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2021 REVIEW



JANUARY

'MIRACLE PATIENT'

Seymour man home after 67 days in hospital recovering from COVID-19

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
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Jerry Owens is back home again.

The 74-year-old Seymour man spent 67 days at Schneck Medical Center recovering from COVID-19.

Dr. Ryan Stone, chief medical officer of the Seymour hospital, said that's the longest a person with COVID-19 has stayed there since the pandemic started in March 2020.

Owens is among 268 people who have been hospitalized for the virus at Schneck (not counting those currently there). Stone said the average stay for someone with severe COVID-19 has been seven to 14 days.

While he was elated to go home Wednesday, Owens said it's difficult not having his wife of 42 years, Karen Owens, there.

She was hospitalized shortly after him with COVID-19 and was in the next room until she died Dec. 4, 2020. She was 61.

"I used the term bittersweet. It was sweet to get home but bitter without Karen," Jerry said.

On Nov. 10, he was fishing with a former co-worker of 256 Supply True Value Hardware in Austin when he began feeling queasy. He returned home and felt worse, so he laid down to sleep. For six hours, his temperature was 104.4.

Karen took him to the emergency room and he later was sent home, but he progressively felt worse the next two days. The next day, he couldn't get out of bed.

"She was checking on me and turned real quick and passed out and hit the floor face first," Jerry said of Karen. "How I managed to jump out of bed and revive her and get her up, I'll never know."

Jerry's oxygen level dipped to 60%. Normal level is 95%.

"Next thing I know, they are strapping me on a gurney," he said of being taken to Schneck.

Jerry was put on a ventilator for the first time Nov. 20, while Karen was admitted Nov. 15 and started on a ventilator Nov. 23. Along with COVID-19, Jerry had pneumonia and a secondary lung infection, and Karen had dealt with lung and other health issues over the years.

Jerry was taken off of the ventilator for 17 hours until



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Jerry Owens of Seymour is wheeled out of Schneck Medical Center on Wednesday afternoon after spending 67 days in the Seymour hospital recovering from COVID-19.

having it put on for the second time Nov. 29.

He then developed pneumothorax, which occurs when air leaks into the space between a person's lung and chest wall and pushes on the outside of the lung and makes it collapse, according to mayoclinic.org. While vented, he had a chest tube put in until his oxygen levels improved.

"If they were going to vent me a second time, I didn't figure I was going to make it because people usually don't, so I texted Karen and told her goodbye," Jerry said. "The next thing I know, she's texting back — and she's just in a room around from me — and I see her at my door and she's waving at me, and then I went back on the vent after that."

When he came off of the ventilator Dec. 14, he saw Karen's brother, C.D. Kinney, pacing in the corner of his room.

"I knew when I saw him and didn't see her, she didn't make it," Jerry said. "Karen had a lot of health problems, especially lung issues. I knew if she ever got (COVID-19), I stood a real good chance of losing her."

Losing Karen was "like losing your right arm," Jerry said.

"Karen was all things to all people," he said. "If you needed a leader, she was a leader. If you needed a follower, she was a follower. If you needed a mother, she was a mother. If you needed somebody that knew about banking, she knew."

She also was the most selfless person he knew.

"She always, always put herself second to anybody else," Jerry said. "I can guarantee

you while we were both up there in ICU, she was more worried about whether I was going to make it than if she was going to make it or not. You could not find a more religious person than Karen. She was God's servant always."

Jerry said he then relied on God to help him overcome COVID-19. He also trusted the Schneck doctors, nurses and therapists to do what they could to help him return home.

Jerry lost 40 pounds and stayed in bed for more than 50 days because he was so weak.

"The first time I got out of bed — they had me standing to the side of the bed — it felt like I was standing on Jell-O. My legs were so weak," he said.

"Then it seemed like in the matter of the next 10 days, 12 days, I went from standing on Jell-O legs to the day before I got out (of the hospital) walking a little over 500 feet in the hallway," he said. "It was rather rapid to where I could get up and move. It was night and day. The nurses called me their miracle patient, the longest in-house surviving patient (of COVID-19)."

Jerry's children, Bill Owens and Shelley Turner, were told his rehabilitation would take four to five weeks, but it wound up being a couple of weeks.

"Somebody had told him, 'You've got to do this much walking before we're going to let you out of here,' so in his mind, he was thinking he's got to walk to get on home, and he just kept on and kept on," Bill said.

"I think once he was able to eat, that helped tremendously

because he was able to build up some strength," Turner said. "He knew in his heart of hearts, Karen wanted him to fight. He knew that's what she would want him to do."

In her last text message to Jerry, Karen told him to not give up.

"I've always felt like you have to accept personal responsibility, and this COVID stuff is part of it, too," Jerry said. "You're wearing your mask. It's responsibility not only for yourself but for other people. It's the same way in anything you do. ... Nobody was going to do my rehab for me. If I wanted out, I was going to have to do it."

Schneck personnel taking care of Jerry recently met a couple of times to determine if he could go home and function. They wanted him to go to a rehabilitation facility, but he told them he would rather rehab at home.

At 3 p.m. Wednesday, he was wheeled out of his room to go home and saw the hallway lined with Schneck employees holding signs and balloons and clapping.

Then when he reached the first floor, he saw more employees gathered in the lobby.

"It was just unbelievable," he said. "The nurses had been saying I was their miracle patient, and when I saw all of those people, it finally dawned on me."

From the nurses to the doctors to the physical, occupational and speech therapists, Jerry said they all took good care of him.

"I'm absolutely sure if it wasn't for (God) up above and the care that I got, I wouldn't be here," he said. "I can't say enough about the care I got there at the hospital. The people top to bottom were absolutely great. I don't think I could have gone to any other hospital anyplace and gotten any better care."

Stone and Melanie Burgess, director of hospitalist medicine and palliative care, were there for his sendoff.

Not only did they help take care of Jerry and Karen in the hospital, but they are neighbors.

"This is a very special thing for us to be able to participate in because of that," Stone said. "Nurses, administration, hospitalist team, patient services team, anybody that knew him, that knew his story

was excited to be a part of it."

Since there were some tough days in caring for Jerry and Karen, Burgess said she considered Wednesday a celebration.

"We are one big family. When someone stays with us for that long, they are a part of our family," she said.

Now home, Jerry has to use oxygen when he moves around so he maintains the normal level. Soon, he will start in-home care twice a week from physical and occupational therapists.

"People that think this is not real or they think it's like the flu ought to have to sit in the hospital and watch these nurses deal with death day in and day out because of it," he said. "I don't know how they do it. I could not."

Jerry was a teacher and coach for 33 years, including 30 at Crothersville High School, where he also served as athletic director. While his job wasn't easy at times, he said it doesn't compare to nurses dealing with the virus pandemic.

"I couldn't sit there and lose people day in and day out and continue to do it. I can't lose a ballgame day in and day out and continue to do it, let alone lose a life," he said. "Those people that think (the virus) is a joke ... it's not a joke."

Jerry said he followed the precautions, including wearing a mask, social distancing and washing his hands, but he still got the virus and said it was the sickest he has ever been in his life.

Since Jerry turned the boys basketball program around during his tenure, his brother, Darrell Owens, said he was sure he would be a winner in his battle against COVID-19.

"I'm not surprised he made it. He was never a loser at anything. He would worry himself to death if he lost a ballgame," Darrell said. "He has always been a winner his whole life. If anybody makes it (through COVID-19), he will."

Jerry has been involved with athletics for a long time, including playing senior softball until he had to have his third back surgery a year ago.

"I think the conditioning that I was in played a big role in me being able to make it," he said of battling the virus. "Plus, the man up above says, 'I'm not done with you yet.'"

THE BEST GIFT

Jackson County native's new album receives rave reviews

By ZACH SPICER
The Jackson County Banner

NPR says she's "one of Nashville's most fearless young singer-songwriters."

All Songs Considers notes "flat out, she is one of the best lyricists I've heard in a long time."

Rolling Stone quoted her "one of the most irresistible roots-rock gems of the year."

These are just three of the accolades Jackson County native Stephanie Lambring has received since her latest album, "Autonomy," was released Oct. 23, 2020.

The lengthy list can be found on the press section of her website at stephanielambring.com/?page_id=160.

"I'm feeling super validated, excited and grateful," the 34-year-old Freetown native and 2005 Seymour High School graduate said. "The response has far exceeded my expectations."

The rave reviews are especially welcomed since Lambring released her first album, "Lonely to Alone," in 2009, served as a staff songwriter for Carnival Music for three years and then took a break from the profession.

"I love to write songs that deliver some hard, sometimes heavy truths,"



LAMBRING

she said. "To hear that others want to dive in with me is the best gift. It makes me want to keep showing up and putting pen to paper so I can hopefully build a long career."

So far, Lambring, who now lives in Nashville, Tennessee, said the most surprising honor she has received is when one of the songs on the album, "Joy of Jesus," was chosen as No. 28 on NPR's 100 Best Songs of 2020.

"I was checking my email and received a notification from YouTube about a new comment on my video for 'Joy of Jesus,'" she said. "Someone had congratulated me on being one of NPR's picks for best songs of the year. I looked it up immediately, but my first thought was that maybe it was a mistake. When I saw my name and song, I was beside myself. NPR is pretty much my ultimate outlet."

Ann Powers from NPR saying she is "one of Nashville's most fearless young singer-songwriters" means the most to her, Lambring said.

"To be recognized by such a well-respected music critic is fulfilling and validating on a deep level, especially after battling intense cycles of self-doubt," Lambring said.

Powers also named "Autonomy" as her Best of October pick on NPR's All Songs Considered, noting, "What lifts these stories beyond the maulin is Lambring's thoughtfulness and clarity

AT A GLANCE

Stephanie Lambring's second full-length album, "Autonomy," can be purchased at the Jackson County Visitor Center, 100 N. Broadway St., Seymour, online at stephanielambring.bigcartel.com or streamed on Spotify, Apple Music or Amazon Music.

For information, visit stephanielambring.com or [facebook.com/stephanielambringmusic](https://www.facebook.com/stephanielambringmusic).

in going past the point of comfort to a place that demands the listener not just weep but confront her own assumptions, the lies she tells herself. Speaking truth should feel uncomfortable but ultimately freeing. And beautiful, like this music."

Lambring wrote all 10 songs on the album, which she said was her goal after five years of co-writing burnout during her time with publishing companies. She and her producer, Teddy Morgan, played most of the instruments on the album.

Along with "Joy of Jesus" are the songs "Daddy's Disappointment," "Pretty," "Little White Lie," "Mr. Wonderful," "Fine," "Somebody Else's Dress," "Old Folks Home," "Save Me Tonight" and "Birdsong Hollow."

She already has released music videos for "Mr. Wonderful," "Little White Lie," "Fine" and "Joy of Jesus."

"Mr. Wonderful" won Best Music Video at Summer in the South Film Festival in early September 2020. The lyric video was created by Iris Wendy Doutour.

Soon, Lambring will release a music video for "Pretty."

"You might see a couple familiar faces," she said. "Shawn and Kristina Charlton, whom I met in choir at SHS, brought their daughter, Lilly, down to Nashville to star as little me in this video. She did an amazing job. I can't wait to share it soon."

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a halt to many live shows, but Lambring said she hopes to be able to do some concerts this year to promote her album.

"I just now started disciplining myself to write again, so probably no new album in 2021, but I'm hoping to tour this one," she said. "I have tentatively secured an opening gig to tour the Southwest/West Coast late next summer, and I'm hoping for more. Fingers crossed."

"Autonomy" can be purchased at the Jackson County Visitor Center, 100 N. Broadway St., Seymour, online at stephanielambring.bigcartel.com or streamed on Spotify, Apple Music or Amazon Music.

"If you feel like a deep dive into the human experience, give it a listen," Lambring said. "It's not everyone's cup of tea, but when it is, it really is."

FEBRUARY

'I HAD THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD'

Local man retires after 42 years of working for city

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
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Rick Steward went as high in the ranks as he wanted to while working for the city of Seymour.

On Feb. 10, 1979, he started as an operator at the wastewater treatment plant.

He then spent some time working in the lab and helped in maintenance before entering management for the next 37 years.

Just recently, after 42 years of service, he officially retired. The 66-year-old most recently served as assistant utility director, which is a step below the person who runs what's now known as the Seymour Water Pollution Control facility on East County Road 525N on the city's far west side.

Transitioning to management, he said he went from "hands-on to managing the hands that did the on." As operators and foremen were hired, they looked to Steward to teach them everything they needed to know.

"I think I've been there and done every single thing that there has been to do in wastewater, and I'm a firm believer in if you say you've been there and done that, you better be able to prove that you've been able to do that," Steward said. "I've started at the bottom and ended up at what I consider the top. The superintendent, I had to make their job easier, and I did — every single one of them."

Steward said he was working for a private contractor when Gary Hukill, the wastewater treatment plant superintendent at the time, told him he needed someone to work weekends.

"I did, and the next thing I know, I'm getting ready to go out the door after 42 (years)," Steward said, smiling.

His father, Bob, had worked at the plant for a couple of years, but Rick didn't have any experience in wastewater treatment, so he had a lot to learn.

He was willing to put in the time and effort to do just that, not only at the beginning but throughout his entire career.

"Once you get certified, you've got to have continuing education, and that never ends," Steward said. "It has been educational through the whole thing — something new every day, something different every single day."

He said the plant treats an average of 5.8 million gallons of wastewater per day, so it's a big responsibility to ensure it's done the right way.

"The only service we provide is when you flush (a toilet), it's got to go down and somebody's got to take care of it," he said. "I have always been a firm believer that the 8,900 ratepayers in the city of Seymour, that's



who I work for, and I've always been the one over the years to make sure that the ratepayers get their money's worth. I'm all about the ratepayers."

Steward also liked passing on his knowledge to his co-workers.

"I've always told them, 'If you have the knowledge, share it. That makes you more valuable,' and it does because if you keep it inside and you think, 'Well, I'm the only one that knows how to do that and nobody else does,' that's not getting anybody anywhere," he said. "I've always been a firm believer 'Learn it, pass it on and you can always move on to something else.'"

Having served as the facility manager and facility superintendent in the past, Steward said it has been neat to see the plant progress.

"In 1979, there was not a lot here, and now, this is it," he said of the facility that has received three multimillion-dollar upgrades during his tenure.

Being a part of that gives him a lot of pride.

"That's where a lot of the understanding and the learning comes from is when you get to see an orbital oxidation ditch installed from the ground up, you know every single piece of the working," Steward said. "It's like putting together a clock. You get to see it all, and then you have a super understanding of it."

Two years ago, Steward said he started pondering retirement. He had told the city's mayor at the time, Craig Luedeman, he was going to stay through the end of his term. At the start of 2020, new mayor Matt Nicholson appointed a new utility director, Jarin Gladstein.

"I was in a tree stand hunting and (Nicholson) called me and said, 'Can you hang around for a little bit?'" Steward said of being asked to stay to share his knowledge about the plant with Gladstein.

Steward committed to staying a year before recently retiring.

During a retirement party Feb. 19, Nicholson presented a plaque to Steward recognizing his 42 years of service, and he and his co-workers, other city

employees, family and friends enjoyed lunch.

"I had the best job in the world," Steward said. "I've enjoyed every minute of it."

His wife, Maryellen Steward, and one of his sons, Dustin Steward, were in attendance.

"He loved his job. It provided for us for years. He really did enjoy his job," Maryellen said.

"That's why he worked there so long," said Dustin, who worked at the plant for a couple of years before moving to his current job at the Jackson County Sheriff's Department. "I even asked him over I'd say the past five or 10 years, 'You planning on working until you die?' He'd say, 'I just enjoy it.' Here we are 42 years, and he finally gave it up."

Doug Gregory has taken Rick's title of assistant utility director. He has worked for the city for 21 years, including the past five at Water Pollution Control.

Gregory went from stormwater crew lead to stormwater foreman before taking on his new role, which he said will be a learning curve because there's a lot to know about the everyday and emergency operations.

"I've got some pretty good-sized shoes to fill," Gregory said. "He knows the facility very well. He has got a lot of knowledge ... but he has always told me he's only a phone call away. He will be retired, he will be drawing a check, but he said if I need anything, give him a holler."

In retirement, Rick said he will continue his longtime hobbies of building turkey calls, woodworking, hunting, fishing and camping. He and Maryellen also plan to spend time on their motorcycle.

Maryellen said she has worked at Tammy Hiester-Stout's dental office in Seymour for 20 years and plans to retire later this year.

"We haul the bike with our camper, and we plan to venture out West and East," Maryellen said, noting they have done a lot of camping in the Midwest and want to branch out.

BROWNSTOWN

Schools to resume in-person learning

By ZACH SPICER
The Jackson County Banner

Two of the Brownstown Central Community School Corp. administrators are excited about the start of the third trimester — probably more so than any other school year.

Since the fall of 2020, Brownstown Central middle and high schools have operated on a hybrid schedule with students attending school every other day based on the first letter of their last name. The day a student is not at school is a remote learning day with learning and instruction taking place online.

That was implemented due to the COVID-19 spread in the community.

When the third and final trimester starts Feb. 23, however, all students will be at school learning.

"We are thrilled to be returning to all-student, in-person daily instruction," BCMS Principal Doug McClure. "In many respects, it's almost going to feel like starting the year all over again."

Staff members will spend the next week taking opportunities to remind students of the protocols and procedures that will still need to be followed, including mask wearing, social distancing, handwashing and staying home if they are experiencing COVID-like symptoms.

"The kids are doing a great job on their Red and Black days," McClure said. "We don't have any concerns, but just bringing everybody together, it's going to feel like an entirely different environment again."

Returning to all in-person learning shows things are progressing, he said.

"We are looking forward to getting on the other side of this pandemic, and getting back to having all of the kids at school is just going to be incredible," McClure said.

BCHS Principal Joe Sheffer said he, too, is looking forward to having all students back together again.

He noted one positive of getting a little bit back to normal.

"We pretty much had a plan in place where I had teachers teaching out of the auditorium, teaching everywhere," he said. "Now, it's 3-foot distances in the classroom as long as you are masked. It doesn't apply to certain spots, but you get 3 feet, so it helps us get a few more desks in the classroom and might allow a few more teachers to be able to teach in their room."

Superintendent Tim Taylor said everything has been "an ever-changing target" during the pandemic, and everyone continues to navigate that.

While some students have been quarantined with symptoms or as close contacts, he said spread of COVID-19 in the schools has been nearly nonexistent. That has been attained through the diligent efforts of staff and students to wear masks, maintain a safe social distance and adhere to other health and safety protocols, he said.

The highest number of students and staff absent due to some aspect of COVID-19 was 143 on Nov. 24, but that recently dropped to around 30.

Since the metrics for Jackson County also have improved, the Jackson County Health Department gave the corporation the OK to return to everyday in-person instruction.

Taylor said it was important to make the switch at a natural break in the school year that also allows families adequate time to plan for the transition.

Brownstown Elementary School will continue to utilize a pod system, which limits the number of students that a student interacts with to reduce the number of close contacts should a positive COVID-19 case occur.



Pictured: Rick Steward recently was presented a plaque in recognition of 42 years of service to the Seymour Water Pollution Control facility. ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE

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MARCH

KEEPING
HISTORY ALIVE

Downtown Brownstown buildings undergoing renovations

By ZACH SPICER

The Jackson County Banner

Two buildings in downtown Brownstown are being renovated to look modern yet maintain their historic charm.

The storefront of the 1902 building at 128 S. Main St., owned by 128 Properties LLC, was rebuilt to bring it back in line with others on the block. The office of Edward Jones financial advisor Ryan Kemp occupies Suite A on the right, while Suite B on the left is for rent.

On the north side of the courthouse square district, which recently was added to the National Register of Historic Places, Brownstown native Jim Gillespie purchased the 1875 building at 111 E. Walnut St. and plans to live upstairs and find a tenant for the first floor once renovation is complete.

Bill Hiday with 128 Properties initially talked to the Brownstown Town Council in the spring of 2019 about a national brand's intention of using the first floor of the Main Street building, and he wound up splitting that into two suites.

"It was available and it was a good buy, and we saw opportunity," he recently said of what drew him and his business partner, Steve Cissna, to the building. "Brownstown reminds me of the little town I'm from (Fortville), and I said, 'This is a good deal,' and to do projects like that, it just helps the town."

Hiday has made a living by rehabilitating old buildings in communities around the state. He can now add Brownstown to the list.

When a building transformation is complete, he said it gives him a sense of accomplishment and pride.

"If you go over to the Edward Jones space, it is modern office," Hiday said. "But whoever rents the other space, Suite B over there, if they say, 'You know, I want it as historic as you can make it,' you've got the flexibility."

A past owner had moved the storefront back into the building, and Hiday said he wanted to bring it back out and also expose the brick walls inside.

"That's taking it back to how God intended it," he said, smiling.

The building also has a second floor with 3,000 square feet of open space, but Hiday said they are undecided on what to do with it right now.

"It's completely gutted down to nothing upstairs, so we're still kind of toying with a couple of ideas up there," he said.

Kemp said his office has been in the building for three months. He and Kathy Barber, branch office administrator, previously worked in a building on the corner of Tipton and Chestnut streets in downtown Seymour with Adam Jackson and Cinda Burris.

"When I was looking for an office space, I knew I wanted to be located downtown with easy access to parking for the convenience of my clients," Kemp said of moving to Brownstown. "In a small town, that posed a few problems, so when I got in touch with Steve Cissna and met with Bill Hiday of 128 Properties, I knew it was the one. Bill shared his vision, and it just seemed to fit."

Part of what he loves about the restored building is that while Edward Jones is a new business in town, he said it feels like they are honoring Brownstown history.

"So all the boxes were checked: Convenient for my clients, honoring the history of this great town and simply put,



Ryan Kemp, an Edward Jones financial advisor in Brownstown, stands inside the newly renovated Suite A at 128 S. Main St.

a beautiful space," Kemp said. There are many things to love about the dichotomy of historic and modern in one space, he said.

"Bill and 128 Properties did such a fantastic job bringing the space up to speed with the modern business necessities, which makes it feel fresh," Kemp said.

"At the same time, you have features like the original brick wall that adds design interest and is something most of my clients like to talk about," he said. "We already loved Brownstown and couldn't wait to open our doors in this community, but pulling up to the square every day to a piece of Brownstown history is the cherry on top."

Over at 111 E. Walnut St., Hiday also is involved in that renovation, but the building is owned by Gillespie, who grew up in town and graduated from Brownstown Central High School in 1984.

After earning a business administration degree from Hanover College, he moved to Louisville, Kentucky, and later New York City to start a career. He now holds a senior position at a large commercial mortgage banking company, works in real estate and is a developer.

Gillespie said a few years ago, he tried to buy the building from Bessie Royalty, but she didn't accept his offer.

Then in the summer of 2020, she called and asked if he was still interested in the building, and they struck a deal.

"I bought it from Bessie in September and started demolition right away," Gillespie said.

He also had been interested in the 128 S. Main St. building, but Hiday and Cissna got to it first. Once he bought 111 E. Walnut St., he hired Hiday as the contractor.

"He has been great," Gillespie said. "He has really got an eye for these old buildings and has done it a lot, so he has been a good fit so far."

The Walnut Street building has been completely gutted.

"We've basically stripped everything out of the building," Gillespie said. "There were two apartments upstairs, so we basically have stripped everything out, from the walls to the floor, the ceiling and the utilities. The wiring, electric, plumbing, everything is gone. ... Everything has come out, so now, we have to put it back together."

The plan is for Gillespie to have a live-work space upstairs. That way, he can be closer to his father, Dr. Robert Gillespie, who is retired after a 50-plus-year career as a veterinarian in Brownstown.

"I currently am going back and forth between Louisville and New York," he said. "The idea is when this building is finished, I'll homestead upstairs."

For the first floor, he is looking for a tenant. Over the years, the building has housed a saloon, a hotel, an Odd Fellows lodge hall, a hardware store and most recently a bakery.

"I've heard from a few people, but I do not have a tenant down there yet," he said. "I'm interested in hearing ideas. I would prefer it be like an active retail use, more of like a cafe or a coffee shop or retail. You could put a law office in there. I just want it to bring some kind of street activity, a place for people to go. Ideally, that's what I'd like."

That floor is unique because during renovation, the brick walls were exposed and an old pressed tin ceiling was still intact.

"There was a fire next door, so some of it is damaged, some of it is missing, so we're going to try to repair that," Gillespie said of the ceiling.

"We're finishing it out as like a white box space and will work with whatever tenant to finish it out for their needs," he said of the first floor. "It should be a pretty cool space."

Gillespie said the new windows were expected to arrive this week, and he looks forward to seeing the building take shape.

"This is the first renovation of this magnitude where we've taken a building down to its walls and roof, so it's kind of fun," he said, comparing it to other development projects with which he has been involved.

Owning a piece of history in his hometown makes it special.

"Brownstown is my hometown. It always will be. I love the place. It made me who I am," said Gillespie, whose family has been in Jackson County for seven generations. "It's an honor, it's a privilege to have this opportunity. Hopefully, this building will spur a lot of new development downtown and allow people to see what these old buildings can be."

Now that the courthouse square district is on the National Register of Historic Places, building owners can apply for grants and tax credits to help with renovations. Gillespie said Brownstown Ewing Main Street is willing to assist them as a way to incentivize property owners to invest and encourage development downtown.

"When I grew up, downtown was different back then," Gillespie said. "People went downtown, there were stores downtown, so I'd love to see that come back. Instead of driving to Walmart, drive downtown. Walk down the sidewalk and run into your neighbors and say hello and be friendly. I think we all miss that. ... It's character. It's charm."

Hiday said while driving through many towns, there are vacant buildings, and that's not attractive to people who may be looking to relocate and put down roots or start a business there.

Brownstown, though, has done a pretty good job of keeping buildings occupied, he said.

"Just breathing some life into them, it just helps everybody," he said.

BCHS senior
makes top 10
in state DYW

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE

zspicer@tribtown.com

When Distinguished Young Women of Indiana posted pictures of the top 10 finalists on its Facebook page, Abby Stuckwisch was among them.

The Brownstown Central High School

senior went on to finish as runner-up in the Be Your Best Self essay contest and was a preliminary winner for self-expression and scholastics.

That resulted in her earning more scholarship money to put toward her future education.

Normally, the winners from DYW county competitions from around the state would go to Kokomo for the state contest. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the competition was conducted virtually Feb. 25 through 27. There were 20 senior girls competing.

"I was very blessed to have made top 10 but am so proud of all the girls who competed in general," Stuckwisch said. "I think everyone did an amazing job, especially for having to compete virtually."

During the in-person county competition Aug. 1, 2020, at BCHS, Stuckwisch won Be Your Best Self, self-expression, scholastics and interview, receiving a \$250 scholarship for each, and was the overall winner, earning a \$3,000 scholarship. In all, she received \$4,000 of the \$8,000 in scholarship money up for grabs on the night.

Stuckwisch and the other seven contestants were evaluated by a panel of judges on scholastics (25%), interview (25%), talent (20%), fitness (15%) and self-expression (15%). Scholarship money from local donors was earned by winning one of those categories, the Warren/Silver Spirit Award, second runner-up, first runner-up and overall winner.

Over the past few months, Stuckwisch said she worked really hard to practice and improve her dance from the county level.

"My dance was self-choreographed, and I changed a lot of 8-counts to make it overall more impressive and fun," she said. "Additionally, I practiced interview questions and trained for my fitness routine."

At state, two preliminary winners and an overall winner were chosen in each of the five categories. The senior with the best overall score won the state title.

This year, that was Kelsey Lawmaster of Bremen. She also won Be Your Best Self and was an interview preliminary winner.

Stuckwisch wrote a different essay for the state level.

"They ask that each girl hold a different presentation or campaign promoting the qualities of Be Your Best Self," she said. "I personally chose to do a social media campaign, Be Your Best Self Week, on the Jackson County DYW Instagram and Facebook. Each day for five days, I made a video about a different aspect of Be Your Best Self and used what I learned to help write my essay."

She said she was extremely surprised with how much interaction she received with her posts.

"Because of that, I had a great time writing my paper and reflecting on the impact I made," she said. "Placing high was just an added bonus."

Stuckwisch was a scholastics preliminary winner along with Evelyn Detamore



STUCKWISCH

ON THE WEB

For information, visit distinguishedyw.org or search for Distinguished Young Women of Indiana or Distinguished Young Women of Jackson County Indiana on Facebook.

of Grant County, and Sriya Koganti of Avon was the overall winner. Koganti also won interview and was third runner-up.

Scholastics is based on each senior's transcript (grades, test scores, etc.) and scholastic-based activities. For Stuckwisch, those include FFA, agriculture classes and 4-H.

Koganti was the other self-expression preliminary winner. Anissa Washington of Howard County won self-expression and also was a preliminary winner for talent and interview and was named first runner-up.

"For self-expression, the contestant is asked a question and gives anywhere from a 25- to 40-second response, answering the question and elaborating," Stuckwisch said. "It is a good chance for the judges to get to know the contestants' personalities and the way in which they handle themselves."

Stuckwisch said she was truly honored to receive these awards.

"I have worked diligently over the past few years to gain good grades and to better my public speaking skills, so earning these awards was a great reminder of the progress I have made," she said.

Even though the state contest was very different from the county level, Stuckwisch said she was still able to make some great connections with girls from across the state.

"It even turns out that one of the other girls will be going to Purdue, as well, and will be living in the same cooperative house as me," she said. "So although it was very different from normal years, it was a great experience."

Stuckwisch plans to major in agriculture education at Purdue University and ultimately wants to become a high school agriculture teacher and FFA adviser.

"All in all, this experience has taught me that when representing something, whether it be yourself, county or state, you are responsible for working hard and doing your best," she said of DYW. "Those people, whoever you may be, respected you enough to allow you to represent them. For that reason, you should always fulfill your role and exceed their expectations."

She said she is honored to have been chosen to represent Jackson County, where she was born and has been raised.

"This county is home to me, and I couldn't be more proud to represent it," Stuckwisch said.

She encourages other girls to sign up for DYW.

"Distinguished Young Women is an experience you will never regret," she said. "There is a place for everyone within the program, and we would love to see you participate (later this year)."

Lawmaster moves on to the 64th Distinguished Young Women National Finals in June in Mobile, Alabama, joining 50 other representatives from across the country in competing for cash scholarships and the opportunity to represent the program as the Distinguished Young Woman of America.

APRIL



ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
Special Olympics Indiana Jackson County athletes Dale Hickman, left, and Becky Klosterman hunt for Easter eggs during Saturday's Tom Judd Memorial Eggstra Special Easter Egg Hunt at Emerson Elementary School in Seymour.

BEARS, BLANKETS AND PILLOWS

Items made from old uniforms to benefit band program

By ZACH SPICER
The Jackson County Banner

The last thing Richard Branaman wanted to see was the old Brownstown Central High School Band of Braves uniforms being hauled off to a landfill.

With support from the community, the band received new uniforms last year. Several people then asked about having an old uniform since they were no longer being worn.

Branaman proposed turning them into unique handmade keepsakes, including blankets, teddy bears and pillows.

"I received my inspiration from a flier I received from an outside company offering to make pillows out of the old uniforms," he said. "I thought, 'This could be a solution to my 'What am I going to do with the old band uniforms?' problem.'"

The band boosters initially had reservations about the process, cost and interest in the project.

They, however, changed their tune when Branaman learned a BCHS graduate, Veronica Sons, made those types of items.

"We thought it would be ideal if we could find someone local who would have a personal connection to the project," he said.

"It was dumb luck that I discovered Veronica," he said. "Her mother, Kim Schneider, and I were talking when I received word that I was going to have to find a new storage space for the old uniforms. I mentioned the pillow idea to Kim, and she said, 'You should call my daughter, Veronica. She does all kinds of creative sewing projects.'"

Branaman set up a meeting with Sons, and the project took off.

"She had all these ideas," Branaman said. "I gave her all of the uniform parts she could carry to get started making some samples, which brings us to today."

In the past month, the boosters have drummed up business to keep Sons busy. She went from two orders to six after a flier was shared on the Brownstown Band Boosters Facebook page by Susan Raisor.

"I was just making them as I went, but then after (Raisor) placed the second order, I went ahead and started cutting them out so they are prepped, so once somebody orders them, all I've got to do is sew it because I've got them all prepped and cut out," Sons said.

Sons first made a quilt and

AT A GLANCE

The Brownstown Central Band Boosters fundraiser involves selling unique handmade keepsakes sewn from old band uniforms.

A 40-by-50-inch throw blanket is \$60, two styles of 17-inch-tall teddy bears are \$35 apiece, two styles of 10-inch-tall teddy bears are \$30 apiece, two styles of 17-by-17-inch pillows are \$35 apiece and a 12-by-14-inch pillow is \$30.

An order form can be obtained from a current band member, on the Brownstown Band Boosters Facebook page or by contacting Susan Raisor at 812-896-2069 or s.raisor@frontier.com.

Completed forms and payment (cash or check) may be given to any current band member or mailed to 500 N. Elm St., Brownstown, IN 47220. If paying with PayPal (paypal.me/sraisor), text or email a copy of the completed order form to Raisor. Checks should be made payable to Brownstown Central Band Boosters.

Delivery will take approximately two weeks.

then some teddy bears.

"I did the quilt first because I wanted to see how many pieces I could use, but then I started with the teddy bears," she said. "They don't take much material, but they are more fun to play with. It's kind of like you're making a teddy bear and dressing it."

The throw blanket, which is 40-by-50 inches, takes the most time to make.

There are two types of teddy bears, available in 10 or 17 inches tall, and three styles of pillows, two that are 17-by-17 inches and one that is 12-by-14 inches. The bears both have BC logos on them, while the pillow styles are Braves, arrow and teepee.

"It's just fun," Sons said of making the items. "You get so many different creativities. The more I make them, it's just like you get all of these more ideas. The one pillow that's so popular, we're already making a second idea for it because it's already almost sold out."

Sons is honored to be a part of the project because proceeds benefit a program at her alma mater. Plus, she gets to use a skill she learned in third grade.

"I had started sewing when I was in third grade for 4-H. I

started making clothing. For 4-H, you would model it and all of that fun stuff," she said, noting she attended the 4-H sewing workshops and also learned from her great-aunt.

Later on, she worked at a bridal store doing alterations. Even though she now works full time at The Peoples Bank, she does alterations on the side.

She started making teddy bears out of clothing when someone asked her if she could do that with baby clothes. Then she added quilts and pillows.

That worked out perfectly when Branaman asked her to help with the band fundraiser.

"I was excited right away because for one, I like doing the little things, like making the teddy bears. Little things like that are fun," she said. "It's just little side money. I work full time, and this is just my relaxing after work. It gives me a hobby to do."

The items are great for current and former band members and anyone else who supports Brownstown, as they are all in school colors — red, black and white — and include logos.

"We thought some might like a keepsake item and others might just like something to show support for Brownstown," Raisor said.

An order form can be obtained from a current band member, on the Brownstown Band Boosters Facebook page or by contacting Raisor at 812-896-2069 or s.raisor@frontier.com.

Branaman said the fundraiser provides several benefits for the band.

"First off, it will eventually free up storage space," he said. "Next, it provides us with a way of being good stewards with property and equipment that past generations have worked hard to earn. It is good for the environment because it will not end up in a landfill somewhere. It offers a keepsake to the Brownstown Central alumni as well as our community."

When the band and the band boosters started a new uniform drive, they started from scratch, and there had never been any money put aside for the day that the old uniforms would have to be replaced. Now, there is such a fund, Branaman said.

"All of the proceeds from the sale of these items will go into that account, drawing interest until the next band director has a need to replace his uniforms," he said.

Family honored to see special needs Easter egg hunt continue

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
zspicer@tribtown.com

Tom Judd's passions included education, children and sharing God's Word.

He spent 44 years in education, first teaching math and serving as assistant principal at North Vernon Junior High School and then being principal of Crothersville Junior-Senior High School and Hayden Elementary School, assistant to the superintendent for Jennings County School Corp. and superintendent for Orleans Community Schools and Medora Community School Corp.

He also was project director of high school initiatives for Ivy Tech Community College in Columbus, taught several graduate courses at Indiana University-Purdue University Columbus and was a foster grandparent at Emerson Elementary School.

Upon retirement from education, Judd became the minister at White's Chapel United Methodist Church. Through that role, he started the Eggstra Special Easter Egg Hunt for kids with special needs.

Last month, Special Olympics Indiana Jackson County found out Judd wasn't going to be able to do the event this year due to his health. Shortly after, the organization learned of his death March 10. He was 72.

After receiving the blessing of his family, the local Special Olympics group helped organize the Easter egg hunt so an important event he started keeps going.

Judd's wife of 43 years, Tina Judd, said she was happy to receive the phone call about the tradition continuing.

"We appreciate it, and we certainly appreciate Special Olympics," she said at the start of Saturday's Tom Judd Memorial Eggstra Special Easter Egg Hunt on the playground at Emerson Elementary School in Seymour.

"He had a heart for children," she said of her late husband. "I know he's

looking down today and he's talking to everybody in heaven and telling them what's going on down here and mentioning all of you by name, and I just hope you all have a very good time."

Then the first group of kids scurried about the playground in search of colored plastic Easter eggs stuffed with candy and also golden eggs to turn in for prizes, which were donated by Tina.

A second group later took its turn hunting for eggs, and Special Olympics athletes closed the event by picking up the remaining eggs.

Becky Klosterman and Derrick Martin were among the latter group.

Klosterman said she was glad to meet Tina and thank her for donating and attending.

"I was wanting to meet her, but I never met her before until today, and it was so good to meet her. She is so sweet," Klosterman said. "It was good to have her there in memory of Tom. I know it's kind of hard on her thinking about him, but like she said, he's smiling down on her, smiling down on us, thankful for us having it in memory of him."

Klosterman said it was fun to watch the kids with special needs participate in the event.

Martin agreed. "My heart is happy to see the kids be there to hunt the eggs," he said.

The Easter bunny also was at the event along with Rob and Kristye Lewis with their miniature therapy horse, Flash, from Little King Ranch Miniature Therapy Horses.

Plus, several Special Olympics volunteers and athletes were there to help and ensure everyone had an "eggstra special time."

"It's nice for the kids because it is a smaller hunt," said Mary Carlson, assistant county coordinator and secretary for Special Olympics Indiana Jackson County. "I was very pleased with the turnout for the hunt. It was nice to have Mrs. Judd there and just to honor Mr. Judd in general."

Pictured from top: Veronica Sons of Brownstown cuts a piece of fabric from an old Brownstown Central High School band uniform. // Sons is using old Brownstown Central High School band uniforms to make pillows, throw blankets and teddy bears as a fundraiser for the band. **ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE**

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MAY



New subdivision planned in Crothersville

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
zspicer@tribtown.com

CROTHERSVILLE — Previous owners of a 5.11-acre lot in the 500 block of Moore Street in Crothersville laid it out for a subdivision.

While those plans never panned out, the current owner, Sam Kuehn, plans to make it happen.

"I look to move quickly," he told the Crothersville Town Council during a meeting May 4 at the town hall.

"I'm in line with talking to my bankers, talking to Jonathan Isaacs about layout, getting a little bit more current engineering drawings for me and surveying and stuff," he said. "I don't think that's going to change very much. It's just a matter of fine-tuning and -tuning to make sure that everything's where it is. I'm ready to start moving some dirt soon."

Kuehn said the subdivision will have 15 to 18 three-bedroom homes that will total around 1,200 square feet and be in the \$150,000 market range. The latter will depend on market value and cost of lumber. He described the homes as "simple, modern, ranch-type structures."

One reason for attending the town council meeting was to discuss tapping into the town's sewer and water lines. Kuehn wants to coordinate that with the culvert replacement work being done nearby on Moore Street.

"The time to do it would be now while we've got the road opened up," council President Danieta Foster said.

"It's going to be a big job," Mason Boicourt, the town's utility director, said of the Moore Street project. "It has just kind of all lined together that (Kuehn) wants to do this all at the same time."

Boicourt said the sanitary main extension for the sewer tap is an 8-inch tap into the 10-inch main. King's Trucking and Excavation Inc. of Seymour quoted that work at \$13,895. For the 6-inch water tap, the cost from the same company is \$10,590.

Kuehn said there are water and sewer lines on the property, but they are about 50 years old and likely are useless.

"It would probably work, but it would just be a lifetime of headaches," he said.

Councilman Jamy Greathouse said the biggest concern is ensuring everything is congruent going from the taps into the area and who would be responsible for them.

"We want to make sure it all lines up with our current systems and everything meets the code that it needs to be at," he said.

Kuehn said an engineer would lay out the systems, so they should be up to code.

Boicourt said the town's utility workers would just need access to clean out mains and do maintenance, and there would need to be a manhole every 200 feet in the subdivision. It also needs to be decided who will pay for all of the materials.

"We need to have all of that in writing," he said. "That way, we know what we're responsible for and what you're going to take care of, and we want it to be something that we can maintain after we take it over."

Kuehn said according to state code, the subdivision needs to have a cul-de-sac. Greathouse confirmed that, noting anything except for streets approved for future extension into adjacent developed territories must end in a cul-de-sac.

While the town is putting a lot of money into various improvement projects, Greathouse said he's glad to see a subdivision coming to Crothersville.

"I believe this is probably one of the most important things that has come before us in a long time because we have an amazing industrial park in a great location, and the No. 1 restriction that this town is facing is housing," he said. "Over 60% of those people (who work at the industries) live outside of this area, and the more houses, more things go on in this community."

Foster said as soon as a house in Crothersville goes up for sale, it's pending the next day.

"I'm hoping that maybe some other people take light of this with some of the other available properties in the area because I've talked to a couple of places that do warehousing and stuff in the Louisville area, and they said, 'Yeah, we would love to be right there. You're halfway between Louisville and Indy. Our employees have no place to live,'" Greathouse said. "I'm hoping that maybe this will spur something up."

Greathouse then made a motion to accept both quotes from King's, and it was seconded and unanimously approved.

Since the town doesn't have a subdivision control ordinance at this time, Boicourt said the next step is to work with Brad Bender with FFBH Inc. to come up with requirements for Kuehn and have town attorney Matt Lorenzo draft a letter for the engineer to review.

Once everything, including the subdivision street, gets dedicated to the town, it would be responsible for maintenance and upkeep.

MAKING A 'SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT'

Fair lands Impact Grant for grandstand seating

STAFF REPORTS

Visitors to grandstand events during this year's Jackson County Fair will have new or renovated bleachers to sit upon thanks in part to a \$100,000 grant from the Jackson County Visitor Center.

The visitor center board of directors recently voted to award the Jackson County Fair its 2021 Impact Grant.

The matching grant will help the fair board pay for work on the uncovered bleachers at both ends of the grandstand.

The plan for seating in Turn 1 is to put aluminum on top of the wooden bleachers, while all of the bleachers in Turn 4 will be replaced with aluminum seating.

The \$200,000 project was implemented to address safety concerns with the existing bleachers that have been in place since the 1980s. Those bleachers also are not handicap-accessible, which is being addressed with the project.

One of the safety concerns was of people falling through the old bleachers.

"They will be all aluminum, they will look nice, they will be really safe and they'll be handicap-accessible and have all of the proper aisles," fair board member Matt Boknecht said while discussing the project during a fair board meeting in February.

"All of that old stuff was fine when it was built, but it's truly not up to code now," he said. "Now, we'll be all up to code, and everything will be good. It will make it really nice when we have big crowds."

The covered and uncovered parts of the grandstand are especially full during big Brownstown Speedway races, and there are some races and other events that draw large crowds during the Jackson County Fair the last week of July.

"More than anything, it's to protect the spectators and protect the county and the commissioners," Boknecht said. "During the fair, we have big crowds, and some of the racing events, we have big crowds."

The hope is to reuse some of the bleachers from Turn 4 to add more seating in the pit grandstand on the opposite side of the racetrack and at



AUBREY WOODS | THE TRIBUNE

Clockwise from top left: A \$200,000 project at the grandstands at the Jackson County Fairgrounds will see wooden bleacher seating in Turn 1 covered with aluminum. The fair recently received a \$100,000 Impact Grant from the Jackson County Visitor Center to use toward the work. // A \$200,000 project at the grandstands at the Jackson County Fairgrounds will see wooden bleacher seating in Turn 4 replaced with aluminum bleachers. // Mike Warren with Bane and Warren Construction unloads gravel for a part of the project.

the horse arena. The groups that oversee those areas will be able to fix the boards and maintain them.

Boknecht said the board talked about redoing the seating under the covered part of the grandstand, too, but decided to do the project in stages. The first stage is to replace or redo the bleachers in the uncovered areas.

This project is part of the continued improvements at the fairgrounds.

The visitor center established the one-time Impact Grant to have a direct impact on Jackson County and tourism.

The grant aims to enhance the quality of the experience of the visitors to Jackson County and in turn the quality of life for county residents.

The grant was approved following a review and recommendation by the visitor center grant committee. The committee also received a request from Child Care Network for renovations to its planned child care building. As a part of the current project, they are planning to develop space for conference, meeting and convention use.

"The Jackson County Visitor Center is excited to award our 2021 Impact Grant to the Jackson County Fair," said Arann Banks, executive director of the visitor center.

"The Jackson County Fair is our county's most attended event of the year, and we are thrilled to play a significant part in improving and enhancing the visitor experience," she said. "With improvement to the grandstand

seating, our race visitors will also be able to more safely enjoy their Jackson County experience."

Jackson County Fair grandstand chairman Mark Norman thanked the visitor center and said it will bring a needed improvement to the fair grandstands.

"We are thankful to the visitor center board for selecting the Jackson County Fair as the recipient of the 2021 Impact Grant," he said. "With these grant dollars and our match, we will be able to make a significant improvement to our fair, which already has an existing reputation as one of the best in the state."

Greg Prange, a member of the visitor center grant committee, said choosing which organization receives a grant from several worthy applicants is always a difficult task.

"The Impact Grant is the 'granddaddy' of all of our grants," he said. "The Jackson County Fair grandstand project is one that will benefit both the residents of and the visitors to Jackson County. Our fair is touted as one of the best in the Midwest, and thousands upon thousands of visitors come to visit every year."

The grandstands are filled every night, and the condition of the current seats is a safety issue, Prange said.

"We look forward to the safety and comfort that this improvement will bring to all visitors to the Jackson County Fairgrounds," he said.

The formal check presentation for the funds will be conducted during the visitor center board's May 19 meeting.

JUNE

FORMING LIFELONG FRIENDSHIPS

Seymour High School Best Buddies International pair, adviser receive state honors

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
zspicer@tribtown.com

Payton Toepfert decided to check her email one day and found a message that was sent three days prior.

She was pleasantly surprised to learn she won a chapter award from Best Buddies Indiana.

The Seymour High School senior and sophomore Karsen Allman were named Buddy Pair of the Year for the state.

Best Buddies International is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, leadership development and inclusive living for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, according to bestbuddies.org.

Best Buddies Friendship programs represent one of the organization's four key mission pillars. The programs build one-to-one friendships between people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities, offering social interactions while improving the quality of life and level of inclusion for a population that is often isolated and excluded.

Through their participation, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities form meaningful connections with their peers, gain self-confidence and self-esteem and share interests, experiences and activities that many other individuals enjoy.

This was Seymour High School's second school year with a Best Buddies chapter, and it has won Buddy Pair of the Year both years. A.J. Engel and Aidan Hiester won it in 2020.

"I'm honestly shocked because I procrastinated opening the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Karsen Allman, left, and Payton Toepfert were on Seymour High School's Unified track and field team this spring.

email. It was like three days late," Toepfert said, smiling. "I'm proud of us. I don't do any of this for the recognition, but if it helps show people that it's OK to include (then I'm happy)."

Of the seven chapter awards given each year, Seymour also won Adviser of the Year. That went to Alanie Flack.

She spent three years leading the Best Buddies chapters at Columbus East and Columbus North high schools before waiting a year after moving to SHS to get it established there.

"Just being able to take that experience and apply it to this new chapter, it was actually something I wanted to do at a previous school and didn't get that accomplished, so I knew when I came to Seymour that I really wanted to get a Best Buddies chapter going, especially with Special Olympics, Unified track, we have a strong peer tutoring program," Flack said.

"I took a year to get into my new role, and we implemented that," she said. "It's a program that we just have to keep working on and building, but I'm really proud of where we are right now."

Winning an award also came

ON THE WEB

For information about Best Buddies Indiana, visit bestbuddies.org/indiana.

as a surprise to Flack. She didn't even know she was nominated until Toepfert sent her a screenshot of the award winners listed in the email.

"I was like, 'Oh, what? What's going on here? What's she sending me?' Then I was able to open up my own email and see it on there," Flack said.

If she had to guess, Toepfert and junior Samantha Foster nominated Flack for the award.

"I have girls that really do the bulk of my duties," Flack said. "I'm the one who does the paperwork and talks to administrators about events. I do try to coordinate things and give some past experience from when I was Best Buddies sponsor in Columbus."

Seymour's first two years of Best Buddies have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, members were able to form friendships and participate in activities in and out of school.

While Flack said she normally likes for pairs to just spend one year together, Toepfert and Allman were an exception and remained together for two years.

This year, Toepfert said she and Allman went to a Jackson Snelling concert at Harmony Park and attended the chapter's Best Buddies Friendship Walk at SHS.

"Sometimes, we just kind of hang out at her house, watch 'The Wiggles' and nap and snack," Toepfert said.

She also has become close to the Allman family.

"She has a twin sister, and if she needs anything, she'll get ahold of me and we'll talk," Toepfert said. "Their older sister likes me, and their grandparents

like me. I've gained a family because I was at their Christmas this past year and Thanksgiving. Actually, I wrapped some of their Christmas presents."

Karsen's mother, Lissa Allman, said she still remembers two years ago when they were sitting on their front porch and Toepfert pulled up to introduce herself.

"At that point, I never dreamed this program would be exactly what it was meant to be: Friendship and inclusion," Lissa said.

Karsen cannot speak her wants and needs, so Lissa is her voice, and so is Toepfert, particularly at school.

"I have seen Karsen want to be part of her neuro-typical twin sister's life for many years," Lissa said. "She gets to experience what it is like to have a friend that is not her family or others of special needs. Inclusion is what is so important to our children with special needs."

Seeing the bond between Payton and Karsen is something anyone who knows them would be so proud of, Lissa said.

"God absolutely knew what he was doing when putting Payton in Karsen's life," she said. "Seeing the two together is so rewarding in so many ways. Payton has made such a positive impact on Karsen."

Special needs students can and will feel much isolation day in and day out throughout their lifetime, Lissa said, but Best Buddies works on building relationships with those with special needs and typical peers.

"It works," Lissa said. "When Karsen sees Payton, she lights up, and although she cannot tell us, it's obvious Payton is her best friend. They laugh together, hang out like typical teenagers, go out to eat or get ice cream. Besides family, Karsen would not get this with another teen peer."

Lissa said Payton is a blessing for Karsen and their family.

"I say she is my adopted daughter because she and her family have become part of ours," Lissa said. "She never ceases to amaze me in knowing about Karsen and how to take care of her physically and mentally. I cannot ever give her the thanks she deserves. Karsen never really had a friend until this program, and the love between them is incredible."

Flack said Seymour winning state Buddy Pair of the Year both years of the chapter's existence is a great way to start the program.

"Payton and Karsen are really what Best Buddies is about — developing a lifelong friendship," Flack said. "They are together a lot, and Payton can assist Karsen in school, but also, she gives Karsen some experiences that she probably wouldn't have, at least in the frequency that typical high-schoolers do. And Payton has been welcomed into their family. ... I think that it's just neat to see how they've grown the last two years."

The SHS chapter had more than 20 members in the 2020-21 school year, and Flack looks forward to seeing the program continue in the years to come.

"Our mission in Best Buddies in Seymour is just to continue to involve our community and just to give as many folks the typical high school experience," she said.

"Parents are dropping their kids off for school events for the first time in their lives, they are having friends over or having phone calls or things like that that hasn't been their experience in school, but yet we are facilitating those relationships," she said. "It's just important to get everyone included and to have as much of that high school experience as you can."

2-day event honors local fallen Marine, 15 other heroes

By AUBREY WOODS
The Jackson County Banner

The final challenge for any Marine Corps recruit is known as The Crucible.

The mentally and physically demanding 54-hour event, which includes food and sleep deprivation while traveling 48 miles on foot, comes at the end of 11 weeks of boot camp. It's followed by a graduation ceremony.

In 2009, Hunter "H.D." Hogan of Norman attended his Marine Corps graduation ceremony on crutches because he had torn his ACL and two MCLs on the first day of The Crucible. Despite those injuries, Hogan pushed through the pain and made it to the end.

That display shows the toughness Hogan possessed throughout his life before he was killed in action June 23, 2012, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

On June 13, Hogan's sacrifice was recognized on a stop during the 11th annual Indiana Patriot Guard Ride to Remember.

The ride was started in 2011 by a couple of men from the Ripley County area to remember the servicemen from southeastern Indiana who have died in conflicts in Iraq



AUBREY WOODS | THE TRIBUNE

The Indiana Patriot Guard's 11th annual Ride to Remember stopped at the Jackson County Courthouse on June 13 to recognize the sacrifice of Marine Lance Cpl. Hunter "H.D." Hogan of Norman. Hogan was killed in action June 23, 2012, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

and Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001.

Since 2013, the 300-plus-mile, two-day event has always made its way to Brownstown to remember Hogan.

Veteran Tim Kieffer of Batesville and Ed Schmidt of Napoleon organized the first ride for the southeastern part of the state in 2011.

During Sunday's ceremony in front of the Jackson County War Memorial on the courthouse lawn, Kieffer talked about Hogan, who grew up in the Clearspring area and graduated from

Brownstown Central High School in 2009.

Hogan was serving with the 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force at the time of his death.

The 21-year-old was buried in Nebraska, where his father lived at the time. A funeral service was held in Brownstown, and the town council later named Walnut Street Hunter "H.D." Hogan Memorial Way in his memory.

Kieffer said Hogan was proud of the Marine Corps and believed it to be second to none.

"He was loyal to his comrades and to the corps, adhering always to its motto, 'Semper Fidelis' (always faithful)," Kieffer said. "H.D.'s personal side was all about as he said, 'The three F's: Family, friends and with the emphasis on fun.'"

Hogan lived his life at 100 mph, whether it be his passion for rodeo and bucking horses, hunting and fishing or with his time in the Marine Corps, Kieffer said.

"His love of the sport (of rodeo) eventually led to several full-ride scholarship offers," Kieffer said. "H.D. put all of that on hold in order to fulfill his dream. He wanted to serve his country like his dad, who also served in the Marine Corps."

Hogan joined the Marine Corps in October 2009.

"Always the littlest guy, standing at 5-foot-7 and weighing 130 pounds," Kieffer said. "One word to accurately describe him was tough."

Prior to sustaining his injuries on the first day of The Crucible, Hogan had sustained broken ribs when a horse fell on him in the fourth grade.

"Hunter simply stood up, brushed it off and kept

going," Kieffer said. "He continued about his daily activities, which included baling hay and riding bulls."

His father didn't learn about the injuries until two weeks later.

Hogan also broke his neck in a rodeo in Abilene, Kansas, at the age of 17, Kieffer said.

"The first question he asked as you can imagine was 'When can I ride again?'" he said.

After suffering his injuries on the first day of The Crucible, Hogan's drill instructor forced him to seek medical help.

"H.D. was informed that he needed surgery," Kieffer said. "He insisted they just put ice on it so he could get back to his platoon and finish The Crucible, and that's exactly what he did."

Hunter graduated from the Marine Corps despite his supervisors urging him to seek a medical discharge and reap the financial benefits from disabled military status, Kieffer said.

He said Hogan's military awards included Infantry Training School, Infantry Training Regiment, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force, Purple Heart, Afghanistan Campaign

Medal, Navy Sea Service Deployment, Combat Action Ribbon and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Besides Hogan, 15 other fallen heroes are honored during the Ride to Remember each year. There also are stops in Batesville, Sunman, Aurora, Bennington, Madison, Scottsburg, Sellersburg, Clarksville, New Albany, Bartlettville and Versailles.

Marine Lance Cpl. Jacky Koenig, who died April 7, 2017, was the last fallen hero added to the ride. He is recognized each year during a stop at Vernon Cemetery, where he is buried.

Each stop includes an introduction by bagpipers with the 35th Indiana Pipes and Drums, an opening prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, recognition of Gold Star Mothers, roll call, the reading of each fallen hero's biography, the reading of a poem, the placement of a memorial plaque and a rose, a three-volley gun salute and the playing of "Taps."

The public is always invited to attend each ceremony and travel with the riders from one ceremony to the next.

EST. **1933**
State Bank
of Medora
24 E. Main St,
Medora
812-966-2601

EST. **1938**
 Jackson County REMC
274 E. Base Rd.
Brownstown
812-358-4458

EST. **1962**
 TOWNHOUSE CAFE
Celebrating 60 years in 2022
206 E. 4th St., Seymour
812-522-1099
Tuesday - Sunday 7AM - 2PM
townhousecafein.com

JULY



SPELLING

V-I-C-T-O-R-Y

Students compete in annual spelling bee at county fair

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
zspicer@tribtown.com

BROWNSTOWN — It's a good thing Gabriella Sarver practiced her spelling.

When she was one of the final two students in the fifth grade division of the Jackson County Fair Spelling Bee on July 26, the final word she needed to spell to win was practice.

She calmly and confidently spoke into the microphone, saying the word, spelling it and saying it again.

Then she was announced as the winner and presented a plaque to proudly display at home.

The St. Ambrose Catholic School student won in the 13th round. Cayden Booker of Brownstown Elementary School misheard the word steamy and spelled steaming. Sarver then correctly spelled that word and practice.

"Yeah, I got really lucky," Sarver said, smiling. "Then I was like, 'An easy word to finish it off? Great.'"

The only word Sarver misspelled was poisoning in the 10th round. Booker misspelled it, too, and then they alternated correctly spelling the words mayor, postage, regional and manufacture before what wound up being the final round.

Sarver moved to Jackson County last year, so this was her first time competing in the annual spelling bee at the fair, which occurred for the 44th year and was sponsored by Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Indiana Realty.

Students qualified after winning the spelling bee in their classroom at school. Boys and girls who were in third, fourth and fifth grades in the 2020-21 school year from all Jackson County schools participated.

There were 121 winners from around the county, but only 58 were able to make it July 26 to compete at the pavilion at the Jackson County Fairgrounds in Brownstown.

Sarver said at her previous school, she competed in a spelling bee in her classroom and placed second, and she also did a geography bee.

For the fair spelling bee, she said she volunteered to participate.

"I was really worried because I thought everyone else here was better than

AT A GLANCE

44th annual Jackson County Fair Spelling Bee

Top three

Third grade: Becca Herbert, Cortland Elementary School, first; Haley Bumbleburg, Immanuel Lutheran School, second; Hank Stuckwisch, Lutheran Central School, third

Fourth grade: Josie Beavers, St. John's Sauer's Lutheran School, first; Julia Hartung, St. Ambrose Catholic School, second; Kohlie Hallow, Immanuel Lutheran School, third

Fifth grade: Gabriella Sarver, St. Ambrose Catholic School, first; Cayden Booker, Brownstown Elementary School, second; Kenna Bohle, Emerson Elementary School, third

ON THE WEB

For information about other activities at the Jackson County Fair, visit jackson-countyfair.org.

me," Sarver said.

She was surprised to make it to the final two out of 16 spellers.

"I thought I would at least make it to third place maybe, but I didn't know if I was going to make it to the final two," she said.

Being the winner, Sarver said she was proud to represent her school.

"That actually does mean a lot," she said.

She planned to celebrate afterwards by riding on the Ferris wheel and eating cotton candy. While this was her final opportunity to compete in the fair spelling bee, Sarver said she plans to keep practicing her spelling.

The first division to compete July 26 was third grade. It started with 19 and was down to three after 10 rounds: Becca Herbert of Cortland Elementary School, Hank Stuckwisch of Lutheran Central School and Haley Bumbleburg of Immanuel Lutheran School.

They were perfect in the 11th and 12th rounds. Herbert then correctly spelled squirt, but Stuckwisch misspelled imagine and Bumbleburg misspelled honor. Bumbleburg, however, remained in the competition

when Herbert correctly spelled honor but forgot to say the word afterwards.

After Herbert was right on interested, Bumbleburg spelled the word quite instead of quiet, and Herbert won on quiet and then crayon.

Herbert said she has always been good at spelling, but she amazed herself by winning at the fair. She qualified after winning among 23 kids at her school.

Spelling at the fair in front of her peers and adults was stressful, she said, but she was happy about winning. Afterwards, she headed to the show arena to participate in a fourth show.

The 10th grade division had the most spellers, 23.

After the 10th round, it was down to Josie Beavers of St. John's Sauer's Lutheran School, Kohlie Hallow of Immanuel Lutheran School and Julia Hartung of St. Ambrose.

Hallow missed a word in the 11th round, and Beavers and Hartung were perfect in the next two rounds before Hartung missed on symbol. Beavers then spelled it right and followed with fashion, finishing the contest perfect.

"My legs were shaking like crazy. They were shaking all around," Beavers said, smiling.

In her school competition, she said there was a four-way tie after three rounds before she was declared the winner.

Competing against kids from around the county at the fair, however, was a new experience.

"I kept telling my mom I was a nervous wreck. I was nervous as can be," she said. "Since I've never done anything really like that before, I was like, 'What if I mess up? People will just be staring at me the whole time. What if I mess up on the easiest word in the world?'"

Getting the opportunity to compete at the fair meant a lot to Beavers, but winning made it sweeter. Before spelling fashion, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

"I was like, 'Oh my gosh! I actually won' because I had no idea I was going to win," she said of her reaction afterwards.

Beavers has one more chance to qualify for the fair spelling bee, and she said she hopes to return next summer.

High school students to work at elementary

By ZACH SPICER
The Jackson County Banner

BROWNSTOWN — Brownstown Elementary School often has trouble finding people who want to work as instructional aides.

Principal Chrystal Street said pay is one thing that keeps the school from having many applicants because some neighboring districts pay a bit more.

As of right now, she said she has enough applicants to fill the spots that are available for the upcoming 2021-22 school year. If several aides leave during the summer, though, she said she might struggle filling those spots.

Brownstown Central High School students, however, could help fill in.

During a recent meeting, the Brownstown Central Community School Corp. board of school trustees unanimously approved paying BCHS students to work as instructional aides at a rate of \$10 per hour.

The idea came from board Vice President Gina Hackman since the aide positions have become increasingly difficult to fill over the past few years.

"The cadet teacher program for high school students has proven to be very successful, providing needed help in the classroom as well as valuable experiences for the participants," she said. "Many students are interested in the School to Work program but struggle sometimes to find placements."

By opening the instructional aide positions to high school students in the School to Work program, she said they are solving two problems in one.

"Teachers and their students will be getting the help they need in the classroom, and the student assistants will be gaining valuable work experiences and hopefully a love of the teaching profession," Hackman said.

Superintendent Tim Taylor, Assistant Superintendent Jade Peters, Street and BCHS Principal Joe Sheffer were all on board with the idea.

Taylor and Peters both said the program is being piloted for one year, and they will evaluate the effectiveness to determine the future of it.

Sheffer said around 10 students are signed up to work at the elementary. Most of them will be there two or three hours a day for at least two trimesters.

"(The) elementary requested more aides this year to help work with students who may be behind due to the pandemic," he said. "There is an aide shortage, so the plan is to try using high school students in addition to other aides. Mrs. Street will be responsible to place our high school students at (the) elementary."

Street said the program has the ability to impact students, staff and administration in a positive way.

"High school students who participate in the School to Work program have the opportunity to be paid for the work that they do," she said. "My thought was then 'Why couldn't the cadet teachers be paid, as well?' Many of them spend several hours at BES and then go to practice. This opportunity gives high-schoolers a little bit of extra spending money while being able to still participate in extracurricular activities."

Street said another interesting facet of the program is her students get to connect firsthand with many of the cadets who have extracurricular activities, such as sports or music, and are able to support them.

"Having high school students at BES gives the elementary students the opportunity to see different activities that they could be part of when they attend high school," she said.

The high-schoolers might work with small groups, laminate, copy or check over student work or go on field trips.

"The kids love to be able to spend a little bit of extra time with the cadet teachers for some individualized attention," Street said. "There is always a great deal of things that teachers need to do, and there is never enough time in the day. Teachers trust the aides to help with some things that they just might not be able to get finished."

Street said she hopes the high school students get the same thrill as educators when they know they have made an impact or impression on a student.

"I want the cadet teachers to realize that their role is very important and that they need to set a great example for students to model," she said. "Brownstown Elementary has fantastic teachers and will have high expectations of the high school students. My hope is that the teachers have inspired them enough to want to come back and possibly teach in their hometown."

Plus, the cadet teachers will know administration and teachers will help them grow as an educator and be available should they need something in the future, Street said.

"If the cadet prefers a different setting to teach, my hope is that the cadets emulate the same enthusiasm and drive that BES teachers show," she said. "Some cadets might not choose education as their future path, but it is my belief that they will look back on their experience at BES fondly and know that every adult who comes into contact with a student has the ability to make a difference in the life of a child."

Clockwise from top left: St. Ambrose Catholic School student Gabriella Sarver spells a word during the fifth grade division of the Jackson County Fair Spelling Bee on July 26 at the fairgrounds in Brownstown. // Cortland Elementary School student Becca Herbert spells a word during the third grade division. // Jennifer Hilton with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Indiana Realty presents awards to Josie Beavers, right, of St. John's Sauer's Lutheran School and Julia Hartung of St. Ambrose Catholic School for placing first and second, respectively, in the fourth grade division. **THE TRIBUNE FILE PHOTOS**

AUGUST

BANDING TOGETHER

Marching Owls hitting the right notes with '80s tunes

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
zspicer@tribtown.com

Whether you say you want to “Jump” or “I Wanna Dance with Somebody,” both will be a part of home football games at Seymour High School’s Bulleit Stadium this fall.

The Van Halen hit and the popular song by the late Whitney Houston will be among the 1980s tunes performed by the Marching Owls at the first home game Sept. 3 against Columbus East.

“’80s Rockers” is the theme for the band and color guard’s first show, which also will include AC/DC’s “Back in Black” and Guns N’ Roses’ “Sweet Child O’ Mine.”

Band Director Kevin Cottrill said he recently learned of a new arrangement of the Houston hit and knew he wanted to go with an ‘80s theme.

While looking for other music, he decided to go with “Jump” after the death of guitarist Eddie Van Halen on Oct. 6, 2020. He also found an arrangement for “Back in Black” that he liked.

“That’s where this comes from,” Cottrill said of the theme choice. “I want to pay a little bit of a tribute to Eddie Van Halen because he’s such a master on the instrument.”

Even though the 200-plus members of the band were born a couple of decades after the ‘80s, Cottrill said they have picked up on the music and like it.

“It’s definitely more recognizable ‘80s songs, even like this generation will recognize them,” senior drum major Katie Deppen said, adding the music also will connect with the older generation.

“I think it reaches out to everybody,” junior drum major Liza Stuckwisch said. “Anybody



ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE

Dillan Cooper, left, and Dylan Nguyen play trumpets during the July 29 session of Seymour High School band camp at Bulleit Stadium.

watching pretty much knows these songs, so I think that’s what’s really good about our band.”

Senior drum majors Will Cottrill and Stevie Sedam said the tunes are perfect for marching band.

“Uplifting music is always better for marching. I love ‘80s music. They are really upbeat for what we just came out of in the community,” Sedam said, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down schools and businesses.

“A lot of songs that we have today or in recent years are not particularly good for marching bands in different parts, so ‘80s with rock bands, there are parts for anything,” Will said.

When not playing on the field at halftime, the Marching Owls will be back in the stands behind the student section. Last fall, they sat apart in chairs behind the west end zone due to the pandemic.

“I think it’s just a good way to return from what we experienced last year,” Deppen said.

“Hopefully, it gives them hope, brings the energy up and makes them excited for the return of all of the Friday nights and everything,” Will said.

Stuckwisch said the band also plans to perform during opening ceremonies of the Seymour Oktoberfest and that festival’s parade, which didn’t happen last year because of the pandemic.

“I just want everybody to be excited about our band because we didn’t get to show it very much last year,” she said. “I think these songs are a good way to get everybody excited. We have songs that we dance to, and we get the student section involved. I missed that a lot last year, so I’m excited for that. I think it’s just a way to get everything back to normal.”

AT A GLANCE

The Seymour High School Marching Owls and color guard will perform at home football games Sept. 3, 17 and 24 and Oct. 8.

The band is directed by Kevin Cottrill. The assistant directors are Debbie Carroll, Kyle Lutes, Luke Horton (middle school director), Kyle Karum (marching) and Tony Franklin (drill writer). The drum majors are seniors Will Cottrill, Katie Deppen and Stevie Sedam and junior Liza Stuckwisch. The color guard directors are Steve Nauman and Lacey Money.

The section leaders are Valeria Ramirez and Matte Nicholson (flute), Samantha Carter and Madalyn Baurle (clarinet), Joey Larison (alto sax), Alison Klakamp (tenor sax), Olivia Fowler and Marlo Cornn (trumpet), Lucas Jablonski (mellophone), Clay Greenawalt (trombone), Wyatt McKinney (baritone), Jordan Stevens (sousaphone), Luke Lanam, Todd Fee, Kaydan Noblitt, Mady Downey and Dunigan Huddleston (percussion).

There are 231 members of the band and color guard — 252 when they perform with the cheerleaders.

Census shows county becoming more diverse

By MITCHELL BANKS
The Jackson County Banner

While many of the state’s rural counties lost residents between 2010 and 2020, Jackson County’s population grew by nearly 10% and grew more diverse at the same time.

The county added 4,052 people during that period, according to data from the 2020 Census. A total of 46,231 Hoosiers reside in Jackson County, an increase of 9.6% from the 44,428 in 2010.

Out of Indiana’s 92 counties, Jackson County is the 31st most populated in the state.

Of the seven surrounding counties, Monroe, Brown, Scott and Bartholomew saw growth. The other three, Jennings and Lawrence and Washington counties, all experienced decreases.

One of the largest growths in diversity over the entire state was experienced by Jackson County.

A 159.4% increase was seen in the Hispanic population over the last decade, the second largest increase across all counties in Indiana. A



PLUMP ROBISON

total of 13.5% of Jackson County residents identified as Hispanic, up from 5.7% in 2010.

The diversity index is a measurement used by the U.S. Census Bureau to calculate the likelihood of two random people from one area coming from a different racial or ethnic background.

Census data from 2010 had Jackson County with a diversity index of 15.7%. For 2020’s data, that percentage grew to 31.8%. This ranks Jackson County as having the 19th highest diversity index in the state.

Jackson County’s white population fell from 94.5% in 2010 to 83.4% in 2020.

Almost every non-white demographic grew in Jackson County with Pacific Islanders being the only non-white group seeing a decrease.

ON THE WEB

For more local 2020 Census results, visit census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html.

People who identify as having two or more races consist of 7.1% of Jackson County’s population.

The number of Black residents is 1.1% of the total population, and the Asian population stands at 1%.

Jim Plump, executive director of Jackson County Industrial Development Corp., said Jackson County saw the seventh-largest percentage of growth across all of Indiana’s counties.

The top five largest growing counties, Hamilton, Boone, Hendricks, Johnson and Hancock, respectively, are all counties surrounding Indianapolis. Coming in at No. 6 is Clark County, which is considered a metropolitan area right across the river from Louisville on the Indiana-Kentucky border.

With all of that in mind, Jackson County is the fastest growing rural county in Indiana.

One factor that Plump attributed to Jackson County’s growth is its close proximity to Indianapolis and Louisville. Because of this location, he said companies are incentivized to open businesses in Jackson County.

With more companies operating and expanding in the county, more jobs are available and encourage people to move here.

“You really don’t have growth without jobs, and I look at the industrial base that is located within Jackson County, and I think that has a tremendous effect on the growth that we have seen,” Plump said.

Dan Robison, president of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, said he was happy to learn about the increase in diversity in the county.

“I’m very excited to hear our diversity index has grown,” he said. “I think that shows health in our

community in that we’re about integrating people into our broader community and we’re welcoming.”

A big reason to be proud of the community is the Jackson County residents themselves, he said.

“The seed of Hoosier hospitality lies in Jackson County. That’s because our people are friendly and welcoming. They have a grit that we especially saw last year with the pandemic,” Robison said.

Other factors Robison thought contributed to the growth of the county’s population are its location, strong public and private schools and the community being business-friendly, whether businesses are small or industrial.

He also said he felt the cost of living in Jackson County was an overlooked factor, as it is 80% lower than the national average.

Even though Indiana is a low income property tax state, Jackson County has lower property taxes than 70 of Indiana’s 92 counties, he said.

EST. 1974
Larrison's
DINER

200 S. Chestnut St.
Downtown Seymour
812-522-5523
larrisonsdiner.net
Monday-Saturday 7am-2pm

EST. 1977
hoosier christian village
GracePoint
short-term rehab

621 S. Sugar St., Brownstown
HoosierChristianVillage.org
812-358-2504

EST. 1980
Engraver
OF SEYMOUR

1520 Schleter Rd.
Seymour, IN 47274
812-522-6161
engraveronline

SEPTEMBER

'EMPHASIZE HOPE'

City conducts inaugural 9/11 ceremony to mark 20th anniversary

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
zspicer@tribtown.com

As important as it is to never forget what happened on Sept. 11, 2001, many people today would like to see the nation be more like it was on Sept. 12 that year.

People were nice to one another and came together to help each other. American flags were proudly displayed. Churches were full. Americans bravely stepped up to serve in the military or become a first responder.

The nation was united. That was theme of the speakers during the city of Seymour's inaugural 9/11 ceremony, conducted Saturday morning at Shields Park in Seymour.

It was an appropriate time to introduce this event, as Saturday marked the 20th anniversary of terrorists crashing planes into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Angel Abshear, pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Seymour, said she will never forget where she was on that September day: Sitting in an ambulance with her partner while serving with the Center Township Volunteer Fire Department in Marion.

While it was difficult to watch it all unfold, she said she remembers how the country united on Sept. 12, 2001.

"We came together in the principles that this country was built on," she said, as food and other items were collected for those impacted by the tragic day in which 2,977 people lost lives.

Abshear said her church youth group sent a semi full of socks.

"There were so many clothes and provisions sent to New



ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE

Helping place 2,977 flags in the ground before Saturday's 9/11 ceremony at Shields Park in Seymour are, from left, Seymour Mayor Matt Nicholson, Eli Snyder, Chris Snyder, Sally Acton and Anthony Rutherford.

York City that they didn't know what to do with it all, but what they did know is they were not alone," she said.

"Let us go to our creator and father and thank him not only for him being present with all of the civil servants that helped that day but for him being present with all of us in the 20 years that have followed," she said. "Let us ask him to make us the country that we were on 9/12."

Seymour Mayor Matt Nicholson said he recently came across a quote by Jeff Parness, founder of the New York Says Thank You Foundation: "When Americans lend a hand to one another, nothing is impossible. We're not about what happened on 9/11. We are about what happened on 9/12."

"Think about that as you walk away today and remember that we came together as a nation the day after the most horrific attack we've ever seen," he told the crowd gathered for the ceremony. "Let's figure out how to

come together as a country one more time. Let's figure out how to make our community better."

One way to do so is find a local charity and help out however you can, Nicholson said.

"Find what your passion is and go out and help them, lend a hand," he said.

Nicholson also said it's important for people who were alive when the terrorist attacks occurred to know how to talk to the generation that wasn't.

In researching pieces of advice, he said to be prepared and ready to listen to kids when they want to talk about it, give them the answers you know and look up the ones you don't, be specific and emphasize hope. Emotions are going to vary for both parties, he said, but it's important to remember what happened that day.

Seymour Fire Chief Brad Lucas shared the breakdown of the 2,977 people who died on 9/11.

"It was such a beautiful almost fall day that day, and

you wonder 'How can anything go wrong? How could anyone penetrate our soil and do something like this? How could 19 Middle Easterners associated with Al-Qaeda be persuaded to take that many lives?'" he said. "I just can't fathom how that could happen, but it did, and our lives have been forever changed."

Thousands of others were killed defending the country in Operation Enduring Freedom, and firefighters and others who worked on rescue efforts developed respiratory diseases from the smoke and debris, Lucas said.

Despite all of that, he said a lot of good came about after 9/11. People donated blood and gave money to the 9/11 charity, the Department of Homeland Security was formed to protect America's borders and a 9/11 memorial with reflective pools was completed where the World Trade Center towers once stood.

"Always remember," Lucas said in closing after thanking the local first responders and military personnel in attendance and those serving around the world.

Before Saturday's ceremony, nearly a dozen people gathered at Shields Park to place 2,977 flags on the ground to represent all of the lives lost on 9/11.

Elijah Downey, 14, a freshman at Seymour High School and member of Boy Scout Troop 529, was among those who helped with the hour-and-a-half effort.

"Community service is a big part of what we do," he said.

"I'm the Scout leader of the troop, so I felt that I should show up, especially in case any other Scouts were here, because I'm supposed to be that example. It's just important to me that we respect all of those lives that were lost, and I just wanted to be a part of some memorial service."

While he wasn't alive when 9/11 happened, Downey said the adults he helped Saturday morning were.

"I know that it personally affected them in some way. I know that it had an impact on pretty much every adult in my life, so I was just thinking I know this affects other people, and it's important to them that I'm here, that I'm placing all of these flags," he said.

Once all of the flags were placed, Downey said it put in perspective just how many people died on 9/11.

"Even though I wasn't around when this happened, it's still important to remember the lives that were lost, and we need to make sure nothing like this ever happens again because this was a terrible, terrible tragedy that happened," he said. "History repeats itself, especially if we're not careful, so we need to educate people about what happened."

In her closing prayer, Abshear said she knows God was present on 9/11, and he was with all of those who died and was present with their families in the weeks, months and years to follow as they grieved. She said God also was present with all of the emergency and military personnel who stepped up to sort through the rubble and pull people to freedom.

The pride that was evident in America after 9/11 needs to return today, she said.

"I pray we would search our hearts to make her a great country once again, that we would remember each life lost, each life that searched through that rubble and that none of that would be in vain, for we would find purpose and come together again for your glory," she said. "In Jesus' name and all God's people said, 'Amen.'"

A soldier shares stories of Afghanistan in book

By LORI McDONALD
The Jackson County Banner

Not enough credit is given to recruits who joined the military from a sense of patriotic duty in the days after the worst attack on America in history, a former Jackson County resident contends.

Sgt. Darel Shelton, a 2000 graduate of Brownstown Central High School, joined the military on Sept. 11, 2001.

That's the same day terrorists hijacked three planes, crashing two into the World Trade Center towers in New York City and one into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. A fourth plane crashed into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers onboard overtook the terrorists and foiled their plan to crash into the White House or the Capitol building. A total of 2,977 people were killed in the attacks that day.

"At 18 years old, I had moved into my own apartment and my mother had stayed the evening prior," Shelton said. "On the morning of Sept. 11, my mother shook me, waking me from my bed."

She told him the U.S. was under attack and led him to the television where they watched the horror unfold.

"Many join the military for school, employment, experience or to escape a poor home life," Shelton said. "I, like many others at that time, joined the military because our country was attacked and a strong response needed to be made to deter another attack in the future."

Shelton started his basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas on March 12, 2002.

The son of Allen Shelton and Kimberly Hodge, Darel Shelton, 38, now lives in Las Vegas with his wife, Samantha. He recently released a book with stories from the time he spent in Afghanistan.

"A Ticket Back: Coming Home is Never Promised" is available in both Kindle and paperback versions.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The cover of "A Ticket Back" (Kindle book version) by Sgt. Darel Shelton. Bob Weatherly is pictured on the left, standing next to former Jackson County resident Darel Shelton.

"Initially, 'A Ticket Back' was meant to be half about Afghanistan and half about getting better," Darel said. "When some of my family began reading what I was writing, they told me they felt it would be better served as two separate books."

His family thought he should write one book on Afghanistan and another on post-traumatic stress disorder. Their constructive criticism made sense to Shelton, and he started writing the book around Thanksgiving of 2019.

Sept. 1 was the formal release of the paperback, which is about a typical service member being pulled from his or her family and current military assignment to leave on short notice.

"Only five days to prepare for three months of training and 12 months of Afghanistan," Shelton said. "It goes on to tell the story of how I was dropped into an Afghan village during the middle of the night and the sights and sounds that accompanied it in the morning."

Shelton said he was provided with Russian helicopters, a small red metal toolbox and a gaggle of untrained Afghans. Their mission was to build an Afghan Air

ON THE WEB

darelshelton.com
https://www.amazon.com/Darel-Shelton/e/B09CV992YZ%3Fref=dbs_a_mng_rwt_scns_share

Force, which had never existed before.

"During my time in Afghanistan, I left my assignment to go to a much more dangerous place for a short period of time," Shelton said. "The circumstances around that trip were devious, and I'm not sure I should talk much more about it, outside what is already in the book."

Shelton was a helicopter mechanic by trade, and he worked on helicopters the Air Force calls PAVE Hawks. They are essentially the same thing as the Army's Black Hawk helicopters.

PAVE stands for precision avionics vectoring equipment. The PAVE Hawk specializes in combat search and rescue operations.

Shelton, who was stationed in Shindand, Afghanistan, said the two most impactful injuries he has from his time of service are PTSD and a low back disc fusion.

"During the 'wind of 120 days,' common in eastern Iran and western Afghanistan, the wind starts out in the morning around 25 to 35 miles an hour," Shelton said. "It keeps getting stronger every hour until the end of the day when the winds are around 75 or 80 miles an hour."

He said there was a cheaply built aircraft hangar at Shindand Air Base in the western part of Afghanistan, and the doors opened up directly into the wind, so when the winds started picking up, one of the doors was bending back.

"It looked like it was going to snap off, so the commander yelled for us to go shut the door, and my friend, Mike, unpinned it from the ground," he said. "The wind was blowing harder, and then I saw everybody was running."

Shelton said he started running, too, and about that time, the 25-by-40-foot door slammed shut harder than a car door.

"When it hit me, it knocked me 20 feet through the air, and I landed flat on my back," he said. "It dislodged a vertebra from my spine, which essentially free floated until it was bolted down via disc fusion in 2016."

He has a small limp and will need radio frequency ablations or nerve burnings every six to 12 months for the rest of his life.

Shelton came back home to the United States on March 11, 2012, 364 days after landing in Afghanistan.

Darel wasn't the first in his family to serve in the military. His father spent 20 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. During Darel's childhood, the family moved a lot.

His grandma, Mary Jane Turpin, was a single mother of six children. She raised them in an 800-square-foot home on West Vine Street in Brownstown and worked as a butcher.

Between every move his father made, the family would come home to visit all of their relatives in Jackson County. That's one reason he still calls it home.

"While my parents went to visit family, I would stroll around town looking for old childhood friends, and I never once had any problem finding them," Shelton said. "My father retired from the Marines when I was in ninth grade, and we moved back to Jackson County."

"From birth to age 18, I lived several years in the states of North Carolina, Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, New York and three years in Okinawa, Japan," Shelton said. "I graduated early from Brownstown Central High School Nov. 10, 2000, but our class graduation was June 2001."

He met his future wife, Samantha, in Las Vegas, back in 2017. She was a pilot, flying tours of the Grand Canyon in Twin Otter planes and landing on a dirt strip at the bottom.

"Without her love and support, it wouldn't have been possible

for me to commit to treatment," Shelton said. "I most assuredly would not have sought so many different forms of treatment."

He said it's because of her that he was able to continue living his life until he found the best combination of medication and therapy.

"We were married April 27, 2019, and I cannot thank her enough for her faithfulness," he said.

Shelton said he began to enjoy writing in eighth grade upon the conclusion of learning to write his first formal research paper. He loved sharing multiple perspectives of singular events.

"My book is a sad story, but it is a true story. All of it was written by me from my specific memories of the events," Shelton said. "I did not want to change the names of people and places, but it seemed necessary once I completed the story."

He hopes readers take away an understanding of the sacrifices made in order to prevent another Sept. 11-style attack.

"I hope it helps people better understand PTSD and veterans," Shelton said. "Most of all, I hope that it helps people who are looking for a true story about persevering through the darkest of hours and trying every tool in the medicine cabinet before taking their lives by their own hands."

He said one of the most challenging parts of recovery is simply being able to see a future that you want to live in.

"It just seems unattainable at times, but by making persistent choices to continue treatment and practicing the skills learned, a person can learn to appreciate the positive life around them in the moment instead of living inside the mind's eye of the past and future," he said.

Shelton plans on writing more and has a second book in the works.

"A Ticket Back: Coming Home is Never Promised" is now available in both Kindle and paperback versions on Amazon.com.

OCTOBER

TOGETHER UNTIL THE END

Twin sisters retiring from The Peoples Bank at end of month

By ZACH SPICER
The Jackson County Banner

BROWNSTOWN — After graduating from Brownstown Central High School in 1974, Pattie Lubker and Debbie Helwig began working at The Peoples Bank in Brownstown.

The twin sisters both started in bookkeeping and later switched to the teller position. Pattie then became head teller, and Debbie worked in customer service.

Since they started at the same time, they decided to retire at the same time, too.

Oct. 31 — Halloween — will be their last day on the payroll. That's no trick. It will be a treat for both of them to enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

Pattie will wrap up 47 years at the bank, while Debbie will finish with 38.

"It has all been great here," Pattie said. "It has always been like a family. You never felt uncomfortable, and I enjoyed working here this many years. It was very good."

Debbie would have had the same amount of years as her sister, but she chose to take some time off to raise her two children.

"It has been really great, I'll tell you that," she said. "Don (Norman) and Mark (Norman) both have always put family first. They've both treated us very well. You just don't find employers that let their people put their kids and their family first. I could always count on them to be there for you."

Mark Norman, who is the current president of the bank and son of Don, the previous president, said an open house is planned for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday, giving current and former employees and customers a chance to share their well-wishes with the sisters.

Over the years, Mark said The Peoples Bank has been very lucky to have people make a career there, and it's hard to replace their years of experience.

"In a sense, 47 years they've been a part of the bank. Even though (Debbie) was home taking care of the kids, she was still a part of our family," Mark said. "This is how I was taught by my dad, that I run this place as a family. When I hired you in or Dad hired you in, this was family. You become a family member. That's the way Dad operated. That's the way I continue to operate it."

After high school, Pattie said she and her sister wanted to get into banking, so they submitted applications at different banks.

"Not thinking that we would get on that soon, but we thought we



Twin sisters Debbie Helwig, left, and Pattie Lubker are retiring from The Peoples Bank on Oct. 31. Both started there in 1974, and Lubker has been there ever since, while Helwig will finish with 38 years of service.

might be off for the summer," Pattie said, smiling.

Mark said his father told him when Pattie came into his office for an interview, he said, "Don't you have a twin?" When she replied "Yes," Don said, "I want to hire her, too."

Pattie was happy to land a job so soon.

"My parents always banked there," she said of The Peoples Bank. "We were with them when they went to do their banking. I just thought, 'Well, that would be interesting.'"

When they started in bookkeeping, the sisters said the work was done by hand. There weren't computers at that time. Those came later.

Both stayed in that department for about a year before switching to teller, where they helped customers with deposits, check cashing and other requests.

At times, if a co-worker was on vacation or off work for another reason at one of the two branches in Seymour or the branch in Crothersville, the sisters would fill in there. Debbie said when she came back in 1991, she spent a year working at the Airport Road location in Seymour.

Pattie said she had the opportunity to step up to head teller when the person she was assisting retired.

In that role, she handled scheduling of the tellers and was in charge of the vault at the main branch in Brownstown.

"You had to make sure the vault had enough money from all of the different branches because they would get their money from here or their money from fed and all of that," she said. "You have to keep an eye on what everybody has to see if they need to order money or not."

As a customer service representative, Debbie said she has helped customers open a new account for checking or savings, certificates of deposit and individual retirement accounts.

"When we started in this department, we did have a lot of questions and people helping people with any kind of problems and trying to direct them to the right place they need to go," she said. "Now, it's more questions go a lot to account services and the data center."

Mark said Debbie became the "guru" for IRAs, so that has been her specialty.

"After this many years, you do become like their family," Debbie said of customers, "because we started with some of them that just got married, and now, their kids are already having kids, so you went through their whole family."

Since teller is terminology from several decades ago and banks now offer electronic banking, Mark said he's calling employees in that role customer service representatives because they have to know and do more.

Once the sisters turned 65 this year, they began considering retirement.

Pattie said it was the right time so she can have the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays off.

"I'm just wanting to have time off and do different things at home and with family," she said of her plans for retirement.

Both of Debbie's children have four kids, so she plans to spend time with them. The sisters also have both parents in a nursing home, so they will have a lot more time to visit them, too.

"I just want to spend a lot of time and be able to help my grandkids like my mom did for me," Debbie said.

Trinity wins semistate to punch ticket into volleyball state finals

By ARV KOONTZ | THE TRIBUNE
akoontz@tribtown.com

A year ago Addie Darlage was finishing up her final season of volleyball at Sauers St. John's Lutheran School.

What a difference a year makes.

Today, she is practicing for a match in the IHSAA Class 1A state championship after helping Trinity Lutheran defeat Bloomfield 25-10, 25-8, 25-14 in the Columbus East semistate this past Saturday.

"I am very excited," she said after recording 43 assists and leading the Cougars in aces with 4 against the Cardinals. She was the setter for the Saints last year.

"Just to be a part of this is awesome," she said. "I'm looking forward to winning (state). It's going to take a lot of communication and a lot of teamwork."

"I feel on this team we have a lot of bonding together. We know each other very well and we trust each other. The seniors are very good leaders."

Trinity takes a 30-4 record to Ball State University (Muncie) for an 11 a.m. Saturday match with Lafayette Central Catholic (26-9). The Knights defeated Kouts 25-15, 25-23, 25-11 in the Frankfort semistate Saturday.

The Cougars fell behind briefly in each of the first two sets before pulling away, and they went up 4-0 at the start of the third set.

The first set was tied at 9-9 when Ruthie Bingham pounded her third kill to put the Cougars in front to stay.

Bailey Tabeling had seven kills in the first set and her 7th gave Trinity set point.

Trinity took advantage of hitting errors by Bloomfield to open up a 7-3 lead in the second set.

After Bloomfield scored back-to-back points for a 7-5 score, Trinity went on an 8-0 run, then outscored the Cardinals 10-1 down the stretch.

Set point came on an attacking error by the Cardinals.

Darlage served back-to-back aces to put Trinity on top 4-0 in the third set.

Trinity held a 10-6 lead before going on a 7-0 rally with a kill by Tabeling, making it a 17-6 score. Madison Keith had a kill for the final point of the match.

Darlage talked about the teamwork it takes to be successful.

"You have to have a good pass then I can make a good set so we can have a good hit," she said.

"I just credit (the 22-match win streak) to teamwork, and the coaches. I really appreciate the coaches. I just enjoy volleyball. I just like running around, hitting the ball, diving on the floor."

Cougars Coach Faith Wilder-Newland said, "They put a few short balls in on us, and then we had to make sure we were ready for those tips and rolls. After that I thought we did a really good job of communicating and staying ready to move."

She credited Trinity's defense for limiting Bloomfield to back-to-back points only five times in the first two matches, and not allowing the Cardinals to score three straight points until late in the third set when several of the Trinity starters were on the bench watching their younger teammates.

"Stella (Kleffman), Kamzi (Gross), Ruthie and Laura (Roeder) played some really good defense," she said.

Tabeling topped Trinity in kills with 18, Bingham had 11, and Kleffman and Carson Bowling each had 8. Gross was the leader in digs with 13 and Kleffman had 8.

"Our blocking was better," Wilder-Newland said as Tabeling had 5 block assists, Bingham had 3, Keith 2 and Bowling 1.

"It's a wonderful feeling going to state," Wilder-Newland said.

"It's a long road and we're one step closer for the kids accomplishing their goals, and our goals as a team, as the coach's goals."

"I was really pleased. We had some great ups on defense and good transition out of it, and got some big swings so that's really nice to see."

NOVEMBER

Local schools celebrate Red Ribbon Week

By ZACH SPICER | THE TRIBUNE
awoods@aimmediaindiana.com

Door decorating contests, dress-up days, posters, a book character parade, a WalkTober event and tying red ribbons on trees.

These were among the ways Jackson County schools celebrated Red Ribbon Week during the last week of October.

The nation's largest and longest-running drug-use prevention campaign is led by National Family Partnership, formerly the National Federation of Parents for Drug Free Youth. It was established as a grassroots, nonprofit organization in 1980 by a handful of concerned and determined parents who were convinced they should begin to play a leadership role in drug prevention, according to redribbon.org.

Today, NFP provides

drug awareness by sponsoring the annual National Red Ribbon Campaign. Since its beginning in 1985, the Red Ribbon has touched the lives of millions of people around the world, serving as a symbol of commitment to raise awareness of the killing and destruction cause by drugs in America. The Red Ribbon serves as a catalyst to mobilize communities to educate youth and encourage participation in drug prevention activities.

Locally this year, Seymour Middle School and Medora Community Schools conducted door decorating contests. Classroom doors were decorated with a drug-free message, and students and staff cast votes for their favorite.

At SMS, Clayton Carr's PRIDE class was selected the winner. It featured the message "Drugs are a

nightmare."

"My class came up with the general design based on a class vote for what they wanted the theme to be," said Carr, a math teacher at the school. "It initially started out as a skeleton theme, and a student brought up the

idea of Jack Skellington. I took it from there and put a Red Ribbon Week twist on it."

The work was completed by Carr.

"I told the students that I would draw whatever they needed me to and that they would direct the

creation of the door," he said. "We looked through some sample images of Jack Skellington with backgrounds, and they voted on one they wanted for the general design."

Since there were a lot of creative doors around SMS, Carr was pleasantly

surprised when he learned his was declared the winner.

"I am very excited for my class watching their creativity be channeled into a positive message and watching it win the

(SEE RIBBON PAGE 12)

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NOVEMBER

HOLIDAY GENEROSITY

Two Brownstown churches come together to provide meals for Thanksgiving

By MITCHELL BANKS
The Jackson County Banner

On the eve of Thanksgiving, the congregations of two Brownstown churches wanted to make sure they had done their fair share of giving this year.

Through the effort, spearheaded by Community Church of Brownstown and New Life Missionary Church, volunteers came together to make and distribute 726 Thanksgiving meals to those in need in the community.

The act of generosity started a dozen years ago when Brownstown resident Melissa Collins decided she wanted to give out meals as a part of a project for a class at Ivy Tech Community College.

She currently attends New Life Missionary Baptist Church at 709 W. Bridge St., and to this day, Collins is gracious to be providing food to families across all of Jackson County for Thanksgiving.

"It's really neat to watch God work in the ways of hands and feet and feed the community," she said. "It's been a true blessing to be able to do that."

Before the 5 p.m. time that churches started distributing the Thanksgiving dinners, Collins said the volunteers had

400 meals prepared and that wasn't even halfway through how many she was expecting to make.

The meals consisted of turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, stuffing, green beans and bread with butter. Families interested in receiving a meal were able to eat inside of the Community Church of Brownstown, pick one up from either church or have meals delivered to their homes.

Collins said she was blessed to be able to see the amount of meals given out over the years. One Thanksgiving, 1,300 dinners were provided to those in need in the community.

Michael Weiler, pastor for New Life Missionary Baptist Church, said he's helped prepare and distribute the Thanksgiving meals since 2017.

He said giving back is a highlight of his Thanksgiving. "It's a blessing," Weiler said. "It really is. It's an opportunity to give back and be thankful for what we get."

Weiler's favorite part of the Thanksgiving giveaways is seeing people be thankful for the food, and also the camaraderie of seeing his church family come together.

"I think that there's a lot of people that are shut in and not able to get out," he said. "With the COVID-19 pandemic a lot

of people don't want to get out so this is an opportunity to give them a meal."

Last year the church was able to give out about 700 meals. Weiler said he was amazed that they were able to provide as many meals as they did during the pandemic.

The Brownstown pastor said he looks forward to providing meals every year and plans to be a part of the project as long as he's still with the church.

"It's great to be able to use God's house to be able to deliver it all out," Weiler said.

At the Community Church of Brownstown, located at 709 W. Bridge St., Karen Branaman helped facilitate the preparation of the meals. She said she's helped give out meals with the churches for five years.

Before families arrived at the church, Branaman said 172 meals were packaged to be sent to Hoosier Christian Village in Brownstown for both residents and staff.

Branaman said the church was providing a service for people who might not be able to afford or able to cook.

"It's just nice to see the look on a family's face when you go and deliver their meals or when they're able to come in and sit down in an

atmosphere with loving people and have a meal," she said. "Honestly we get the bigger blessing. All of us say 'We get the bigger blessing.'"

The community service doesn't end on Thanksgiving for Branaman. She said she doesn't plan to stop providing meals for Thanksgiving and the church wants to be able to provide food on Christmas and Valentine's Day too.

Inspired to continue to serve the community, Branaman said she started an outreach ministry with Collins called MOM, which stands for "Mobile Outreach Ministry." The mission of MOM was to deliver food directly to homes.

Branaman explained the meaning behind the ministry's name.

"When you need something, who do you call?" she said.

The Community Church of Brownstown recently received a new pastor, Mitch Patrick. He is being ordained and installed this Sunday.

His wife Lisa helped get meals together and said it was "amazing" to provide for the community while getting acclimated with the church.

She said she's never done charitable work around Thanksgiving and looks forward to doing it again next year.

RIBBON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

contest," Carr said. "I hope the kiddos take away the message that a drug-free life is the life to live."

He said it was great seeing the school come together and create a sense of community.

"To know that there are peers around you that support a drug-free lifestyle, I believe it empowers students to feel like they don't have to feel peer pressure into something they don't want to do," he said.

Meigan Vest, the seventh grade counselor at SMS, said the door decorating contest and special dress days for the students combined for a great week.

"We participate in Red Ribbon Week in hopes to bring awareness to just saying no to drugs," she said. "Students had fun dressing up to different themes built around saying no to drugs, and they loved helping their team and class decorate their doors."

At Medora, Marissa Hatchett's preschool classroom was the door decorating contest winner. She combined Minions and Spider-Man and shared the message "Drugs are despicable."

Normally, she takes a class vote to decide on class ideas. In this case, Minions and Spider-Man were the top choices, so they rolled with it.

"For my pre-K kiddos, picking the door was really about them choosing things they are interested in," Hatchett said. "If I can incorporate what my kids are interested in, then they are more engaged in the lesson."

The message she shared with the kids was all about healthy choices.

"Making sure that what we choose to put into our body are healthy choices, which starts with healthy food choices," she said. "Pre-K is too young to talk specifically about drugs, but talking about the choices we make and how they affect our body is the first step."

She was glad to see the school come together for Red Ribbon Week.

"The kiddos really love getting involved, especially when it's something they know is important to their teachers," Hatchett said. "At Medora, we are all like family, and we as teachers/staff want our kids to be the best they can be. Red Ribbon Week is about promoting positive social behaviors. Our goal is prevention, helping our students make good choices and promoting the importance of living a drug-, alcohol- and tobacco-free life."

For the Red Ribbon Week posters, Brownstown Elementary School student council members decorated them, and they were then placed on the wall in the cafeteria.

The book character parade was conducted by Crothersville Elementary School students in the school's main gymnasium. That gave students a chance to dress up like a character from a book.

The Seymour Middle School Sixth Grade Center hosted a WalkTober event on the last day of Red Ribbon Week. It was a fundraiser for the school that shared the message of students saying no to drugs for every step they took.

At Seymour High School, freshmen gathered in groups to tie large red ribbons around trees on the lawn of the school. Guidance counselor Billy Harmon, who organized the Red Ribbon Week activities, said that helped show the school's drug-free message and philosophy.

Fellow guidance counselor Nikki Storey said while sophomores and juniors were taking the PSAT, this activity gave the freshmen something to do that was educational and meaningful.

"Last year, because of COVID, we just let freshmen go home and have an eLearning day, but we wanted to do something this year that hopefully would provide some prevention and education for the students," she said.

Harmon said freshmen also watched a couple of videos — one about an Avon teenager who regularly vaped and wound up in the hospital and another featuring various celebrities encouraging kids to find a natural high.

"Whether it's biking, it could be playing a sport, it could be something music-related, but something natural to make you feel good, not to rely on the artificial high of drugs," Harmon said. "Find that now instead of finding something artificial later on that you're going to try to rely on that's not healthy."

For the whole school, students took a Red Ribbon Week quiz on Monday and Friday, and the only dress-up day was Friday with the message "Team up against drugs," where students wore apparel showing their favorite sports team.

"The goal is over the course of the week, they are going to have an improvement in score from pretest to posttest," Harmon said of the quizzes.

DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL RETURNS

By MITCHELL BANKS | THE TRIBUNE
mbanks@aimmediaindiana.com

Families were lined up all along Perry Street in Medora on Dec. 4 to watch classic cars, emergency vehicles and floats pass during the parade for the 49th annual Medora Christmas Festival.

Jackson County's only Christmas festival featured two days of events and a bustling Main Street this year after last year's edition was scaled down to only a tree lighting ceremony, Christmas carols, a holiday lights contest and letters to Santa due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Friday night, the tree lighting ceremony was held in front of the Medora branch of the Jackson County Public Library with carols from local church choirs and music from Derrek Foster.

Saturday, which was a very pleasant and sunny day for an early December festival, featured vendors, performers, the parade and the crowning of the 2021 festival prince and princess, Macy White and Cayden Smith. They raised money by collecting donations in cans where each penny equaled one vote.

A Christmas Ball was held Saturday night for those 21 and older with music from Cody Ikerd and the Sidewinders, an ugly sweater contest and giveaways.

Medora Christmas Festival committee member Nick



MITCHELL BANKS | THE TRIBUNE

Santa, Mrs. Claus and the Grinch roll through Perry Street as the last float in the parade at the Medora Christmas Festival.

Walden said he was pleased to see more than 50 floats in the parade this year, up a few from recent years. The festival also featured 45 food, craft and flea market vendors this year.

Walden said he was appreciative of the many people and organizations that participated in the parade.

Morris Tippin opened the parade with the singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" and a prayer. Paul Carr was this year's grand marshal.

The La-Or-Ma Shrine Club from Bedford was a part of the parade this year, and Walden said a few years ago, the festival committee tried to give them a donation, but they gave it back.

Next year marks 50 years

since the first Medora Christmas Parade was held on Dec. 16, 1972. It featured eight floats represented by four classes at Medora High School. The parade lasted 45 minutes and the sophomore class won the floating trophy for the best school entry and earned \$25 for first place in the open class.

For next year's festivities, Walden said he expects the committee to ramp up the stakes.

"We're going to try to go all out for it," he said. "We'll see what happens."

Zara Carroll, a senior at Medora STEM Academy, was paraded on a float inspired by the song "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer"

that represented her class. It featured a foam deer, a camouflaged tent and signs that said "SNAP," "BOOM" and "BANG" to imply that revenge was being sought out against a reindeer.

The Medora senior dressed as "grandma" by wearing a gray wig and a sweater that had deer tracks all over it.

After coming up with the initial idea, Carroll said it took about two hours the day before the festival to have the float ready for the parade.

"I realized my friend, Abby, went to go get the deer and it was being shot at for deer meat because he killed grandma," she said.

Carroll said she had a positive time tossing candy out and being driven through the parade.

"It was a really good parade experience," she said.

The Grinch, portrayed by Doug Davidson, made it for the parade and spent time walking around the festival.

Davidson, who is a member of the festival committee, said the committee decided to have him be the Grinch for the festival this year to give out toys in the parade and get everyone in the Christmas spirit.

Despite the Grinch being known for having a heart two sizes too small, Davidson said a highlight of his day was giving out large stuffed animals to children who he said went "wild" over them.

Council puts finishing touches on sewer funding requests

By AUBREY WOODS
The Jackson County Banner

A \$7.35 million project to improve the aging wastewater treatment system that serves this community of nearly 3,000 could begin sometime next fall.

The project, however, hinges on the town's ability to secure funding for the work, which includes rehabilitation of the wastewater treatment plant and the Bob Thomas and Vallonia Road lift stations. The Bob Thomas lift station is more than 40 years old, while the Vallonia Road lift station, which serves 75% of the town, is more than 35 years old and is at capacity.

The Brownstown Town Council has been working to obtain funds for the work for the better part of a year and

recently turned the corner by approving a resolution to apply for a \$700,000 grant from the Indiana Office of Rural and Community Affairs.

They also approved a second resolution applying for \$6.56 million from the State Revolving Fund, which provides low-interest loans for projects that improve wastewater and drinking water infrastructure. Both resolutions were OK'd after public hearings during a town council meeting in early December.

Grant consultant Bridgett Weber with Priority Project Resources of Greensburg said the deadline for the OCRA grant is Friday. A decision about that grant would not be made until early February 2022.

"We will either get all or none of that," she said. "If for

some reason we aren't successful the first round, then the plan is to go into the first round of 2022."

The State Revolving Fund money won't be available until July 2022 because the program has run out of money for this year, Weber said.

She said the maximum the town would be borrowing from that program is \$6.56 million.

Weber said as much as half of those loans could come in the form of forgivable, meaning they would not have to be repaid.

That would play into how much of the improvements town residents would have to pay for through increased rates.

Weber said the maximum rate increase right now if none of the \$6.56 million is forgivable would be \$30 a month.