

SPECIAL Daily Reporter SECTION



# YEAR IN REVIEW

Hancock County Community Foundation



# 2021

Year In

# Review

More than  
**\$1 million**  
granted

Designated Grants  
**\$495,000**

111 Charitable Organizations

Traditional Scholarships Awarded

**\$348,000**

143 Students

Nontraditional Scholarships Awarded

**\$24,400**

9 Students

Education Foundation Grants

**\$40,000**

Women's Fund Grant

**\$28,000**

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# 2022

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# JANUARY



## Longtime township trustee remembered for impact on fire service

Melvin Branson, who served as Buck Creek Township trustee for 42 years, dies at age 78. Those who knew and worked with him praise his dedication to his family and leading the growth of fire protection in the township. He was first elected Buck Creek Township trustee in 1978. The lifelong Republican was in the middle of his 11th term. Mike Branson said his father moved to Buck Creek Township around 1965 and got married not long after. The young family bought a lot and built a house that he lived in the rest of his life. Not long after getting married, Melvin Branson joined the township's fire department.

## Inmate worker runs away from jail

An inmate on a work detail outside the Hancock County Jail runs away from jailers and remains at large for more than two weeks before he is recaptured. Tyrell Deshawn White, 22, Indianapolis, was part of a work detail of three inmates and was removing trash from the jail to bins outdoors when he took off. According to investigators, White had devised an escape plan with his girlfriend, who was waiting a few blocks away with a car to pick him up. Following a variety of leads, police finally catch up with White 16 days after his escape. He is picked up on the east side of Indianapolis and returned to the jail, where he remains until he is sent to prison. At year's end, White is serving a four-year sentence at the Putnamville Correctional Facility.

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## Fortville officers' actions avert disaster in house fire

Fortville police officers who are wowed down by an alert passerby help avert disaster when they roust a couple of sleeping teens to evacuate them from a burning home. Reserve officers Sarah Lockhart and Ben Kessinger, along with Detective Matt Fox, found the back section of the two-story residence in the 9200 block of North County Road 400W was in flames when they arrived. Unable to determine if anyone was inside, Kessinger quickly forced his way into the front of the home, assisted by Lockhart. Fox, meanwhile, was trying to break in the back of the house but was thwarted by the flames. Kessinger and Lockhart checked the downstairs area, then headed upstairs and found the two teens, who were asleep and unaware the house was burning. The officers are credited with likely saving the young people's lives.

## County passes 100 COVID-19 deaths

The county crosses a grim milestone in the COVID-19 pandemic after reporting four deaths on Jan. 21, pushing the total to 103. The county's first COVID-19 death was on March 21, 2020. January 2021 becomes the year's deadliest month thus far in the pandemic, with 20 fatalities. At year's end, the death toll from the pandemic closes in on 200 victims, nearly 90% of whom are age 60 or older.

## 2 men with county ties face federal charges for entering U.S. Capitol

Two men with ties to Greenfield face federal charges associated with the riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. Israel David Tutrow, 22, Greenfield; and Joshua Wagner, 23, Greenwood, are accused of unlawfully entering the Capitol during the uprising, federal court documents state. The two men, who are among hundreds who wind up being arrested for breaching the Capitol during the insurrection to overturn the results of the presidential election, face a variety of federal charges. Tutrow, who attended Greenfield-Central High School, entered into a plea agreement and was sentenced in December to three months of probation. Wagner, 23, a Greenfield-Central High School graduate, also entered a guilty plea before a federal judge. He faces a maximum sentence of six months in federal prison and a fine of up to \$5,000.



WAGNER



TUTROW



# FEBRUARY



### New 4-H educator envisions more STEM programs

Amber Barks settles in as the new youth development educator for Purdue Extension Hancock County, and she says she wants to make STEM activities more prevalent in the county 4-H program. “As we see kids move into different careers, they’re using technology more and more, so we want to make sure they’re prepared,” said Barks, who was the 4-H youth educator in Fulton County before coming to Hancock County. She grew up raising boer goats on a farm in Corydon and was a 10-year 4-H’er. These days, she thinks it’s important to broaden the program’s mission, especially for kids who don’t have a farming background. “With the way our world is evolving, we have to be able to reach other disciplines to be able engage kids in hands-on programming,” she said. “Whether that is ag-base or STEM-based, that is more what careers are starting to focus on now.”

**County gets nearly \$9M for future road projects**  
 Hancock County is awarded nearly \$9 million in state grant funds for infrastructure improvements starting in 2025.  
 The county will receive a total of \$8,697,600 for three projects, which include two bridge replacements and the addition of more travel lanes and a roundabout to a portion of County Road 300 North. The bridges are Hancock County Bridge 85, located on County Road 400S over Sugar Creek, and Hancock County Bridge 146, located on County Road 300S over Rodewald Ditch.

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### ‘Father figure’ remembered as someone who always helped

Ron Horning, who spent a long career as director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hancock County before being elected Center Township trustee in 2006, dies Feb. 17 after falling ill weeks earlier. He was 74. His son, Jason Horning, says his two careers showcased his best qualities.

“My dad was a very giving person. I could go on and on about what a great person he was,” Jason Horning said.

The elder Horning first joined the local Boys & Girls Clubs as program director in 1977, serving seven years in that role before being promoted to executive director, a job he’d hold for the next 20 years.

After retiring from the club in 2004, Horning spent several years as a Realtor. In 2006 he was elected Center Township trustee, with 70% of the vote, a position he held until resigning in December due to declining health.

“He thoroughly enjoyed serving as trustee. I believe that he was able to get a lot of satisfaction from helping the less fortunate people in our community through that position,” Jason Horning said.

“My dad was a very giving person. I could go on and on about what a great person he was.”

— Jason Horning

**Pictured:** Ron Horning is presented with a plaque by Darren Turner, then the executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hancock County, commemorating the renaming of the club’s basketball court in Horning’s honor. The dedication occurred in 2012, eight years after Horning retired from a 27-year career at the club, where he served as a mentor to hundreds of children over the years.

### State Street closure brings months of detours

GREENFIELD — Major closures on State Street begin on March 8, beginning a construction project that will involve months of traffic challenges in Greenfield.

Some of the construction lasts through the end of May. Other construction takes until the fall to complete.

Greenfield’s main north-south thoroughfare was closed in both directions first from Main Street to Davis Road on the south side of the city; and then from Main Street to McKenzie Road on the north side. The Indiana Department of Transportation project involved reconstruction of the busy road and installation of ADA-accessible sidewalks and ramps.

Complicating the traffic problem was construction of a median on State Street north of McKenzie Road. That new feature limits left turns into commercial/retail areas and brought a major change in driving habits.

**At left:** Construction material sits in the parking lot at Shares Inc. on the south side of Greenfield along State Street just before the major reconstruction of the busy thoroughfare began in the spring. The street would be closed for months.

# APRIL

## Health

A walk-in COVID vaccination clinic is offered for the first time at Greenfield-Central High School.



### Health department holds first mass vaccination clinic

The gym at Greenfield-Central High School is transformed into a health clinic on a Saturday morning to offer COVID vaccines. As more people became eligible for the shot, the Hancock County Health Department hoped its first mass vaccination event would attract hundreds of people eager to get protection from the novel coronavirus.

Up to 1,200 doses of the vaccine were available. Crystal Baker, office manager and preparedness coordinator for the Hancock County Health Department, said fewer than 70 people signed up ahead of time for the event, but doses were refrigerated continuously and could be used later on if they were not administered at the event.

The relatively low turnout is a harbinger of the future tepid response to such clinics. One future school clinic will not administer a single dose, and by year's end, such community outreach by providers is no longer a priority.

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### Police chief retires after four decades in law enforcement

Jeff Rasche, who changed uniforms to become Greenfield police chief after decades with the Hancock County Sheriff's Department, announces his retirement. Rasche took over as GPD chief in December 2016 following the retirement of Chief John Jester, now a member of the Greenfield City Council. At the time, Rasche was a captain with the sheriff's department and the head of its investigations unit.

Rasche first joined the sheriff's department as a dispatcher in 1984 and became a full-time deputy in 1988. He worked as a detective from 1990 to 1996 before briefly leaving law enforcement for a career in the private sector; he returned in 2000 and stayed with the sheriff's department until he was appointed as Greenfield's chief. He also attended the elite FBI National Academy.

Chief Jeff Rasche of the Greenfield Police Department, foreground, and members of his leadership team: Capt. Chuck McMichael, left, Capt. Michael Schwamberger; and Capt. Brian Hartman, who takes over as chief upon Rasche's retirement.

# MAY



### Court official picked as magistrate

Hancock County judges decide not to hold an open hiring process to fill the new position of magistrate. Instead, they choose court commissioner Cody Coombs. The new role for Coombs will be similar to the one he had as commissioner, filling in for the judges and hearing low-level cases, but he'll have more authority to sign off on verdicts. The new position aims to make Hancock County courts move cases more efficiently. Coombs is sworn in to the new position in June.

**Pictured:** With his family as witnesses, Cody Coombs takes the oath from Judge Dan Marshall. FILE PHOTO

### New Eastern Hancock superintendent chosen

The Eastern Hancock School Board unanimously selects George Philhower as the district's new superintendent. Philhower, who lives in Hancock County, has been superintendent of Western Wayne schools in Wayne County. The new hire follows David Pfaff's retirement as superintendent, marking the end of his long career at Eastern Hancock schools.



PHILHOWER

### Hackers hit Eastern Hancock schools

The Eastern Hancock school corporation becomes the latest victim of ransomware attacks that aim to prevent organizations from accessing files or systems until they send money to the hackers. EH shuts down its computer systems and cancels a day of school; phone and printer systems are also affected. Students return for the last few days of the school year, and though school eventually goes back online, the identity of the hackers is not discovered.



### Developers feeling effects of rising steel, lumber prices

The many building projects underway in Hancock County are feeling the impact of climbing materials prices, with costs for both lumber and steel continuing to climb. Randy Sorrell, executive director of the Hancock Economic Development Council, says some developers will likely postpone projects until 2022 to see if prices stabilize. Lumber thefts from local job sites have also been reported. Meanwhile, local governments struggle with the rising costs impacting their own projects.



### Historical bricks under State Street to be saved

Bricks used a century ago in the construction of Greenfield's first streets resurface during the demolition of State Street as part of a major reconstruction project. Rather than cover the bricks back up, the city decides to preserve them. Many of the bricks will be auctioned off or used in the construction of downtown Depot Street Park to highlight the city's history.



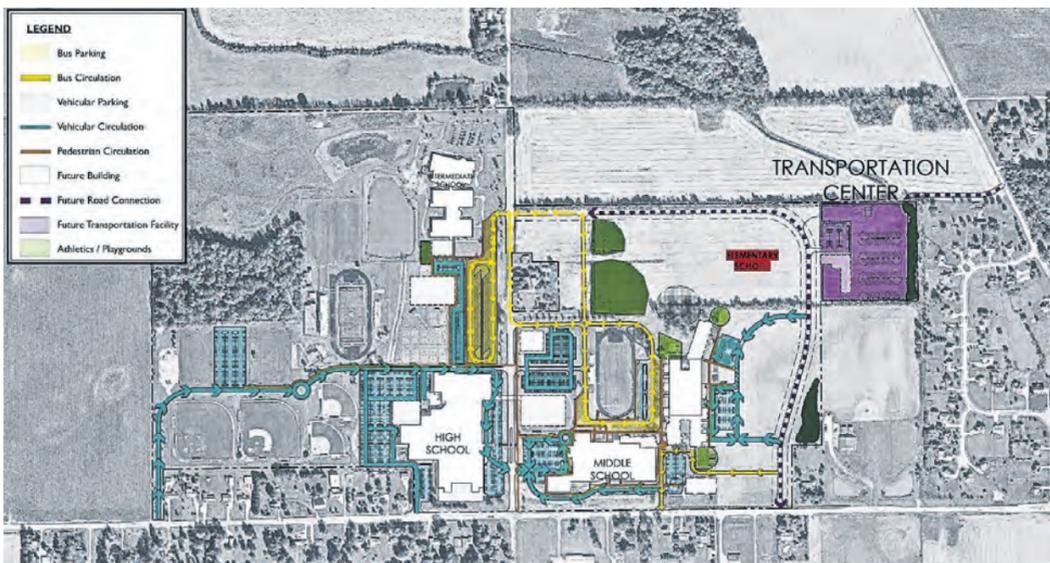
### Deputy chief takes over at GPD

Brian Hartman is officially appointed by mayor Chuck Fewell as the new Greenfield police chief. Hartman had previously been the deputy chief and served as acting chief after Jeff Rasche's retirement from the position in the spring. Fewell says Hartman's no-nonsense attitude and track record of leadership in the department make him the right fit for the role.



### County fair enjoys a happy return

The Hancock County 4-H Fair is open to the public again, after attendance was limited to only 4-H members and their families in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fairgoers return in force to enjoy the exhibitions, activities and fair food that come with the annual tradition. Addison Hill, a recent graduate of Greenfield-Central High School, is crowned queen of the 4-H fair.



### Mt. Vernon OKs \$84 million addition

Officials at the Mt. Vernon school corporation give their approval to a number of projects aimed at accommodating the district's expected growth in the next few years, totaling an investment of about \$84 million. Plans include building a new elementary school; turning a current one into an intermediate school; improving traffic flow at the district's main campus; and constructing a new transportation center. Mt. Vernon is expecting to add about 2,000 students by the 2028-29 school year.

### Council approves raises for police, firefighters

The Greenfield City Council votes unanimously to approve raises for police and fire personnel. Police officers will get a pay raise of \$4,500 per year, coupled with one of \$3,875.50 for firefighters. City officials hope the increase in pay will help with recruitment and retention of public safety employees and say the increase to the city's budget is a sustainable one.

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**Vernon Township getting full-time firefighters for first time**

Vernon Township begins to experience the benefits of creating a fire protection territory and the additional tax revenue that comes with it; the department hires nine full-time firefighters, the first that the township has employed. They plan to add two more full-time positions for training and building inspections. Part-time firefighters will continue serving as needed.



**City breaks ground on new animal management facility**

Greenfield begins construction on its new building for the city-county animal management department, located at 740 S. Franklin St. The new building will be about 12,900 square feet and include a 190-foot horse barn. The facility will be a major expansion of space for the department, which was displaced by the construction of a new wastewater treatment plant and is operating out of a temporary, rented building. The new building will have space for up to 100 cats and about 40 dogs.

Mayor Chuck Fewell and Animal Management director Amanda Dehoney celebrate the city breaking ground on a new facility that will give Dehoney's department more room to work and to house animals.

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**School boards pressured to do away with COVID-19 restriction**

Parents at the county's public school corporations advocate for an end to policies mandating masks and other COVID-19 precautions. Ahead of a Greenfield-Central school board meeting, some parents attend an anti-mask rally outside the school building and say they will pull their children from school if masking is required. All four county school corporations begin the year without a mask requirement, but as another wave of COVID-19 infections driven by the delta variant spreads, each district reestablishes mask requirements and other measures to thwart the spread of the novel coronavirus.

**Pictured:** Parents protesting ahead of a Greenfield-Central school board meeting are among those who want schools to do away with mask mandates, contact tracing, and other COVID-19 safety policies.

**State: ILEARN shows COVID's impact**

Fewer than half of elementary and middle school students in the county recorded passing scores in math or English in this year's ILEARN standardized test, state data shows. Scores for county schools were lower in 2021 than in 2019 in almost every factor assessed. State leaders and local school administrators agree COVID-19 learning loss and virtual classes contributed to the downturn and hope for improvement in the upcoming year.

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**County approves pay raises for employees**

After months of debate, Hancock County officials approve a pay raise for all county employees with an especially big increase for sheriff's deputies. Deputies will get an 18% raise and all other employees a 7% raise. The county council also gives the go-ahead to hire new sheriff's deputies and community corrections staffers. The pay raises are intended to thank employees for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve retention, especially of public safety staff.

**County OKs creation of public defender's office**

Hancock County officials create a new department, the county's first public defender's office. Judges will no longer need to find lawyers from a roster of local attorneys who can represent indigent defendants in their courtrooms on a case-by-case basis. To staff the office, the county in November hires Jeremy Teipen, a veteran of the Marion County prosecutor's office, as the chief public defender. At year's end, Teipen is working to hire two other attorneys and administrative staff. The county will be reimbursed for some of the associated expenses by the Indiana Public Defender Commission.

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A video of a local doctor speaking at a Mt. Vernon school board meeting, repeating incorrect information about the efficacy of masks and vaccines, was seen thousands of times on social media and covered on national news.

**Doctor's comments illustrate divisions on pandemic**

A video of functional medicine physician Dr. Dan Stock criticizing COVID-19 safety policies at a Mt. Vernon School Board meeting goes viral, seen hundreds of thousands of times on social media and covered on the national news. In the video, Stock makes inaccurate statements about how well masks, quarantining and other pandemic measures work. Hancock County health officer Dr. Gary Sharp calls the statements irresponsible, and school board members say they won't sway their decision-making.

**Hancock County one of Indiana's fastest-growing**

Census data finds the population of Hancock County has grown by 14.1% in the past 10 years, meaning the county has grown almost three times as fast as the state as a whole. Hancock County is the fifth-fastest-growing county in the state. Statewide, Indiana saw a population increase, though not enough of one to grant the state an additional seat in Congress; most of its rural counties decreased in population.

**County passes symbolic vaccine resolution**

The Hancock County Board of Commissioners votes 2-1 in favor of a symbolic resolution discouraging COVID-19 vaccination mandates. Attendees pack the hearing room at the Hancock County Annex to express their views, including county residents and medical professionals. In the end, commissioners Marc Huber and John Jessup vote in favor of the resolution while Bill Spalding votes against. Weeks later, President Joe Biden announces mandates related to COVID-19 vaccination, testing and masking for much of the nation's workforce, which in December remain the subject of legal challenges.

**HRH plans new substance abuse clinic**

Hancock Regional Hospital will create a new clinic for people dealing with substance abuse disorder that it plans to open in 2022. The center will be called RISE Recovery and Wellness Clinic and will help those aimed to stop relying on alcohol or drugs. It will focus on providing patients with the most effective evidence-based treatment, including mental health treatment.

# SEPTEMBER

## County reflects on 9/11 20 years later

Hancock County residents reflect on the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, from a woman who lost her brother in the Pentagon to first responders whose careers were shaped by the events.

Fortville resident Carol Webb's brother, Army Lt. Gen. Timothy J. Maude, was killed in the attack on the Pentagon. Several first responders serving the county, including members of the Greenfield and McCordsville police departments as well as the Greenfield Fire Territory, continue to be inspired by the bravery of emergency personnel who responded to the attacks.

Carol, in an interview with the Daily Reporter, said she hasn't let her grief linger as each Sept. 11 comes and goes.

"I don't dwell on it," she said. "I really don't. When it comes around, it comes around, and it's just, OK, tomorrow will be here. ... You can't stop living. You still have your life that you have to go on with."

She does, however, reflect on her brother's accomplishments in the military, which included advocating for soldiers to improve their lives.

"You can't help but be proud of him," Carol said. "He did so many things that we didn't even know about till after the fact. He was a very important person."



CAROL WEBB

## Leadership Hancock County turns 25

Leadership Hancock County celebrates a quarter-century of promoting professional development.

The program was developed in 1996 thanks to a Lilly Endowment grant that invited counties throughout the state to start leadership development programs.

Each year, a new leadership class comes together in Hancock County from September through May, typically once a month. Class members meet at various sites to learn about multiple aspects of the county — from government to economic development to nonprofits.

The 2021-22 class is made up of 20 members.



**Picture:** Jim Matthews enjoys a moment with his family: his daughter, Rachel Matthews, left; son, Jacob Matthews; and wife, Cathy Van Driessche Matthews.

## Kindness, advocacy make up COVID victim's legacy

James "Jim" Matthews of Greenfield dies of the novel coronavirus at age 64 on Sept. 19 after a week-long battle in the hospital.

Matthews spent much of the latter half of his life working to improve the community by advocating for social issues. He was a social worker who specialized in mental illness and addiction, and his family remembers him as strong-willed, caring and insightful. He led an initiative that filled backpacks with helpful items for homeless people and helped to start a support group for those with loved ones with mental illness.

ESTABLISHED **1986**



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## Schools mask up

Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb announces an executive order easing COVID-19 quarantine requirements for students if all children and adults in the school are wearing masks throughout the day.

The order comes as many Indiana schools see outbreaks of the novel coronavirus and hundreds of Hancock County students are sent home due to being close contacts.

Southern Hancock is already requiring masks in all its schools at the time. Mt. Vernon implements the requirement shortly after the governor's announcement. Greenfield-Central does later in the month, followed by Eastern Hancock in October. At year's end, the requirements remain in place amid another surge in infections.

**Picture:** Students get off the bus at Sugar Creek Elementary School earlier this school year.

## Redistricting maps nudge boundaries

The Indiana General Assembly approves newly drawn boundaries for the state's congressional and state House and Senate Districts. Its usual process was delayed because COVID-19 held up the census collection process.

Though the maps bring big changes for other parts of the state, Hancock County's electoral boundaries remain relatively stable.

The county remains in the 6th Congressional District, currently represented by Republican Rep. Greg Pence, and with its townships divided among state House districts 88, 53 and 54.

Despite population growth in Hancock County, the district boundaries are similar to those drawn in 2011. The major difference is the shift of Blue River Township to District 54, shrinking the geographic size of the increasingly populous District 53.

Hancock County remains entirely in the Senate district of Sen. Mike Crider, R-Greenfield. Crider's district is reshaped slightly, including fewer precincts from the east side of Indianapolis.

# OCTOBER

## Accidents pile up on I-70 during construction project

Officials from the Indiana Department of Transportation knew drivers would be inconvenienced as they made changes along Interstate 70 this past summer and into the fall, but the work creates a dangerous stretch of road for travelers. The county's 911 center reports 159 collisions occurred from June 2 through Sept. 29 on I-70 east of Greenfield. Almost all of the crashes are caused by semi-trailer trucks in the construction zone. And despite additional signage INDOT installed warning drivers, most crashes are caused by drivers not paying attention, according to law enforcement.

## Mayor won't seek re-election

Greenfield Mayor Chuck Fewell announces he will not run for a third term, leaving the top elected office open in the 2023 election.

The mayor, a popular city leader who was appointed in 2013 after the death of former Mayor Dick Pasco, will have served in the office for a decade. He achieved significant majorities in two elections. Assuming he remains in office until 2023, he will leave the post at age 80.

Fewell's time as mayor has seen unprecedented growth for Greenfield and Hancock County in general, with numerous new businesses attracted to the area and a significant increase in population.



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## Zoey's Place preps to log 100th interview

Officials approach their 100th interview almost 10 months after opening Zoey's Place Child Advocacy Center, showing there is a strong need in the community for the facility and its services.

The center helps abused and neglected children share details about what has happened to them, providing a welcoming environment for families who are forced to recall traumas they'd rather forget.

Located at 953 W. North St., Greenfield, the center was designed to be a safe haven where child victims can come and share their stories with trained investigators, who often need their crucial testimony to build cases against abusers.

Zoey's Place is named after 1-year-old Zoey Wagoner, who died of severe abuse in 2015.

**Pictured:** Crystal Wiley, director of Zoey's Place Child Advocacy Center

## Fire department points with alarm to rising number of runs

The high volume of emergency runs in the western part of the county is nothing new, but officials with the Buck Creek Township Fire Department are increasingly at wits' end over how to handle the growing number of calls. They say without immediate financial assistance to hire more help, they're not sure how emergency coverage will look in the future.

The fire department saw 1,483 runs in 2019, at that time the most ever. The department eclipses that total for 2021 by mid-September. Fire Chief Dave Sutherlin attributes the increase to the business growth in the western part of the county — development he says is not paying its way when it comes to public safety.



## McCleerey's Sporting Goods ends 50-year run

Steve McCleerey shuts his store for good, writing the final chapter for the shop his father opened when Steve was a kid.

The family business had just celebrated its 50th anniversary this summer.

A number of factors contribute to the decision to close the storied shop. The 11-week shutdown last spring at the onset of COVID-19 came right at the busiest time of the year, and global supply chain issues made it challenging to receive products after that. The lengthy closure of State Road 9 for construction projects didn't help either.

# DECEMBER



## Facing fiscal shortfalls, Mt. Vernon seeks tax hike via referendum

Mt. Vernon's school board votes unanimously to add a question to the May 2022 primary election ballot asking registered voters living in the school district if they'd support a new property tax of up to 17 cents per \$100 of assessed value from 2023 through as late as 2030.

The decision will come as a decade-long funding boost that's been instrumental for the school corporation nears its end. Not helping matters, in the view of school officials, are the property tax caps that limit revenue available for schools. The challenges bring a significant portion of funding to what Mt. Vernon describes as the "edge of a cliff" in the next few years. If the referendum passes, officials say it will help sustain school operations, keep staff pay competitive and enhance security.



## New park opens

Greenfield's new Depot Street Park opens to the public, with construction nearly complete after months of construction delays.

The park is located along the Pennsy Trail and next to Greenfield's historic grain elevator. It is one of the projects funded by Indiana's Stellar Communities program in the Health and Heritage Region, which includes Greenfield. Communities chosen for the program can receive up to \$15 in grants over the course of five years.

Depot Street Park features an amphitheater where musical performances and other events can be held, plus picnic tables and public art paying tribute to the city's history as a railroad destination. It will also feature a statue of local artist Will Vawter, tying it into the future Riley Literary Trail that is planned to pass through the park.

**Pictured:** Dave Neff, supervisor for the development of the Depot Street Park, along with city planning director Joanie Fitzwater and Greenfield Mayor Chuck Fewell look over the finishing touches at the new park.



Balanced on crutches after suffering an injury in a previous round of the state band contest, Greenfield-Central's Jessica Baker is overcome with emotion after the Marching Pride is named state champion.

# NOVEMBER

## G-C wins second straight marching band state title

Greenfield-Central High School defends its title as the best marching band in the state in the Open Class B division at the 48th Indiana State School Music Association State Finals.

The Cougar Pride band, with some 150 members, performs a show called "rAMPed Up," a performance they'd worked on since summer and perfected heading into state. The band also won a state title in 2019 before last year's contest was canceled due to COVID, giving them the right to claim back-to-back state titles.

## Community remembers Kathy Dowling

Kathy Dowling, a longtime community servant and friend to many, dies at 67 on Nov. 11 after a lengthy health battle dating to 2004.

Dowling was known as much for her fighting spirit as she was her tireless service to the community she called home.

For the past 10 years, she served as a board member for both the Greenfield Parks Department and Greenfield-Central schools. Earlier this year, the former Riley Park Swimming Pool and conference room at the Greenfield-Central Educational Services Center are renamed in her honor.



## Annual Feast of Plenty provides thousands of Thanksgiving meals

Hundreds of volunteers fill the exhibition hall at the Hancock County 4-H Fairgrounds on Thanksgiving Day to prepare thousands of holiday meals for the 16th annual Feast of Plenty.

Due to the pandemic, Meals and groceries are delivered and distributed via drive-through, like last year, rather than the event's usual sit-down meal.

The event benefits those in Hancock and six other counties. Among its volunteers are yearly regulars who are happy to spend the holiday lending a helping hand.



Mt. Vernon's Keagan La Belle hoists the IHSAA Class 4A state football championship trophy.

## Mt. Vernon High School wins football state championship

The Mt. Vernon Marauders defeat Northridge High School 45-14 to win the Indiana High School Athletic Association Class 4A state championship at Lucas Oil Stadium.

The team upholds its moniker as the state's top-scoring offense, and quarterback Gehrig Slunaker receives the Phil N. Eskew Mental Attitude Award for Class 4A football after throwing for 235 yards and three touchdowns in the state title game.

## Hancock County region receives less than hoped for from grant program

An area focused in Hancock County is awarded only about 10% of the funds it sought from a large state grant program intended to support accelerated regional development.

The Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative program, also called READI, has a budget of \$500 million to support regional development plans, but received requests for triple that amount from 17 regional partnerships across the state that included representation from every county.

The 70-40 Mt. Comfort Corridor Region, located in Hancock County along with part of eastern Indianapolis, is awarded \$5 million after requesting \$48 million. A READI coalition that includes McCordsville and other communities on the White River basin, receives \$20 million after requesting \$49 million.

## COVID surge pushes hospital to capacity

Hancock Regional Hospital reports having about 20 COVID-19 patients at any given time for several weeks, which along with the hospital's other patients pushes the facility to its capacity. The surge taxes the facility's system by forcing it to put patients in alternate spaces and hold them in the emergency department until beds are available elsewhere in the facility.

The influx comes a year after the roll-out of novel coronavirus vaccines led medical professionals to anticipate a much different outcome. It also comes as COVID-19's latest omicron variant is confirmed in Indiana while concerns rise over colder weather and holidays driving more people to gather indoors.



**ESTABLISHED 2006**

**Sprinkle CPA, LLC**

Michele D. Sprinkle, CPA  
Managing Member

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317-477-1043 fax

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# THE YEAR IN PICTURES

A look back at scenes that helped shape 2021, as seen through the lens of photographer Tom Russo



**Clockwise from top left:** Clouds seemingly close enough to touch float over a farm in Hancock County. // Members of the Greenfield-Central Class of 2021 await the start of their commencement ceremony on June 5. // Greenfield-Central High School baseball players celebrate a home run during the the Cougars' game against Wapahani on April 9. // Greenfield-Central's Cougar Pride band marches out of Lucas Oil Stadium after winning the title in the Indiana State School Music Association state contest on Nov. 6. // During a ceremony in April, Hancock Regional Hospital employees place small pennants to memorialize patients who died of COVID-19. // New Palestine head coach Ed Marcum consoles Kendal Calvert after the Dragons' loss to Roncalli in the Class 4A sectional semifinal on May 25. // Harris Elementary School instructional assistant Marti McCarley works in Sara Houston's kindergarten class during the first day of school on July 29. // Mt. Vernon's Adam Koon returns a serve from Greenfield-Central's Matt Hyre during the first run of the sectional on Sept. 29. // A dairy cow licks the hand of a 4-H contestant during the 2021 Hancock County 4-H Fair Dairy Show on June 21.