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CONTENTS



Daily Reporter

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- 6 Welcome
- 8 Our Communities
- 12 Events & Festivals
- 16 Area Parks
- 20 Area Markets
- 22 Arts Organizations

FEATURES

- 26 Community Spotlight
- 72 Education
- 84 Faith



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On the cover: Atalie Weirich enjoys the splash pad at Riley Park Pool on a sweltering summer day.

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WELCOME



One of them is a person of color whose background is very different from the congregation he leads. Another is a town councilman and first-responder who gained fame in sports arenas around the country. A third is a Gulf War veteran whose military experiences prepared her for the hurdles of serving in local government.

The three — the Rev. Theo Griffin, pastor at Brown's Chapel Wesleyan Church; Chris Lytle, a renowned former mixed martial artist who now casts votes on the New Palestine Town Council; and Florence May, the Army veteran whose latest mission is to improve public safety as the trustee in Vernon Township — are subjects of profiles in the 2021-22 edition of Discover magazine. We chose them as worthy subjects because each has been in the news in recent months. But we also wanted to share their stories because they have set strong examples of leadership and commitment in their communities.

These days, we all need a dose of such inspiration. We hope you find it in reading their stories. We also hope you enjoy the other stories in this edition of Discover about the people, places and things that shape life in our communities.

— DAVID HILL
editor, the Daily Reporter

Pictured: Chelsi Lancaster, 11, cuddles with a Sun Conure parrot during an exotic bird show at the Hancock County Fairgrounds. The facility played host to the event last spring.

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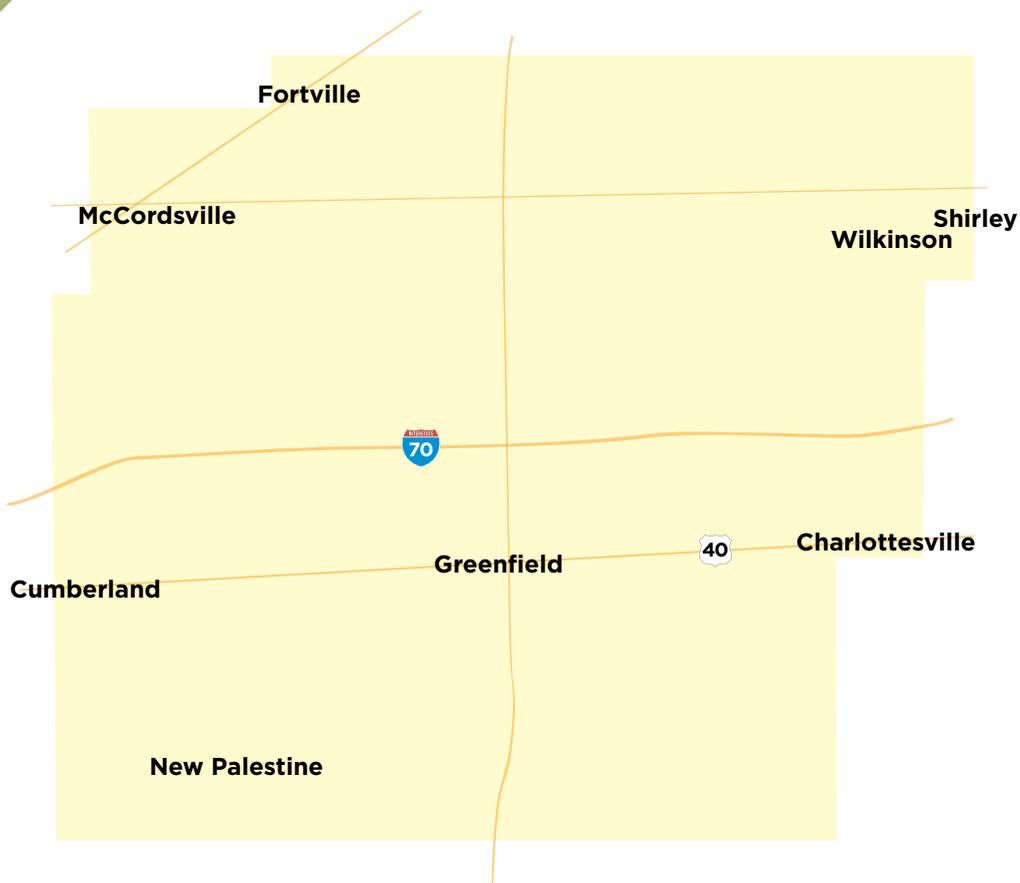
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OUR COMMUNITIES



Charlottesville

Charlottesville was platted in 1830. It is a quiet little town in eastern Hancock County, in Jackson Township. Described by those who live there as a close-knit community, Charlottesville is home to Eastern Hancock Schools, the smallest of Hancock County's four public school corporations.

Cumberland

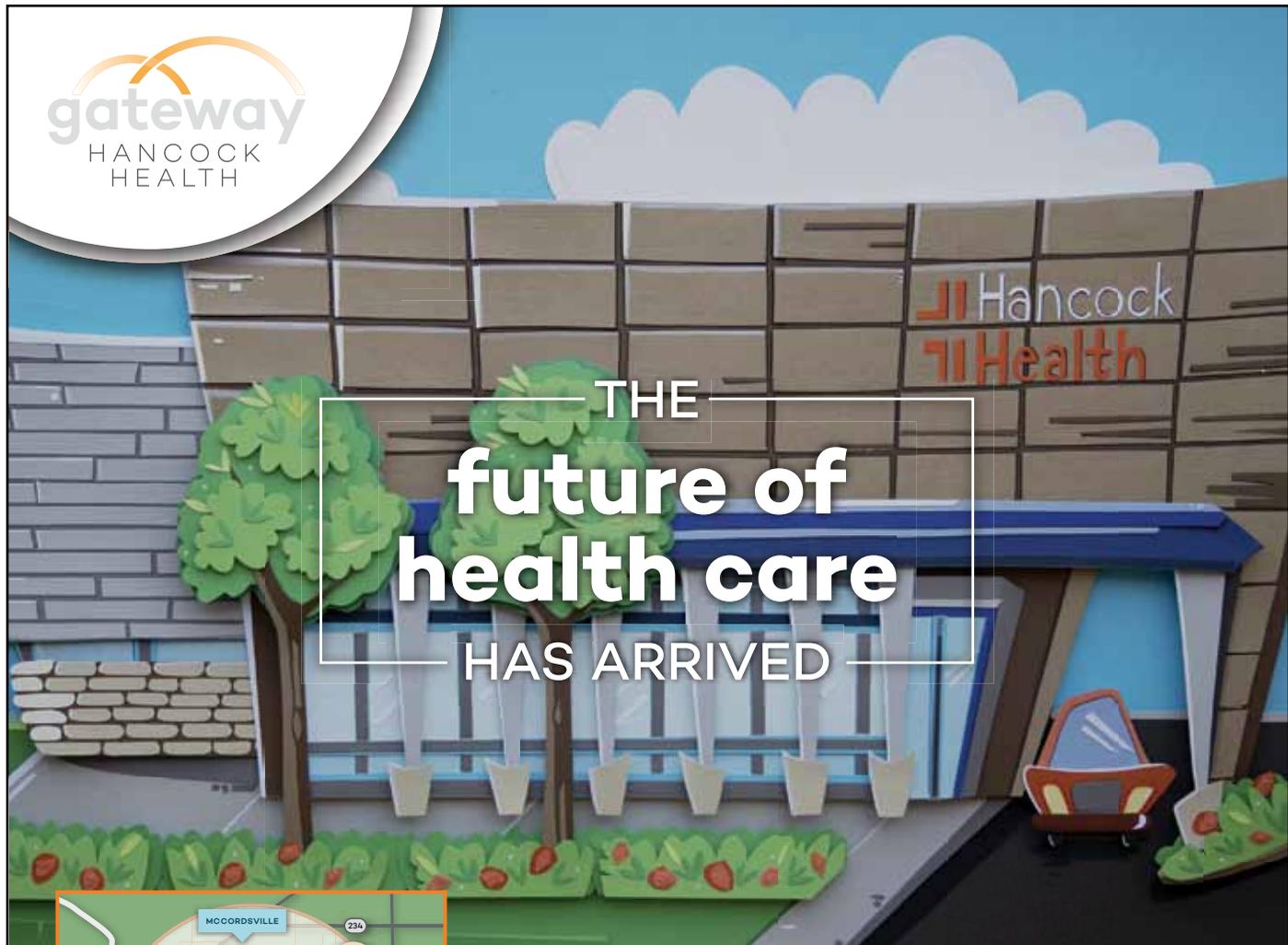
With a population estimated at 6,017 in 2019, the town of Cumberland straddles both Hancock and Marion counties. It was established in 1831 along East Washington Street, or U.S. 40, which is also known as the Old National Road. It connects Cumberland with Indianapolis to the west and with Greenfield to the east.

Fortville

Fortville, a town incorporated in 1865, is located at State Road 67 and Fortville Pike in Vernon Township. The town is named after Cephas Fort, who platted the original settlement on his land in 1849. Fortville has a vibrant Main Street, and significant efforts have been made in recent years to turn the downtown area into a destination for shoppers, diners and visitors. Fortville's most recent population count, in 2019, was 4,162.



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OUR COMMUNITIES

Greenfield

The heart of Greenfield is centered at State Road 9 and U.S. 40, an area dotted with antique stores and small businesses. Its population in 2019 was estimated at just over 23,000. Selected as the county seat of Hancock County in 1828, it was incorporated in 1876. Greenfield was once a stop along the old Penn Central Rail Line, on which presidents and the Liberty Bell traveled, historians say.



Visitors enjoy one of the summer Blues, Beer and BBQ events in Cumberland. The town, which straddles the Marion/Hancock county line, puts on the festivals monthly during the summer and early fall.

McCordsville

McCordsville, one of the fastest-growing towns in Indiana, is located in the northwestern corner of Hancock County. It grew by 46% from 2010-19, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. The heart of this town of nearly 7,500 is at State Road 67 and County Road 600W (also known as Mt. Comfort Road). Leaders are contemplating a long-term campaign of improvements that could eventually include a town center complex of government offices, shops, restaurants and green spaces.

New Palestine

Located in southwestern Hancock County, the town of New Palestine is a quaint, quiet town with a population

estimated at just under 2,600 residents. The town sits along U.S. 52, about 20 minutes east of downtown Indianapolis. New Palestine was established in 1838. It first consisted of 15 blocks and 36 lots. The area became incorporated as a town in 1871.

Shirley

Shirley was established in 1890 when the Cincinnati, Wabash and Michigan railway extended to the area. The town's name comes from Joseph A. Shirley, a railroad official. With about 890 residents, the town straddles the Hancock and Henry county lines, claiming both Brown Township in

Hancock County and Greensboro Township in Henry County.

Wilkinson

Located in the northeast corner of Hancock County, Wilkinson has a population of 450, according to the latest U.S. Census estimate. State Road 109 runs through the heart of this small town, connecting it with Anderson to the north and Knightstown to the south. Celebrated aviation pioneer Harvey Weir Cook was born and raised in Wilkinson. The town's favorite native son is often called a flying ace for his distinguished career during World War I.

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springhursthc.com



Kids enjoy a midway ride at the Hancock County 4-H Fair. The annual week-long event, featuring food, entertainment, other amusements and a large slate of 4-H competitions, is one of the biggest celebrations in Hancock County.

Festivals spotlight our communities

Riley Festival

rileyfestival.com

The works of Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley are the focus of the annual Riley Festival, but even folks who aren't familiar with his poetry can find something to their liking during this four-day celebration, which coincides with Riley's Oct. 7 birthday. Each year, the festival selects one of Riley's poems as the festival's theme. The festival features entertainment, arts and crafts vendors, a Riley Festival Queen, carnival-style food and contests in poetry writing, photography, baking, pumpkin decorating and more. Highlights include the Parade of Flowers, in which children place flowers on the Friday of the festival at the base of the Riley statue on the north side of the Hancock County Courthouse; a large parade at 11 a.m. on Saturday morning; and an entertainment tent. The 2021 festival is Oct. 7-10 with the theme "The Bumblebee."

Pumpkins and Peddlers Festival

townofshirley.com

The town of Shirley's Pumpkins and Peddlers festival features vendors, entertainment and food in Shirley Park, east of Main Street inside the town limits. This year's event will be held Oct. 15 and 16. For more information, visit facebook.com/townofshirley.

New Palestine Summer Fest

facebook.com/NewPalSummerFest/

The town kicks off county celebrations of Independence Day with a three-day celebration the weekend before the Fourth of July. The event features music, food, a 5K run/walk, a car show and, of course, fireworks.

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A large crowd gathers for a concert at New Palestine's annual Summer Fest.

New Palestine Fall Festival

nplions.com

The festival, which takes place annually on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday after Labor Day, is a community homecoming to New Palestine residents. Organized by the New Palestine Lions Club at its community building at 5242 W. U.S. 52., it features music, a parade, karaoke, entertainers and a merchants' tent.

Greenfield Christmas Festival and Parade of Lights

rileyfestival.com

Downtown Greenfield lights up for Christmas in early December with the Parade of Lights and the arrival of Santa Claus by fire truck. The event typically includes craft vendors, a dinner, musical entertainment and the lighting of the plaza tree during opening ceremonies. Following the parade and entertainment, children can visit with Santa in his house on the plaza to share their Christmas lists. Holiday festivities continue the rest of the month with a downtown market, breakfast with Santa and holiday movies at the historic theater.

Will Vawter Juried Art Competition

hancockcountyarts.com

The Will Vawter Juried Art Competition, conducted as a celebration of Vawter's April birthday, features a juried art exhibit as well as a plein air competition designed to capture scenic Hancock County on canvas. This June event is organized by Hancock County Arts.

Strawberry Festival

A community church fundraiser now hosted by Bradley United Methodist Church has become a downtown summertime tradition. The event, started in 1984, originally relied on local hand-picked strawberries. Today, frozen berries are mixed with fresh ones to pour on the top of shortcake and ice cream. Proceeds from this early June event are combined with other food fundraisers to donate thousands of dollars to local organizations.

Entertainment on the Plaza

gcbank.com

Greenfield Banking Company has sponsored these free concerts on the Courthouse Plaza since 1987. The concerts feature musicians performing everything from oldies to patriotic marches and Southern Gospel. To learn more about the series, log on to gcbank.com. Click on “Connect,” then “Sponsored Events.”

Ball Day

mvoptimist.com

Mt. Vernon Optimist Ball Day gives families and other residents a chance to get outside in the parks and watch local children play baseball and softball. The event includes a parade and vendor booths. Ball Day is scheduled for June 2022. For more information visit mvoptimist.com.

Hancock County 4-H Fair

yourhancockfairgrounds.com

This annual event celebrates the achievements of children and teens who have spent months preparing to show animals and compete in a wide variety of projects including foods, tractor maintenance, sewing and model rocketry. Fairgoers can enjoy the projects on display in the 4-H building in addition to checking out the fun at the pet parade, tractor pull and talent show. Family-centered fun also includes live music, carnival rides and fair food. From tangy barbecue to gooey grilled cheese and refreshing lemon shake-ups, there's something to satisfy any hankering. The 2022 Hancock County 4-H Fair is scheduled for June 17-24.



Jess Jones sits while having his portrait sketched by artist John Erwin during the Pennsy Trail Art Fair. The annual event, which celebrates the arts and artists, benefits Mental Health Partners of Hancock County.

Pennsy Trail Art Fair and Music Festival

facebook.com/pennsytrailartfair/

Artists, musicians and local food vendors combine for the Pennsy Trail Art Fair and Music Festival. Visitors can peruse a range of artistic offerings from pottery and basketry to chic jewelry and fine art. The festival, held the last weekend of July, features interactive art therapy activities for children and adults, arts and crafts vendors and live music. The event is a benefit for Mental Health Partners of Hancock County.

St. Thomas Festival

www.facebook.com/stthomasfortvillefestival

The parish festival of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church in Fortville traditionally takes place the first weekend in August and features events ranging from a kids' zone, food, beer garden and parade.

Lord's Acre Festival

www.mccordsvilleumc.org

The festival, which traditionally happens in mid-September at McCordsville United Methodist Church, features a fish fry, live entertainment, vendor booths and children's activities. The event, started in 1952, takes its name from the concept of farmers donating proceeds from an acre's crops to the church.



Friends of the Theater is a nonprofit that supports the Ricks Centre for the Arts in downtown Greenfield.

Arts groups and venues

Hancock County Arts

Address: 20 N. State St., Greenfield

The mission statement of Hancock Arts is to “provide leadership for the creative community by encouraging, celebrating, and promoting arts and culture throughout Hancock County.” This arts organization showcases gallery shows, workshops and events that promote local art and artists, including the Will Vawter Fine Arts Competition, the annual Chalk Fest and other community events. Visit hancockcountyarts.com or facebook.com/HancockCountyArtsCouncil for more information.

Twenty North Gallery

*Address: 20A N. State St., Greenfield
317-967-2461*

A venue of Hancock County Arts, Twenty North Gallery features exhibits in downtown Greenfield. For details and hours, email hancockcountyarts@gmail.com or visit Hancockcountyarts.com

Friends of the Theater

Friends of the Theater is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support the H.J. Ricks Centre for the Arts, a venue in downtown Greenfield. The group has regular volunteer days and raises money through a membership program, grants, donations and an annual holiday variety show. The Friends help assure the Ricks remains a place for all ages to enjoy. Visit the website to learn more: hctheaterfriends.org or email info@hctheaterfriends.org.

THEATER GROUPS

CrazyLake Acting Company

The CrazyLake Acting Company is a community theatre that performs one to two productions a year at the H.J. Ricks Centre for the Arts. Visit crazylakeacting.com or email chris@crazylake.com for more information.

Hancock County Children's Theater Workshop

The Hancock County Children's Theater is a summer workshop for Hancock County children in grades 4-8. Students spend the month of June learning all aspects of theater production culminating in two performances. Participants rehearse and perform at Greenfield-Central High School. For more information, visit hancockcountychildrenstheater.org or email pjohnson@gcsc.k12.in.us.

KidsPlay Inc. children's theater

KidsPlay Inc. children's theater is a community theater for children. The group performs two shows a year with children from Hancock and the surrounding counties. For more information, visit KidsPlay on Facebook.com or email kidsplayinc.me.com.

Ricks-Weil Theatre Company

Performing classics to musicals to premiere plays, the Ricks-Weil Theatre Company delivers the community artists in productions at the historic, art deco H.J. Ricks Centre for the Arts. Ricks-Weil Theatre Company is home to artists, theatre administrators and loyal patrons and donors. For more information, visit ricksweltheatreco.wixsite.com/information.

MUSIC GROUPS

Brandywine Wind

Call Jerry Bell at 317-652-2033 or Gary Davis at 317-440-0834.

Brandywine-wind.org, www.facebook.com/brandywinewind

Greenfield's all-volunteer community orchestra regularly performs in various venues throughout the county.

Mission statement: To provide an artistic avenue for area musicians to prepare and perform music for the enjoyment of our community and each other.

Greenfield Community Choir

greenfieldcommunitychoir@yahoo.com
greenfieldcommunitychoir.com and on Facebook

The Greenfield Community Choir, Inc. is all about bringing quality choral music to the Greenfield community. Concerts are designed to be of high quality, entertaining, engaging, and will bring a smile to your face.

Hancock County Children's Choir

hancockcountychildrenschoir.org

info@hccchoir.org

317-620-0096

Hancock County Children's Choir mission is to bring excellent musical education and mentorship, equipping youth with essential life skills while igniting a community interest in youth and the arts.

DANCE GROUPS

Wilkerson Dance Studio

Address: 1114 W. North St., Greenfield

317-462-1673

wilkersondance@gmail.com

wilkersondance.com

Offers year-round dance classes for all ages and seasonal performances. Classes available in tap, jazz, ballet, hip-hop, modern and contemporary dance.

Hearts Ablaze Clogging Team

Directed by Cristy Corwin-Howard

Address: 3254 W. County Road 400 S., Greenfield

Phone: 317-498-5566

Email: knowhimjc@heartsablaze.me

Website: www.heartsablazeclogging.com

Hearts Ablaze Studio is a recreational and competitive clogging studio that also offers private piano and violin lessons convenient to both New Palestine and Greenfield families.

Ricochet Cloggers

Address: Friends Church, 323 W. Park Ave., Greenfield

260-409-3005

anniewing1@hotmail.com

www.facebook.com/ricochetcloggers

Saige Chandler and Kelly Keller rehearse a scene from the Ricks-Weil Theatre Company's production of "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," which the local group staged starting in July at the Ricks Centre for the Arts in Greenfield.





A crowd of shoppers browses produce and other items at the farm market at the Hancock County 4-H Fairgrounds. The market is one of several in Hancock County.

Area markets

Hancock County has an active farm-to-table community that includes a number of farmers' markets. Here's a list:

Cumberland Farmers Market

facebook.com/CumberlandINFM
8 a.m. to noon Saturdays, May to October at Cumberland Town Hall, 11501 E. Washington St., Indianapolis.

Fortville Farmers Market

Fortvillenzarene.org or facebook.com/FortvilleFarmersMarket
4 to 7 p.m. Thursdays, mid-May to September, 701 S. Maple St., Fortville (Church of the Nazarene parking lot).

Greenfield Farmers Market at the Fairgrounds

facebook.com/FarmersMarketAtTheFairgrounds
May to October: Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon, at the Hancock County 4-H Fairgrounds, 620 Apple St., Greenfield
July through September: Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to noon at the fairgrounds.
November through April: First and third Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the heated show arena at the fairgrounds

New Palestine Farmers Market

4 to 7 p.m. Tuesdays from June through September, Hancock Wellness Center parking lot, 4055 S. Roy Wilson Way, New Palestine.

The Market in McCordsville

facebook.com/themarketinmccordsville
Noon to 3 p.m. every other Sunday, 7724 Depot St., McCordsville



Our Community



1. Cumberland is a truly connected community with over six miles of multi-use trail. The town is now connected to Irvington and soon will be connected to Greenfield via the trail.



2. Spend a little time on the Pennsy Trail and you will find a 1:1 billion scale model of the solar system with interpretive panels for each of the planets that were designed to meet state school testing requirements.



3. Cumberland is a great place for family friendly entertainment and events. Cumberland Trails Day is the first Saturday in June at Lions Park. The Blues, Beer & BBQ annual summer concert series brings regional and national blues artists to a family friendly space for an evening of music and, of course, beer and BBQ from local vendors. In December, the town's annual Weihnachtsmarkt (German holiday market) occurs on the first Saturday in December. This all-day festival features local craft vendors, children's activities, visits with Santa, a tree lighting, and free live music.



4. The town is a great place to raise a family. Cumberland enjoys a low crime rate with a police department truly dedicated to reducing and preventing crime. The Cumberland Police Department serves its community well through its hard work and community policing.



5. Cumberland also benefits from great access. Being located within a 20 minute drive to both Greenfield and Indianapolis, residents can take advantage of numerous cultural events and amenities. Cumberland also has access to public transportation via IndyGo.

www.town.cumberland.in.us





Visitors to Riley Park enjoy the gentle flow of Brandywine Creek, which winds through the park in Greenfield.

Area parks

CUMBERLAND

Lions Park

301 Buck Creek Road

This 6.5-acre park features a baseball field used by the Cumberland Cardinals Youth baseball league for home games and practices. The various facilities, or the entire park (except for the baseball fields), may be rented. All shelters have electrical outlets. The small shelter is located near the parking lot, and the large shelter is located at the west end near the large playground. One baseball diamond, playground equipment, one tennis court, one basketball court, one sand volleyball court and rentable shelter.

FORTVILLE

Hampton Fields

400 block of West Church Street

This 6-acre park includes two tennis courts, a picnic shelter, paved parking, concession station (in season), three baseball diamonds, seven bleachers, playgrounds equipment and six picnic tables.

Landmark Park

200 E. Church St.

This 3.2-acre park is in a more urban setting, as it is centrally located one-half block from the main street in town. It has an area adjacent to Fortville United Methodist Church for passive recreation with paved walks through the landscaped setting and a gazebo. It also has a soccer/football field.

Memorial Park

9088 W. County Road 1025S

This 25-acre community park is situated at the junction of Stottlemeyer Ditch and Jackson Ditch that creates rolling hillsides and running water. The park also has many facilities for activities and recreation as well as playgrounds equipment. Amenities include four shelters, three playgrounds, two tennis courts, two softball/baseball diamonds, a basketball court, foot trails and sledding.

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GREENFIELD

Beckenholdt Park

2770 N. Franklin St.

Beckenholdt Park includes a large pond with a fishing pier, wetland with an observation deck, a two-acre dog park, walking paths, interpretive signs, a picnic shelter and more.

Brandywine Park

900 E. Davis Road

Brandywine Park is a 60-acre sports complex offering 20 soccer fields, three softball fields (two adult, one youth), playground equipment and a wooden trail along Brandywine Creek.

Commons Park

856 W. Fifth St.

Commons Park is a small residential park, measuring less than one acre, offering playground equipment in a quiet setting.

Greenfield Parks and Recreation Department

280 N. Apple St.

The city's parks and recreation department offices are located in the Patricia Elmore Center in Greenfield. For more information about activities and events available throughout the year, visit greenfieldin.org/recreation or call 317-477-4340.

Mary Moore Park

951 N. Franklin St.

Mary Moore Park is an 8-acre nature park offering mulched trails running throughout a wooded setting. Information markers are located along the trails with plant and bird life points of interest.

Penny Trail

Just south of U.S. 40 between County Roads 150W and 400E. The trail also runs between County Road 600W and German Church Road in Marion County. Another section of the trail has been completed between County Roads 400W and 500W, with plans to link up to the trail at 600W.

The Penny Trail, generally follows the old Pennsylvania Railroad Line that once ran through Greenfield. This paved multi-purpose trail features historical markers, parking areas, water fountains, accessible restrooms, an arts garden, and exercise equipment.



The Penny Trail now runs in three segments in the county. The longest stretch is between County Roads 150W and 400E.

Riley Park

Apple Street and U.S. 40

Riley Park, the feature park of the city, is 40 acres and offers a 7,200-square-foot skate park, two basketball courts, six tennis courts, five baseball fields, playground equipment, disc golf, sledding hills and plenty of open areas for play and fishing along Brandywine Creek. Located within the park is the Riley Park Shelter House, Riley Park Pavilion, the Patricia Elmore Center and the city's public swimming pool and splash pad.

Thornwood Nature Preserve

1597 S. Morristown Pike

This 40-acre woodland features seven trails, two creeks, a suspension bridge and educational posts. A campground is available on weekends only with a staff member present. The preserve includes diverse habitats, wildlife, birds and native plants.

NEW PALESTINE

Jacob Schramm Nature Preserve

1926 S. County Road 600 W.

The Jacob Schramm Nature Preserve features a mature woods that seem to arise out of the surrounding farm fields. An easy loop trail takes you through the property, which features American

basswood, American beech, American hornbeam, shagbark hickory, slippery elm, sugar maple and sycamore trees. In spring, beautiful wildflowers blanket the forest floor. For more information, visit conservingindiana.org/preserves/jacob-schramm-nature-preserve/

Southeastway Park

5624 S. Carroll Road

Though technically part of the Indianapolis Parks system, Southeastway Park is located in New Palestine. The 188-acre nature park features walking/biking trails, forest trails in 80 acres of forest, several prairies, a pond, Buck Creek, a sledding hill, six picnic shelters, several picnic sites, playgrounds and an activity center with seasonal educational programs. Visit funfinder.indy.gov/#/details/27 for more information.

Sugar Creek Township Park

4161 S. County Road 700W

The 88-acre park features a playground, a fitness trail and a nine-hole frisbee golf course. Visit sugarcreektwp.com/park/ to learn more.

SHIRLEY

Shirley Park

200 Second St.

Shirley's main park offers an outside shelter, a community building, playground equipment, baseball diamonds, an outdoor stage and volleyball and basketball courts.

Malcolm Grass Memorial Park

201 Main St.

This small park, named for the late Hancock County sheriff, features a seating area, a war memorial and a memorial to Grass, who was killed in the line of duty in 1986.

WILKINSON

Weir Cook Community Park

147 N. Main St.

This small park offers playground equipment, shelters, green space, a veterans memorial, a Weir Cook memorial and a basketball court.

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Chris Lytle, who has been a firefighter in Marion County for 20 years, says his career has always kept him grounded.

Welcoming all comers

Long retired from the ring, Chris Lytle branches out into other opportunities

By Kristy Deer
DAILY REPORTER
kdeer@greenfieldreporter.com

NEW PALESTINE

Many sports fans know his name: Chris “Lights Out” Lytle, a retired MMA fighter and boxer who fought professionally from 1999 until 2011. His athletic accomplishments, however, only scratch the surface of who Lytle really is and what he brings to his community and family now that his fighting days are well behind him.

There’s much more to the former fighter, who is also a father, husband, first-responder, anti-bullying advocate and sports commentator. In 2020, he added New Palestine Town Council member to the list.

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Lytle, 47, just finished up his 20th year as a firefighter for the Indianapolis Fire Department. His career there grounded him during his fighting. Lytle likes to tell stories about the times he won a big bout and then have to head to work at the firehouse the next day and be forced to mop floors or clean a fire truck.

“It was a reality check for sure,” he said with a laugh. “I learned winning a fight wasn’t nearly as important as the major things going on with life and others — that’s the big scope.”

While Lytle isn’t sure how much longer he’ll remain a first-responder, he’s hoping the pandemic constraints stay minimal so he can get back into his anti-bullying platform and visit county schools again, something he did often in the years before the pandemic. In those presentations, Lytle shares a message with kids about being respectful to

others and reminding kids to reach out to those who need a friend.

The Chris Lytle Foundation was originally designed several years ago to bring awareness to autism — something his son youngest child, Jake, has — as well as bringing awareness to bullying, domestic violence, suicide, and sexual assault. The foundation’s goal is to encourage, educate and empower everyone so they, too, can be a fighter who speaks up and stands up for themselves and others.

“A long time ago, I was talking with a friend about the suicide rates and attempted suicides with kids, and I cannot imagine how that would make a family feel,” Lytle said.

He hates thinking about a child taking their own life because of being bullied just because they’re different.

“A lot of kids are marginalized and

picked on because of how they’re raised or their DNA, things that are not their fault, and it crushes me to think of what that does to a kid and a family,” Lytle said.

Regardless how tough Lytle was in the ring, he’s always been sensitive to wanting to help others.

“Even when I was younger and a kid, I was never a bully,” said Lytle, whose mixed martial arts career included 20 fights in the elite Ultimate Fighting Championship. “I just happen to have had an ability to fight, but even in the ring, I got a lot of compliments about how nice I was.”

His wife of 23 years, Kristin, said her husband is just a kind-hearted soul.

“There really is no greater guy that I know of than Chris,” she said. “Now, I know he’s my husband, but he’s just a phenomenal human being.”



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She loves the work her husband likes to do and said she will continue to support him in whatever endeavor he undertakes at the firehouse or with one of his many endeavors.

Like stepping up and agreeing to join the New Palestine Town Council when a position came open last year. Republican Party precinct officials held a caucus in October and elected Lytle after others in town suggested him for the position.

Lytle has had an interest in politics for some time. He ran for a state Senate seat in the 2012 Republican primary, losing to Mike Crider, who has since begun his third term in the office. While disappointed with the loss, Lytle said he felt he could make just as big a difference in his own neighborhood and accepted the bid to join the town council.



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“The bigger the office, the less change you really get to make a real change,” Lytle said. “But, at the local level here, I feel like I can really make a difference.”

These past several months have been a crash course in municipal government for Lytle, who’s been studying town ordinances and procedures. He has spent extra time at town hall asking questions on how things work.

“I’m trying to learn more and more every meeting about how the council and the town is supposed to run,” he said.

“I’m in a unique situation where I really enjoy everything I do, so why stop until I have to.”

CHRIS LYTLE



Lytle, who is originally from the south side of Indianapolis, said he fell in love with New Palestine when he and his wife came to the area to visit relatives several years ago. After a great visit, they decided to move to the area and raise their children in Hancock County. He’s now working to make sure the town maintains its charm while it continues to grow.

“We want to make sure New Palestine is heading in the right direction and things are done correctly,” Lytle said.

Lytle, who was never one to live the “fighter lifestyle” even when he was at the peak of his athletic fame, said there

is nothing like spending time with family and enjoying small-town living. When he was on the road all over the country and overseas compiling an impressive record as an MMA fighter, he’d always head home to be with his wife and their four children.

Lytle and his wife met in middle school, so the two have watched each other grow up.

“It’s really cool to have that perspective of him as a kid and to see all the stuff he’s gone through up until now,” Kristin said.

The two have worked together raising their children: Jake, a senior at New Palestine High School, along with Corie, Kaylin and Keegan. Their journey with Jake inspired them.

“It really did rock our world just trying to find ways to help our son, but Chris is a phenomenal father,” Kristin said.

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That included doing as much research on autism as possible and getting involved, creating a bullying program with the thought it might help protect his own son.

“Chris really does like going into schools telling kids to stand up for the kids who do have problems and can’t stand up for themselves,” Kristin said.

In what little spare time Lytle has, he works on his podcast, “Lights Out,” showcasing the history of mixed martial arts. He invites former UFC fighters on his show to discuss highlights of their careers, and the podcast has found an audience.

“It’s doing pretty good,” Lytle said. “I think we’ve had over 30,000 views on YouTube.”

Lytle is also doing commentary work for the Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship, something he’s watching grow with enthusiasm each week.

“It’s really starting to take off,” he said. “It’s kind of neat to be part of a sport that is up and coming and growing.”

Lytle is also involved in a mixed martial arts developmental league called the B2 Fighting Series, working with fighters and advising league founders.

Having a busy schedule is just something Lytle has always done, from his training and fighting days to working with the town, the podcast and his continued involvement in the sport.

“For some reason I always put myself in situations where I’m doing too much,

and I don’t like it, but I love it at the same time, if you know what I mean,” he said with a laugh. “I’m in a unique situation where I really enjoy everything I do, so why stop until I have to.”

While Kristin can’t imagine her husband ever slowing down, she said the older they get there are some things the two have decided they want to take some time to do together. Plus, they’re hopeful grandkids are not too far off.

“Once that happens, I know he’ll slow down,”

Kristin said. “It’s just right now, he’s got all these opportunities being thrown at him and they’re great opportunities that are just hard to say no to.”



An advertisement for Joyner Homes. The top section has a dark blue background with the Joyner Homes logo on the left and the text "CHARACTER RICH SMART DESIGN" on the right. Below this is a red banner with five logos: "THE BOICES with BRENDY WINE", "WILLIAMS RUN", "THE BOULDERS AT SUGAR CREEK", "EAGLE RIDGE", and "STONE RIDGE". The middle section shows a photograph of a modern kitchen with white cabinets, a white countertop, a white range hood, and a stainless steel oven. The bottom right section has a dark blue background with white text: "At Joyner Homes, our focus is on creating architectural elements that are uniquely yours." followed by "BUILDING SMART, WELL-DESIGNED, CHARACTER RICH HOMES IS OUR PASSION." and the website "joynerhomesonline.com". A small vertical text "IN-30944895" is on the far left.



May the Force

Vernon Township trustee's military background prepares her for government role

By Mitchell Kirk

DAILY REPORTER

mkirk@greenfieldreporter.com



For Florence May, joining the military was something of a “family business,” she says. Her father was a career Army officer, and May grew up on military bases around the world.



VERNON TOWNSHIP

The daughter of a father who was a career U.S. Army officer, Florence “Flory” May grew up on military bases around the world.

When she arrived in Indiana as a teenager after her dad was transferred to Fort Benjamin Harrison, she found the scenery far different from the ones she was used to.

“It is so flat,” she remembered thinking.

May had lived near the Alps, the Shenandoah Valley and the mountains of Colorado. Storybook places like Heidelberg Castle in Germany had made up her backdrops throughout her youth.

Now, it was corn as far as the eye could see.

But her perspective completely

changed years later when she returned from the Gulf War after following in her ancestors’ footsteps and enlisting in the Army herself. She’d lived in tents in the desert with oil fields on fire just a few miles away, missiles blowing up overhead and exploding mortars shaking the ground.

Exhaustion consumed her as she made her way home on a bus traveling through northwestern Indiana. She longed to sleep in a real bed. Not a cot, not on top of her jeep when she had a few rare moments to rest. Not having to shake out her sleeping bag to see if there were scorpions or snakes inside. Not having to keep her rifle by her side as she slept.

“And I look out over the fields in northwest Indiana as we’re driving down, and the wind is whipping across the top of the corn,” she recalled. “I could cry thinking about it. I will never forget that moment. And I remember thinking: That is the prettiest sight I have ever seen in my entire life.”

She was home. And it has continued to be her home ever since, one she’s built a business in that serves some of the world’s biggest events, and a home she serves as Vernon Township trustee. Along with her love for the area, she relies on skills honed throughout her military experience and understanding of the importance of a solid team to bring financing and fire protection on pace with a quickly growing population and economy.

Jumping into the unknown

May graduated from Mt. Vernon High School in 1984 before joining the Army.

“For me it was really going into the family business,” she said. “It was the



environment I had grown up in. In the military, you move every few years, and you have to get to know people quickly, and if you want to make anything happen, you have to make your mark pretty early.”

She met her husband of nearly 30 years, Tony May, in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War as well.

Her Army service prepared her well for the path she'd embark on after returning home.

“The military gives you tremendous opportunities at a very young age,” she said.

May had her first command at age 22, leading a unit that conducted personnel parachuting. She completed 198 jumps throughout her military career.

“I had some great, great adventures,” she said. “...We would drop everything from medical supplies and food to tanks. You can imagine the size of parachutes that drop tanks. It was quite the

adventure.”

When she was sent to Saudi Arabia, it was early, ahead of the rest of her unit.

“But in the military — much like local government — things don't always work the way you'd expect,” she said.

Her unit never ended up being sent, and she became the logistics officer of the battalion headquarters, something she knew nothing about.

“Maybe that prepared me for this job (as Vernon Township trustee), because I would say also there was a lot I did not know,” she said. “There was an awful lot I did not know.”

So much of the role is understanding what is legally allowed and not allowed to be done, as well as understanding government financing, she said.

“It's not like owning a private business in any stretch,” she said. “I wish it was, but it is not. The hoops are just enormous to get things done, as they are with the military. And so I think what

the military teaches you is to dig in, and to really learn it. Give it 100-and-something-percent, and figure it out.”

Assembling a team

In township government, as in the military, a leader is nothing if not surrounded by an effective team, May said.

“Because none of us are good at everything,” she said. “And I'm not good at most things. But I'm really good at surrounding myself with really good people. And that's why we've been successful here. I'd love to say it's all me. It's my leadership, right? It is one component. If you don't have really good people surrounding you — that's great, you're a really good leader of nothing.”

May took office in 2019 as development was underway on the township's first 24/7-manned fire station in Fortville. Not long after that, she led the creation of the Vernon Township Fire Department,

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merging the former volunteer outfits in Fortville and McCordsville. A 24/7 on-station firefighting force followed. Also under May's leadership, the township changed ambulance service to in-house from a former longtime private provider, determining it to be more cost-effective. The township sought special legislation from the Indiana General Assembly to reset its fire and emergency medical services tax rate to allow it to keep up with the area's growth, but was rejected. Leaders quickly switched gears and pursued the formation of a fire protection territory, which was successful.

May is proud of the group she's surrounded herself with for those milestones, members of which include the township's fire chief, EMS chief and other fire officials along with past and present deputy trustees.

"This is a part-time team," she said. "And if you look at what people are paid, you would not expect to have this level of talent at the table. I'm really, really proud of that."

Her work in operations in the military brought out her talent in strategic thinking, which helped her realize a need to look at what she personally lacks when assembling an effective team.

"I am terrible at the details," she said. "I need to be surrounded by people who are very, very detailed, and who are going to dig in on the day-to-day, because my brain is not today. My brain is six months from now."

When looking back at all the changes the township has undergone since 2019, one other important factor, May said, was heavily communicating and engaging with all of the key players in

the community to ensure they were aware of the challenges and what the potential solutions were. Among those key players are representatives of the Mt. Vernon Community School Corporation

and Fortville's and McCordsville's town councils.

Greg Brewer, a McCordsville Town Council member who serves on the Vernon Township Fire Protection Territory Board, agreed May's emphasis on communication went a long way. He praised her formation of a study committee of area leaders to discuss the mounting fire protection challenges as well.

"Without Flory's persistence and focus on creating a fire territory, and prioritizing that as one of our main goals, we wouldn't be where we are today," he said.

Private to public sector

May served in the Army from the mid-1980s through the mid-1990s, and it paid for her education at Purdue University and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. She graduated with degrees in chemistry and education as well as a minor in military science. She then worked for Visit Indy, Indianapolis' tourism organization, before starting a software company, TRS, that she's owned for 21 years. Her early clients often referred to the software as "the registration system," or TRS for short, and the name stuck.

The software aids large events in need of many volunteers and allows them to sign up and be managed online.

"It is unique to the event world," May said. "It was built specifically for these very, very large events. It's got the capability to manage so many shifts during a very short period of time."

TRS has supported five Super Bowls, 28 men's and women's Final Fours, three

USA Games and four Special Olympics, as well as Democratic and Republican national conventions, Olympic trials and the 500 Festival.

The company is based in the Fortville Business Center and has five employees and about 20 contractors.

May admitted she didn't really want to run for Vernon Township trustee.

"But there was a lot of discussion throughout the broader community that there were real concerns about the fact that we did not have a professional fire department," she said. "There were real fears."

She viewed it not as a political, but operational need of the community, and became confident her skill set would be effective in laying out a long-term plan.

However, had she known ahead of time how difficult it was, she would have wanted to run even less, she said.

"I think ignorance is bliss," she added with a laugh.

She looked at fire departments in the surrounding area, including those in Hancock County's Buck Creek and Sugar Creek townships, both of which have had full-time fire departments with 24/7 coverage for years. She realized Vernon Township hadn't put in growth appeals for larger portions of tax levy as it grew, and was sitting on the same financial foundation for decades.

"I was angry that we didn't have a public safety system that matched the number of people and our property taxes," she said.

With so much going on, including plans for a new fire station in McCordsville, May plans to run for a second term.

"We are at the point of enacting all the transition that we put into place," she said.

But she's open to competition too.

"I am committed to do this again," she said. "I have obviously recruited a team of people I feel quite committed to. But if there's somebody who is better suited and would do a better job, they should run."

"Without Flory's persistence and focus on creating a fire territory, and prioritizing that as one of our main goals, we wouldn't be where we are today."

GREG BREWER



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



Andrea McCaughey looks over swatches in her sewing room in her Fortville home.

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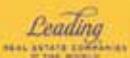
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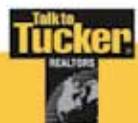
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Keep them in stitches

Fortville seamstress teaches the art of sewing to eager learners

By Shelley Swift
DAILY REPORTER
sswift@greenfieldreporter.com

FORTVILLE

When 7-year-old Hayden Osburn wanted a sewing machine last year for Christmas so she could make her own clothes, her mom, Alisha Deaton, was happy to oblige.

There was just one problem: Her mom didn't know how to sew.

A parenting group led her to Andrea McCaughey, a Fortville woman who has been teaching kids to sew for years.

With McCaughey's guidance, Hayden has made a number of handcrafted items since opening up her sewing machine that happy Christmas morning.

"It has been wonderful," said her mom. "She's made all kinds of things like a small quilt, a pillow, a pillowcase and a stuffed animal," she said.

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Andrea McCaughey, kept company on a summer afternoon by her dog Callie, says sewing "is not just about mending and making quilts. It's about fashion, it's about a lifestyle, it's about home design..."

"Andrea makes it really interesting. She lets Hayden pick colors she likes and materials she likes. She's also really good about helping her to focus and stay on task."

It's all in a day's work for McCaughey, who believes in teaching kids early.

Nothing fills her tank quite like seeing a child's eyes light up when they put the finishing touches on something they've made by hand.

Creating something by hand instills a sense of self-confidence and pride, McCaughey said.

"I've taught all kinds of children. I get moms bring their children that do have low self-esteem or who are shy, and by learning to make things, their self-worth grows, and they become more confident and happy," she said.

Fourteen-year-old Ellie Streveler has been taking lessons from McCaughey since the fourth grade. She had received



Cindy Nguyen, DO

Family Medicine

Cindy Nguyen, DO, received a bachelor of science degree in biotechnology from the University of Nebraska Omaha. She received a master of arts degree in biomedical sciences from Midwestern University-College of Health Sciences and a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree from Midwestern University-Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine. She recently completed the Community South Osteopathic Family Medicine Residency program. She has a special interest in OMT and women's health. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, hiking, and road trips.



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Family Medicine



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a sewing machine as a gift the year before, and wanted to learn how to use it.

She's since made a number of different pieces of apparel she loves to wear. Her mom, however, never learned to sew.

"I sent her to lessons because I didn't want her to be limited by what I don't know," said her mom, Janette Streveler.

Ellie, a freshman at Greenfield-Central High School, now spends about three hours a week sewing for fun.

"My main goal is to sew my prom dress or my wedding dress someday," she said.

Those words mean a lot to McCaughey, who loves to teach her students how to make their own clothes.

"I come up with different ideas for clothing they can make and wear to school that's totally different than anything the kids are going to buy," she said. "It's trendy, it's creative, and it's personal because they made it with their own energy, and they're proud to wear it."

The Fortville seamstress teaches children as young as 6 years old how to sew.

For the past six years she taught students out of her former sewing studio, Kewpie's Kloset, in downtown Fortville, but she's now in the process of moving her studio into her home.

"I'll teach people from 4 to 104. Anyone can learn," she said.

McCaughey knows that the ability to sew is somewhat lost on many young and even middle-aged people these days, with adults confessing to her that they've never sewed a stitch in their lives.

"It's a dying art. People seem so excited that I'm teaching children and adults how to sew," she said.

McCaughey thinks today's so-called "throw away" culture encourages people to buy cheap items that don't last long, and to throw away items that can easily be repaired.



With seamstress Andrea McCaughey's assistance, 7-year-old Hayden Osburn has made a number of items since receiving a sewing machine for Christmas.

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“Our culture is very much about throwing everything away or instant gratification. It takes time to create something through sewing. It’s an art,” said the longtime seamstress, who loves sharing that art with her students.

“People sometimes forget you can create your own beautifully custom creations just by being able to put some thread together needle and thread to fabric,” she said.

McCaughey said these days fewer schools are teaching home economics, now known as Family and Consumer Science, so fewer young people are learning the basics of sewing. If they’re parents don’t sew, they look to teachers like her.

When they do, students often find that sewing opens up a whole new world of

possibilities, she said.

“Sewing is not just about mending and making quilts. It’s about fashion, it’s about a lifestyle, it’s about home design,” said McCaughey, who said it also uses a lot of brain power.

“It involves measuring and fractions. There’s a whole aspect to it that people probably don’t really think about when they think of traditional sewing,” she said.

McCaughey said she’s created a fun way to teach adults and children

how to sew. She keeps them interested and intrigued by

what they’re going to make in their next session.

“We start with simple hair scrunchy and move up from there,” she said.

McCaughey teaches in 12-week sessions, focusing on a new item every

three or four weeks.

Students eventually make their own skirts or pajama pants, and a monogram pillow for their rooms.

“I have 12-year-old girls who are making their own bedding, their own curtains, making gifts for their family,” said McCaughey, who sometimes hosts sewing parties for kids’ birthdays.

“Instead of grab bags, each child walks away with their own custom creation,” she said.

Her huge collection of textiles and embellishments is like a treasure trove to young kids, she said. “Every kid loves to see touch and feel, and they get to use their senses as they’re picking out fabrics. Here they can pick what they want, whatever calls their name,” she said.

“I try to play off their energy, because I want to make it fun,” she said. “I help the kids use different embellishments, whether it’s feathers, vintage buttons, ribbons or trim.”

Learn more

To learn more about sewing lessons with McCaughey, contact her at KewpiesKloset@gmail.com or 317-987-3700.

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McCaughey said she combined her love for children with her love for sewing to create Kewpie's Closet.

"My mission is to share my passion for sewing with them and make it fun, so that they'll love it too," she said.

The former nanny also has experience in interior design, furniture reupholstering and creating high-end window treatments. She started sewing 25 years ago in her early twenties, taught by her mother and her aunt.

She understands why many women today have never even stitched on a button.

"A lot of the society changed when women went out into the workforce, and sewing wasn't something that society deemed important. So if someone can't sew, they can do a lot of other things," she said.

"But if they do want to sew, I can teach them," said McCaughey, who is a big advocate for mending rather than tossing



Andrea McCaughey delights in teaching people of all ages the art of sewing, which she says has been diminished by a "throw away" culture.

damaged clothes. It not only saves money, but it keeps a lot of trash out of landfills.

"I think that we should reuse our clothing, we should enjoy something repeatedly. The way we're doing things now is depleting our resources, and we're

using more synthetic fabrics that are not good for us or for Mother Nature," she said.

"If a button comes off of it, find somebody to put that button back on for you if you can't."



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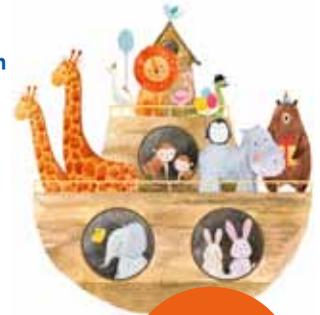
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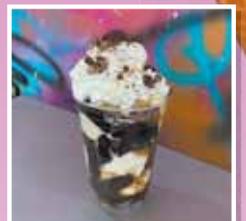
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D

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



Writ large

Hoosierartist's downtown mural celebrates agricultural roots

By Shelley Swift

DAILY REPORTER
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GREENFIELD

Pamela Bliss has made a career helping communities celebrate their heritage through art.

The nationally known artist has painted a 60-foot tall mural of basketball great Reggie Miller and a 38-foot-tall mural of author Kurt Vonnegut in downtown Indianapolis, plus a 35-foot-tall rendering of rocker John Mellencamp in his hometown of Seymour.

In the summer of 2021, she finished a larger-than-life mural in downtown Greenfield that celebrates Hancock



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County's agricultural roots.

The 35-foot-tall mural, on the east wall of the building at the southeast corner of Main Street and American Legion Place, portrays an older farmer gesturing excitedly as he shares a story Pamela Bliss has made a career helping communities celebrate their heritage through art.

The nationally known artist has painted a 60-foot tall mural of basketball great Reggie Miller and a 38-foot-tall mural of author Kurt Vonnegut in downtown Indianapolis, plus a 35-foot-tall rendering of rocker John Mellencamp in his hometown of Seymour.

In the summer of 2021, she finished a larger-than-life mural in downtown Greenfield that celebrates Hancock County's agricultural roots.

The 35-foot-tall mural, on the east wall of the building at the southeast corner of Main Street and American Legion Place, portrays an older farmer gesturing excitedly as he shares a story with a younger man and young girl.



The three are gathered along a fence in a farm field, supposedly swapping stories of life on the farm.

The mural, titled "Tall Tales," is meant to capture the farming roots that run deep in Hancock County, said Bliss, who started work on the mural in early June.

Bliss said she intended to create a scene worthy of Norman Rockwell, with all eyes focused on the older farmer spinning a tall tale.

"I wanted that over-exaggeration and a little bit more animation to their personalities, that Norman Rockwell-esque type of look in the people's faces," she said.

Bliss said her vision was based on direction from the Downtown Greenfield Mural Committee, which commissioned her to do the mural thanks to a grant from the local White Family Foundation.

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Blight to bright

Mural covering graffiti-prone underpass in Cumberland

By Mitchell Kirk

DAILY REPORTER

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The Buck Creek Trail underpass beneath U.S. 40 is no stranger to paint.

Unfortunately, all of the graffiti isn't the kind a community welcomes, especially along an amenity like a recreational path.

But that has changed with the help of a muralist and a place-making initiative to turn an area that once drew eyesores into an attraction representing what the town's proud of.

The three-mile Buck Creek Trail runs north and south between East 21st Street (County Road 100N) and the Pennsy Trail south of U.S. 40 just east of Carroll Road.

Koda Witsken, the artist behind Hue Murals, created the mural on the concrete surfaces making up the underpass that takes the trail beneath U.S. 40.

"It'll be like an art tunnel when you walk through," said Witsken, who studied art

at Duke University and Purdue University and also designed the new branding signs identifying the four sectors along the Mt. Comfort Corridor.

The mural highlights various flora and fauna of the area in a cohesive way along with elements representing Cumberland, Witsken said, like the sunflowers that grow around the town, butterflies, deer, fireflies and the stained glass windows of the former St. John United Church of Christ building on German Church Road that residents helped to save.

"We wanted it to be about Cumberland in a way that wasn't cliché or largely used in other communities," Witsken said.

Witsken started the mural last fall before pausing over the winter. Fellow artists Israel Solomon and Megan Jefferson helped her. It was finished in the spring of 2021.

The mural project stemmed from Cumberland's participation in the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs' Hometown Collaboration Initiative a few years ago.

County family with farming ties of their own, allocate funds to local causes through the Hancock County Community Foundation.

"We felt it was very appropriate given the fact that our community is very agriculturally driven," said Tami White, who lives on a local family farm that's been passed down through her family for generations.

"This mural upholds what a proud community we are in supporting today's agriculture endeavors."

Bliss said it was an honor to create a piece of art celebrating the county's farming roots and small-town heritage.

She grew up in Cambridge City in Wayne County, and though she lives in Indianapolis, still considers herself to be a small-town girl.

Her Greenfield mural features the likeness of three Hancock County residents — Tom Graham, Jay Shininger and Katie Brown — who were selected by local theater director Chris Schaefer.

Brown, an Eastern Hancock High School graduate, spent years doing local children's theater. Shininger's three kids are also local actors. Graham is a

neighbor and friend of Schaefer's, who was happy to portray the animated older farmer in the scene.

Ironically, the two men closely matched the renderings Bliss had already sketched out. Brown was a bit older than the young girl she had sketched, so the artist painted the young girl as a teenager instead.

"She still helps to represent the three generations, which represents the past, present and future," said Bliss, who felt strongly about including a female in the mix.

"Women are an important part of the farming community too," she said.

Lorraine Ewing, whose family's Hancock County farm roots go back five generations, was thrilled to hear the new mural was honoring that heritage.

"I think it's great that we are paying homage to our Hancock County agricultural past, present and future, because that's been a big part of who we are" as a county, she said.

Bliss has made a living creating such larger-than-life visuals that tell a story for individual communities. It typically takes her four to six weeks to complete one of her murals, depending on the weather.

She's been doing commissioned work for the past 30 years, becoming a full-time artist in 2005.

Bliss remembers being creative from a young age, picking up a pencil to start drawing at age 2.

It took years for her to discover her knack for painting, however.

"When I was a child I would draw what I would see, and I remember getting frustrated because I just had a pencil. I didn't know I needed paint," she said.

She vividly remembers how, years later in a high school art class, a teacher told her she had no skills and no future as a painter.

"It turns out I did," Bliss recalled.

Stung by the criticism, she didn't start exploring her love of painting until she took some art classes in college. But once she started, she never stopped.

"I took a workshop for portrait painting where I learned how to manipulate oils, and it was just like 'boom,' as soon as I learned that medium it was like I knew it all along," she said.

It turned out painting was very much like drawing. "You're just filling in the color basically," Bliss said.

As the community-wide effort pursued a place-making initiative, organizers decided on the Buck Creek Trail underpass, which they knew tends to attract tagging.

“We were looking at what could we possibly do to try to deter that, and do something unique with the space,” said Christine Owens, director of planning and development for Cumberland.

The endeavor received seed money from the office of community and rural affairs, along with funding from the town, Cumberland Community Arts and Spaces Task Force and the Hancock County Community Foundation.

“It’s awesome,” Owens said. “We’re really excited. We love Koda’s work, and she did a really good job capturing some images that really represent the community, and put together just a really vibrant piece to really create a destination for people not just using the trail, but to come to the community and check it out.”



Indianapolis artist Koda Witsken wanted to create imagery that represented Cumberland.



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Darlene Trusty plants marigolds in a bed on the Courthouse Plaza.

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Day of planting

Volunteers brighten downtown landscape by planting hundreds of flowers

By Shelley Swift

DAILY REPORTER

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GREENFIELD

Paul Norton loves when strangers stop to roll down their car windows and pay him a compliment as they're driving through downtown Greenfield.

Norton, a Greenfield Parks Department employee commonly known as "the flower guy," said hundreds of people have stopped to compliment the colorful blooms he keeps watered along city streets each summer.

"They can't believe how beautiful and transformative Greenfield looks. We've been compared to Nashville, Indiana, and that's a big compliment," he said.



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In his five years working for the parks department, Norton has led the effort for Greenfield's annual Day of Planting, a time in the spring when volunteers roll up their sleeves and set about filling the city's decorative planters, hanging baskets and flower beds with colorful blooms.

About 15 people gathered in the Greenfield Christian Church parking lot one May day this past spring for the big event, which started out with a pep talk and some direction from Norton.

"Let's get to it," he said, as the volunteers fanned out in several directions, where small pots of perennials were waiting alongside concrete pots and flower beds.

Under sunny blue skies, the crew made quick work of the job, taking about an hour to get more than 800 wave petunias, sweet potato vines and ornamental grasses tucked into the dirt.

"I look forward to this day all year," said Bobbi Anderson, chairwoman for



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flower into the soil as part of Greenfield's Day of Planting. Right: Amanda Geiling, left, and Rosemary Hill arrange flowers in a pot in front of the Hancock County Courthouse Annex.

Master Gardeners, who traditionally lend their expertise at the annual event.

Lynn Meier, who became a master gardener nearly four years ago, said it's an honor to help transform the downtown into a tapestry of colorful blooms.

"I think it makes a great impression. You can't help but think it's a nice town when you drive through," she said. "It shows that the people here really care about the community."

She and her planting partner for the day, Sally Parsons, both showed up ready to get their hands dirty, bundled up in black fleece jackets with gardening gloves and trowels in hand.

Parsons, an active member of the city's tree-fostering organization, Regreening Greenfield, said the trees and flowers downtown make a memorable impression.

"All the colorful blooms really make Greenfield stand out when people are passing through," she said.

Norton said a ton of planning goes into designing the floral landscape, which is a labor of love. He spends time at home going over the inventory and layout of each plant, and provides volunteers with a diagram of just where each flower should go — right down to the color of each petunia.

Throughout the summer, it's his job to maintain the plants, which involves much more than just watering, he said.

"It involves fertilizing, watering, pruning, trimming and pinching off flowers... everything you'd do in your



garden," he said.

"It's knowing when to water, how much to water, and taking into account the temperature and cloud cover. There's a scientific exercise I go through each day."

Norton praises the collaboration of city officials and the volunteers who make the annual spring planting possible.

"I'm proud of our volunteers, of how quickly they step up to pitch in," he said. "I love Greenfield for that. You don't get that everywhere."

Meier said it's an honor to help but admits it also gives volunteers bragging rights throughout the summer. "It was fun to drive through last year with the grandkids and say, 'Look, Grandma planted those,'" she said.

Fellow master gardener Peggy Robertson also gets a kick out of seeing the flowers bloom each year after helping

plant them.

Each summer, she hears comments from people all over town about how great the flowers look downtown.

"People just like to drive through on a pretty day like this and look around. It's beautiful," she said.

While flowers were planted in the city's flower pots and hanging baskets, Norton said the sidewalk beds around town won't be planted this year, due in part to road construction taking place downtown.

"That was a collaborative decision between the mayor, the street department and the parks," he said, pointing out that the construction and chemicals would make it hard for the flowers at street-level to survive.

"We hope to revisit the idea again next year," Norton said.

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Testing his limits

Triathlete's odyssey goes for nearly 900 miles

Devon Brown has raced in endurance events all over the country, but the TransAmTri was his biggest challenge. By the time Brown finished the cycling portion of the race, he had logged over 800 miles. (Submitted photos)

Jumping into a lake first thing in the morning and swimming 16 miles might not be the way an average person starts their work week, but it's just another day at the office for fitness trainer Devon Brown.

Brown, 37, Greenfield, participated in the TransAmTri — a 945-mile swimming, cycling and running endurance test, in late May 2021. The race took him from Florida to Alabama to Louisiana and back to Alabama over a two-week period. Participants who finish the race swim 16 miles, bike 805 miles and run 124 miles. Brown said the participants could end up going over 1,000 miles depending on projected detours.

The total distance of the race is more than seven traditional ironman races. His longest race so far had been a three-day, 330-mile triathlon across Florida

as part of the Florida Xtreme Triathlon in November 2019. He has raced in half the states, five countries and on two continents in his racing career.

Brown, who graduated from IUPUI with a Bachelor of Science degree in physical and health education, is a former college basketball player who started a training career with the YMCA when he was only 14 years old. That included training athletes — something he does now — when he was 18. After working several years at the former Family Fun and Fitness center in New Palestine, Brown founded his own training business, Change Fitness, in 2013.

Brown is an experienced endurance athlete, having taken part in the competitions such as World's Toughest Mudder and a variety of Spartan

By Kristy Deer

DAILY REPORTER

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endurance events.

"I always tell the people I train you have to have something to look forward to that is going to push you on those days when you don't feel like it," Brown said.

As a father of three young boys — Dominic, Gabriel and Chase — Brown said he trains and races because he wants to be able to keep up with his sons, two of whom have already started racing with him. He wants to be able to do any adventures the kids want to try.

Brown's personal goals in the race were to go from 10 to 15 hours each day: 100 to 150 miles on bike days and 40 to 60 miles — or more than two full marathons — on run days. In order to keep himself supplied with energy during the event, he aimed at consuming around 7,000 calories a day.

His father, Dennis Brown, served as his crew and drove his trailer full of gear.

The athletes had 15 days to finish the race. The 16-mile swim — with a time limit of 18 hours — was the first challenge. Brown, who set a goal to finish the race in 13 days, finished the swim in 14½ hours.

He posted on his Facebook page the following day: "Sunburnt and sore this morning, but got to keep moving and get some miles in even if it's not many."

But after the strong start, things took a turn for the worse. Performing in the heat and humidity of early summer in the South was a challenge. "Heat exhaustion sucks; realizing that Dad is getting old sucks even more," he posted. "Shutting it down for several hours to wait out the heat. Hope to be back at it tonight when it's cooler."

On Day 3, Brown said he woke up well before dawn to take advantage of the cool temperatures, and it paid off with part of the ride producing perfect weather, giving him a breeze, a full moon and no vehicles. "Rode for 20-30 miles before lack of sleep caught up and I started yawning a lot," he posted.

Day 4 was even better, as Brown set out to ride 70 miles before the heat set in. He told his online followers he was going to reward himself and his dad with some hotel time and posted, "the last several miles included roadkill of big snakes and small gators."

Day 5 was the most challenging so far.

"I had my first big 'incident' today (Sunday, May 30) that involved me getting lost, having to walk about 10 miles in sandy trails in the middle of the woods, spending a lot of energy in the scratchy outback, logging miles on the back

trying to find my way — a very stressful time.”

Brown noted not only are these types of races physically grueling, but they have many mental peaks and valleys as well.

“I’ve had a flat, then had to walk a couple miles on the roadside to be saved by a trail angel,” he said.

Brown also took advantage of the local culture when he had a chance to rest and even saw a local band play during a break. “Today was a low valley, but it is giving me time to reflect and grow,” he posted.

On Day 6, May 31, Brown reached a major section of the race and made it to the Pensacola Bridge in Florida. On Tuesday, June 1, one week into the race, he was down to the final 110 miles left to ride. He finished around 1 p.m. Wednesday, June 2, having ridden a total of 805 miles.

“Oh thank goodness,” Brown said. “Resting and then out to get some run miles.”

Brown said on Day 8 (June 2) that he was planning to run 156 miles — or about six marathons — to wrap up the race on June 6. It was shaping up to be a stiff challenge: Brown had already lost 11 pounds heading into the running segment of the event.

His plan was to run a marathon (26.22 miles) in his first stint and then run another 1½ to two marathons on the three following days.

“That will leave less than one marathon for (the final day), so I can get done early and see my family at the finish line,” Brown said.

But the race, after 877.6 miles, had taken a toll. There would be no more running toward a milestone — not on this occasion, at least. By Day 9, he had posted a photo of his feet, his big toes bandaged. He could not continue.

“Yes, I dropped out,” he posted in a message shortly before 9 a.m. Friday, June 4, just two days and less than 70 miles from his projected finish. “It is a long and emotional decision/story that ultimately concludes with my ‘why’ to do the race became smaller than my reasons ‘why not.’”



Devon Brown and his wife, Allison, with their three boys: Dominic, Gabriel and the youngest, Chase, during a competition.

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Heart & Soul

Changing Footprints helps people get off on the right foot

By Shelley Swift
DAILY REPORTER
sswift@greenfieldreporter.com

Pictured: Changing Footprints collects used footwear and redistributes it to those in need throughout the county.

GREENFIELD

A bin overflowing with shoes sits at the southwest corner of Main and Franklin streets in Greenfield, and a team of people is eager to get them to new owners.

All sorts of footwear — from high heels and dress shoes to sneakers and steel-toed boots — is available to those who can't afford them, thanks to the nonprofit known as Changing Footprints.

Greenfield resident Maureen Leisure launched the organization in 2004, after watching a televised news

story about Afghans who were suffering and sometimes losing their feet because they had no shoes, after being forced into the mountains fleeing war with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Since then, Changing Footprints has distributed more than 220,000 pairs of shoes throughout the state and beyond.

“We give them away locally and have shipped them off to places like the Appalachian Mountains and to Texas after the hurricanes,” said Stephen Jeffries, who helps oversee the

local collection center in Greenfield, at the former site of Red Rooster Antiques.

A number of churches, stores and other gathering places also serve as collection sites throughout the county.

Jeffries said it would likely surprise people to know the level of need in the community.

“We used to think it was only homeless and destitute people who were in need, but that’s not the case any more. With the economy like it is, there are so many more people in need,” he said. “I get calls two to three times a week from people needing shoes because their kids are in school and they can’t afford them.”

Jeffries and Leisure can both get emotional when talking about the people who come in seeking shoes.

“We have parents, grandparents and foster moms who need shoes for their kids, and we have people who get a job but can’t afford the proper footwear,” said Jeffries.

It was filling that need that motivated Leisure to launch Changing Footprints nearly 17 years ago.

The nonprofit distributed 4,000 pairs of shoes that first year. More than 60,000 pairs were distributed last year.

The effort started in Rushville, where Leisure lived at the time, and has since grown throughout the state. The warehouse there is a former glove factory the nonprofit purchased for \$1.

“The Rushville location is really kind of a showplace. They’ve had shelves donated and a washer to wash shoes, and they keep it very organized. They open a couple times a week for people to come in and get whatever they need. That’s what we’re looking to do in Greenfield,” Leisure said.

Changing Footprints has its main

At a glance

To volunteer or request shoes, contact Changing Footprints Hancock County at 317-374-5608.

Donations can be dropped off at the Changing Footprints collection bin at 1001 W. Main St. in Greenfield or at Needler’s Fresh Market, at 5802 W. U.S. 52 in New Palestine.

Eighty drop-off locations throughout Indiana are listed on the nonprofit’s website, changingfootprints.org.



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warehouse on the north side of Indianapolis, as well as locations on the south side of Indianapolis and in northern Indiana.

There are five processing centers in all, a sign of the immense growth that has occurred since Leisure and her fellow volunteers were collecting and sorting shoes in their dining rooms, garages and out of the trunks of their cars.

Leisure recruited Jeffries as a volunteer while chatting at their high school reunion.

Jeffries was quickly hooked, and he joined the board of directors within a week. He started out storing locally donated shoes above his former business, The Acorn Tree in downtown Greenfield, but had to give that up after moving his business online.

He's thrilled to have the storage bin at the Changing Footprints collection site

“We used to think it was only homeless and destitute people who were in need, but that’s not the case anymore. With the economy like it is, there are so many more people in need.”

STEPHEN JEFFRIES
CHANGING FOOTPRINTS

in Greenfield, at 1001 W. Main St., where he’s hung new signage and painted the front door a bright blue to match the nonprofit’s logo.

The collection bin, which was donated by local businessman Wayne Addison, fills up to the top every week or two.

Jeffries can’t wait for the store to empty so Changing Footprints can open a no-cost foot store to those in need.

“When we have that whole building, we’ll be able to do some really great things,” said Leisure, who previously worked as a materials manager for Emerson. “Those in need of shoes will be able to come in and try on what they want and walk away without any paperwork or any questions asked.”

More volunteers and resources are needed to make that dream a reality, she said.



Stephen Jeffries



Stephen Jeffries of Changing Footprints. The organization collects used footwear and redistributes it to those in need throughout the county.

For now, volunteers will continue collecting, washing, sorting and distributing as many shoes as they can, with the hopes that each pair lands on the right feet.

The Greenfield location typically does a countywide back-to-school giveaway each summer, and takes part in the Day of Giving event at the county fairgrounds each Christmas Eve, but had both disrupted last year due to COVID.

Despite the setbacks, Changing Footprints works with all the Hancock County schools and other nonprofits to assure that anyone who needs shoes can get them.

“We try to keep the quality of the shoes we give away really high. Sometimes we’ll get donations of brand new shoes,” said Jeffries. “Our goal is to have a bit of variety that will cover a lot of different areas.”

Jeffries said the footwear ministry has a positive impact on the environment, as well as those receiving shoes.

“If we can’t use a pair of shoes, we’ll figure out a way to recycle them. We’re keeping shoes out of the landfills, and that’s always good,” he said.

Some shoes that aren’t good enough to be donated are given to Nike Grind, a Nike-driven recycling effort that grinds them down to repurpose them into playground mulch.

Jeffries said Monarch Beverage of Indianapolis buys their employees a pair of steel toed boots twice a year, and donates the used boots to Changing Footprints.

“One dream is to have a truck big enough to keep shoes in that we could drive to food pantries and schools or other nonprofits to give away shoes,” said Jeffries. “We’ve got a lot of goals, a lot of hopes and dreams.”

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Donna Baker displays a collection of painted rocks, part of a campaign to bring a little spontaneous joy into people's lives.

Rock Stars

Painted stones with inspiring messages pop up all over Hancock County

By Shelley Swift
DAILY REPORTER
sswift@greenfieldreporter.com

HANCOCK COUNTY

Ramona Carrico takes a little rock with a scarecrow painted on it everywhere she travels.

Her husband found the painted stone hidden in the rock bed outside the Montana Mike's restaurant in Greenfield.

A label on the back of the rock said to post a picture and where the rock was found on a Facebook page called "Greenfield IN rocks!"

So Carrico did, and she's been hooked on finding, painting and hiding rocks ever since.

Through Facebook, she discovered her scarecrow rock was hand-painted by a fellow Greenfield resident, Donna Baker, who has hidden hundreds of the small painted stones throughout Hancock County and beyond.

"I've hidden over 200 rocks the last nine months," said Baker. "I love it when they make a difference in someone's day."

Facebook pages are devoted to "rock" groups in Greenfield, New Palestine and McCordsville. Followers post pictures of the brightly-colored rocks they hand paint

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and hide throughout the county, as well as pictures from those who find them.

All three Hancock County rock pages were created in the summer of 2017, and all encourage the practice of painting decorative rocks with positive words or images, then leaving them out and about to hopefully brighten someone's day.

"It sounds silly, but it's really quite fun," Carrico said. It's a great way to connect with people, she said, especially in a time when personal interactions have been limited due to social distancing.

Those connections were the driving force behind the Kindness Rocks Project, which inspired the movement throughout the country.

At her website, thekindnessrocksproject.com, Megan Murphy shares how she was inspired to inscribe positive messages on a handful of rocks and leave them along the beach where she walks each day.

The daily walks were sacred to Murphy, who told herself that each heart-shaped rock or piece of sea glass she found were hidden messages from her late parents. Although she only left five rocks on the beach that first day, a friend of hers texted her a picture of one of the rocks she had found later that night.

Murphy denied leaving the rock, wanting to be anonymous, but her friend said: "If you did drop this rock, it made my day. I was having a rough day and



the message just meant so much."

Thus the Kindness Rocks Project was born, encouraging people to "leave rocks painted with inspiring messages along the path of life."

The concept appears to have spread far from the coast where the idea first originated.

The "New Palestine Rocks" Facebook page, among others, promotes the painted rocks project as a great way to tap into your artistic side, make people smile and get out and explore.

"The world needs more kindness, fun, adventure, creativity, family time and fresh air.... This activity promotes ALL of the above," wrote New Palestine resident Kelly Teater-Lucas, who administers the page.

Through it, she encourages community members to paint the small stones and leave them for others to find.

"If you are out and about and come across one take a picture and... share where you found it, and then re-share it

for someone else to find or begin your collection. But remember, make more to leave for others to find. Keep the fun of discovery alive," she wrote.

Teater's favorite kind of stones to paint are Mexican skipping stones, which are smooth. She buys them at local landscapers, paints and seals them, and leaves them around town whenever the mood strikes her. She often hides the decorated rocks in the Irvington area, where her fiance owns a business, and was thrilled to see an "East Side Rocks!" Facebook page spring up shortly after the idea caught on there.

Jenna Wertman tapped into the painted-rock craze two years ago when she hosted a community rock painting party to help celebrate the "Barefoot Boy" mural unveiling in downtown Greenfield.

She set up a picnic table with tubes of paint and a pile of rocks and encouraged everyone to paint rocks with whimsical messages, adding a label for the "Riley

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Mural Rocks” Facebook page, sharing details about the James Whitcomb Riley-inspired mural.

About a hundred rocks were painted and left at the foot of the mural on the south end of the Living Alley just off Main Street.

“I would love to see a new batch of painted rocks left out there. It would be great to get a new infusion of those,” said Wertman, formerly senior planner for the city of Greenfield.

The rocks were a great way to get the community involved in spreading the word about the new mural, she said.

“The painted-rock trend can be a lot of fun for the community,” said Wertman. “You can just be walking along and now this rock you’ve found has turned into art. If there’s a tag on the back directing you to a Facebook page or website, now it’s taken you on a little bit of an adventure,” she said.

Carrico loves knowing that the rocks she places while traveling around the country can potentially brighten someone’s day.

“It’s just addicting. Once you get started you can’t wait to paint your rocks and share them,” she said.

Carrico buys the rocks she paints at a local landscape store. Local rock painters suggest using any standard type of paint, paint markers or colored permanent markers for the designs, then coating them with a layer or two of protective finish.

Stickers are not recommended, since they can be eaten by wildlife.

While Carrico holds on to the first two rocks her husband ever found her — including the scarecrow she named Mr. Boo — she typically takes the new ones she finds and hides them for someone else to discover.

When painting rocks, she likes to make them colorful and include a short message of positivity or encouragement. Sometimes she’ll skip the message and turn the tiny stones into cute little monsters, or seasonal designs like Santa hats, turkeys or spring flowers.

“It doesn’t have to look perfect to lift up somebody’s day,” she said.

Spreading a little bit of joy is what motivates Baker to paint and hide the little rocks, knowing they might be found by someone who needs a little lift that day.

It’s been the perfect pastime to keep her occupied over the past year, she said, when people seem to need a way to connect.

Baker loves to read people’s posts saying they found an inspirational message on a rock right when they needed it.

“Sometimes people will say how much the particular message they found meant to them, and how they’re going to hold on to it until they don’t need it anymore, then they’ll hide it for someone else,” Baker said. “It’s great to see these little rocks can really mean so much.”

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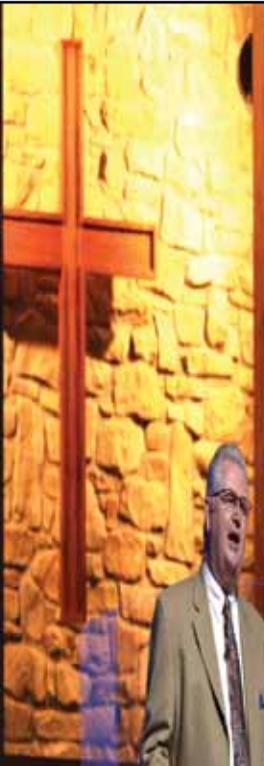
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Crash Detectives

Team of investigators is well-versed in reconstructing fatal impacts

By Kristy Deer
DAILY REPORTER
kdeer@greenfieldreporter.com

HANCOCK COUNTY

The team is only called into action when it's a worst-case scenario and they must figure out what went wrong when a person dies or is seriously injured in a vehicle crash.

The Hancock County Fatal Accident Crash, or F.A.C., Team, is a group of 12 highly trained law enforcement officials from agencies throughout the county who are tasked with determining the cause of fatal crashes or those that cause severe injury.

They are reconstruction experts, going through painstaking details — from a car's speed at impact to whether the brakes were applied — to gather every bit of information to help determine the cause of the crash.

All team members go through specialized training.

The calls — which can come at any time — are never easy. But as they deal with the human toll of the destructive power of collisions, they also apply the science, similar to the way investigators look for clues at crime scenes.

“Our job is to be enhanced fact-gathers as compared to an officer who is just on the scene,” said Maj. Bobby

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Campbell, chief deputy of the Hancock County Sheriff's Department. "We bring a scholastic knowledge to the table."

Campbell has been a part of the F.A.C. Team from its earliest days and actually started working on a crash reconstruction team in 1999. As far as anyone can recall, the F.A.C. Team became an official unit around 2007.

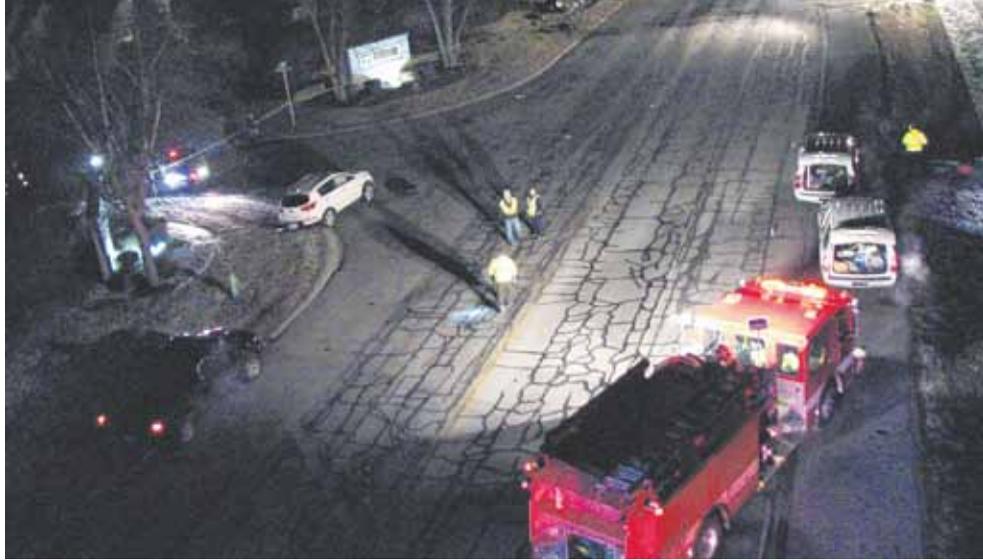
Campbell has seen quite of bit of change through the years.

"We used to use strictly measuring tapes and certain mathematical formulas to determine the speed of a car in an accident," Campbell said, referring to a key detail in reconstructing a crash.

Not anymore.

Officials now have state-of-the-art computer software into which they can upload data and actually see how the crash unfolded on a computer screen.

Capt. Robert Harris of the sheriff's department is a crash reconstructionist and has been part of the team since 2007.



A drone-mounted camera offers a panoramic view of a crash scene. Investigators will pore over every square inch of the scene for clues. (Hancock County F.A.C. Team photo)

He's also the only person in the county who can download electronic data from the electronic control modules from vehicles after a crash.

"I download the 'black boxes,' as the public knows them," Harris said. "It is actually the airbag control module, powertrain control module, rollover sensor, etc..."

Every crash tells a story.

Some of the newer cars and "black boxes" can tell Harris everything from speed to engine RPM's and even the seat position. The data can even tell a trained officer if the steering wheel was turned left or right.

The information helps the team understand the status of the vehicle upon impact.

"I like the science behind the team,"

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Harris said. “I like being able to take all the puzzle pieces from the crash to find out what happened.”

Much of the data they collect can be used by highway engineers to make the roads safer.

The plan for the team is simple. Once they arrive at a crash site, they check on the people involved, then stabilize the scene to prevent the destruction of evidence.

“That was something we had to teach others who might arrive before us like the fire department or other officers whose first instinct is to push everything off the road and get it back open,” Harris said.

After stabilizing the evidence, team members photograph the site and start marking the crash site for a scale diagram. Once information is gathered, they utilize diagram software to figure it all out.

“All the measurements we take, we can plug them into a program,” Harris said.

While the data from each accident scene is processed differently, most crashes are solved within a few weeks unless blood work or other chemical tests are needed for the people who



Maj. Bobby Campbell, left, and Capt. Robert Harris, members of the county F.A.C. Team, go over information they've gathered in an investigation of a vehicle crash.

The County's F.A.C. Team Members:

- Major Robert Campbell (HCSD) — crash reconstructionist
- Capt. Robert Harris (HCSD) — crash reconstructionist
- Sgt. Nick Ernstes (HCSD) — crash reconstructionist
- Cpl. Mark Galbraith (HCSD) — crash reconstructionist
- Officer Shawn Brady (NPPD) — crash reconstructionist
- Ryan Chappell (GPD) — crash reconstructionist
- Detective Ross Yoder — (GPD) detective, crash reconstructionist
- Detective J.D. Fortner (GPD) — assists with flying drone for photographs, crash investigation, interviews, search warrants, drug and alcohol testing and other documentation
- Officer Matt Fox (Fortville PD) — assists with investigation, interviews, search warrants, drug and alcohol testing and other documentation
- Sgt. Gary Achor (HCSD) — assists with investigation, interviews, search warrants, drug and alcohol testing, and other documentation
- Deputy Jon Lawrence (HCSD Reserve officer) — assists with investigation, interviews, search warrants, drug and alcohol testing, and other documentation
- Deputy Jeremy Smith (HCSD Reserve officer) — assists with investigation, interviews, search warrants, drug and alcohol testing, and other documentation

were involved. That type of evidence is processed through a state lab, which can take months.

Cpl. Ryan Chappell of the Greenfield Police Department has been a reconstructionist for the F.A.C. Team since 2013.

Chappell has always been good at mathematics and physics and at one time wanted to be an engineer, even attending Purdue University for a while to study electrical engineering.

As a crash-site investigator, he was inspired by his mentor, Derek Towle, a former deputy chief at the Greenfield Police Department who helped establish the F.A.C. Team.

“He was the best reconstructionist I ever saw,” Chappell said. “He taught me to pay attention to the smallest of details on cars.”

Chappell has taken numerous police technology and management classes to be better prepared to assess accidents.

“It’s just something that has always interested me and is also a good job to get into when you retire, working for an insurance company,” Chappell said.

As a crime scene investigator for GPD, Chappell is adept at analyzing blood stain patterns, which includes multiple mathematical formulas to answer questions. These are the same type of skills he uses as a reconstructionist of crash scenes.

"I like looking at the evidence at hand and saying 'Hey, I'm gonna see if I can figure this out,' and that goes through your mind before you even talk to anyone there," Chappell said.

The hardest part of the job for Chappell is dealing with the victims. The work always involves death or life-changing injuries for the people involved.

"I'm thankful for a good support team at home," Chappell said. "It makes a huge difference."

He recalled the death a few years ago of a young woman who was struck and killed while riding her bicycle on U.S. 40. A semi-trailer truck carrying concrete beams hit her with one of the beams.

Chappell later found out she was going to college to better herself.

"She had kids at home, and it's just things like that, that just stick with you," Chappell said.

Sheriff Brad Burkhart praised the

team, calling them an important unit for community safety.

"The officers and deputies (who are) part of this team are smart guys," Burkhart said. "There's a lot of math and equations and things they have to know and understand to do the job."

The work can be far-reaching. Data is used for insurance purposes, and trucking companies use information to report driver safety statistics at the state and federal level, for example.

"There is a lot of money involved in accidents," Burkhart said. "While insurance companies can do their own investigations and do, when it comes to collecting appropriate data, the right information comes from the scene where the F.A.C. Team collects information, data that stands up in court."

Chappell said it's good to be able to pass along the information they gather to state officials who then use the information to

make travel safer. While he personally is not a fan of the readjusted lanes along West Main Street in Greenfield, he noted the realignment has cut down on accidents in that area. The decision on the road "diet," which added bicycle lanes and cut driving lanes to two from four, was based in part on crash data.

"The data we collect does help make a difference," Chappell said.

Like Chappell, Harris noted it's their job to find the answers after a fatal crash and speak for those who can't tell anyone what happened.

"Everybody thinks crashes are accidents, but we have to explore the other possibilities," Harris said.

Crashes can be intentional, like a road rage incident or perhaps a suicide accident. It's why Harris said the county is fortunate to have a team of law enforcement officials who are willing to determine what really happened when there is a fatal crash.



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Symbolic Farewell

A group of veterans makes sure hundreds of worn American flags are properly retired in a special ceremony

GREENFIELD

Hundreds of old, frayed and tattered American flags weighed heavily on the metal racks in a clearing at The “La Place” 40&8 recreational property south of Greenfield.

And they weighed heavily on the minds of onlookers as they watched flames consume them during a ritual to honorably retire the banners.

Veterans organizations gathered on a Saturday in June for their annual flag disposal ceremony, a tradition in Hancock County throughout the past half-century. They destroyed banners unfit for display collected over the past year in accordance with the nation’s flag code, which establishes that ceremoniously burning

unserviceable U.S. flags is the proper way to dispose of them.

The Hancock County 40&8 Voiture Locale 1415, VFW Post 2693, American Legion Post 119 and Greenfield Veterans Honor Guard were part of the service. Members of the organizations ceremoniously inspected a sample of the flags for disposal, and determined their condition was the result of their service as the emblem of the country before recommending they be honorably retired by fire.

A bugler played “Taps” as a bright, searing eruption of orange overtook the mass of red, white and blue.

Kathy Davis, whose husband, Mike,

By Mitchell Kirk

DAILY REPORTER

mkirk@greenfieldreporter.com

Pictured: Worn and tattered flags are sorted by volunteers before they are arranged to be burned.

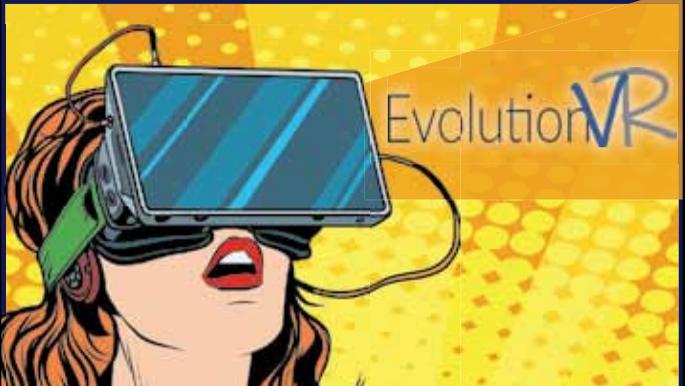


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Retired after flying outside homes and other locations to reflect their owners' patriotism, the worn and faded flags are put to flame.

served in the Navy for 20 years and participated in the ceremony, said her thoughts were on military members' sacrifices and the enduring nature of the flag as she watched the service.

"For me, it brings the debt that has happened to our military, and what they have given, and how the flag just keeps flying for now and for our future," she said. "It's very important to me."

Bryan Hollenbaugh, whose father served in the U.S. military and who has relatives who currently do, was in the audience as well.

"It's important to remember what's happened to our flag, and the people who've died and sacrificed for the ultimate cause, that give us the freedoms and create the variables that make those freedoms possible," he said. "We owe them much."

Hollenbaugh was also among the volunteers who helped prepare the flags for disposal earlier in the day. They removed American flags of various sizes from garbage bags and laid them out on tables before loading them into the back of a pickup truck and hauling them over to the burn area, where they were draped over the racks and doused with an accelerant.

Butch Miller, an Army veteran and VFW member who estimated there were about 1,500 flags, said the larger ones are saved for last.

"Usually we're lucky enough to get a garrison flag, which covers the entire length of the disposal area," he said. "But if we don't have those, what we'll do is we'll use these bigger ones to kind of lay over it and give it kind of a finished look. And when they all go up, they all go up."

"There's no real science to it," Miller added. "There's just experience to it. We've learned from experience."

One flag came out of a bag properly folded.

"You'd be surprised how many people send them here to be disposed of, but they're properly folded and everything," Miller said. "They show respect for them right up to the end."

Matt Whitton, who's involved with the VFW and 40&8, has been helping with the flag disposal ceremony for many years.

"I've done it my whole life with my parents, my friends and my comrades," he said. "If we didn't do it, who would? These would be in the dump; I hate to say it."

Chuck Gill, a Navy veteran and commander of American Legion Post 119, said he was honored to be part of the ceremony and its preparation.

"As a Navy veteran, this is one of the more meaningful, respectful, solemn duties that we all carry forward, not only as Americans, but also as veterans," he said. "It's just my way of paying the respect that the symbol of our nation is due, and the unity of what it entails for all of us. This is an important thing, and as part of the Legion, one of our orders is to carry traditions forward, to let people know why it's important to do these things."

His respect for what the flag stands for also drives him.

"A lot of us that served, it means more to us than just a symbol," Gill said. "There's so much of ourselves that we see as we progress through, represented in the flag. And all of us, every last one of us has had a solider, a shipmate, somebody that's passed defending, protecting our freedoms and rights. And it's important to me that people understand that those rights are very fragile. If we don't protect them at every stage, they can easily go away on us, and we don't want that to happen."



Matt Whitton tends to some of the estimated 1,500 flags to be retired in a special ceremony. Top: Chuck Gill of American Legion Post 119 joins others to pay tribute during the flag ceremony. Local veterans organizations held their annual flag disposal ceremony in June.

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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT



Show Buzz

New Palestine teen's podcast is attracting attention

By Kristy Deer
DAILY REPORTER
kdeer@greenfieldreporter.com



Jacob Buehrer originates his podcast from his home in New Palestine. The Jacob Buehrer Show is available through Apple and Spotify.

NEW PALESTINE

The list of people Jacob Buehrer has interviewed for his podcast is impressive. A rundown of the names might make some wonder how a teenager from New Palestine is getting the chance to have in-depth conversations with some nationally known names in politics, business and entertainment.

From former Apple CEO John Sculley to Michael Reagan, the son of President Ronald Reagan, it's been a great start for Jacob, a New

Palestine High School junior who started his podcast, "The Jacob Buehrer Show," as a way to express his creative energy.

"I got to interview Michael Reagan on the 40th anniversary of the assassination attempt on his dad," Jacob said. "To me, that was incredible."

The podcast can be heard every couple of weeks on Apple and Spotify and is attracting listeners from around the world. While most of the interviews are done remotely, Jacob has done some work in the field and even tracked down a business professional he wanted to interview in an airport when he was in Miami.

"I've had listeners all over the country and world, like in Brazil and other countries," Jacob said.

The first episode, in December 2020, centered on politics, one of his passions. It was "nothing big," Jacob said. But the adventure was fun, and he thought, why not try to get some big-name people on the show?

"With COVID and school getting cut short some days, I just started contacting people because I thought, what is the most they can say, 'no,'" Jacob said.

With a little bit of ingenuity, he was able to find phone numbers and email addresses of some famous people and started reaching out to them.



To his surprise, many were willing to come on his show.

“Some of them wondered how I got their contact information, but I would always tell them, ‘Let’s not worry about that. I’ve got a great opportunity for you,’” Jacob said.

As someone who has always been interested in broadcasting, Jacob said he was looking for something to get him off the sofa and into a more active role. Doing a podcast has done that.

He’s getting solid ratings, averaging a 4.5 out of 5 in online reviews. The podcasts are averaging a couple thousand listeners per episode, but the number of listeners varies depending on the guest.

Jacob was proud of landing an interview with Michelle Tidball, who was rapper Kanye West’s running mate during West’s third-party presidential

campaign in 2020. Jacob was told he was one of a handful of reporters who was able to interview the candidate.

“I really don’t know how me, a kid, was able to get that because they told me they said ‘no’ to Forbes,” Jacob said.

In a podcast with former astronaut Mark Mullane, who completed three space missions, Buehrer has a down-to-earth conversation, asking Mullane how he became involved in aviation and what it was like for him as a teenager to chase his dreams.

The whole process has been a great lesson for Jacob, because it has taught him to push forward and follow his ideas even if others don’t think his dreams have a chance of being a success.

“I’ve had some kids I go to school with tell me my podcast is nothing, but I get comments from California and all over telling me they really like it,” Jacob said.

“That fuels me to keep going.”

His parents, Janice and Trent Buehrer, are proud of their son’s podcast and like the fact he’s finding a way to use his curiosity about politics, entertainment and other topics to ask questions and talk to people he finds interesting.

“He does have a lot of confidence in approaching people, even strangers and just starting a conversation,” his mother said. “He’s always been a really friendly person, a social kid. He has no fears about reaching out and calling or talking to people.”

The family is interested to see where their son’s hobby might lead. Janice said it will be fun to watch and see if the podcast does lead to a broadcasting career.

“He’s just not the kind of kid who can sit still for very long, he’s goer and a doer who gets bored easily,” his mother said.



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“He’s always looking to learn.”

Like many teens Jacob isn’t the biggest fan of traditional school; he likes to learn in his own way, and so far it’s working out, the family said.

“He researches people online, and if he finds something interesting he then goes after it,” Janice said.

Right now his podcast is just for fun, with no advertisers, but Jacob noted one never knows what can happen. He’s not sure what he’s going to study in college, but he’s been inspired to learn more about business, because he’s learned the money follows if a person puts forth a good product. He also has learned the key to success is not giving up.

“This one guy I talked to, it took 15 years just to get his fitness facility started in one place, and now he’s got over 2,000 all over,” Jacob said. “I’ve always believed (in following) your passion, and what you are good at will show.”

Some of the people who’ve appeared on the “The Jacob Buehrer Show”:

John Sculley, former Apple CEO

Kevin Lacey and Ken Cage from the TV program “Airplane Repo”

Former U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire

George Allen, former U.S. senator and governor of Virginia

Diego Morales, 2022 candidate for Indiana secretary of state

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Actor Adam Ferrara from the TV programs “Top Gear” and “Nurse Jackie”

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Michelle Tidball, Kanye West’s running mate

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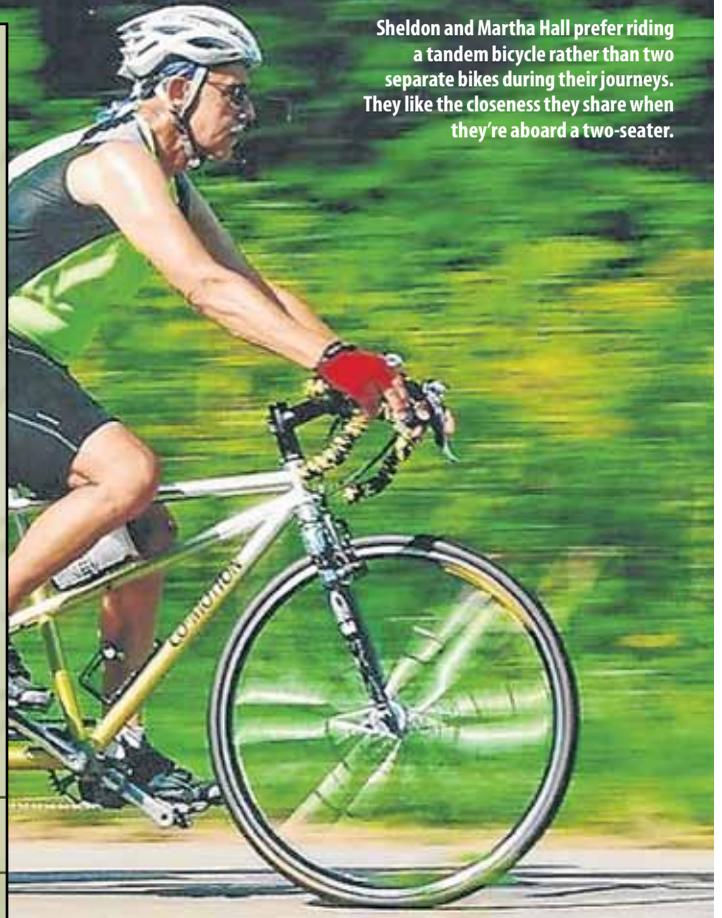


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Sheldon and Martha Hall prefer riding a tandem bicycle rather than two separate bikes during their journeys. They like the closeness they share when they're aboard a two-seater.

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Long Riders

Local couple racking up the miles in retirement

By Shelley Swift
DAILY REPORTER
sswift@greenfieldreporter.com

GREENFIELD

If you regularly ride or walk on the Pennsy Trail in Greenfield, you might have seen Sheldon and Martha Hall, riding their two-seat bicycle in perfect tandem on one of their many trips through the countryside.

They cover a lot of ground for a couple of retired schoolteachers: Last year, they road 180 days, racking up 4,000 miles.

The Greenfield couple have been cycling together ever since their parents set them up

on a blind date 30 years ago.

The date in question? A 100-mile century ride — a badge of honor among devoted cyclists — in Hope, Indiana.

The couple married two years later, and have been biking thousands of miles together ever since.

The Halls ride as much as they can, even while on vacation. They frequently drive out to the West Coast to visit a son who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, stopping along picturesque parks along the way.

They've also biked through Europe when visiting another son in Sweden.

In the warmer months, they'll ride two to four hours a day, four to five days a week.

"Sometime we just ride on the Pennsy Trail, come home and say,

"That's better than going to the gym for an hour and a half." We like being outside," said Sheldon.

"It's a great way to see the world," said Martha.

When they're not traveling, they are frequently seen riding their teal blue tandem bike throughout the back roads of Hancock County and along the Pennsy Trail. They prefer the closeness and camaraderie that comes from riding a two-seater, rather than two bicycles.

"I haven't ridden a single for miles in the last seven years," said Martha, who takes the backseat while her husband rides in the front.

Sheldon said riding a two-seater is a great way to have better conversation with your fellow rider. Plus, it feels safer, too.

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Martha and Sheldon Hall can be found on their tandem bicycle almost every day on the Pennsy Trail or on back roads in Hancock County.

ears on one bike instead of two. It has more of a team effect,” he said.

The Halls are active in a subgroup of the Central Indiana Bicycling Association called Hoosiers Out On Tandem, or HOOTs, consisting of couples from all over the state.

“A lot of our socializing is when we get together with other tandem teams,” Sheldon said. “About all of our friends ride, and a lot of our trips are planned around riding. It’s a big part of our lives.”

He and his wife never hesitate to strap their bike onto the back of their Toyota Sienna minivan and meet up for rides with friends.

The couple has biked through all 92 counties in Indiana, and they pedaled their way around Lake Michigan in 2006.

Three years later, they completed the Ride Across Indiana event, known as RAIN, a 160-mile course that runs mostly along the Old National Road, from Terre Haute to Richmond.

“You see things differently traveling by bike,” Martha said. “You see things you wouldn’t otherwise see driving by car, because you’re going slower.”

It’s also a fun pastime and the best form of exercise for people with bad knees, said Martha, a former runner who had one knee replaced 10 years ago and has ongoing arthritis in the other.

She took up cycling 30 years ago as a way to keep up with her two active kids. She soon worked her way up to doing a week-long ride.

Sheldon started bicycling long distances after going through a divorce in his mid-30s.

The couple is passionate about sharing their love of cycling with others, and they encourage people of all ages to pick up the hobby and get pedaling, even if it’s just around the block to start.

“You can ride from Greenfield to New Pal on back roads that are relatively low traffic. The main thing is to make yourself visible,” Martha said.

She and her husband wear matching high-visibility green jerseys and helmets. There’s a flashing light on the back of Martha’s helmet, and a flashing light on the back of their bike.

The couple wear rear-view mirrors attached to their glasses, which they prefer over mirrors that attach to a bike. “The mirrors are an absolute necessity. It’s like riding blind without them,” Martha said.

It’s safest to pick back roads with low traffic, she said.

“That’s not hard to do in Hancock County, especially with the Pennsy Trail. You can ride it end to end and get out into roads with light traffic at either end. The trail changed our life,” Martha said.

It also helps to have a destination. “Sometimes we ride to Carthage or Knightstown or Morristown. If you have a destination, then you feel like you’ve been somewhere, and it makes the ride more fun,” she said.

She and Sheldon take turns picking interesting destinations with friends. They’ve taken several friends to visit the Hoosier Gym in Knightstown, and the oldest iron bridge in Hancock County, and they’ve had friends take them biking out to Shelby County to visit the ASSphalt Acres miniature donkey farm.

The Halls serve on the Hancock County Trails Plan steering committee, on the subcommittee focused on educating the public about bike safety, and providing programs targeting improved safety and biking and walking clubs for kids.

The Halls hope to help Hancock County become designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists, and they work with the Greenfield Parks Department to host group rides for seniors along the Pennsy Trail.

The couple is also active with the Ghost Bike Project, which places bicycles painted white at the sight where bicyclists have been killed by motor vehicles. They’ve placed three in Hancock County and have helped with the placement of 12 or so in Marion County.

“That project is to raise awareness of the need for bicycle infrastructure and adequate safety precautions,” said Martha, who advocates for good shoulders, lighting and curbs along roadways for cyclists.

Last year, the couple planned to speak at local schools about bicycle safety, but the program was delayed due to COVID. They hope to resume the effort soon, working with Bicycle Indiana, a statewide nonprofit working to make bicycle riding safer throughout the state.

“With the obesity and health problems our country is having, riding is a good way to keep your fitness up, and it’s also a good way to commute,” said Sheldon, whose son bikes to work within the Bay Area each day.

“It’s also a great way to see the outdoors,” he said.

He and his wife marvel at the interesting things they come across when pedaling down the road, like a field full of crosses marking a plane crash from years ago, or the sight of petrified wood making its way out of the ground.

They also meet interesting people along the way. They once pulled to the side of the road and struck up a conversation with a semi driver pulling a load of manure that ended up being the

farm manager for Fair Oaks dairy farm.

“You find interesting things like that in Indiana,” Martha said.

The couple think that exploring the world on two wheels is the ideal way to spend their retirement.

They’ve been pedaling daily ever since they retired 13 years ago. Before that, Martha was a special education teacher for the Indianapolis Public Schools. Sheldon rounded out his career teaching biology and genetics at Lawrence Central High School.

They do a variety of short and long trips each month, often cruising the back roads throughout Hancock and surrounding counties.

For longer rides, they make sure to take enough water, as well as a couple of energy bars.

When riding 40 or miles along back roads, they plan a place to stop and eat, but when biking along a developed route like through the towns around Lake Michigan, they stop and explore local shops and restaurants.

They can go up to 40 miles without stopping if they push themselves, they said.

“You just have to gradually build your distance, adding no more than 10% to your mileage each week,” Sheldon said.

While some long-distance cyclists like to camp, the Halls prefer to stay at motels along their route. When biking through Europe, they take a much more leisurely speed, stopping frequently to enjoy the scenery or a glass of wine.

No matter the distance, wearing padded bicycle shorts and adjusting your seat to just the right height is essential, Sheldon said.

This month the Halls are taking part in the 30-day nationwide challenge that encourages cyclists to ride every day in the month of April, regardless of the weather.

“We can watch the weather and try to pick a time when there’s a gap in the weather,” said Martha, who admits to not being a big fan of riding in windy, rainy, cold weather. “That’s one of the benefits of being retired.”



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HANCOCK COUNTY

The Pennsy Trail is expanding for the first time in over a decade, with a segment of its next phase complete and property secured to join it up with the path that goes all the way to Indianapolis.

The nonprofit organization Pennsy Trails of Hancock County, which is responsible for the design of the trail, worked with Hancock County to pay a total of \$137,018 to prepare for the next section, between County Roads 500W and 600W. When it's completed, it will link to the existing Pennsy Trail that runs through Cumberland and the east side of Indianapolis.

This new section of the trail was made possible by a grant from the Indiana

Department of Natural Resources. The department awarded Pennsy Trails \$670,802 for the design and construction of the 500W/600W section, which will be 1.3 miles long. It will link to another new section County Roads 500W and 400W that was completed in the summer of 2021.

The goal is to eventually link to the trail from Greenfield, whose terminus is currently at County Road 150W. The trail generally follows the old Pennsylvania Railroad bed, parallel to U.S. 40.

DNR director Dan Bortner said at the time of the grant announcement that a variety of factors was considered when choosing the recipients of the grants,

By Jessica Karins

DAILY REPORTER
jkarins@greenfieldreporter.com

Pictured: A new section of the Pennsy Trail has opened between County Roads 400W and 500W.



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such as whether governments proposing trails were partnering with community organizations and whether proposed trails would connect two communities. A total of 62 applications were submitted, and 18 grants were made.

The engineering firm WSP USA Inc. was awarded the contract by the county to design the section. The Hancock County Highway Department will

Trail Update

The two-mile-plus sections of the Pennsy Trail, part of which is now under construction, will be the most extensive addition to the trail since the Cumberland leg of the Pennsy was added in 2010. (Erin Caplinger | Daily Reporter)

construct the trail as part of the local match for the DNR grant.

Construction of the trail section is expected to be completed by July 2022, Pennsy Trails board president Mary Ann Wietbrock said.

The path will take an unusual route. Instead of following the old rail bed directly east, a section will go south on 600W before bearing back east to 500W.

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From there, the trail will head back north. Marked crossings on 600W and 500W are planned.

The new section running east from 500W to 400W is complete. It runs from the Sugar Creek Township fire station on 500W to connect with a new trailhead a mile east. This section of the trail runs between the Meadow Lake Estates/Havens neighborhood and the Washington Village Apartments. It also passes through a wooded area.

"A trailhead has been designed at 400W... to provide shelter and environmental signs to highlight the Sugar Creek Watershed Project," Wietbrock wrote in an email. "This site will have handicap parking and will be available for students, Scouts, families and adults to understand how

to restore and manage vital wildlife habitat."

Much of the trail work has been funded by grants from the state and federal government.

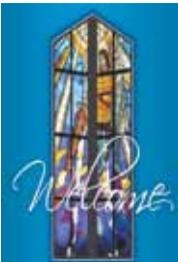
Pennsy Trails spent \$60,801 on land purchases for the 500W/400W section, according to numbers provided by the Hancock County auditor's office. DNR contributed \$127,000 toward land purchases.

The trails received a federal Transportation Alternatives Program grant construction of that trail section totaling \$550,400, and the county in spending \$137,600. Work is expected to be completed later this summer.

For the creation of the trailhead area at 400W, Pennsy Trails used a combination of funds from a Hancock

County Community Foundation grant and another grant from Duke Energy. Eagle Scout projects are also helping develop the trailhead, which will be completed once construction is done on the trail section. Plans for the trailhead include picnic tables, educational signs, paved parking and space for a portable restroom.

The work on the trail sections will be the most extensive expansions of the Pennsy Trail in Hancock County in years. The Cumberland section of the trail, extending from German Church Road to 600W, was completed in 2010. Paths heading east out of Irvington now link with it. The Greenfield section of the trail, running from 150W to County Road 400E, was completed in 1998.



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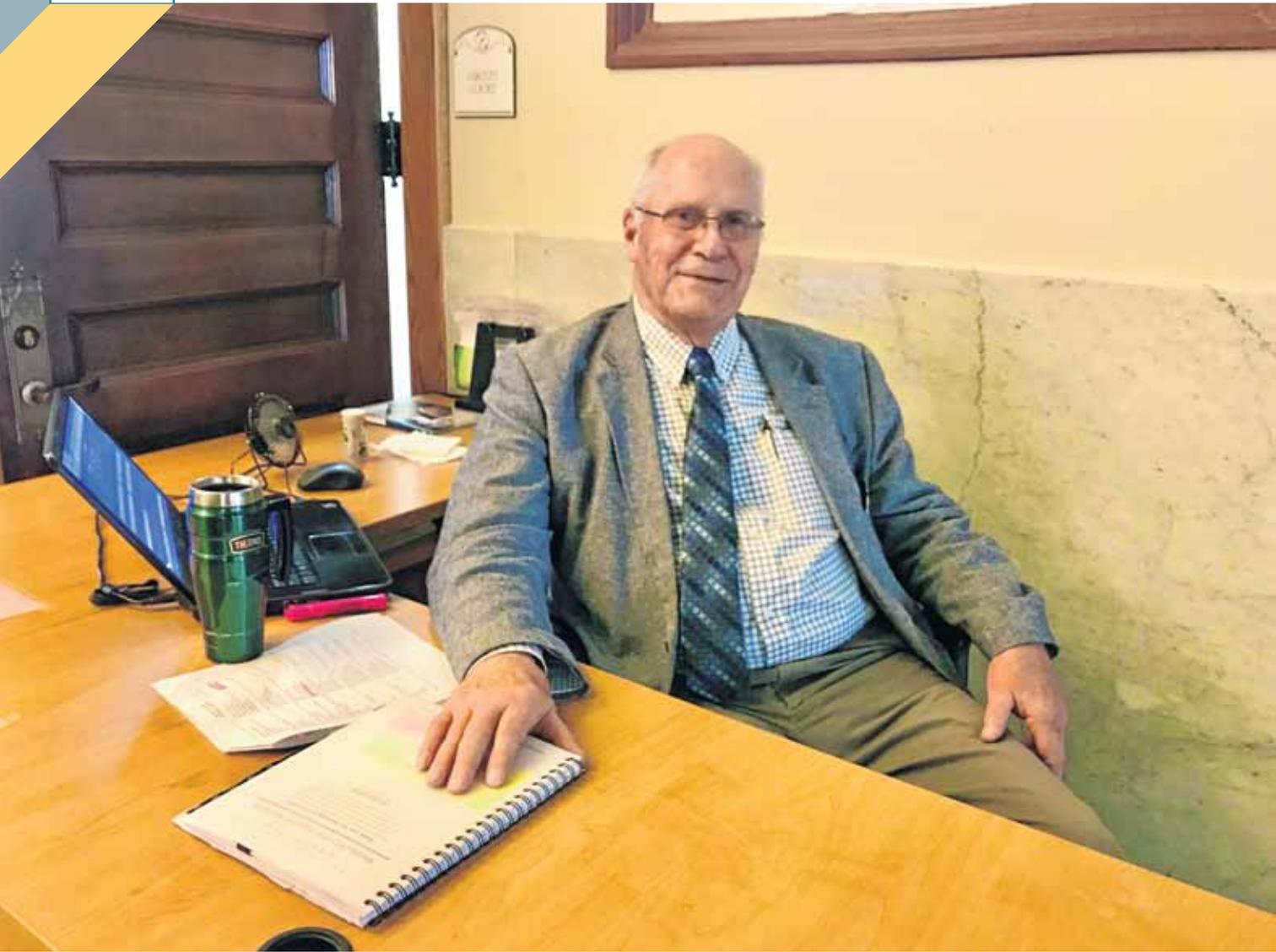
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Lifetime Achievement

Bailiff continues service at county courthouse
after decades in law enforcement

HANCOCK COUNTY

To say Warren Aldrich likes things done by the book would be a slight understatement. Doing things by the letter of the law defines Aldrich, who in 2021 celebrated 50 years of working in law enforcement. He started his career with the Indiana State Police on Sept. 1, 1968 and worked with the department for 34 years before retiring Aug. 31, 2002.

After a couple of years, Aldrich knew the retirement life was not for him. He heard of an opening for a bailiff, a courtroom security officer, in Hancock County Circuit Court. Judge Richard Culver hired him in May of 2005, and he's been serving the county as a courtroom law enforcement officer ever since.

While it takes a special kind of person to get into public service, it takes someone even more dedicated to do it for 50 years. However, Aldrich said he's a little different, noting he stuck with police work for decades and continued on as a bailiff because he quite frankly loves the work.

"You know the state police recruitment force asked me the very same question all those years ago, why did I want to get into law enforcement, and I said 'well, I liked the pension program, and number two, I've always been the kind of person who did not depend on somebody else to do things,'" Aldrich said. "I wanted to do things and rely on myself to help keep society safe."

By Kristy Deer

DAILY REPORTER

kdeer@greenfieldreporter.com

Warren Aldrich celebrated 50 years of working in law enforcement in 2021. He spent 34 years working with the Indiana State Police and has worked as a county bailiff at the courthouse since 2005. (Kristy Deer | Daily Reporter)



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Tough and gruff are two words some have used to describe the 77-year-old, but that suits Aldrich just fine. He likes being able to show people who walk into the courthouse that there is a right and wrong way to do things, and the right way is the only way that flies when he is present.

“When I first started working in the courthouse, I’d maybe have to say something to someone about the way we do things here once a week, but now sometimes it’s more than once a day,” Aldrich said.

While some might think that is the hard part of his job, it isn’t. Just like when he was patrolling Indiana’s highways, Aldrich said he was and is very comfortable on the job and is always ready to let people know if they step out of line.

“People talk about how dangerous being in law enforcement is, and it is,

especially nowadays, but it’s the same for a fireman, a midnight store or gas station clerk,” he said. “But, it’s something most police officers only allow to occupy a very small part of their brain.”

Judge Scott Sirk, who presides over Circuit Court, inherited Aldrich as part of his staff when he took over for Culver in December of 2017. Sirk, who had worked as the county’s court commissioner since 2009, considers Aldrich a vital part of his court staff and called him a dedicated security officer who desires the very best protection and operation for Circuit Court.

“He always comes to work early, never misses a day and is flexible and will stay as long as we need his services,” Sirk said. “I rely on him tremendously during jury trials and in taking care of and serving our jury.”

Sirk cited a packed sentencing hearing in which Aldrich not only handled a

large crowd of 50 or more people inside the courtroom, but also oversaw and supervised some 50 people waiting in the courtroom hallways to hear the outcome of the hearing.

“Warren was dedicated to ensure smooth court operations,” Sirk said. “He meets the public on behalf of Circuit Court and always conveys professionalism and service to the citizens of Hancock County.”

Whenever he’s slated to work, Aldrich is always the first person at the courthouse, reading through the Bible and praying for protection and guidance for all who enter through the doors. While the act almost makes one think Aldrich cares about the happenings of every soul who enters the courthouse, he never wants to spoil the image he has of having a rough and tough exterior.

“I don’t want to admit that I have a heart for the community and ruin my

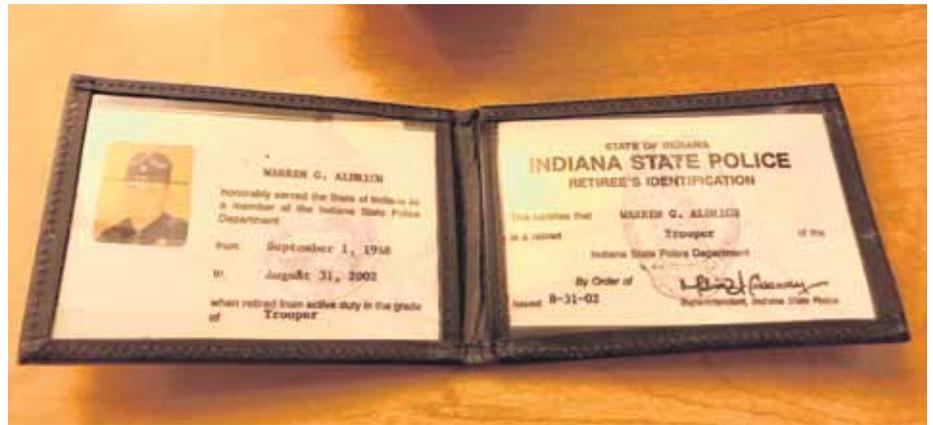
reputation,” he said with a laugh. “I’ve been accused of not having a heart, and I’m good with that.”

Aldrich’s wife, Sally, happened to be a jail commander with the county when Aldrich thought about heading back to work as a bailiff some 16 years ago, and that helped him determine while there were a hundred other things he could have done, serving as an bailiff would be good for him.

“It’s been a good fit for me,” he said.

Through the years, Aldrich has seen how being a law enforcement official has changed and admits it bothers him. He noted how when he first became state trooper, people generally were compliant and willing to follow rules. Nowadays, there is so much distaste for law enforcement and a lot more defiance.

“I don’t know if I could go back to wearing a uniform or being a policeman on the roads today,” he said. “It’s



Warren Aldrich always carries his Indiana State Police retirement identification cards tucked in his pocket along with his badge, something given to him when he retired from the Indiana State Police in 2002. (Kristy Deer | Daily Reporter)

completely different from when I was on the roads.”

Still, he knows being a trooper was a chance to do something he loved, just like being a bailiff now. He’s proud to talk about his grandson, who has followed in his footsteps and currently works for the Greenfield Police Department.

Aldrich likes to tell the story of when his grandson first started in law enforcement with the Knightstown Police Department of how he’d always

pull out his pension check from the state police and compare it with his grandson’s pay as a way to get him to join the state police.

“I’d show it to him and say, ‘You sure you don’t want to go work for them?’” Aldrich said with a sparkle in his eye.

In his wallet, Aldrich still carries reminders of his long career. It includes a state police badge and his retirement cards, proving that once a police officer, always a police officer.

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Road Relics

Historical bricks under State Street being saved as a way to preserve history

By Mitchell Kirk

DAILY REPORTER

mkirk@greenfieldreporter.com

As State Street gets dug up, the historical bricks that used to make up the road are being removed and saved for future projects.

GREENFIELD

Long before downtown State Street was made up of asphalt, the thoroughfare was paved in bricks.

Those blocks have remained where they are ever since they were first laid more than a century ago. They resurfaced during the demolition of the street as the state's reconstruction of State Road 9, known as State Street through town, took place in the spring and summer of 2021. Rather than cover the bricks back up, many in front of Greenfield City Hall were removed to be used in ways that will allow them to see the light of day once more.

Many of the bricks are stamped with "Buckeye Block," referring to the former Roseville Brick and Terra Cotta Company in Roseville, Ohio. The company was in business from 1891 to 1908, according to the Roseville Historical Society.

In 1898, when Greenfield's population was around 4,500, The Hancock Democrat reported that contractor C.M. Kirkpatrick got the job to brick Main, State and East streets.

According to a history compiled by G. Edward Knight of Knightstown, Christian M. "Kit" Kirkpatrick lived in Greenfield, and his company built the Interurban railroad from the city to Indianapolis and elsewhere throughout the state.

Joan Fitzwater, Greenfield planning director, said so far the city managed to set several dump truck loads of the historical bricks that formerly made up State Street in front of City Hall. They'll be used on trails or in parks to preserve a unique part of the city's past.

"They're not making any more of these," Fitzwater said. "It's just another piece of our heritage, and a reminder of



A photo from 1903 shows a brick-paving crew on East Main Street in Greenfield. (Submitted photo)

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IN-35084906



how we came to be who we are today. “The National Road (Main Street/U.S. 40) and State Road 9 are important transportation routes that put Greenfield on the map.”

Brigitte Jones, former president of the Hancock County Historical Society and current executive director of the Hancock County Tourism Commission, said before bricks, roads through town were lined with planks that would clatter as horses trotted along. Pothole-prone Macadam streets replaced those, which were dusty when dry and mucky when wet.

“They’re heavy,” Jones said of the Buckeye Blocks. “They’re not just like bricks you put on a house. They’re paving bricks, like what you’d find under the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.”

It quickly became the material of choice.

“Main streets would’ve been bricked first, and then side streets would’ve been bricked later,” Jones said. “So there’s a lot of brick under a lot of our streets.”

At the time the bricks were going in downtown, Indiana was in the midst of its gas boom following the discovery of the Trenton Gas Field in the east-central part of the state and part of Ohio in the 1880s.

“The time period would’ve been a time of extreme growth,” Jones said. “A lot of our buildings that you see that are downtown were built right around this time period.”

That includes the Hancock County Courthouse; the H.B. Thayer building on State Street’s east side north of

Main Street; the L.C. Thayer building at the northwest corner of Main and East streets; and the former Masonic building that houses Bradley Hall at the northwest corner of State and Main streets.

“Greenfield would’ve been a happening place because of the gas boom and the buildings being built,” Jones said.

Joe Skvarenina, Hancock County historian, agreed.

“All the services were here in town, all that you needed,” he said.

As Knight’s history reported, it was also a time when the Interurban railway was being developed in Hancock County and throughout the state. But it didn’t last long, as a new form of transportation was picking up speed.

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extensive mass transit systems in the world,” Jones said. “And when the automobile became popular, it killed it. ... You could hop on the Interurban and go from Mohawk all the way up to Maxwell and then take it up to Willow Branch and go all the way to New Castle. It connected a lot of our little communities. Of course, when that went away, it hurt a lot of our communities.”

Along with Depot Street, a brick alley remains at surface level in town running to the west of The Garden Chapel at 226 W. North St.

Skvarenina applauds city’s efforts to save the bricks.

“They’re characteristics of an era gone by in Greenfield,” he said.



The stamp on a block identifies it as a “Buckeye Block,” manufactured by Roseville Brick and Terra Cotta Company in Roseville, Ohio.

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Lighting a Spark

Academy introduces youngsters to possibilities of firefighting as a career



Keagan Sanders takes a break after a training scenario involving search and rescue from a smoke-filled building. Above: Greenfield firefighter Easton Fields watches as a smoke variant fills a training space before a practice scenario during the teen academy.

By Kristy Deer
DAILY REPORTER
kdeer@greenfieldreporter.com

GREENFIELD

The protective fire gear was much heavier than Declan McPherson thought it was going to be.

“I had no idea I was going to have to put all this gear on,” Declan said, tugging at the heavy metal clasp keeping the pants from falling. “These pants weight a lot.”

The 14-year-old eighth-grader was standing in the middle of a Greenfield fire station garage with a dozen other teenagers, dressed in full gear and learning the proper way to prepare to fight a fire.

“It’s a different ball game when they put on the fire gear, mask and everything,” said Steve Kropacek, fire marshal for the Greenfield Fire Territory. “They’re putting on about

100 pounds with everything we carry, and that’s one of the things they had never thought about.”

The training session was just one of the many things the Greenfield-Central Junior High School students learned during the department’s second annual Teen Fire Academy.

The daylong program was designed to give younger teenagers a chance to see if they’d be interested in a career as a firefighter. Those who did well and enjoyed the experience were recommended to take the next step and sign up for the department’s Cadet Academy, which accepts high school students to learn more about firefighting skills.

Kropacek and Lt. Jeff Goebel were overseeing the lessons, which started with a look back at the fire department’s history.

The students also went through gear-fitting drills and teenagers

learned how to properly use fire extinguishers. They learned how to handle hoses and ladders and conduct searches. They also learned about aerial operations, rescue operations and the duties of paramedics.

"The kids love because it opens their eyes a little bit to what we really do and what they could do one day," Kropacek said.

Officials from the fire territory recruited the teenagers, having lunch with them during school at Greenfield Central Junior High and explaining what they do in an effort to drum up interest in first-responder training.

Even though he's only heading into the eighth grade, Declan seemed pretty confident he'll end up being a firefighter one day, noting his father, uncle and grandfathers are firefighters.

"My family really likes it, and I think it's kind of fun," he said. "That's my goal to be a firefighter."

Declan was particularly looking

forward to seeing what it was like to climb a firefighting ladder.

"I want to see what it feels like to be up that high," he said.

Goebel over sees the department's Cadet Academy and had a few of his older high school cadets working with the seventh- and eighth-graders.

"This is all about giving the kids a chance to get their feet wet kind of learning," Goebel said.

Goebel noted it's one thing to dream about being a first-responder as a smaller kid. Getting a chance to wear the gear and understand firefighters work is different.

"They get to put their hands on the equipment and see how heavy an axe is," Goebel said. "They're getting their eyes opened."

Logan Williams, 18, is a recent Greenfield-Central High School graduate who landed a volunteer position in Green Township. He was one of the teenagers who went through the Cadet Academy and helped teach

the younger teens during the training session. Williams remembered what it was like to cross the line from dreaming about being a firefighter to getting a real chance to be one. He said it's days like this that can focus young people's vision on their career choices.

"This just kind of gives you a taste of what it would be like to be a firefighter, the basics," Williams said.

Becoming a firefighter and helping people is something Williams has wanted to do his whole life, he said. Introductory programs like this one are very important.

He's taken numerous classes and hopes to one day join the Greenfield Fire Territory as a full-time firefighter and said it all started thanks to things like the Teen and Cadet Academies.

"This is a great intro into the Cadet program so when you get in there, you know what to expect," Williams said. "I love teaching people about it because it's a great field to get into."



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After a career in broadcasting, Julie Patterson now plans events for the town of Cumberland, including its popular Blues, Beer and BBQ events.

Party On

Former TV and radio host finds a fun new calling

By Shelley Swift

DAILY REPORTER
sswift@greenfieldreporter.com

CUMBERLAND

Julie Patterson knows how to throw a party.

As the special projects coordinator for the Town of Cumberland, she's in charge of planning community events like the Cumberland Arts Festival and the ever-popular Blues, Beer and BBQ events.

The fun-filled job is right up Patterson's alley, even if it comes at a much slower pace than she's been used to in the past.

Patterson spent the bulk of her career as a well-known Indianapolis radio and TV personality, hosting the popular morning show on WZPL-99.5 FM and later on WENS-97.1 FM, then serving as traffic anchor for WISH-TV Daybreak until 2014.

Although Patterson doesn't mention it, her LinkedIn bio shows she once won Best on Air Talent from the organization American Women in Radio and Television.

She's lived just a mile west of Cumberland for the past 26 years, and is enjoying her gig planning events for the community, but memories of her former, fast-paced life are never far behind.

A Rocky III poster signed by Sylvester Stallone hangs in her office at Cumberland Town Hall, a relic from those fast-paced days, when Patterson was often rubbing shoulders with celebrities, jet-setting around covering press junkets for movie premieres and awards shows.

"Elton John was probably my favorite. He's just a classy, wonderful individual," said Patterson, a high-energy extrovert with a quick wit and easy smile.

Her eyes light up when she recalls some of the highlights of her former life, like attending the Grammys in 1992, or flying first-class to cover the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

Some of her very favorite memories were the wacky contests she helped

host over the years, like the “Live in It to Win It” contest, which invited four strangers to live alongside each other inside a car parked in a mall, or the one where players chugged Orange Crush for the chance to meet Jon Bon Jovi.

One of the biggest highlights of her career was the day Bon Jovi called her up on stage on her 40th birthday during a concert at Market Square Arena.

Perks like that are a big part of what made her broadcasting career so fun, said Patterson, although the real highlight has been the interactions she’s had with everyday people.

She’ll never forget the day she was doing her morning radio show at WZPL when the first plane hit on Sept. 11, 2001. “We were broadcasting live when the second plane hit, and we stayed on live all day long. We walked alongside the community through it all day that day,” she said.

Nowadays, some morning radio hosts have a whole team of people scanning headlines and making up jokes to be shared on air, she said. But not so much back in the ‘80s and ‘90s.

“Each morning I’d have five newspapers I’d go through and take a razor blade to cut out interesting things to talk about on air that day, and we made up all our own jokes and parody songs. We’d record interviews on tape and splice them together with a piece of tape. It was a blast,” she said.

She still speaks fondly of the people she spent so many early morning hours alongside, year after year. The hours were brutal, but a lot of fun, she recalled.

“I got up at 2 a.m. for the better part of 31 years,” said Patterson, who took a few years off to be a stay-at-home mom to her three now-grown kids.

The Tennessee native first came to

Indiana to play basketball at Taylor University, then transferred to Ball State University, where she first fell in love with broadcasting.

She then fell in love with a Hoosier, her future husband, Pat Patterson.

After a long and exciting career in broadcasting, Patterson decided to ease into what she calls her “giving back years” by working a number of slower paced jobs after leaving her post at WISH-TV in 2014.

She spent six years working at her children’s school in Warren Township before taking on her current role in Cumberland in November 2020. Patterson said she quickly fell in love with the job.

“I just loved it from the first day,” said Patterson, who is happy to help showcase the fun side of Cumberland, which is divided between Hancock and Marion counties. “It’s a great place to be,” she said.



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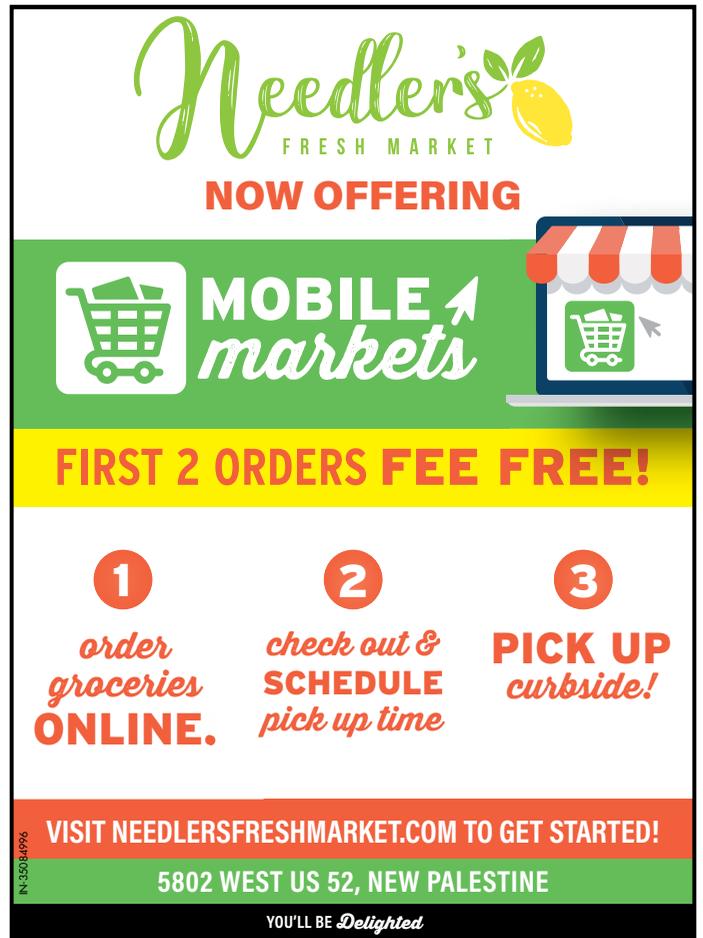
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New Palestine Junior High School

2279 S. County Road
600W
New Palestine, IN 46163
317-861-4487

Keith Fessler, principal
kfessler@k12.in.us

New Palestine Intermediate School

5613 W. County Road 200S
New Palestine, IN 46163
317-861-3267

Vincent Meo, principal
vmeo@newpal.k12.in.us

Brandywine Elementary

413 E. County Road 400S
Greenfield, IN 46140
317-462-7396

Austin Theobald, principal
atheobald@newpal.k12.in.us

New Palestine Elementary

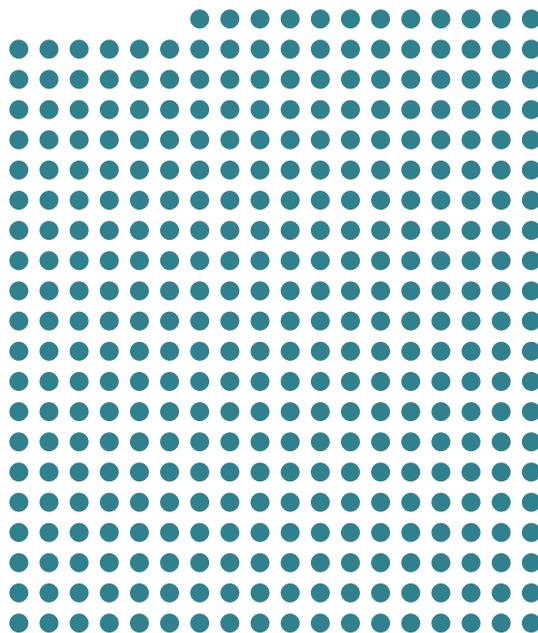
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317-861-5287

Kayleigh Fosnow, principal
kfosnow@newpal.k12.in.us

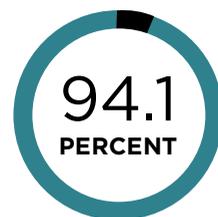
Sugar Creek Elementary

2337 S. County Road 600W
New Palestine, IN, 46163
317-861-6747

Jan Kehrt, principal
jkehrt@newpal.k12.in.us



2020-2021 ENROLLMENT: 3,728 • Represents 10 students



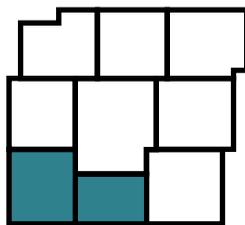
2019-2020 GRADUATION RATE

A

2019-2020 ACCOUNTABILITY GRADE

SOUTHERN HANCOCK

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THE DISTRICT

Children in Sugar Creek and Brandywine townships attend Southern Hancock schools.

SCHOOL BOARD

- Matt Ackerman
- Brian McKinney
- Laura Haeberle
- Jon Hooker
- Dan Walker

ADMINISTRATION

- SUPERINTENDENT:** Lisa Lantrip
llantrip@newpal.k12.in.us | 317-861-4463, ext. 117
- ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT:** Robert Yoder
byoder@newpal.k12.in.us | 317-861-4463, ext. 111
- DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTION:** Miles Hercamp
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Agriculture & Natural Resources



Lais McCartney is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator in Hancock County and the Indiana SARE Coordinator. Lais enjoys working with local farmers in technology and license recertification classes. Home horticulturalists, backyard gardeners, and Beekeeping are a large portion of Lais's work and time, especially in the summer.

Health and Human Sciences

The Health and Human Sciences (HHS) Educator in Hancock County provides research-based education in the community in the areas of finance, human development, food and nutrition, and health and wellness.

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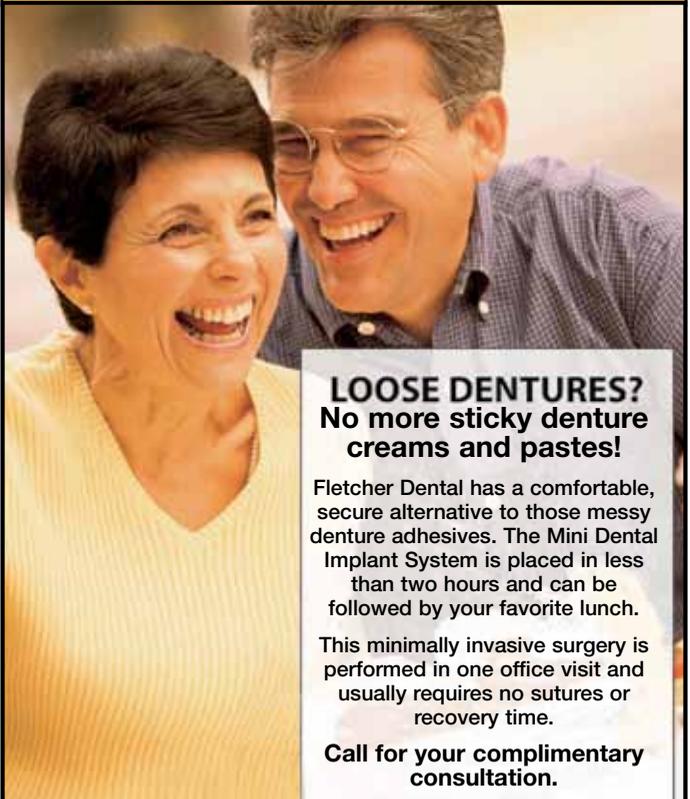
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Greenfield, 317-462-9211

Jason Cary, principal
jcary@gcsc.k12.in.us

Greenfield Central Junior High School

1440 N. Franklin St.
Greenfield, 317-477-4616

Jim Bever, principal
jbever@gcsc.k12.in.us

Greenfield Intermediate

204 W. Park Ave.
Greenfield, 317-462-6827

Devon Marine, principal
dmarine@gcsc.k12.in.us

Maxwell Intermediate

102 N. Main Street
Maxwell, 317-326-3121

Jobie Whitaker, principal
jwhitaker@gcsc.k12.in.us

Eden Elementary

8185 N. State Road 9
Greenfield, 317-326-3117

Melia Hammons, principal
mhammons@gcsc.k12.in.us

Harris Elementary

200 W. Park Ave.
Greenfield, 317-467-6731

Sarah Greulich, principal
sgreulich@gcsc.k12.in.us

J.B. Stephens Elementary

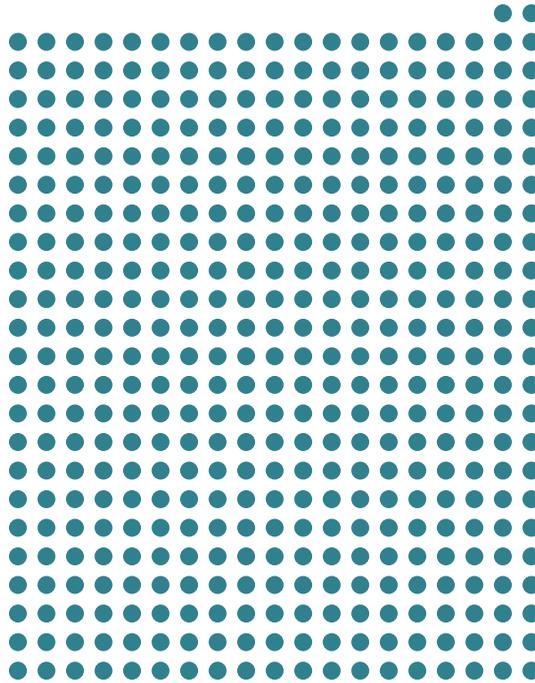
1331 N. Blue Road
Greenfield, 317-462-4491

Shane Bryant, principal
shbryant@gcsc.k12.in.us

Weston Elementary

140 Polk St.
Greenfield, 317-462-1492

Meg Welch, principal
mwelch@gcsc.k12.in.us



2020-2021 ENROLLMENT: 4,396 • Represents 10 students



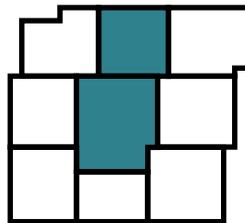
2019-2020
GRADUATION RATE

B

2019-2020
ACCOUNTABILITY GRADE

GREENFIELD -CENTRAL

110 W. NORTH ST. • GREENFIELD 46140 • 317-462-4434



THE DISTRICT

Children in Center and Green townships attend Greenfield-Central schools.

ADMINISTRATION

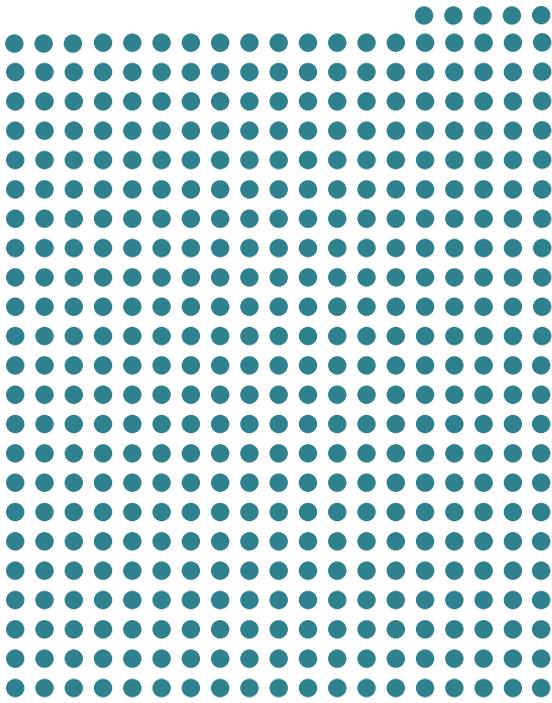
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holin@gcsc.k12.in.us | 317-462-4434

DIRECTOR OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: Megan Thompson | mthompson@gcsc.k12.in.us

DIRECTOR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION: Lori Katz | lkatz@gcsc.k12.in.us

SCHOOL BOARD

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2019-2020
GRADUATION
RATE

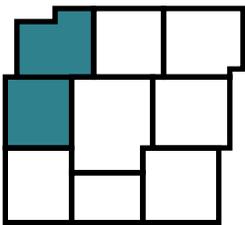
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2019-2020
ACCOUNTABILITY
GRADE

2020-2021
ENROLLMENT: 4,420 • Represents 10 students

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THE DISTRICT

Children in Buck Creek and Vernon townships attend Mt. Vernon schools.

ADMINISTRATION

SUPERINTENDENT: Jack Parker
jack.parker@mvsc.k12.in.us | 317-485-3100

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT: Chris Smedley
chris.smedley@mvsc.k12.in.us | 317-485-3100 ext. 5104

DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM: Scott Shipley
scott.shipley@mvsc.k12.in.us | 317-485-3100 ext. 2158

DIRECTOR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION: Scott Shipley

SCHOOL BOARD

- Kellie Freeman
- Tony May
- Shannon Walls
- Chad Gray
- Phil Edwards

SCHOOLS

Mt. Vernon High School

8112 N. County Road 200W
Fortville, IN, 46040
317-485-3131

Casey Dodd, principal
casey.dodd
@mvsc.k12.in.us

Mt. Vernon Middle School

1862 W. State Road 234
Fortville, IN, 46040
317-485-3160

Brooke Tharp, principal
brooke.tharp@mvsc.k12.in.us

Fortville Elementary

8414 N. County Road 200W
Fortville, IN, 46040
317-485-3180

Vince Edwards
vince.edwards@mvsc.k12.in.us

McCordsville Elementary

7177 N. County Road 600W
McCordsville, IN, 46055
317-336-7760

Stephanie Miller, principal
stephanie.miller
@mvsc.k12.in.us

Mt. Comfort Elementary

5694 W. County Road
300N, Greenfield, IN, 46140
317-894-7667

Alissa Lockwood, principal
alissa.lockwood
@mvsc.k12.in.us



SCHOOLS

Eastern Hancock High School

10320 E.
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Charlottesville, IN, 46117
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Eastern Hancock Middle School

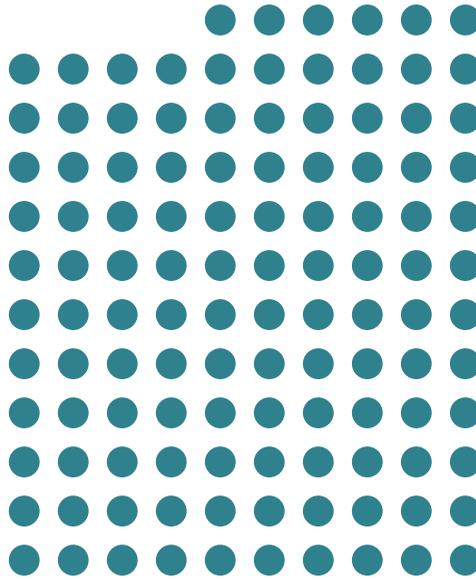
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County Road 250 N,
Charlottesville, IN, 46117
317-936-5324

Adam Barton, principal
abarton
@easternhancock.org

Eastern Hancock Elementary

10450 E.
County Road 250N,
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317-936-5829

Amanda Pyle, principal
apyle@easternhancock.org



2020-2021 ENROLLMENT: 1,151 ● Represents 10 students



2019-2020 GRADUATION RATE

A

2020-2021 ACCOUNTABILITY GRADE

EASTERN HANCOCK



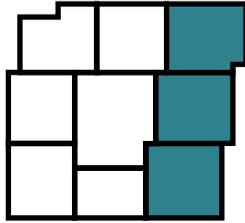
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Pastor finds a home with a congregation where love is color blind

GREENFIELD

It's been said that Sunday morning is the most segregated time for Americans, with Black and white worship services largely remaining separate. That makes Theo Griffin, the lead pastor of the Brown's Chapel Wesleyan Church, an outlier: He's a Black pastor leading an almost entirely white church.

Theo Griffin is lead pastor at Brown's Chapel Wesleyan Church.

By Jessica Karins
DAILY REPORTER
jkarins@greenfieldreporter.com

Griffin moved to Greenfield with his wife in 2019 to take over leadership of the church, which sits on the edge of town surrounded by cornfields — a far cry from his previous church in a Virginia college town, and even further from his home on the small Caribbean island of Nevis. But the faith that's led him there has helped

him connect with his new congregation.

It wasn't long after Griffin began his new job that the COVID-19 pandemic shifted his church's services online. Not long after that, the death of George Floyd led to a nationwide wave of protests against police brutality and racism.

"Those were very challenging times for me. I felt very lonely," Griffin said. "While the congregation was very sympathetic, they obviously cannot necessarily relate to my experience, through no fault of their own."

The board of the church and the congregation in general, he said, were supportive. But Griffin felt the pressure of

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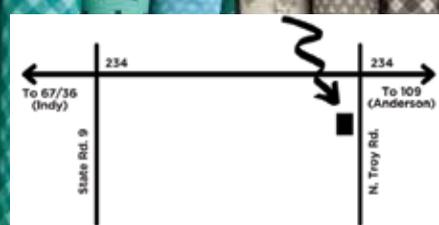


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being a Black man who had to speak to a white congregation during a time of racial and political division.

“It was a lot of emphasis and I think a lot of exposure that was placed on me living in a predominantly white community,” Griffin said. “I think that it brought attention to me because of the different pigmentation that I carry. And perhaps that in itself became a challenge for me. It became a challenge for me to provide leadership during that time.”

The Sunday after George Floyd was killed, Griffin preached a sermon that involved three questions asked in the Book of Genesis. The first is asked by God of Adam and Eve after they eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden: Where are you? The second, God asks Cain after he kills his brother, Abel: What have you done? The third question is asked by Cain: Am I my brother’s keeper?

“I think all three questions related



very significantly to the racial tensions in the country following the events, because they really asked us to think very seriously about our relationship with one another,” Griffin said. “First of all, our relationship with God, and then our relationship with others... Do we feel anything when our African-

American brothers, our brown and Black brothers, are suffering at the hands of police?”

That message, Griffin said, may have caused some defensiveness among church members. But if it was challenging for them, he said, he hoped they realized it was for him, too.

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“I had to also challenge myself to allow my love for God and my love for my congregation to usurp any racial differences that there are,” he said.

Most of Griffin’s flock attended the church long before he became its pastor. Stan Durnell and his wife found Brown’s Chapel in 1990, when he and his wife were looking for a new place to worship after a move from Indianapolis. They tried out six churches, but their last visit stood out.

“They were so friendly and welcoming that we just felt at home,” Durnell said.

Durnell said he’s been very impressed with Pastor Theo, as church members call him. He said Griffin has an obvious passion for counseling parishioners and for preaching, and he’s worked hard to attract new people to Brown’s Chapel.

“He is a very gifted man, and he uses those gifts to further his love for people,” Durnell said.

Nevis, the small island where Griffin

was born, was a British colony before joining with its neighboring island to become the independent Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis. Nevis is just 36 square miles, has a population of about 11,000, and is known to most Americans, if it is at all, only as the birthplace of founding father Alexander Hamilton.

The youngest of 11 siblings, Griffin’s father died when he was five years old. Despite that, he said, he had an idyllic childhood. In the neighborhood’s small communities, most people were farmers and would exchange crops and other goods with each other in a barter system.

“You’re never more than about 10, 15 minutes from the beach,” he said. “We spent a lot of time on the beach, fishing, swimming, playing games. Our neighborhoods were very closely knit.”

Griffin’s mother was a faithful Christian, and he grew up attending church, but he was a rebellious teenager

until a family tragedy struck that would change his mind. An older brother, out with friends who had all been drinking, was a passenger in a car that ran off the road and into a concrete wall. He died at the scene.

“That caused me to start thinking about my own mortality and my own future in a very, very serious way,” Griffin said. “I believe that kind of triggered my desire to turn my life around and to ask God to become the center of it.”

He still remembers the exact day — June 5, 1982 — that he dedicated his life to Christ at a church service alongside a friend who also later became a pastor.

After completing the free college education offered in Nevis, Griffin immigrated to the U.S. Virgin Islands, where he met his wife, Randy. He pursued a career first as an educator and then as a social worker.

“Being a pastor was the last thing on my



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mind,” Griffin said. When he first started to feel a calling to ministry, he said, he resisted it. “But that sense would never really go away. In fact, it became even more intense, until I finally said yes.”

After making the decision that would change his life, Griffin moved to New York to pursue a degree in ministry. His wife remained behind for a while in the Virgin Islands, where she worked in government, but eventually they moved together to Pennsylvania, where Griffin pastored his first church.

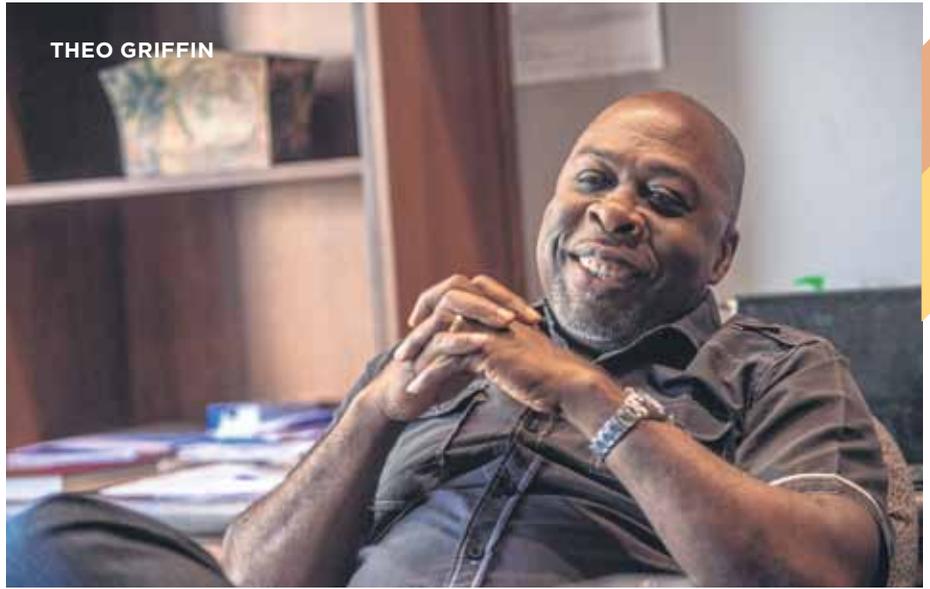
The Griffins stayed in Pennsylvania for 14 years before spending some time in Lynchburg, Virginia, and then moving to Greenfield in 2019.

Brown’s Chapel is the third Wesleyan church where Griffin has served as head pastor, and he said each has been a unique experience. Compared to his previous church in Lynchburg, Brown’s Chapel is older and whiter.

Griffin said he’s enjoyed living in Greenfield and quickly made friends with his new neighbors.

“We are the only African-Americans, but we have great neighbors,” he said. “I love the Midwestern values, I love that people are very polite — in the north, not so much. I really do like these Midwestern values of people looking out for one another, supporting one another. It’s been a great journey so far.”

Griffin’s goal for the Brown’s Chapel community is to grow the congregation and particularly to reach out to younger people. He has starting hosting events aimed at young parents, including Bible



THEO GRIFFIN

study groups and a soccer camp for kids. “It’s an aging congregation, so we desperately need to attract younger families,” he said.

Carol Reynolds is one churchgoer whose relationship with Brown’s Chapel has been strengthened because of Griffin. She initially started attending in 1997; she had never regularly attended church before, but tried out a service shortly after having a baby with an infant in tow. She was struck by how many people came up to her welcoming her and asking her to stay for lunch.

“It was such a welcoming family of believers,” she said.

Reynolds drifted away from the church, but started attending again shortly after Griffin became its new leader. Since then, she’s been a regular

and gotten involved in the church community.

“I stayed because I just enjoy his preaching so much,” she said.

Lynn Greenwalt is a lifelong member of Brown’s Chapel.

“My parents attended Brown’s Chapel when I was born; that was 1959,” he said.

Throughout his life, Greenwalt kept attending the church because of its caring and supportive community. In recent years, he had started to see the attendance at services decrease and the congregation grow older. When Griffin became the lead pastor, though, he started bringing the social gatherings that had been falling by the wayside back to the church.

“He’s been very good for the church,” Greenwalt said.

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FAITH SPOTLIGHT

One last time

Church has service in pastor's yard just before he dies

By Anne Durham Smith
DAILY REPORTER
annesmith@greenfieldreporter.com



Jody Ballenger, lead pastor of Evangel Church in Greenfield, talks to the congregation about his father, Larry Fannin (pictured at top), a co-founding pastor of the church. At one point during that Sunday's service, the congregation said together, "Pastor Larry, we love you, and we're going to miss you." Photos provided

GREENFIELD

"Pastor Larry" Fannin was too sick to make it to church. So the congregation hauled a sound system and folding chairs to the Fannins' yard to bring the service to him.

It would be his last.

Though they knew the 79-year-old pastor had experienced heart problems for years, many people of Evangel Church in Greenfield carpooled to his yard on a Sunday in June not knowing his kidneys were failing, his health had rapidly deteriorated, and he might not live past that day. After all, said son Jody Ballenger, it's not news one shares in a text message or email.

Yet even before Ballenger began his message, many seemed to grasp the weight of the moment. When one singer sounded emotional, the singer next to her put an arm around her. Some people wiped their eyes. Later, after he had spoken plainly of the urgency of the hour, they passed around a box of tissues.

"That's when I knew that was probably the last time we were going to be in his proximity on this earth," said church member Mark Williams.

The proximity was an open second-floor window of Fannin's bedroom facing the yard. Below it, a keyboard, guitar and box drum were the band. People of the church sang, arms outstretched and worship



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FAITH SPOTLIGHT

flags waving:

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Be the wind inside my sails
The anchor in the waves
Oh He is my song

People who know “Pastor Larry,” who co-founded Evangel with his wife nearly 40 years ago, tell of a humble leader who truly cared about them.

Matt Belcher remembers years he worked with Fannin on different projects at the church, such as the building or a sign. Fannin never wanted his name on the sign, never wanted his own name to pull people’s focus from God. “That just stood out to me as honorable,” Belcher said.

Williams remembers when he first met Fannin at a social gathering in someone’s home about 10 years ago. When Williams started to leave, “He turned to me and said, ‘Be blessed’ like I was the only person who mattered,” he recalls.

“He was like that with everybody in the church ... He cared about everybody

A founding father

Dr. Larry Fannin and his wife, Dr. Sun Fannin, founded Evangel Church (formerly Body of Christ Fellowship) in their home in 1981. It met in a couple of second-floor sites above downtown Greenfield storefronts before landing at 1221 E. Main St. It grew and added a 6,300-square-foot auditorium in 2003.

Fannin died June 20. Survivors include his wife, the couple’s three sons and their families.

there very deeply.”

Fannin also cared deeply about seeing revival.

“My father always talked about revival ... ‘I don’t want to leave this earth until I see revival,’” Ballenger said.

As Fannin’s health declined, though, people at church saw seeds of renewal sprouting. During a sermon series, Ballenger — who received the pastoral baton from his parents and became lead pastor in 2018 — gave a sermon about having a repentant heart. That day, he saw almost every person walk forward to the altar area, praying and crying.

After that, there seemed to daily be a group of people gathering at the church to pray.

“It has begun at our church,” Williams said. “You feel a presence ... It’s hard to

explain, but you know. You know what it is.”

Fannin had been to a service early in the series but had recently been watching online from home.

Thinking of all that was coming to be at church, and all his father had prayed for, Ballenger said it felt unfair to have that service — on Father’s Day — without him.

“I believe that this is the revival God had told him he would see,” he told those gathered in the yard that day. “... We’ve been experiencing God’s power in our church in a new way, a new anointing.”

The service ended around noon, he said later, and Fannin died a little after 1 p.m.

“We do feel it was God that kept him alive just long enough,” Ballenger said. “I think it was not just a gift to him; it was a gift to the church.

“It was a gift to them to say goodbye.”

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FAITH SPOTLIGHT

A sacred place

St. Michael celebrates dedication Mass in remodeled building

By Anne Durham Smith

DAILY REPORTER
annesmith@greenfieldreporter.com

GREENFIELD

Hand on the open door, he paused.

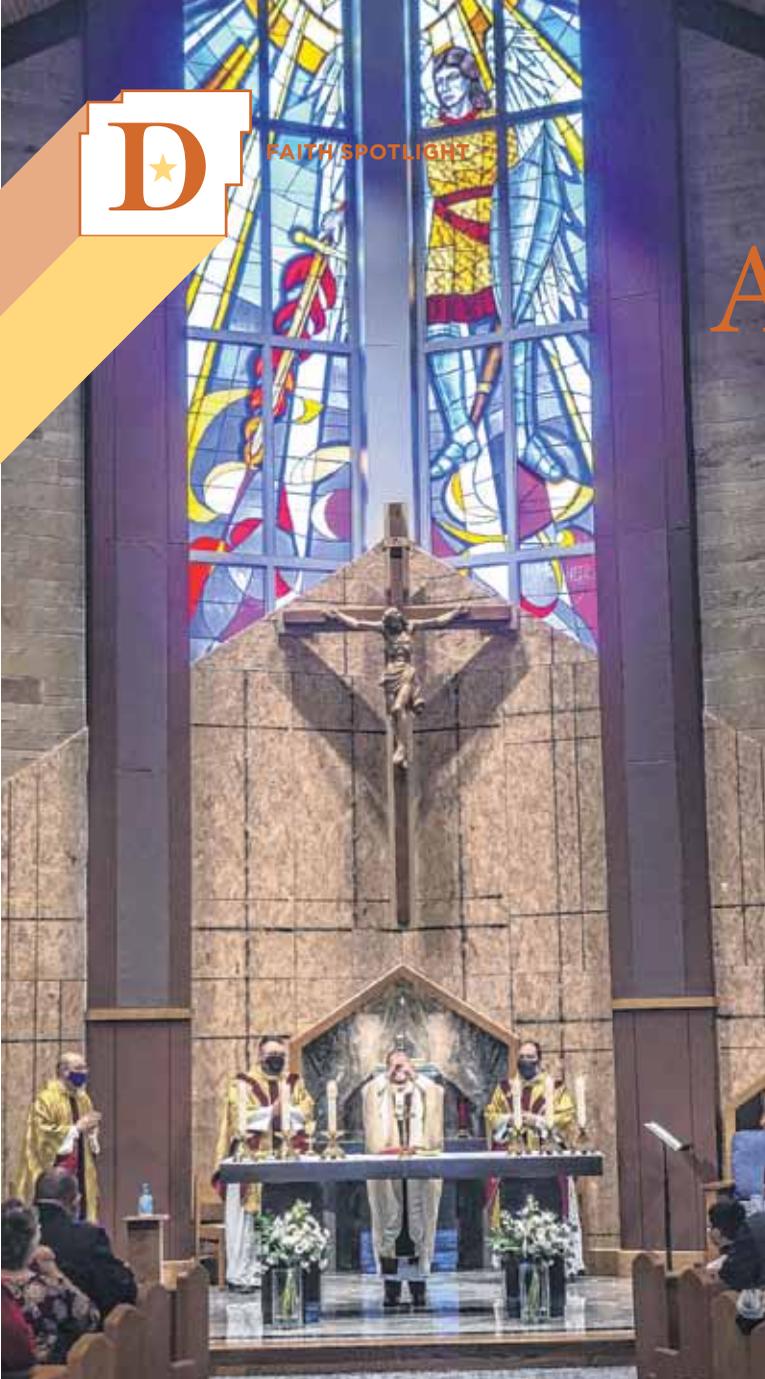
“This will be different, won’t it?” he said to the others.

Then they stepped into the new narthex and beheld the renovated and expanded St. Michael Catholic Church, minutes before a Mass dedicating the new space.

“It was really nice, something that was needed for a long time,” Mike Arnold, who was among the group pausing to reflect before entering, said after the service. Born in the parish and growing up attending the church and St. Michael’s School, he’s seen the congregation grow over the years and facility needs expand along with it.

“They just had to keep building,” often barely keeping up with the need, Arnold said. He motioned to the narthex. “This is great.”

The narthex added to the east end of the church building provides a common point of entry and easier access from the parking lot, also located to the east. The space’s design, meant to also accommodate overflow seating, allowed about 30 extra people to see and hear the service as Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson presided over a morning dedication Mass.



The Most Rev. Charles Thompson, archbishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, raises the Communion chalice during the Jan. 30 dedication Mass at St. Michael Catholic Church.



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A parishioner prays during the Mass of Dedication.

The special service was held on Jan. 30, 2021.

As multiple priests lined up for the procession into the redesigned space, Thompson reached out and patted the shoulder of the Rev. Aaron Jenkins, St. Michael priest.

The 90-minute Mass that followed was rich in Old Testament imagery, such as Solomon dedicating the newly built temple, or the prophet Ezra reading the Book of the Law to Nehemiah and others who rebuilt Jerusalem's wall.

It was also rich in symbolism.

Thompson poured oil on the large black altar and spread it over the surface to consecrate it. Jenkins and other priests carried oil and spread out to anoint the walls.

"Churches are sacred spaces," Thompson said in his homily. "Churches are intended to glorify God ... to point to something greater than ourselves."

The archbishop also walked the aisles sprinkling water toward the walls and toward the parishioners gathered, including those out in the narthex. He later lit incense and shook a thurible, a

spherical censer on a chain, he and the other priests similarly making their way around the space to spread the scent.

"Let Your Church be fragrant with the aroma of Christ," he prayed.

The service also reflected on the past, from previous church structure milestones in 1860, 1954 and 1966 to priests who have served or grown up in the St. Michael parish. Among the priests taking part in the service were Monsignor William Stumpf, pastor at St. Michael from 2011-2015; the Very Rev. Joseph Newton, interim pastor at St.

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Michael in 2015; and the Rev. Douglas Marcotte, pastor at St. Simon, who grew up in the St. Michael parish.

There were pieces of the future, too. Participating in the procession into and out of the service was James Hentz, a college student who grew up in the parish and is attending seminary classes. He said it was great to get to take part.

“I’ll probably never be able to do this again,” he said. “It’s beautiful. After being in the gym for a few months, it’s beautiful to come back to.”

The \$3 million renovation included flipping the seating arrangement in the sanctuary. Since the building at 519 Jefferson Blvd. first opened in 1966, the congregation had faced east during Mass. Now parishioners face west, with the altar resting under the large stained-glass window depicting St. Michael the archangel, the church’s patron saint.

Parishioner took in the space after the service. Some took pictures of Thompson, Jenkins and others in the procession when they gathered for a group photo. Two women later stood to one side talking with Stumpf, who prayed with them.

Jenkins, who received a standing ovation when Thompson recognized him near the end of the service, commended parishioners for supporting the building project.

“You of course didn’t do that for me or Monsignor Bill. You did this for yourselves, your families — but above all, God.”



The Most Rev. Charles Thompson, archbishop of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, raises the Communion chalice during the Jan. 30 dedication Mass at St. Michael Catholic Church.

About the project

The \$3 million renovation and expansion at St. Michael Catholic Church was funded by a capital campaign and by money the church had saved up.

The work included not only remodeling the sanctuary but also connecting St. Michael School to classrooms in the Nolan Hall building north of the school, paving a new parking lot for the school and improving water retention as required by the city.

The sanctuary has 425 seats — that’s 419 seats in pews or chairs, plus six wheelchair spaces. Overflow seating is now possible by setting out folding chairs in the new narthex.

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FAITH SPOTLIGHT



Finding hope

Recovery group launches Fortville chapter

By Anne Durham Smith

DAILY REPORTER

annesmith@greenfieldreporter.com

An advertisement for Hope House. It features three red buttons with white text: "Volunteer", "Shop", and "Donate". Below the buttons is a logo of a house with a green roof and a red heart, with the text "Hope House" and "Homeless Shelter • Thrift Store hancockhopehouse.org". There are three small photos showing people in various settings. A vertical text "IN-35085012" and a Facebook icon are on the right side.

 An advertisement for Mental Health Partners of Hancock County. It features a logo with three stylized figures in orange, purple, and green. The text reads "Mental Health Partners of Hancock County". Below the logo is a paragraph: "Collaborating with community partners to promote mental wellness and fight addiction." followed by a list of services:

- Behavior Care Assistance Program:** Provides financial assistance for mental health counseling, medications and entry into a recovery house.
- Advocate Navigator:** Provides assistance by connecting those in need with resources in our community.
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 At the bottom, it provides contact information: "98 E. North Street, Suite 204 • Greenfield • (317) 462-2877" and "Office.mhphc@gmail.com | mentalhealthpartnershc.com". A vertical text "IN-35085009" and a Facebook icon are on the right side.

FORTVILLE

There was a time when Barbara Terrell found the local church a convenient way to send the children away for a while.

“I partied all weekend,” she said. “I wanted them out of the house.”

Terrell’s path of addiction began at age 11 with drinking and sneaking cigarettes from her mother and stepfather. From there it included some harrowing incidents with a boyfriend in a motorcycle gang and his friends, as well as a stay at a girls’ home that operated in Fortville.

By the time she was a wife and mother, her interest in the church bus passing by from Fortville Church of the Nazarene revolved around getting the kids out of the house for a while. She showed up for a Christmas program they were in, but she sat on the back pew drunk — “so drunk,” she recalls.

“I just figured, ‘This is the way I’ll be for the rest of my life,’” she said.

But she was wrong.

For many more years than



Barb Terrell, left, believes she would be dead today if she had not found freedom from addiction. She hopes people who come to Brianna’s Hope meetings in Fortville will see hope, acceptance and possibility for change. “Most people that’s trapped don’t see any way out,” she said. “I hope people see we love you no matter what. We don’t look down on you or against you.” Terrell is pictured with Sheryl Gray, hospitality director for Brianna’s Hope of Hancock County. Left: The Rev. Phil Edwards delivers a devotion, “Accepting the Struggle” at the start of Saturday’s training for Brianna’s Hope in Fortville.

If you go

A Better Life — Brianna’s Hope has meetings in Fortville from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursdays. Gatherings will be at Fortville Church of the Nazarene, 701 S. Maple St., Fortville.

The support and recovery group for people struggling with addiction also has chapters in Greenfield and Knightstown, among others. Find a list at <https://www.ablh.org/locations-1>

For more information, send email to briannashope4us@gmail.com or call 317-509-3930 or 253-381-1358.

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Leaders of the new Brianna's Hope chapter in Fortville, in the group at right, visit the Brianna's Hope meeting in Greenfield. At front is the Rev. Markus Dennis, pastor of Riley Friends Church and board president of Brianna's Hope.

she was addicted, Terrell has been clean. She's been going to that church that used to pick up her children, and now she hopes a new group forming there will help others find hope and healing as she did.

A Better Life — Brianna's Hope launched a Fortville chapter in the spring of 2021. A training session was the largest one the support and recovery group has ever done, said the Rev.

Markus Dennis, president of its board of directors.

"We want to be a lighthouse to those people who are searching," said the Rev. Phil Edwards, lead pastor of Fortville Church of the Nazarene. "Some of them may be at a point where they feel like they may not be set free.

"We want them to know there's hope. We feel like that's what Brianna's Hope does."

A Better Life — Brianna's Hope began in 2014 when about 20 people in Redkey gathered after the death of Brianna DiBattiste. She was a vibrant youth who became addicted to heroin, and people in the community were rocked by her death and determined to make help more available for people struggling with addiction. A desperate prayer from Brianna's journal for "a better life" is shared at group meetings. Today there



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are more than 40 chapters in Indiana and Ohio.

Edwards, who is also part of the Christians United group of Fortville-area churches, said that group has been talking about a recovery ministry for some time. He's longtime friends with Dennis and his family, and when he learned Dennis had moved back to Hancock County several years ago, they got together to catch up. Dennis told him about Brianna's Hope and later came to talk to area ministers about the recovery group.

Dennis said Fortville is a good fit for a chapter because it's situated in the space between chapters in Greenfield and in Marion, Hamilton, Madison and Henry counties. "With the growth of Hancock County and a population nearing 100,000 this is an essential corridor for our Recovery movement,"

he wrote in an email.

He and others describe Brianna's Hope as "faith based, not faith required." People who don't consider themselves religious participate and are welcomed.

Still, the spiritual element resonates with Edwards and makes him optimistic about the possibilities for people to find life change.

"It's not easy ... but God promised that he would give us the strength and grace to do what is right," Edwards said. "It is through Christ. It's not through a church, it's not through a movement.

"If people are desperate enough to reach out, God is going to listen to them."

Terrell became that desperate in 1979 when her husband was diagnosed with melanoma and given a short timetable. She downed a bottle of sleeping pills; fresh out of the hospital from that, she went straight to the liquor store.

"I said, 'If there's a God, wherever you are, you need to change my life and deliver me now. If God can do that for me, he can do that for anybody.'"

Barb Terrell

Terrell's young daughter smashed the bottle and called a pastor. He and his wife came, and Terrell knelt by her couch.

"I said, 'If there's a God, wherever you are, you need to change my life and deliver me now,'" she said. "If God can do that for me, he can do that for anybody."

In the years that followed, Terrell's husband did die. She ended up living next door to former missionaries who mentored her.

She became a church camp counselor who took a special interest in encouraging campers facing problems. She became the person attuned to a fellow grocery shopper who could use a kind word, or someone who's helped others get connected with Brianna's Hope meetings in Greenfield.

Now she's excited about helping create a place of welcome and hope for people who will come to the Fortville group's meetings. She wants to help point them to the same freedom she found.

"I know that God can change a person's life," she said. "I never want to forget where God brought me from. ...

"I want God to use me for his glory — anything I can do to help people see there's hope and a better life."



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FAITH SPOTLIGHT



Setting a place

Mercy Table organizers hope people find connection, community over food

By Anne Durham Smith
DAILY REPORTER
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FORTVILLE

Jenn Beaumont remembers a time years ago when someone saw that she was hungry and invited her to their church.

That invitation also included a meal. In that season of life, feeding physical hunger was crucial. There would eventually be a spiritual hunger in her, and she would one day seek nourishment for it too, but back then the meal was a big deal.

“I came to Jesus Christ over food,” Beaumont said. “I was lost, not a believer.”

Her life is different now. She doesn't worry about her next meal, she's married, and she's active in her church. Now she, husband Mike and others at Mercy Road Northeast in Fortville want to make room at the table for others.

“Once I got to the other side (of the table) where I could give back, I tried to do this,” she said.

They envision Mercy Table, a monthly meal where anyone is welcome, one based on finding connection and community. It's not about addressing food security; it's about giving people opportunities to make connections.

“We wanted a sit-down community meal ... (to) remind people how to make friends — real friends,” Beaumont said.



Pictured at left: From left, Justus Leininger, Darren Lehman, Caroline Lehman, Lucas Lehman and Maddie Lehman package meals at Mercy Road Church Northeast. About 30 volunteers staff the monthly Mercy Table meal, from those cooking and packaging, to those like Darren and Lucas carrying bagged boxes of meals toward the drive-thru line.

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Beth Leininger hopes those who come “see people who are at this location who genuinely care about them.

“This is because we genuinely care about our community,” Leininger said. “The church is about more than just a building on Sundays.”

Mercy Table launched in December. A Christmas dinner-themed meal, complete with green beans and mashed potatoes, was boxed up and handed to those who drove by the church at 611 Vitality Drive. Organizers didn’t see the turnout they’d hoped for, only a couple of cars, but they found a way to give away every meal they’d made.

At the most recent Mercy Table event on March 27, the white foam boxes held pulled pork sandwiches, green beans and a fruit cup.

A church member with a side catering business made the pulled pork. A crew of volunteers, guided by team members with Servsafe certification, packaged the meals in the church kitchen.

Other volunteers stood outside directing the line of cars. Still others were available to say a prayer for those with prayer requests. About 30 volunteers staff each Mercy Table event.

They estimate more than 70 meals were given to those who drove past the church’s front door.

Drive-thru is not the format organizers envisioned, but it’s what they’ve done thus far amid coronavirus concerns. Later this month, however, they plan an outdoor event where they

can move closer to the connection they hope to foster.

Mercy Table seeks “a long-term development of engagement rather than crisis relief,” said Katie Weaver, one of the leaders. “We’re wanting to re-engage them in the community.”

The April 24 meal will feature hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans, cole slaw, cookies, chips and dip. Those serving it, from noon to 2 p.m., will be masked and gloved.

Mercy Table and Fortville Area Resource Mission are different groups with different purposes, but they do work together on occasion and promote each other’s events.

Mercy Table also gave out breakfasts March 6 when Fortville Area Resource Mission was having a large food box giveaway at Fortville Christian Church. Visitors to such events or FARM’s weekly drive-thru pantry receive notice about Mercy Table meals, but people don’t have to be in need to eat at Mercy Table. Mercy Table volunteers eat at the events, too.

“Even though it looks like (it’s addressing) food insecurity,” Beaumont said, “It’s for community engagement.”

She wants people to find community at Mercy Table. And when community “is centered around identity in Christ, they have a purpose,” she said.

“And I don’t think you’re poor anymore once you have those two things.”

How to help

Anyone can volunteer at the monthly Mercy Table meal, typically on the fourth Saturday at Mercy Road Church North-east in Fortville. Families with children 8 and older can volunteer together; organizers try to offer childcare for volunteers’ younger children. Volunteers eat too in this ministry of community building.

Mercy Table also has an Amazon wish list for items such as foam containers or paper towels.

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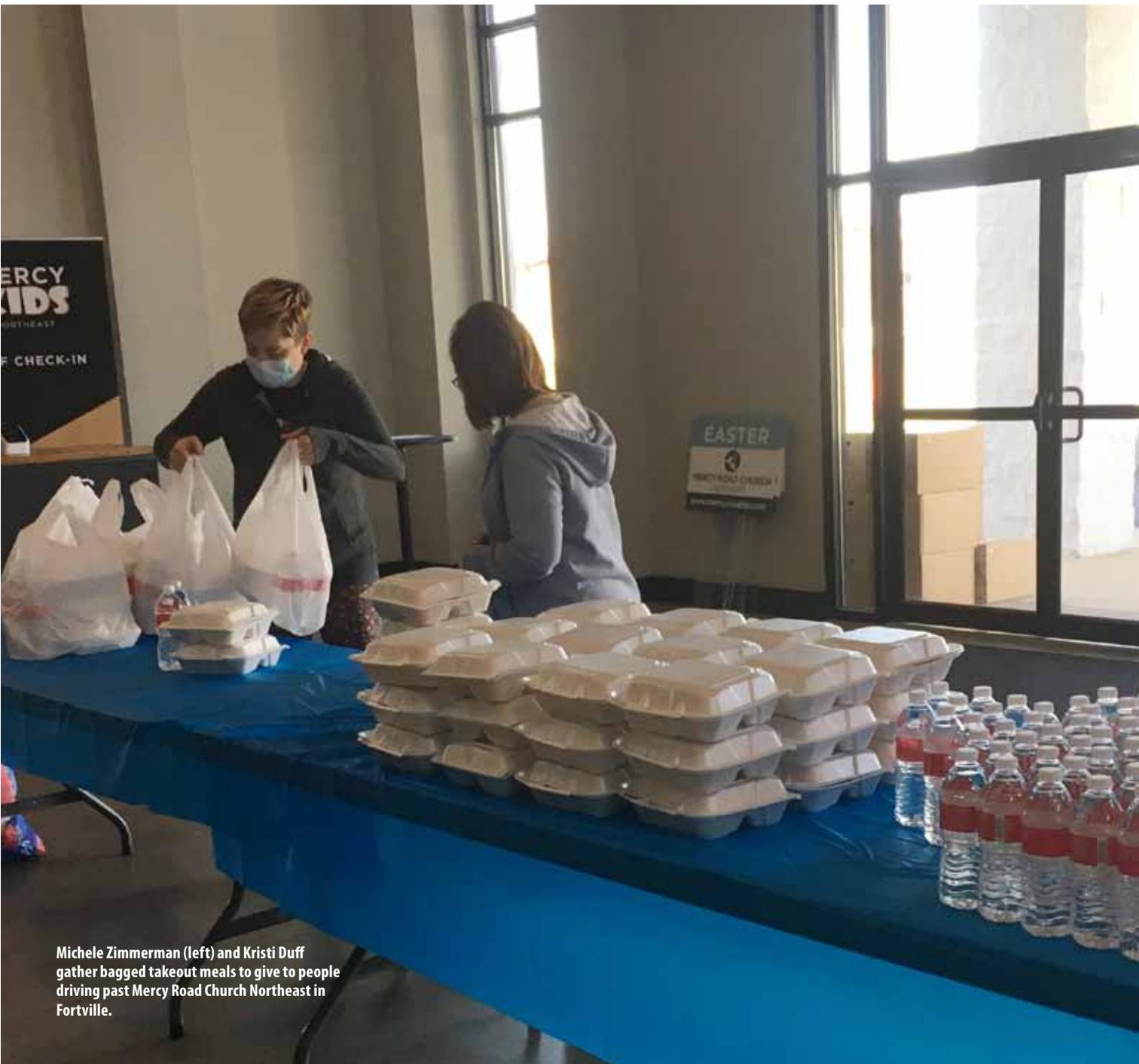
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Michele Zimmerman (left) and Kristi Duff gather bagged takeout meals to give to people driving past Mercy Road Church Northeast in Fortville.

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FAITH SPOTLIGHT



Lisa Reynolds took over as director of Fortville Area Resource Mission on April 26. Anne Durham Smith | Fortville-McCordsville Reporter

'Amazed at what God is doing'

Resource mission leader grateful for enthusiasm collaboration already here

By Anne Durham Smith
DAILY REPORTER
annesmith@greenfieldreporter.com

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FORTVILLE

Lisa Reynolds has sought to serve people in a variety of ways over the years, from helping senior citizens served by a nonprofit find more connection, to making sure people are warmly welcomed when they show up at her church.

She was looking for even more ways to serve when she went to talk with a couple of her pastors. She was ready to take a smaller role in the family concrete business and wanted to spend more time ministering to other people.

One of them pointed her toward Fortville, noting that Fortville Area Resource Mission was looking for its first director. After an interview

process that included helping out at the mission's weekly drive-thru food pantry, the mission's board chose Reynolds for the job.

"Lisa met about every quality/skill that the FARM search team was looking for; from her experience with managing the daily operations of non-profit organizations, working with volunteers, developing business plans and job roles, writing grants to most importantly her love for Christ," Kelly Griffey, chairwoman of the search committee, wrote in an email to the Daily Reporter. "We are very happy to have her as our director."

Fortville-area churches have been

collaborating more closely in the last year or two. They gathered for a joint worship service in early 2020, before the coronavirus arrived in Indiana. They've donated to the food pantry and have offered some additional food box giveaways, such as Thanksgiving dinner supplies, with each participating church assigned a particular item to gather for the boxes.

"I began to realize God was working in the Fortville community," Reynolds said as she learned more about FARM and the community. "They really are about working together."

Leaders of those churches have



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How to help

Fortville Area Resource Mission distributes food in a drive-thru format from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Tuesdays outside Fortville Christian Church, 9450 N. County Road 200W.

To volunteer: Select "Contact" at fortvillemission.org.

To donate: Select "Items needed" at fortvillemission.org. Items can be dropped off anytime in donation bins just inside the outer doors at the church.



Bob Ellis of Fortville Christian Church unloads food for the pantry that takes place there. The pantry is a key outreach for Fortville Area Resource Mission. | Submitted photo

envisioned even more ways they might be able to minister together, such as job training or counseling opportunities to address more of the various ways people struggle. When the board of FARM began its search for a director, leaders spoke of finding grants and adding another pantry time slot as examples of how having a staff member would be beneficial.

Reynolds said getting people to pray for the mission is No. 1 as she gets started. She also wants to get better acquainted with participating churches, needs in the community, and possible resources toward meeting them. She's excited about the engaged group of volunteers already participating.

She likes to hear people's life stories

and understand their hopes and dreams.

"My passion is to connect people's dreams to the ability to serve Christ," she said.

Steve Wallen, Reynolds' pastor, said he's seen Reynolds be a connector for people as she serves on the church's host team, greeting those coming to Genesis Church on Sundays.

"She's always on the lookout for new people," particularly people who seem to feel out of place or on the fringes, said Wallen, campus pastor for the church's Noblesville location.

Reynolds and husband Don "are very including," he added. "They're very open to wanting other people in the community to feel welcome and feel valued."

Griffey has seen glimpses of that, too,

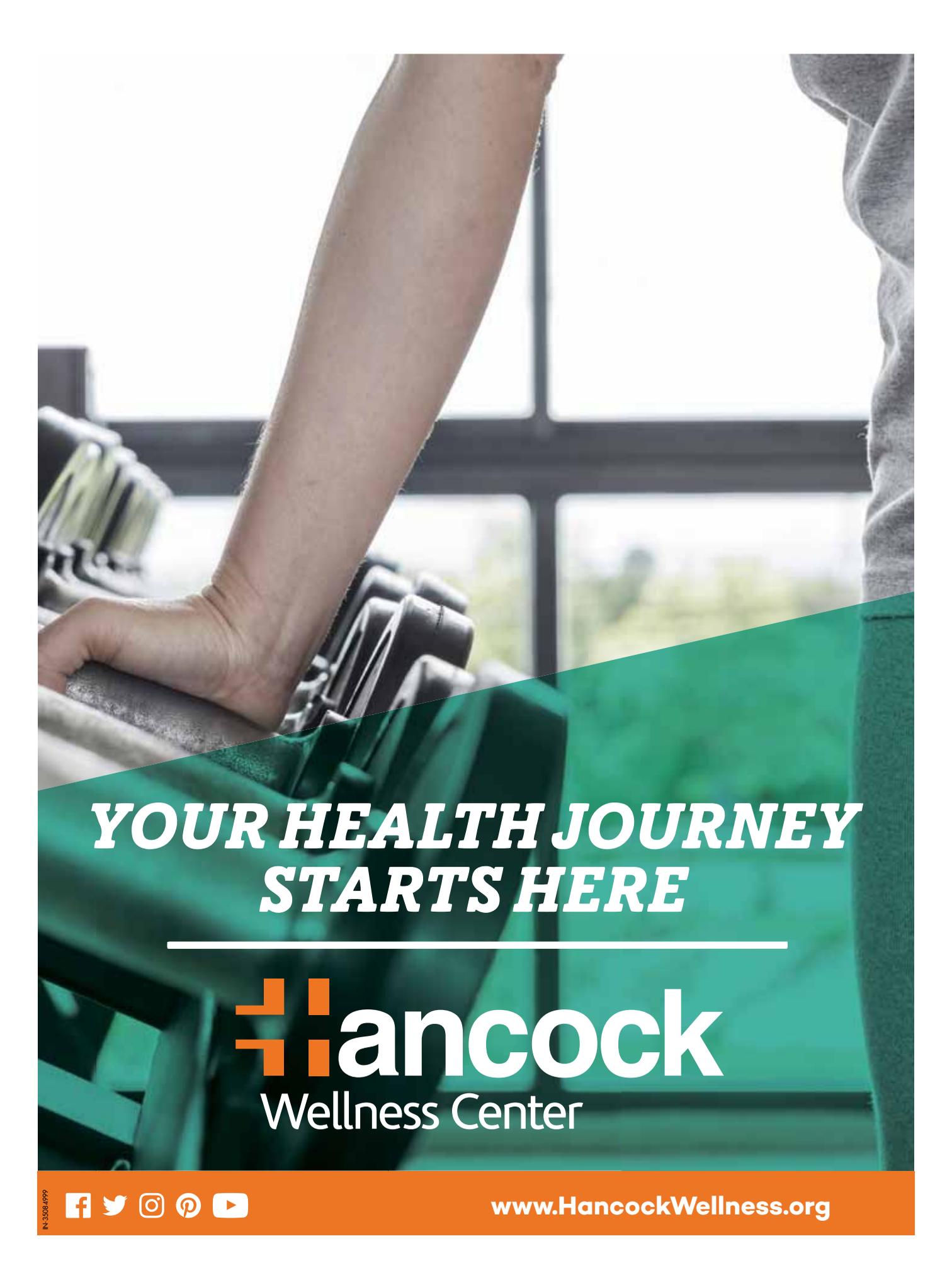
in Lisa Reynolds.

"She has a servant's heart and wants to know and pray for everyone she meets," Griffey wrote.

Reynolds said she enjoys the discovery process of getting to know people, finding resources, and seeing the pieces come together. She points to times in past endeavors when she saw God bring the right person for a role, or when people found the right fit for a place of fulfilling service or financially supporting work they found meaningful.

"It's just neat to see the ways God works when you walk in faith," Reynolds said. "I become more and more amazed at what God is doing in this ministry.

"It's not about me. It's about what God's doing here."



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