

The

January 2025 • Vol. 26 Num. 01

# Hometown Treasure



## When Calls the Heart

A Reflection on  
The Blue Gate Musical

Lilly Recipient

\$5 Million to  
Hawpach Trails

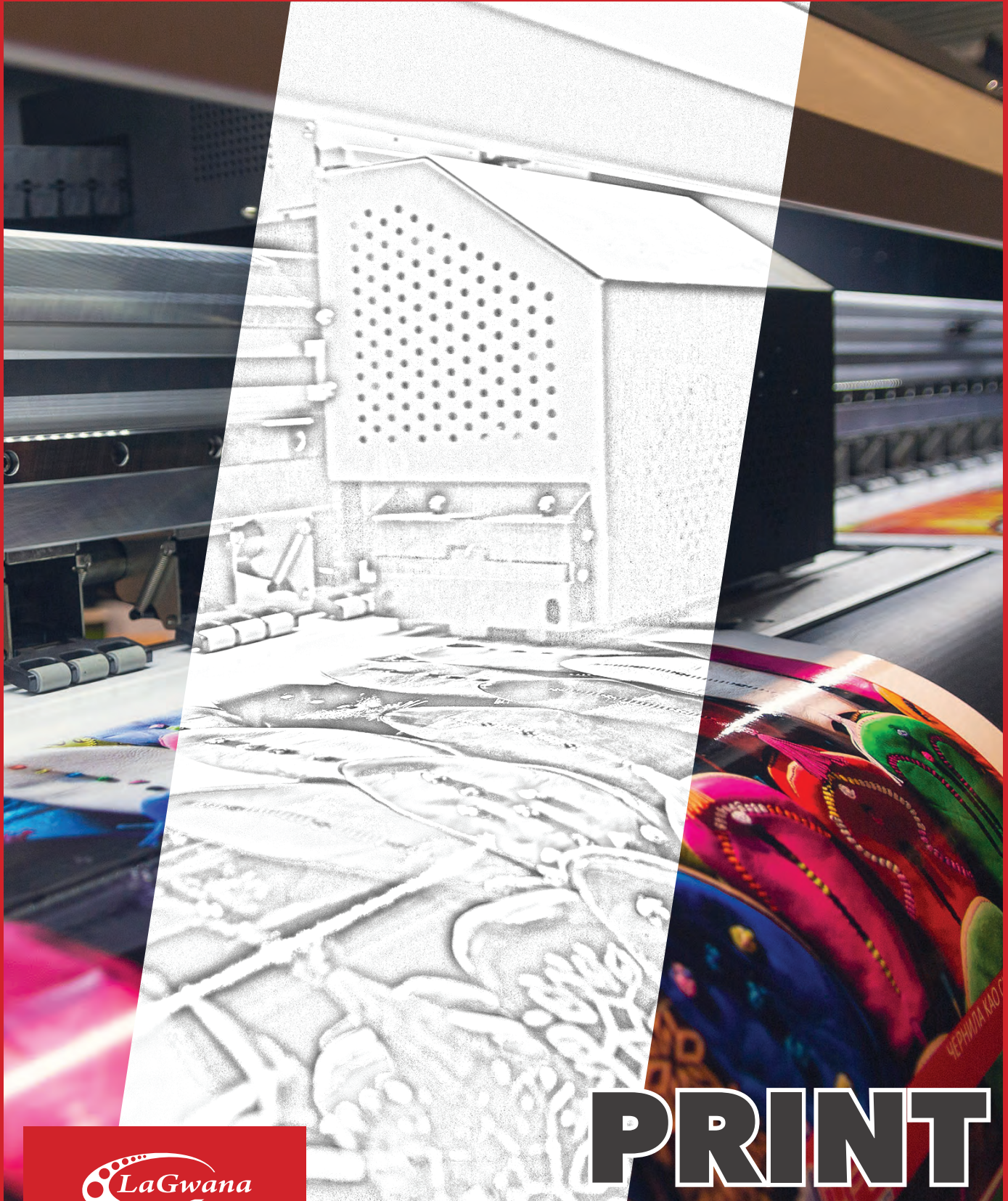
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of the Year

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by Harold D. Gingerich

Noah Bontrager, a Westview High School junior and the 2024 Indiana cross country runner up, finished off this racing year with two impressive 5K runs in Portland, Oregon and San Diego, California, earning both individual and team All-American honors. The entire Bontrager family made the trip to the West Coast to watch Noah run.

On December 7th, running in the rain and the mud, Bontrager finished 19th out of a field of 198 runners in the Nike Cross Nationals with a time of 15:50.4. The finish earned him individual All-American honors.

The following Saturday (12/14/2024) in San Diego's Balboa Park and with better running condi-

tions, Noah placed 16th in the 45th Annual Foot Locker Nationals. The fastest ten runners from each of the four regions across the country (40 in total) qualified for the race. The Midwest team, of which Noah was a member, finished first to claim the All-American team title. Noah was the 7th runner to finish on the Midwest team with a time of 15:51.2.

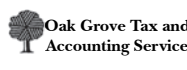
Noah's outstanding finish in Portland was made even more gratifying by the fact that he finished ahead of Sam Quagliaroli (Fishers H.S.) the 2024 Indiana Cross Country champion.

Congratulations to our Westview All-American, Noah Bontrager. 🏆

All Photos Submitted



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## The Hometown Treasure

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Serving the towns of Shipshewana, Topeka, & the entire Westview School Corporation since 2000.

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Just west of Shipshewana

Phone: 260-463-4901 • Fax: 260-463-7257  
e-mail: [news@lagwana.com](mailto:news@lagwana.com)

You may call or stop by during office hours:  
Monday - Friday, 8 am-5 pm

### Hometown Treasure Staff

Dan Byler, *General Manager*

Arlene Thompson, *Intern*

Abby Wenger, *Photographer*

Linda Prough & Tamar Wilkins, *Layout*

Marsha Patrick, Robin Peters, & Sara O'Haver,  
*Customer Service*

Cassie Reed, *Proofing*

Stephen Bruegge & Alisa Lincoln, *Graphic Designer*

Erika Byler, *Word Search*

Rod Lantz, Cary Peters & Kimberly Hays, *Sales*

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### — ADVERTISING INFORMATION —

Deadline for February 2025 Issue:

**12 noon, Tuesday, January 21**

Thursday, January 16 if you need a proof.

**February Issue Date is Tuesday, Jan. 28.**

### — SUBSCRIPTION RATE —

One Year: \$35

The Hometown Treasure reserves the right to not print any submitted advertisement or press release. Refunds for errors on advertising shall be limited to the amount paid for the first insertion for such advertising.

A

**LaGwana**

Publication

## The Power of Music

As I've said before, music plays a pretty huge part in my life. Whether it's playing my saxophone, Barbara, or turning on my Spotify playlist even for a two-minute drive, I usually always have something musical happening. That love did carry over to musical theatre, where I may know too much for not even being a "theatre kid."

The first musical I ever saw live was, ironically, *Wicked*. I was about eight years old, and I was pretty enchanted by the production. From the singing, the atmosphere, and the acting, I couldn't get enough. Maybe this stemmed from my absolute obsession with Disney movies, or maybe it was a completely different type of love.

A normal appearance on my Christmas list is tickets to musicals. Just this past year, I got a season pass for the Morris Performing Arts Center in South Bend. I got to see shows like *Aladdin*, *Little Women*, and my favorite, *Mamma Mia!* Nothing beats the ambience of a packed, beautiful theatre, filled with people who all share the same appreciation for music and talent.

When I had the opportunity to interview the cast of *When Calls the Heart*, I was incredibly excited. I've never had the chance to see a musical produced by the Blue Gate, which meant a day filled with new experiences altogether.

This was my most challenging piece to create, write, and brainstorm on. It took me days to be satisfied with my questions, and even then, I didn't feel like they could suffice. The day of the interview, I was incredibly nervous to meet the cast. My age has been something I've been conscious of throughout

my time here, and I was afraid they wouldn't take me seriously. But, of course, they were lovely.

I felt so inspired while I watched the musical after reading the actor's bios in the playbill. The fact that so many of them are from states scattered across America and ended up in small Shipshewana, Indiana, made me realize that anything is possible. These actors spend hours a day performing in front of a small, intimate audience, while doing what they love. No feat in your journey is small, if it marks your travel in the end.

The message of *When Calls the Heart* has stuck with me since the day I watched it. As a career-driven person, Elizabeth Thatcher spoke to me and made me rethink the way I've always thought about my future. I don't need to be at the biggest, fanciest corporation to make a difference. Even reaching a few lives is better than none. Musicals can speak words that other pieces of work can't say. Music can always convey the true meaning, whether your heart wants to hear it or not.

Arlene Thompson  
*The Hometown Treasure Intern*







Photo Submitted

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**Merry Christmas  
& Happy New Year**

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is the reason for the season*

*Thanks to all our customers  
for a great year!*

.....

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## Gardener Program

The Purdue Master Gardener Program will be offered this winter in a virtual setting. The statewide program will be offered in 14 sessions via the internet on Tuesday evenings, beginning February 4 and running through May 7 from 6:30 to 8:30 PM ET.

In addition to those Tuesdays, there will be in-person sessions in seven locations. These sessions will be held on Monday evenings: Feb. 10 & 24, March 17 & 31, April 14 & 28, and May 12.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/393xma4u> for a full schedule and instructions.

1) The application needs to be submitted to participating offices by January 13.

2) Once accepted, you will receive a link to register and pay the registration fee by January 21. At that point, you should mark your calendars and prepare for a great experience. 

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## What's Your Legacy?

If you're a Bible reader, you may have noticed that the authors of the Bible often use "post titles" after someone's name.

Some titles denote their genealogy or hometown, such as Joseph of Arimathea. Clearly, we understand that Joe is from Arimathea. Much like we do here in Dutch Country when we say Marvin Yoder's Betty. Clearly, we know Betty is married to Marvin. Do you get the picture?

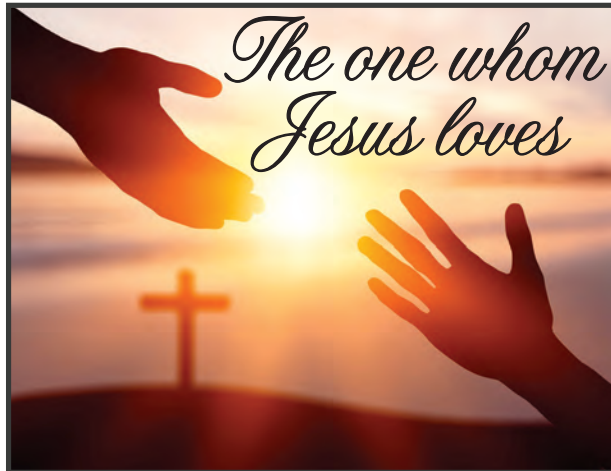
Post titles are important when reading scriptures. When every other gal is named Mary, it's good to know if they're speaking of the one from Magdala or the mother of Jesus.

Most impressive to me, however, are the post-titles given according to your response to Jesus: Mary—the mother of Jesus; John—the one whom Jesus loved; Thomas—the doubter; and Judas—the one who betrayed him.

It is evident to me (according to the gospels) that how you respond to Jesus is the legacy you leave. In Mark, the twelve disciples are listed. The list ends with Judas, the one who betrayed him. Although the infamous betrayal has not yet happened in Mark's account, he gives us a glimpse into what will come when he introduces Judas' character. We know, off the bat, that he is the villain in the story.

His legacy preceded him here.

His legacy also supersedes him. Judas has been associated with accusing someone of being a traitor throughout the centuries. "Don't be a Judas" is common. And, of course, doubting Thomas has its claim to fame over the years.



The hope of a legacy is that it will follow you in a positive light and that you will leave behind an example that others look up to. Unfortunately, Judas and Thomas didn't get the memo here.

I much prefer that John refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. I don't believe John is trying to say Jesus loved him more. After all, Jesus washed Judas' feet just like he did John's. No one is certain why John refers to himself in this way. My perspective is that John is speaking for all of us here. If you have a personal relationship with Jesus, you

should also consider yourself as the one whom He loves. Our legacy should reflect our response to a relationship with Him.

This has caused me to reflect. How would the Gospel writers describe me? What would my post-title be? Kim—the one who laid her burdens at His feet and left them there. Or, more accurately, Kim—the one of "takebacks."

Perhaps it would be Kim—who liked to boss Jesus around. Or, how about Kim—the worrier.

I can think of a bunch of them. Very few of these are things I want to go down in history as a lasting imprint on generations to come. I'd much rather have the legacy of John than Judas. And just perhaps, that is why John wrote this of himself. He wanted his legacy to be that he remembered, regardless of his imperfections, that Jesus loved him. Perhaps John's penning of this was a nod to me and you to remember the same.

How do you respond to Jesus? How would your post-title read? What imprint of your relationship with Jesus do you leave as a legacy? Perhaps a good New Year's resolution would be to live into the post-title you've given yourself.

Blessings,

Kim—the one whom Jesus loves—and she loves him back!

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The Hometown Treasure · January '25





# Auction & Flea Market

## 2025 Event Calendar

### JANUARY

25 .....Standardbred Horse Sale

### MARCH

22 .....Standardbred Horse Sale

22 .....Ship-Chic Craft & Vintage Show

### APRIL

15 .....Special Easter Lamb & Goat Sale

18 .....Good Friday Horse Auction

23 .....Antique Toy Auction

26 .....Swap Meet

### MAY

6 .....Flea Market Opens

17 .....Swap Meet

26-28 .....Memorial Day Flea Market

28 .....Signs & Advertising Auction

### JUNE

3 .....Special Spring Lamb & Goat Sale

20-21 .....Weekend Flea Market

20-21 .....Shipshewana Antique & Vintage Market

21 .....Swap Meet

### JULY

4 .....Independence Day Horse Sale

### AUGUST

1-2 .....Weekend Flea Market

1-2 .....Shipshewana Antique & Vintage Market

2 .....Swap Meet

### SEPTEMBER

1-3 .....Labor Day Flea Market

20 .....Swap Meet

27 .....Standardbred Horse Sale

### OCTOBER

1 .....Last Flea Market Day for Season

18 .....Swap Meet

22 .....Antique Toy Auction

25 .....Ship-Chic Fall Craft & Vintage Show

### NOVEMBER

28 .....Day After Thanksgiving Horse Sale

Nov-Dec .....Shipshewana's Lights of Joy

### DECEMBER

6 .....Ship-Chic Holiday Craft & Vintage Show

17 .....Signs & Advertising Auction

***\*Events subject to change. Call to verify before traveling.***



### Seller Opportunities:

Flea Market • Swap Meets • Antique Auction • Antique Market • Craft Shows • Livestock


Call (260) 768-4129 for more information or visit [www.shipshewanatradingplace.com](http://www.shipshewanatradingplace.com)



**Shipshewana Trading Place**  
345 S Van Buren St., Shipshewana, Indiana 46565  
(260) 768-4129



## Council on Aging Events

The LaGrange County Council on Aging offers many opportunities for local residents to participate in. See the below ongoing events. For more information, feel free to call their office during business hours at 260-463-4161. 

### FOOD PANTRY

Mon-Fri 8-4

No age limit or ID required

### VETERANS BREAKFAST

Every 3rd Tuesday • 8am

Free • Life Care Center

### LOW VISION SUPPORT GROUP

Every 3rd Wednesday • 11am

the-league.org • 260-441-0551

### FREE BREAKFAST

Every 3rd Thursday • RSVP Spot

Tabitha at The Waters • 260-463-2172

# Smart Choices

By Whitney Wolfe, PharmD Student at Topeka Pharmacy


## Sweeter than Sugar! A Guide to Sugar Substitutes

Looking to cut down on sugar in home recipes to limit sugar intake this holiday season? Consider Sugar while still enjoying sweet treats. Sugar Substitutes! Many foods and drinks substitutes have little to no calories and marked as “diet”, “sugar-free”, or “zero” generally won’t raise blood sugar levels. are made with sugar substitutes. Some Please see the conversion chart below substitutes can be used instead of sugar for more information!

SUGAR SUBSTITUTE CONVERSIONS				
Table Sugar	1 Tbs	¼ CUP	½ CUP	1 CUP
Splenda (sucralose)	1 Tbs	¼ CUP	½ CUP	1 CUP
Sweet'NLow (saccharin)	½ tsp	2 tsp	4 tsp	8 tsp
Monk Fruit Liquid	10 DROPS	40 DROPS	80 DROPS	160 DROPS
Stevia Liquid or Powder	1/16 tsp	¼ tsp	½ tsp	1 tsp

There are three types of sugar sugar, most commonly used in “sugar-substitutes: 1. Artificial Sweeteners: free” candy and chewing gum. 3. Novel made from chemicals in a lab, up to Sweeteners: come from plants, fruit, or 500 times sweeter than sugar, very other natural sources, up to 100 times little is needed to sweeten food or sweeter than table sugar, only a little drink. 2. Sugar Alcohols: come from is needed, typically less processed then plants or fruit, not as sweet as table other sugar substitutes.

Sweetener	Type	Recommendation	Fun Facts
Equal (Aspartame)	Artificial Sweetener	Might be linked to cancer, use as little as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Most commonly found in “diet” soda</li> <li>- Loses sweetness when heated, cannot be used for baking or cooking</li> </ul>
Splenda (sucralose)	Artificial Sweetener	Might be linked to gut issues, use sparingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Heat stable and a good sugar substitute in baked goods</li> </ul>
SweetN'Low (saccharin)	Artificial Sweetener	Might be linked to cancer, use as little as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can be used in baking or cooking</li> <li>- Was removed from list of possible cancer-causing agents recently</li> </ul>
Sorbitol	Sugar alcohol	Can cause bloating, gas, or diarrhea for some, okay to use if it doesn't bother you!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Because they are less sweet than sugar, these are not the best cooking substitutes (you would have to double the amount!)</li> <li>- Not safe for dogs</li> </ul>
Xylitol	Sugar alcohol		
Monk Fruit Extract	Novel Sweetener	Use freely! Many think the flavor is closest to table sugar and few to no dangers are known!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Available in liquid or powder form</li> </ul>
Stevia	Novel Sweetener		

For low-sugar recipes, we recommend visiting [diabetesfoodhub.org](http://diabetesfoodhub.org). Topeka Pharmacy is here to assist you and answer your questions! Please stop by or give us a call at 260-593-2252. 

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## 269-625-5099

## Ping-Pong TOURNAMENTS

Monday nights through January & February  
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Tournaments will be held in the  
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For more info contact Ace Hardware  
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## You can put more into your 401(k) this year

Once you retire, you'll likely need to draw on a variety of financial sources — and one of the most important ones may be your 401(k). And for 2025, you can put even more money into your plan than ever.

You can invest in your 401(k) in one of two ways, depending on your employer's plan. With a traditional 401(k), you contribute pre-tax dollars, which can lower your taxable income, and your money can grow tax deferred. If you have a Roth 401(k) option, you can contribute after-tax dollars, which aren't deductible, but your eventual withdrawals will be tax-free if you've had your account at least five years and you're at least 59½.

For either a traditional or Roth 401(k), as well as similar plans such as a 457(b) (for government employees) or a 403(b) (for educators and employees of some non-profit groups), the contribution limit has increased by \$500 for 2025, to \$23,500. If you're 50 or older, you can contribute an additional \$7,500, for a total of \$31,000. And under the SECURE 2.0 legislation, if you are between 60 and 63, you have a higher catch-up contribution — \$11,250, instead of \$7,500, for a total of \$34,750.

If you can afford to contribute the full amount to your 401(k) or similar plan, consider doing so. Of course, not everyone is in that position. If you're a younger worker, you may well have other financial


obligations, such as paying off student loans. And even if you've been in the workforce for a while, you may be putting away money for other things — such as your children's education — as well as your own retirement. But even if you can't "max out" on your 401(k), try to contribute at least enough to earn your employer's matching contribution, if one is offered.

Regardless of how much you contribute to your 401(k), consider these suggestions on managing the money within your plan:

- Create a portfolio that fits your risk tolerance. Most 401(k) plans offer up to a dozen investment options, while some plans offer many more. You obviously want to increase your 401(k) balance as much as possible, but that doesn't necessarily mean putting all your 401(k) dollars into the most aggressive funds available. Instead, consider spreading your 401(k) contributions among a range of investments, which can help you lower your risk level while still giving you opportunities for long-term growth. Everyone's risk tolerance is different, though, so you'll want to evaluate yours when constructing your 401(k) portfolio.

- Adjust your portfolio as needed. It's a good idea to review your 401(k)'s investment mix at least once a year to see if it's performing as you'd hoped. But be patient — one "down" year doesn't necessarily

mean you must make changes. However, as you approach retirement, you may want to lower the risk level of your 401(k) by moving some of your dollars into more conservative vehicles. Still, even when you're retired and have started drawing money from your 401(k), you might want to keep some growth potential in it to help you stay ahead of inflation.

By contributing what you can afford to your 401(k), and by carefully managing the investments within your plan, you can help maximize the value of this powerful retirement savings vehicle — and give yourself a key asset to help you enjoy your retirement years. 



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*This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor, Sheldon Q Shrock AAMS®, 120 N Harrison St, Shipshewana, IN 46565, PH: 260-768-4348. Edward Jones, Member SIPC. Edward Jones, its employees and financial advisors cannot provide tax or legal advice. You should consult your attorney or qualified tax advisor regarding your situation.*



# LaGrange County Library

**Below are the events planned for January 2025.**

*All activities are In-Person unless noted. If you have any questions, please call the LaGrange library for further information.*

Find more information at [www.lagrange.lib.in.us](http://www.lagrange.lib.in.us) or call 260-463-2841.

Facebook Page- [m.facebook.com/lagrangelibraryindiana/](https://m.facebook.com/lagrangelibraryindiana/)

## Shipshewana Branch

250 Depot St. • 260-768-7444  
M - F • 11:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.  
Saturday • 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

## LaGrange County Public Library

203 West Spring Street • 260-463-2841  
M - Th • 9:00 a.m.—8:00 p.m.  
Friday • 9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.  
Saturday • 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

## Topeka Branch

133 North Main Street • 260-593-3030  
M - F • 11:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.  
Saturday • 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

**All library locations will be CLOSED December 24 & 25 in observance of the Christmas Holiday as well as December 31 & January 1 in observance of the New Year Holiday. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

## Youth Interest

### Preschool Story Time (Ages 0-5) Theme: Winter!

LaGrange • Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m.

Shipshewana • Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

Topeka • Wednesdays at 11 a.m.

Enjoy stories, songs and rhymes with a fun craft or activity.

### Oculus VR, Nintendo Switch, Wii Gaming Systems

LaGrange • Tuesdays • 11:30 a.m.-6 p.m. • Fridays 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Switch and Wii: ages 6 & up, parent must stay with children 10 & under.

Oculus VR: ages 13 & up, MUST have waiver signed by parent on file.

Controllers at Children's desk for 1 hour use, first come, first served.

### Homeschool Hangout (Ages 8+ with parents)

LaGrange • Wed., January 8 • 1-2:30 p.m. January 10 • 10:30-Noon This is a casual time for homeschool families to get together to hang out, play games, share ideas and get to know each other. Feel free to come one or both days.

### Makerspace (Ages 5+) (Registration not Required)

LaGrange • Wed., January 8, 15, 22, 29 • 2:30-7:00 p.m.. • Drop in and stay as long as you want. Parents must stay with kids 10 & under.

Makerspace is a collaborative space with a variety of tools and materials to have fun making and creating!

### Lego Play (Ages 5+) (Registration not Required)

LaGrange • Thursdays, January 9, 16, 23, 30 • 2:30-7:00 p.m.

Parents must stay with children ages 10 and under.

Use our collection of Legos to create and build anything you want or to complete the challenges for the month.

### Teen Games (Grades 6-12)

LaGrange • Monday, January 13 • 4-6 p.m. or 4-7:30 p.m. for Catan or other longer games. Drop in anytime, stay as long as you can. Play larger group party type games or settle in for something longer. Enjoy some non-electronic games while snacking & chatting with other teens

### Teen Tabletop Role Play Games (Grades 6-12)

LaGrange • Monday, January 20 • 4-7:30 p.m. Sign up online-space limited.

TTRPG games are more than just D&D! Fight as soldiers in a Civil War battle or as guardians of a tomb in The Skeletons. We have materials for D&D, Pathfinder, Battlezoo, Nations & Cannons and others. Bring your own snacks or pack a light dinner.

### Pokemon Club (Ages 8-18)

LaGrange • Monday, January 13 • 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Have fun playing Pokemon, trading cards, and learning strategies. Bringing cards to trade is optional. Sign up is not required but you can sign up online or call the library to help us know how many are coming.

### Book Clubs

LaGrange • Tuesday, January 21 • 4-5 p.m.

Come to the library in December to get your book for January.

Elementary: Grades 1-3 Reading *One Smart Sheep*

Mid-Grade: Grades 4-7 Discussing your choice of book from the NEW Shelf.

### Family Movie Night! (Rated PG)

LaGrange • Friday, January 24 • 6 p.m. • Movie: Wild Robot

*Free popcorn! Bring your own covered drink.*

## Youth Interest (continued)

### Teen Advisory Group - TAG (Grades 6-12)

LaGrange • Monday, January 27 • 4-5 p.m.

Come help plan activities for teens at the library, help choose books to purchase, and offer ideas about the teen space in the library. Pizza provided! Sign up appreciated for pizza order. Stay after to watch the movie with the Teen Book Club.

### Teen Book Chat: Book-to-Movie Book Club!

LaGrange • Monday, January 27 • 5-7:30 p.m.

Showing: *Ender's Game* rated PG-13. Pick up a copy of the book to read and come to watch the movie and discuss (or complain) about how well the movie matches the book. Free Popcorn! We will be watching a movie adaptation of a book on the 4th Monday all year long!

## Adult Interest

### Walking Well-Read (All Ages) Free!

LaGrange • Mondays & Thursdays beginning January 6 • 12-12:30 p.m.

Come to the library for 30 minutes of cardio! We'll walk up and down stairs, around the book stacks, and through some behind-the-scenes areas. It's great exercise! Drop in and join us.

### Tai Chi (All Ages)

LaGrange • Mondays during January • 11 a.m.

Learn Tai Chi with videos from International Tai Chi Master David Dorian Ross.

These gentle workouts focus on slow movement, balance, and deep breathing.

### Tuesday Night Survival Club: Prepping (Ages 12+)

LaGrange • Tuesday, January 7 • 6 p.m.

Grandma survived the Great Depression because her supply chain was local and she knew how to do stuff. Learn to be as tough as grandma!

### Second Saturday Book Club (Ages 16+)

LaGrange • Saturday, January 11 • 11 a.m.

This month we'll discuss "No Two Persons" by Erica Bauermeister. One book. Nine readers. Ten changed lives. Erica Bauermeister's book is "a gloriously original celebration of fiction and the ways it deepens our lives."

### Make & Take with Deb - Paint Wine Glasses (Ages 12+)

LaGrange • Wednesday, January 15 • 6 p.m.

Join us to paint a set of wine glasses! Glasses and all other materials provided. Paint a set of 4 glasses for \$25 for a set of 2 for \$15. Registration and \$15 deposit due by January 7.

### Cookbook Club (Ages 12+)

LaGrange • Tuesday, January 25 • 11 a.m.

This month's cookbook is "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" by Julia Child. Check out the book at the Adult Services desk. Choose a recipe. Make it, and bring it to the Cookbook Club Carry-in! Plates, silverware, coffee and tea will be provided. Cookbook Club meets the 4th Saturday of each month. Families welcome!

### Tuesday Night Survival Club: Spinning (Ages 12+)

LaGrange • Tuesday, January 28 • 6 p.m.

Featured speaker: Gwen Swogger: Spindles & Spinning Wheels.

Grandma survived the Great Depression because her supply chain was local and she knew how to do stuff. Learn to be as tough as grandma!



### First Day Hike

Wednesday, January 1 • 5 pm–7 pm  
Pine Knob Park  
2825 E SR 120, Howe, IN

Be a part of the national movement of First Day Hikes and begin 2024 with a step towards good health. The glow walk trail will start at the Pine Knob Clubhouse. We invite you to wear family-friendly glow in the dark clothes and accessories. Glow necklaces will be provided while supplies last and the trail will be marked with lights.

## January Events

### Breakfast With the Birds

Wednesday, January 15 • 8 am–10 am  
Maple Wood Nature Center

Coffee, donuts and nature conversation.  
For all ages.

### Winter Sewing Group

Wednesday, January 15 • 9:30 am–3:30 pm  
Maple Wood Nature Center

Fee: \$5 (as a donation to Parks)

If you have an unfinished project...this is the perfect group for you! Open to anyone!

Bring your own sewing machine and supplies. Get help and direction with a project, share ideas with others, and make new friends. Please bring a sack lunch and a munchie to share. Class may be canceled due to inclement weather. Please confirm class and RSVP with Linda Grobis at 260-351-3609.

### Quilt Class


Saturday, January 18 • 9 am–3 pm  
Maple Wood Nature Center

Fee: \$25 (\$5 is given back to Parks)

Hopscotch: A combination of 2 blocks, half triangle square and a 4 patch. Four distinct or contrasting colors will make your quilt show the diagonal lines. It can also be made scrappy as long as there is contrasting fabric. Registration is required. Instructions are provided upon registration. To register, call the Park Office at 260-854-2225.

### Folk Jams

Sunday, January 26 • 1:30–5 pm  
Maple Wood Nature Center

Jams are mostly folk, country, and bluegrass music with other styles added in occasionally. Bring a snack to share if you'd like. For more information, contact Erv Troyer at 260-463-2247 or by email at [reo43@aol.com](mailto:reo43@aol.com). 

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## RAISING DEER



## IN INDIANA

### Reindeer in Indiana?

I ran across a live nativity scene that featured a reindeer, something you do not see every day in Indiana. It had me wondering about raising deer for hobby, breeding or hunting, and how big that industry might be.

It should be noted up front that most midwestern states have some stringent restrictions on movement and raising of members of the cervid family of animals (white-tailed deer, elk, red deer, sika, Japanese deer, spotted deer, mule deer, reindeer, wapiti, moose and hybrids of these species) because of potential issues with tuberculosis, brucellosis, anthrax, Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).


In Indiana, the bulk of that regulatory responsibility falls onto the Board of Animal Health (BOAH) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). All farms with pen raised deer/cervids are to be inspected and registered with BOAH.

In LaGrange and surrounding counties, the CWD issue rose to a new level this spring when a LaGrange white tail deer harvested by a hunter was diagnosed, the first such case in Indiana. Since then, other states have imposed restrictions on Indiana farm raised deer. If you have questions about farm raised cervids, your first stop should be BOAH (877) 747-3038. If you suspect a wild deer may be sick or diseased, contact DNR at (844) 803-0020.

As you can imagine, most reindeer are found in the northern regions of the world: Norway,

Finland, Sweden, Greenland, Russia, Mongolia, China, Canada and Alaska. Most of those reindeer are wild or semi-domesticated, being tended by people whose ancestors herded reindeer for hundreds of years. Each country has put in place rules to protect and maintain the herds, with various degrees of success.

Meat and leather are among the main products sold from reindeer harvests. In many countries, reindeer tourism has given a boost to the local economy.

Like many animals in the artic, reindeer numbers in the wild have been declining as the climate warms. One major issue is a shift from snow towards more rainfall in the fall. The increasing amount of water both from rain and thawing of the permafrost leaves much of their winter food supply under frozen layers of ice, and inaccessible to the herds during the winter. 

**"In LaGrange and surrounding counties, the CWD issue rose to a new level this spring when a LaGrange white tail deer harvested by a hunter was diagnosed"**

*This article was written by Jeff Burbrink, Purdue Extension Educator of Ag & Natural Resources, LaGrange County, 114 W Michigan Street, Suite 10, LaGrange, IN 46761, PH 260-499-6334. Purdue University is an affirmative action, equal access/equal opportunity institution.*





# \$5 Million to Hawpatch Trails

The LaGrange County Community Foundation has received a grant of \$5 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. through the Community Leadership Implementation Grants component of the eighth phase of its Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT VIII) initiative.

This is one of 30 implementation grants being awarded through GIFT VIII, a statewide Lilly Endowment initiative designed to support the efforts of community foundations and their partners to strengthen the quality of life for the people in the towns, cities, counties and regions they serve.

The grant will support the estimated \$11 million needed for the first two phases of the Hawpatch Trail in Topeka. Managed by LaGrange County Trails, this funding will be instrumental in advancing the project, attracting additional resources, and turning the vision of a vibrant community bike trail into reality.

"This is truly a dream come true for LaGrange County," said Octavia Yoder, Executive Director of the Foundation. "To begin a multi-million dollar trail project with \$5 million is beyond comprehension. This will be a game-changer for our community, providing a safer route for cyclists and walkers, and providing more outdoor recreational opportunities. Words cannot express our gratitude and excitement for this opportunity."


The Hawpatch Trail is a transformative 17-mile, multi-use bike and pedestrian trail that will connect Noble County's Fishing Line Trail with Elkhart County's Strawberry Valley Trail. Following the former Wabash Railroad Corridor, this project represents a total investment of nearly \$18

million and will be completed in five phases. The first two phases will span 9.25 miles in and around Topeka, serving as the foundation for the trail's full development.

This project is the culmination of years of planning and community collaboration. Since 2019, LaGrange County Trails has championed the creation of biking and hiking trails to promote safe, active lifestyles. Recognizing the former railroad as a prime location, they identified it as a solution to address the safety concerns of cyclists traveling along 700 S into Topeka. Over the past five years, they have worked diligently to secure site control and build the momentum to make this vision a reality.

The Hawpatch Trail also reflects a community-driven vision outlined in the LaGrange County Together comprehensive plan, which prioritizes the development of trails to enhance connectivity, safety, and outdoor recreation for residents and visitors alike.

The next steps for Phases 1 and 2 of the Hawpatch Trail include land acquisition, surveying, community engagement, trail design and planning, fundraising, and ultimately, construction. Land surveying is slated to begin in 2025, coinciding with efforts to secure the necessary trail corridor. These efforts will pave the way for the development of the initial 9.25 miles, marking a significant milestone in the realization of this visionary trail.


The Foundation and LaGrange County Trails are thrilled to see the Hawpatch Trail come to fruition and are eager to witness the lasting impact it will have on LaGrange County and the region. 

## GRANT TO NEIECC

The Northeast Indiana Early Childhood Coalition (NEIECC) announced the receipt of a \$100,000 grant from the PNC Foundation. This funding will support the development of an "On-Boarding Program" designed to help high-quality early care and education providers in joining the NEIECC Shared Services Network. The network will bring increased financial stability, operating efficiency and enhanced administrative support to over 20 early care and education programs serving low-income families across the region.

"We are thrilled to launch this new initiative to support our local early care and education providers," said Allie Sutherland, executive director at NEIECC. "By providing financial assistance and access to valuable resources, we aim to strengthen the early childhood system in our community. We are grateful to the PNC Foundation for providing funds to build a sustainable network of support for providers. Many of them have been struggling to balance the overwhelming task of managing administrative overhead while also educating our youngest learners."

The NEIECC Shared Services Network and its latest initiative are closely aligned with PNC's longstanding commitment to early childhood education. Since 2004, the PNC Foundation has supported high-quality early childhood education through PNC Grow Up Great®, its signature philanthropic initiative.

Childcare providers with subsidies in their programs who are interested in applying for the On-Boarding Grant should contact Allie Sutherland, executive director, at [allie@nieecc.org](mailto:allie@nieecc.org). 

## New Team Members at Lake City Bank

Lake City Bank is pleased to announce that Drew T. McMonigle has joined the bank as Senior Vice President, Chief Technology Officer.

In this key role, McMonigle leads all aspects of Lake City Bank's technology and information security systems, including executing the company's strategic vision for technology and ensuring that resources are aligned with the company's business needs. He has 20 years of experience in financial services, with a focus of driving digital transformation, increasing operational efficiency and optimizing technology across banking systems.

McMonigle earned a bachelor's degree from Columbia College and studied in the Management Information Systems program at the University of Texas at Dallas. He holds the Certified Product Manager (CPM) designation.


"Providing innovative technology solutions for our customers is critical to our success," said Lisa M. O'Neill, Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer. "Drew's strong background in implementing technology-driven products will help us expand our technology infrastructure and further our product strategy."

Lake City Bank is also pleased to welcome Katie G. Schmidt as Assistant Vice President, Corporate and Institutional Services Sales Officer.



In this position, Schmidt collaborates with businesses to determine their banking needs and identify the best product solutions. She serves Elkhart, LaGrange and Noble counties and surrounding areas. She has 12 years of experience in financial services.

Schmidt earned a bachelor's degree in education from Indiana University. She volunteers with Junior Achievement of Elkhart County, serving on the board of directors and programs committee. She is also an ambassador with the Goshen Chamber of Commerce.

Lake City Bank, a \$6.6 billion bank headquartered in Warsaw, Indiana, was founded in 1872 and serves Central and Northern Indiana communities with 54 branch offices and a robust digital banking platform. For more information visit [www.lakecitybank.com](http://www.lakecitybank.com). 

## Parkview LaGrange Hospital Receives Award

In observance of National Rural Health Day, Parkview LaGrange Hospital has earned a 2024 Performance Leadership Award for excellence in quality from The Chartis Center for Rural Health.

The Performance Leadership Awards recognize top quartile performance among rural hospitals in three categories: quality, outcomes and/or patient perspective. Parkview LaGrange Hospital has received this award for quality for three consecutive years, and was also recognized for outcomes in 2023.

"Our co-workers at Parkview LaGrange Hospital prove that you can be small and mighty, delivering high-quality care and a great experience to our


patients," said Jordi Disler, market president, Parkview Health North.



"We're proud to be recognized by The Chartis Center for three straight years for the quality care we're providing to LaGrange County and the surrounding area."

The Performance Leadership Awards are based on the results of the Chartis Rural Hospital Performance INDEX®, a comprehensive and objective framework for assessing how rural hos-

pitals are performing. INDEX benchmarks are relied upon by rural hospitals, health systems with rural footprints, hospital associations, and state offices of rural health to measure performance across multiple areas impacting hospital operations and finance.

"Serving small communities is a big part of what Parkview does, with hospitals and physician offices across more than 20 rural counties in north-east Indiana and northwest Ohio," said Dr. Greg Johnson, regional market president for Parkview Health. "Rural hospitals are crucial to providing our communities with great care that is close to home, where they need it and when they need it." 

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# Topeka Firefighter of the Year

The Topeka Volunteer Fire Department took time to honor several of its members at the department's annual Christmas Banquet held Friday evening December 6th at Sylvan Cellars Event Center in Rome City.

Kevin Wright was named the 2024 Red Haggard Fireman of the Year. The department's top annual award is given in memory of the late Red Haggard who served with the Topeka Volunteer Fire Department for more than 40

years. The award was presented by Doris Haggard, Red's wife.

Michael Wenger was recognized as First Responder of the Year. Length of service honors went to Devon Bontrager and Nick Philley, each with ten years of service.

Officers for 2025 are: Stewart Bender, Chief; Adam Lambright, Assistant Chief; Brian Miller, Captain; Devon Bontrager, Captain; Barry McDonald, Lieutenant; and Harley Miller, Lieutenant. ①



# Political News in The Hometown Treasure

Both sets of news source extensions were submitted by readers. The first one was mistakenly labeled in the last Hometown as Democratic leaning, the intent for this one is to be a non-partisan informational source. The other is intended to reflect Republican perspectives.

We recommend that any reader approach all news outlets with an open mind and a willingness to explore multiple sources to get a full view of any story.

We deeply regret any confusion or negative connotations caused by these labels, going forward, we will focus on covering our local community news and refrain from publishing political content. ①

# Merry Christmas!

December was full of special events....Silent Night in the Park with the Nativity Scene and Wooden Toy Shop, Pancake/Sausage Breakfast, Christmas with Santa, and Ceramics with Angel.

We had such a great outpouring of toys for all the area children. This community has shown so much support. We could not make this work without all the volunteers and sponsors backing this huge endeavor. Several area churches were instrumental in keeping us supplied with volunteers for the nativity scene. THANK YOU! Thank you, also, to Angie Roth for spear-heading the toy giveaway. "A toy for every child". A big thank you also goes out to our friends running the cocoa bar and to everyone that donated cookies. We had enough left over to donate to the LaGrange County Parks for their "Trail of Lights". A HUGE shout out to our Topeka Together board of directors. We can only proceed with their guidance and knowledge on how this can all come together and continue to make it work.

January looks quiet so far, but we will take suggestions on future events. We have a meeting every 2nd Tuesday, at 6:30pm, in Topeka Piz-za's north room so if anyone would like to come check out what Topeka Together is all about you are more than welcome to brainstorm with us.

Have a safe and joyful holiday season! Enjoy your families and friends... and rest! Sincerely, Connie ①







her sisters frequently take part in local running competitions. In her application, she shared, “I will always make time to run, whether as part of a team or on my own.

Warrener is involved in her church community, volunteering in the church nursery, participating in Vacation Bible School, and regularly supporting the efforts of Feed My Starving Children.

The selection of nominees for this award was based on a comprehensive evaluation of academic achievement, demonstrated service to others, leadership skills, commitment and motivation to succeed, employment history, extracurricular activities, essay responses, and two recommendation letters.

Annagail Warrener of Westview Jr. Sr. High School is the recipient of the 2025 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Award for LaGrange County.

Lilly Endowment Community Scholars are recognized for their community involvement, academic achievement, and demonstrated leadership.

Each Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship provides full tuition, required fees and a special allocation of up to \$900 per year for books and equipment for four years.

The scholarship is for full-time undergraduate students leading to a bachelor's degree at any eligible Indiana public or private nonprofit college or university.

Warrener, set to graduate with academic honors, plans to pursue a pre-med degree at Taylor University with the goal of becoming a pediatrician. She is the daughter of James and Jennifer Warrener of Shipshewana.

The medical field runs deep in Warrener's family. Her father, who is currently in medical residency at the University of Michigan, and her grandfather, a family physician, have been key inspirations in her journey. In her application essay, Warrener reflected on her aspirations: “I want to be the kind of doctor who helps ease people's fears and always makes my patients feel welcome. Watching my dad, who just finished medical school last year, I've seen how the journey is challenging but ultimately worth it. There are many career paths to choose from, but I believe becoming a pediatrician will allow me to make the greatest impact on families.”

Warrener is actively involved in her school community, participating in Student Council, PLUS, National Honor Society, the School Health Advisory Council, school musicals, and the Dynamic Singers choir.

A dedicated runner, Warrener competes on both the varsity cross country and varsity track teams. Running is also a family passion—she, her parents, and

The top five students were invited to complete an impromptu essay presented by the LaGrange County Community Foundation and participate in a personal interview with the Lilly Scholarship Advisory Committee. After narrowing the field of applicants, the nominees were submitted to Independent Colleges of Indiana (ICI), the statewide administrator of the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship Program.

“The Foundation is honored to nominate a LaGrange County student for this prestigious award,” Octavia Yoder, Executive Director of the LaGrange County Community Foundation, stated. “We are grateful Lilly Endowment continues to support future leaders and makes dreams possible for our LaGrange County students. Selecting a nominee is a difficult process based on many factors. The scholarship committee was impressed by the exceptional students in our community.”





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- 2 Joshua Bontrager, Lojain Al Yahiri,  
Eli Raber, Seth Slabach,  
Zachary Yoder
- 3 Logan Hartsock,  
Lucas Hershberger, Halle Stutzman
- 4 Olivia Everage,  
Anastasiia Khodyrieva,  
Brooklynn McDonald
- 7 Lucas Yoder, Mariah Yoder
- 8 Elijah Flores, Brandon Miller,  
Sadie Yoder
- 9 Josh Beechy, Gage Miller,  
Hannah Troyer, Joel Yoder
- 10 Rahaf Hussein, Kaleb Knepp,  
Kaylee Marner
- 11 Allen Bontrager, Hadley Keim,  
Miciah Slabach
- 12 Shawn Miller, Sam Omar
- 13 Roarke Brohm, Kaleb Cupp,  
Krystal Troyer, Zayne Yoder
- 14 Jaxsen Chastain, Cordelia Crabill  
Amelia Gray, Haizel Mullet
- 15 Abdulrahman Algeradi,  
Larion Mullet, Reagan Wilson
- 16 Brian Bontrager, Kara Miller,  
Caleb Yoder
- 17 Janice Miller, Mariah Miller
- 18 Grant Bontrager, Audrey  
Lambright

*Birthdays for children in the area up through sixth grade may be submitted free of charge. Hometown Treasure, Kids' Birthday List, PO Box 70, Shipshewana, IN 46565*




# 2025 Kindergarten Enrollment Notice

If your child will be 5 years old by August 1, 2025, and is not pre-enrolled, the pre-enrollment steps for kindergarten are as follows:

1. Contact school of residence to obtain a pre-enrollment form.
  - Shipshe-Scott Elementary: 260-768-4158
  - Topeka Elementary: 260-593-2897
  - Meadowview Elementary: 260-768-7702


Out of district parents should contact the school that you wish to enroll your child at.

2. Return enrollment form to the school as soon as possible.
3. Parents will receive a SEEK Screening schedule in the Spring.
4. SEEK Screening will be at the student's school of residence near the end of the 2024-25 school year. 

- 19 Brody Cranor, Abrar Saleh
- 20 Logan Bontrager, Eric Yoder
- 21 Lachelle Bontrager,  
Gabriel Miller, Kyla Miller,  
Rieker Schrock, Jeneva Yoder
- 22 Mallory Antal, Kimber Helmuth,  
Brock Stout
- 23 Bristol Brandenberger,  
Ellisynn Hamm,  
Natalie Stutzman
- 24 Brogan Howard,  
Karen Miller, Daxson Sanders,  
Estelle Zabona
- 25 Savannah Bontrager,  
Corbin Jeczala, Nicole Miller,  
Annalyse Yoder
- 26 Harmony Sattelmanier,  
Kielynn Warrenner
- 27 Lilly Miller, Makayla Troyer
- 28 Adra Miller, Emilia Reeder
- 29 Amanda Bontrager,  
Drew Bontrager,  
Brenda Carmona, Aydon Eudy,  
Sophia King, Ryder-Ryan Miller,  
Averie Stutzman,  
Janessa Yoder, Malia Yoder
- 30 Elijah Wingard



## Save-A-Lot Donates to New Life

New Life Fellowship would like to thank Topeka Save-A-Lot, and it's customers, for their donation of bags of food collected from the "Bags for a Brighter Future" program. During November and December, customers were able to purchase a bag for \$5 that would then be donated to a local organization that distributes food in the community. New Life was able to distribute over 120 of these bags at it's November grocery distribution and plans to distribute the remainder at the January 13th distribution. Thank you, Save-A-Lot, for your heart to feed those within our community during this holiday season! 

Left to Right: Breanna Jackson, Cashier; Mariela Gonzalez, Assistant Manager; and Kyle Ehret, Store Manager.

Photo Submitted



### SPONSORSHIP SPACE AVAILABLE

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*Back (left to right): Mackenzie Rodriguez (2nd), Jayna Miller (4th), Ava Bontrager (4th), Jethro Otto (4th), and Micah Whetstone (4th). Middle: Karissa Hersberger (1st), Alex Yoder (2nd), Gabriel Miller (3rd), Leon Hersberger (3rd), and Hayden Moon (3rd). Front: Adrianna Wingard (3rd), Jordan Schlabach (K), Annalise Hersberger (K), Jalen Yoder (1st), and Rylie Bostain (1st).*

*Photo Submitted*

## Mustang of the Month

Each month 15 MES students are recognized during the monthly school wide Family Meeting assembly. These students have shown safety, responsibility, and respect throughout the month. Winners receive a certificate, a Mighty Mustang bracelet, and get to participate in a game during the assembly. Pictured are the winners from November of the 2024-2025 school year. Go Mustangs! 📢

*On National Cake Day,  
we let them eat cake!*

If you are learning about cake during reading comprehension, you should probably taste test some cake too. Fourth grade has the most delicious lessons. 📢



Meadowview Elementary

Home of the Mustangs

The Hometown Treasure · January '25

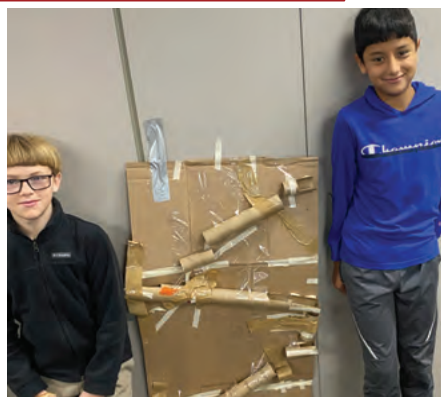




*Students from Ms. Huyvaert's class enjoyed lunchtime together.*



*Fifth grade students from 5C created 3-D listening maps while listening to "In the Hall of the Mountain King" in music class.*



*Students from Mrs. Gongwer's class created marble devices in science class using their engineering design skills.*



*Students have been competing in a 2-on-2 basketball tournament in P.E.*

*All Photos Submitted*



# Westview Elementary

The Hometown Treasure · January '25

Home of  
the Warriors





# CAMELOT

THIRD & FOURTH GRADERS

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM



*This page made possible by the*  
**Shipshe-Scott Elementary** Home of the Scotties

The Hometown Treasure · January '25





All did a wonderful job of spreading Christmas spirit.



THIRD & FOURTH GRADERS CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Topeka Elementary

The Hometown Treasure · January '25

Home of the Bears




# IBA All-Region and All-District Honor Bands

Several Westview Jr./Sr. High School Band members were selected this past Fall to be a part of the Indiana Bandmasters Association honor band program. These students were chosen from hundreds of applicants by the area IBA selection committees.

The IBA All-Region Honor Band weekend took place November 16-17 at Dekalb High School in Waterloo, IN. Westview's Paige McDonald was selected by the Indiana Bandmasters Association to participate in the IBA All-Region Honor Band. They had a seven-hour rehearsal on Saturday, with a concert featuring six selections at Dekalb High School on Sunday. The guest conductor was Mr. Kevin Klee, a highly sought after conductor, educator, and clinician from the Fort Wayne area. The ensemble consisted of 74 students in grades 7-9 from 16 different northeastern Indiana schools.

The IBA All-District Honor Band weekend took place November 23-24 at Dekalb High School in Waterloo, IN. Westview's Kiana Mast, Jonathan Roth, Kaleb Iddings, Matthew Bibbee and Chris Terrones were selected by the Indiana Bandmasters Association to participate in the IBA All-District Honor Band. They had a seven-hour rehearsal on Saturday, with a concert

that featured six selections, including the premier of a commissioned piece, at Dekalb High School on Sunday. The guest conductor was Dr. Jeffrey Doe-

bler, Director of Bands at Valparaiso University. The ensemble consisted of 87 students in grades 9-12 from 18 different northeastern Indiana schools. 



*IBA All-District Photo (left to right): Kiana Mast, Jonathan Roth, Kaleb Iddings, Matthew Bibbee, and Chris Terrones.*

*All Photos Submitted*



*Back (left to right): Bryce Yoder, brother; Defiance College Head Coach Jeremy Thornburg; and Kloie Yoder, sister. Front: Kristi Miller, mother; Baron Yoder, brother; Kylie Yoder, Russ Yoder, father; and Allyse Yoder, step-mom.*

*Photo Submitted*




*IBA All-Region  
Photo: Paige  
McDonald*

## College Signing

Senior Kylie Yoder signed to play college volleyball with Defiance College 1,541.

in Defiance, Ohio.

Yoder had an excellent high school career as a 4-year varsity player. She

was the high school leader in digs with 1,541. Yoder was Westview's Libero and has played club volleyball with Team Pineapple out of Angola for six years. 



# Westview Jr./Sr. High

Home of the  
Warriors





*Back (left to right): Addelyn Miller, Audrey Yoder, Benjamin Chupp, Joshua Riehl, and Officer J. Conwell. Front: Key-Lynn Ferrin, Jalayna Penick, Nyan-chai Sornross, and Austin Jon Miller. Not Pictured: Natalie Detweiler and Julie Yoder.*  
Photo Submitted



*Back (left to right): Jennifer Lehman, Tarah Hochstetler, Landon Nissley, Jan-ice Miller, Aiden Miller, Xaviah Howard, and Officer J. Conwell. Front: Marcus Runyan, Ethan Eash, James Lambright, Treva Miller, and Elijah Wingard.*  
Photo Submitted

# GOOD BEHAVIOR

Bus Drivers recognized students for good behavior which included:



Being On Time



Being a Good Role Model

*Eighth Graders Back (left to right): Andrea Lambright, Victoria Lambright, Breanna Garrett, Kathleen Bontrager, Jannessa Stutzman, Hailey Otto, and Britton Miller. Seventh Graders Front: Caleb Wingard, Ashby Yoder, JuLayne Whetstone, Janessa Caldwell, Declan Ryall, Samantha Bender, Jennifer Miller, Adrian Bontrager, Mason Sivits, and Officer J. Conwell.*  
Photo Submitted

*Back (left to right): Hyde Al Yahiri (12th), Jaden Halderman (11th), Noriah Aldhuraibi (11th), and Dominic Sweet (11th). Front: Devyn Whetstone (10th), Maggie Mast (9th), Savannah Nelson (9th), Cyota Ferrera (9th), Adrien Bell (9th), and Officer J. Conwell. Not Pictured: Ada Chupp, Clarinda Byler, and Kathy Miller.*  
Photo Submitted





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# When Calls the Heart

by Arlene Thompson



Within a heartfelt story about finding love - with a star-studded cast that can sing like there's no tomorrow - lies a deeper meaning of choosing your own destiny and following your heart. When Calls the Heart, the Musical, is a must see show that leaves you walking away with a grin on your face.



When Calls the Heart is an original book written by Jannete Oke, which has now been adapted into a 13 season show on Hallmark. The musical adds a new layer and emotion that the previous adaptations couldn't manage, using music. Whether laying their hearts out for the audience to see, or making witty



remarks during the auction scene, emotions spill out of the cast in ways other versions could not convey.

The musical follows Elizabeth Thatcher, a schoolteacher from the upper class, who lives in Toronto with her family. Unexpectedly, Elizabeth is requested to travel west, miles from her family, to begin teaching where her brother lives. Upon arriving, she meets the dashing but irritating Jack Delaney, who serves as a Mountie for Canada. Travel throughout Canada with Elizabeth as life takes her everywhere and she figures out what is truly calling her heart.

Nicole Leis, Kevin McDaniel, and Elsa Besler all play multiple characters throughout the show. Leis, who is on her seventh season at the Blue Gate Theatre, described the show as “romantic,” with McDaniel chiming in with “a love story.” McDaniel, who has more than 13 years and 2,000 performances for the Blue Gate Theatre under his belt, fawned over the new change that this show has offered the actors. While this adaption wasn’t written by the Blue Gate team,

but by local Christy Stutzman for the Round Barn, it’s a new style that has been embraced. It takes place in the 1910s, and is the first chance the actors get at not playing amish characters. All the actors could agree on one thing, though: their love for acting in period pieces.

With a cast from all over the country—spanning from Florida to Missouri to Maryland, even our own backyard of Shipshewana—the cast is filled with actors taking on multiple roles. Besler takes on the challenge of playing three larger roles, and the ensemble, while Leis and McDaniel both play two roles as well as the ensemble. Every cast member, besides those who play Elizabeth Thatcher and Jack Delaney, have all succeeded at portraying multiple characters within one production.



All three actors agreed that the size of the cast is the biggest challenge they face. A typical Blue Gate Theatre show has from eight to ten performers, while *When Calls the Heart* has 15. “That may not seem like a huge difference, but on this small of a stage it gets crowded quickly,” Leis remarked. The intimate theatre provides the audience with a feeling of inclusivity, as if they are there in Canada with Elizabeth Thatcher.

Besler noted that this show feels more “lush” compared to previous shows, with the larger cast, McDaniel expanded on that idea by explaining





the video wall. Throughout the show, the audience will find the wall behind the cast shifting and moving, taking them through Canada with Elizabeth using scenic changes and videos to keep them engaged.

One character that audience members seemed to keep an eye on was Elsa Besler's portrayal of Anna. An immigrant mother who wants nothing more but for her children to learn to read, is a character your heart cheers on. "The way she's written and the way my brain works, just clicked," Besler explained. She gushed about how Anna already felt like a fully worked out character,


instead of having to dig to find the connection between herself and the depiction she puts on.

"Elizabeth comes from a place of wealth and privilege, but that doesn't let that color her view of other people," said Besler when asked about why this show is important. That class and wealth mean nothing when it comes to a good heart is a great message delivered by this sweet story. Besler described Elizabeth as a "great role model for anybody."

Carrisa Ferguson, who plays Elizabeth Thatcher, is almost never off the

hook. For almost 120 minutes of the show, Ferguson's feet stay on stage. Adding her own quirky remarks, with a fierce and determined personality and also a beautiful voice, Ferguson is a face you'll never forget. Castmate McDaniel praised her perfor-

mance by saying, "she does a great job of working hard every minute she's on stage." Any viewer can agree within the first few seconds of Ferguson's presence on stage.

"Everybody can take something from this show, I think everybody needs to see it," added Leis, "there's some really precious moments, with a great message and some great humor." A performance that's meant for everybody, and a must-see in its closing days, the last chance to see Elizabeth's adventure is Saturday, January 4, 2025, at 1:00pm. Two hours of musical bliss, exciting romance, and a room full of laughs is a great way to start the new year. 







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# HISTORICAL FEATURE DONKEY BASKETBALL

ANYONE FOR AN EVENING OF...  
GOOD OLD FASHIONED

by Harold D. Gingerich

Never let it be said that residents of Shipshewana and Topeka don't know how to amuse themselves during the cold months of winter. In fact, what better way to have some good-natured fun at someone else's expense and raise some money at the same time than to sponsor a donkey basketball game? During the months of January and February in the 1940s and 1950s, donkey basketball games were a popular fundraiser for many communities. Unfortunately, most of the younger generation have never experienced the side-splitting laughter of watching grown men trying to play basketball from the back of a donkey.

Coming across a news article from the 1950s in the Topeka Journal newspaper triggered a host of memories. I remember donkey basketball games in the old Honeyville gym. The bleachers were packed with young and old alike. There was laughter galore, sometimes to the point of tears. The animals were never abused or in danger, none of the riders were seriously injured, and everyone had a good time. Plus, the sponsors

made a little money for their community project.

Ok, I admit it, I have a twisted sense of humor. But let's be honest, there is something funny about watching prominent community leaders trying to play basketball while riding bareback on a donkey. More times than not, the riders ended up on the floor much to the delight of the audience. Oh, it was great fun for a teenager, especially if the person on the gym floor was one of your least favorite teachers.

The Topeka Journal, December 29, 1954, issue ran a front-page article on the Shipshewana FFA's (Future Farmers of America) sponsorship of a donkey basketball game. The opening paragraph read (as it appeared): "It will be an evening of fun at the Shipshewana school on January 3, when the Shipshewana FFA will sponsor something entirely different in the world of sport, Donkey Basketball. This game, that is sweeping the nation, packs thrills,

chills, and spills. It is fun to the 'nth degree. It will amuse the adults as well as the kiddies. If you have ever ridden a donkey you know what the players expect. You will want to be among those present when the whistle blows on January 3, at eight o'clock." The article made no mention of the prices, only that tickets could be purchased in advance from any FFA member or at the door.

The good folks in Topeka weren't far behind. They sponsored their own donkey basketball game just over a

month later, on February 9, 1955. Unlike Shipshewana, Topeka had a weekly newspaper. So, it is not surprising that Topeka's game received



The Hometown Treasure • Jan



# HISTORICAL FEATURE

more press coverage. In fact, the Topeka Journal printed page one announcements in four editions of the Journal beginning on January 12, 1955.

Thanks to those news articles, we have discovered a well of interesting information. The donkeys were provided by Ralph Godfrey Donkeys out of Crescent, Oklahoma. The price of admis-

sion was 60 cents for adults, 25 cents for students, and 25 cents for children. Tickets could be purchased in advance at Turner's Store (present day Topeka Pharmacy). The January 26th Journal news items noted that (note the typesetting mistake), "According to their contract, the sponsors receive ten per cent more on all tickets sold in advance, so local folk are urged to buy tickets for the entire family before the night of the game and thus increase the profit to the local ground."



In addition to the game itself, there were to be races involving both men and women. The jockeys in the first race were Dr. Ken Lehman, Charles Anderes, and Frank Hostetler. Frank Hostetler was a teacher and the high school basketball coach. You can image how much his players looked forward to watching him get embarrassed or bucked off ... hopefully both. The second race was between three high school boys. The third race had three high school girls. Regret-

tably we don't know who the high school students were. The winner of each race then ran in the final heat.

The February 2nd Topeka Journal provided a humorous preview of the game and how the evening would conclude. "The 'Pansy' girls will oppose the 'Petunia' girls in the opening basketball which will run two 8-minute halves.

After the girls tame the donkeys and break them to ride, the Old Men's team will play the All Stars. In the third and final fracas the Young Whipper Snappers tangle with the Hawpachers on the donkeys for a whirlwind finish."

The Topeka fundraiser, which was to be held at the Honeyville School gym, was co-sponsored by the Topeka School and the Topeka Chamber of Commerce (local businessmen). The Honeyville School, built in 1930, was at one time the largest gym in the county. Topeka High School played their home basketball games on that court until 1964. Following the consolidation of Shipshewana and Topeka, Topeka's home games were played in the Shipshewana gym until Westview High School was constructed.

Donkey basketball has been around since the 1930s. During the Great Depression and throughout the war years of World War II, it provided a cheap form of family entertainment in many rural communities.


In recent years donkey basketball has declined in popularity for several

reasons. First, animal rights activists began to target the sport claiming it was cruel to the animals. The critics cite issues such as inexperienced riders abusing the donkeys and show owners starving the animals for several days prior to the basketball games to prevent them from urinating or defecating on the gym floor. Obviously, the promoters claimed that the animals were treated humanely and that during the events there was proper supervision to ensure that there was no animal abuse.

A second reason was that schools became increasingly reluctant to host such fundraisers. With the high cost of installing and maintaining a hardwood gym floor, schools did not want donkeys on their basketball courts even if the donkeys were fitted with rubber shoes. As a result, donkey riding events either moved to county fairground harness racing tracks or simply faded away into history.

As far as we know, while the participants may have come away with some bumps, bruises and wounded pride, there were no broken bones. And a good time was had by all. Unfortunately, to



date I have not been able to locate any pictures from either the games in Shipshewana or Topeka. So, if you have any, please share. Hee Haw! 

*This article sponsored by*



## Left-Over Letters Spell Out A Message From Erika!

Enter remaining letters starting at the top and going left to right.

-----  
----- !

Its always good to have a couple recipes on hand that you can guarantee will taste good! Mine are peanut butter cookies, herby onion bread, and a delightful full roast chicken.

This year my peanut butter cookies once again served me well by winning the Most Delicious category for the cookie baking competition at work. Its an incredibly simple recipe too! Simple enough that I've been baking them for as long as I've known how to bake.

Just mix 1 cup peanut butter and 1 cup sugar. Then mix in 1 large egg and 1 teaspoon of vanilla. Scoop onto a baking sheet and bake at 350 for 10 minutes. For an extra treat, place a chocolate kiss in the center of each cookie immediately after taking them out of the oven. 🍪

Solution on page 38.

# Word Search

(find all the underlined words) by Erika Byler

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

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**2nd Prize(s):** A pen, notepad set, a letter opener, and *The Way I See It* from LaGwana.

**3rd Prize(s):** *The Way I See It*.

\*Additional 2nd and 3rd prizes will be awarded for every 50 entries over 100 received.

#### RULES:

- 1) Identify farm shown by owner's name, by address, or by road and nearest intersecting road.
- 2) Mail to *Hometown Treasure - Mystery Farm*, P.O. Box 70, Shipshewana, IN 46565.  
**Please include your name and address.**
- 3) Entry deadline: **January 21, 2025.**  
Please allow time for mail delivery.
- 4) Winners will be drawn and prizes mailed.  
Next month's winner will receive a 25\$ Gift Certificate to Tiffany's Restaurant and more!
- 5) Correct entries listed in our next issue!

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### LAST MONTH'S WINNERS

**Orla & Diana Yoder of 1100 W, Millersburg** correctly identified last issue's farm as being owned by **Junior & LeEtta Yutzy, 0715 N**

**900 W, Shipshewana, IN** Congratulations! They won a 1 Year Subscription from *The Connection*, a pen, a notepad set, a letter opener, and a copy of *The Way I See It* from LaGwana. Second prize went to **Jaron & Colleen Miller of 600 S, Topeka, IN**. Third prize went to **David & Freda Yutzy of 900 W, Shipshewana, IN**



There were 16 correct entries this month. **Others that guessed correctly were:** Joe & Deann Fry, Martha Raber, Elroy & Rachel Miller, Orley & Norma Lambright, Willie & Ruth Yoder, LaVern & Elnora Yutzy, Gerald & Marlene Troyer, Mark & Miriam Mast, Earl Dean & Regina Mast, Jr & Christina Raber, Mervin & Katie Byler, Amos & Elsie Bontrager, Kyle & Delores Yutzy




# Coloring Contest Winners

Six-year-old Emmalee Lambright of SR 5, Shipshewana was our winner for the December Coloring Contest. She won an ice cream treat of choice at Wana-Cup in Shipshewana.

Everyone else that sent in a page can stop by Wana-Cup for a free small ice cream cone through January.

Runners-up were Charlotte Beechy, age 6; Melissa Miller, age 5; Jeremy Hostetler, age 4; and Landon Marc Miller, age 3. Honorable Mentions: Madison Kate Lambright, age 5; Sophie Miller, age 5; Jaylin Hostetler, age 6; Alayna Bontrager, age 6; Halle Stutzman, age 6; and Alyssa Yoder, age 6.

Be SURE to include all your information on the coloring page, even your age! ... we do not want you to miss out! Remember, the contest is only for children up to six years old. 

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Blizzard

Celebration

Cocoa

Cottage

Eating

Ice Carving

Ice Skating

Lights

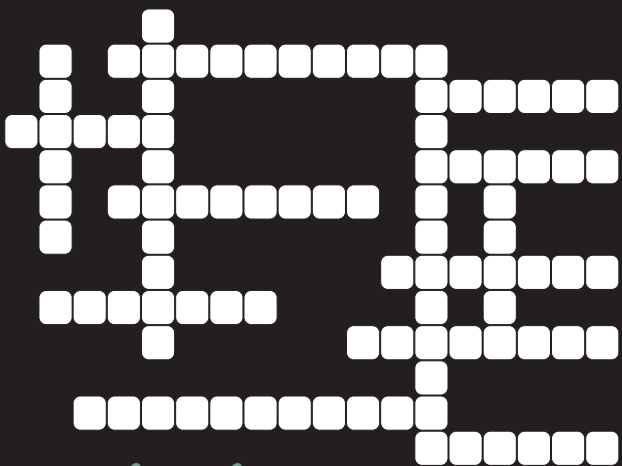
Mitten

New Years

Skiing

Snowmobiling

Storms



Clueless  
Crossword

Solution to Clueless  
Crossword is on pg 38.  
by Marsha Patrick

Use the words listed to fill in the spaces!

## Want a different way to advertise?

We are looking for sponsors for the Clueless Crossword on a month by month basis. Emily would be happy to use words to do with your business as the words that get put in the puzzle. Call for more details! 260-463-4901.

## What kind of LION never roars?



Answer on  
page 38.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**Coloring Contest: kids age 6 and younger.** Sponsored by Tiffany's in Topeka this month! Winner gets a FREE ICE CREAM TREAT OF CHOICE at Tiffany's. The Winning Drawings will be on display. ALL PARTICIPANTS claim your drawing for A FREE ICE-CREAM CONE at Tiffany's in February. Mail submission to: LaGwana, Coloring Contest, PO Box 70, Shipshewana, IN 46565. **Entry deadline is January 21, 2025.**

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



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KZ RV .....	3	The Connection .....	35	Yoder's Shipshevana Hardware .....	3

**Clueless Crossword**  
By Marsha Patrick

**Solution**  
to the puzzle on page 36.

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**A DANDELION**

Riddle on page 36.

[https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/a40910439/riddles-for-kids/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=mga\\_ga\\_gsk\\_d\\_bm\\_prog\\_org\\_us\\_a40910439&utm\\_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAIAgog7BhBxEwAVCW0L14Pik2DqU-vWRDUUOFw1HAYFJlaA82N1qMy9ICs062xcvVKMmfoCqdoQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/a40910439/riddles-for-kids/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=mga_ga_gsk_d_bm_prog_org_us_a40910439&utm_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAIAgog7BhBxEwAVCW0L14Pik2DqU-vWRDUUOFw1HAYFJlaA82N1qMy9ICs062xcvVKMmfoCqdoQAvD_BwE)

Solution to puzzle on page 35.

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

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[www.lagrangecountyhealth.com](http://www.lagrangecountyhealth.com)

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Monday & Wednesday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Tuesday 8:00 am to 3:00 pm	Wolfe Building Community Room <u>Only 1st &amp; 3rd Thursday</u> 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.	Topeka Fire Station <u>Only 2nd &amp; 4th Thursday</u> 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.

There are times when HD inspectors, vital records registrar, office staff, and nurses are engaged in field work, taking care of customers, or in satellite clinics. Please, feel free to call us before stopping in to make sure someone will be here to help you. **(260) 499-4182**

Nursing Division: Ext. #1 & #2

WIC Office: Ext. #3 & #4

Vital Records (Birth & Death Certificates): Ext. #5

Food Inspector: Ext. #6

Septic Inspector: Ext. #7

Water/Well Testing Information: Ext. #5 & #6





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