanted you to do it. You could look it up. Heaven knows why there aren't instructions on the popcorn box.

The next day her fitness trainer Justin asked her if she had been doing her upper-body exercises. "Yes, I did them for three hours last night," she said. "When we went to see *Oppenheimer* at the movies."



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.

ICONic rewind

SNHU announces fall 2023 president's list

Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) recently congratulated students on being named to the fall 2023 president's list. The fall terms run from September to December. Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.700 and above for the reporting

term are named to the president's list. Recipients from Johnson County include:

Abby O'Connell of Greenwood (46142); Adel Mahmoud of Greenwood (46143); Jessica Bostic of Greenwood (46143); Lauren Porter of Greenwood (46143). Learn more at snhu.edu.

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