

A supplement of the **Journal Review**



PROGRESS

2025

INSIDE YOU WILL FIND...

BUSINESS	3
CITY/COUNTY	13
CIVICS/GROUPS	25
EDUCATION	39
HEALTH	47



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Chamber of Commerce celebrates community at annual banquet

Journal Review

The Crawfordsville/Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce hosted its Annual Awards Banquet in September at Stone Creek Lodge, honoring local businesses, educators, and community members who have made significant contributions to Montgomery County. This year's celebration also introduced a new set of awards recognizing excellence across multiple sectors of the community.

Chamber Board President Skylar Stevenson presented a special President's Award to Stacy Sommer, the Chamber's executive director.

Since taking on the role a little over three years ago, Sommer's leadership has resulted in the addition of more than 100 new members to the Chamber.

"She organizes and hosts over a dozen events per year to foster new membership, raise money for the chamber community, and support local businesses. Stacy loves this community," Stevenson said during the presentation. "Her engaging approach, passion for her work, and enthusiastic leadership make her a tremendous asset to the



Award Winners

chamber. Her commitment speaks for itself. We believe it is time to turn the spotlight back on Stacy, the one who loves to shine a light on others throughout the community, celebrating, encouraging, and tirelessly supporting her members."

The first of the new awards presented this year was the Inspiration Educators Award, which honored Amy Hensley, a kindergarten teacher at Hose Elementary; Jodie Webster from North Montgomery Middle School; and Caitlyn Tennison, an English teacher at Southmont High School.

Benchmark Family Services received the Nonprofit Excellence Award for their consistent efforts to support

children throughout Montgomery County. In addition to serving foster youth, they have organized community-wide events such as a Back to School Bash, which provided more than 200 backpacks with school supplies, and a Community Christmas Party, where approximately 300 presents were distributed to children of all ages. For foster families, Benchmark coordinates fall festivals, Easter egg hunts, and touch-a-truck experiences, creating opportunities for connection and support.

PAC Mid-West Rodeo earned the Trailblazer Award for launching a professional rodeo in Montgomery County in 2022. Drawing

thousands of visitors from across the Midwest, the event has boosted local tourism and economic growth while providing family-friendly entertainment and business opportunities for local vendors.

Tolin Family Farms received the Agricultural Excellence Award for outstanding leadership in agriculture and community service. The farm was recognized for producing high-quality products while educating customers about the agricultural process and supporting Montgomery County.

Hoosier Heartland State Bank received the Five Star Award for consistently delivering exceptional customer service and building strong, lasting relationships within the community. HHSB was recognized for its personalized attention, community involvement, and innovative solutions that exemplify trust and excellence both in banking and local leadership.

Tony Bowen received the First Responder Award for nearly 20 years of dedicated service in Montgomery County's Operations Division. Known for his integrity and approachability, Bowen



HHSB Chamber Five Star Award Winners



Inspirational Educators Award Winners



Lali Hess You Rock! Award Winner



PAC Midwest Trailblazer Award Winners



Stacey Sommer President's Award Winner



Tony Bowen First Responder Award Winner



Cville Audiology Spirit of the Chamber Award Winners

has built strong relationships within the community. He has been an advocate for the police department, serves as a DARE officer, and this school year became a School Resource Officer for the Crawfordsville Community School Corporation.

Lali Hess, owner of The Juniper Spoon and The Table Spoon, received the You Rock! Award for her innovative approach and strong dedication to the community through her catering business. This year, she revitalized an empty downtown

Crawfordsville location by expanding her business and providing fresh, healthy meals, creating a positive impact on the local economy.

The final award of the evening, the Spirit of the Chamber Award, went to Crawfordsville Audiology for its dedication to the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. The business was recognized for consistently participating in events, engaging with the community, supporting fellow members, and enthusiastically promoting Chamber programs

both in person and on social media.

Sommer also recognized members of the Chamber Board of Directors, including President Skylar Stevenson of Stevenson's Ace Hardware and Stevenson Realty Group; Vice President Austin Earl of Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance; Secretary Kim Keeling of Lakeside Book Company; Treasurer Tara Miller of Tri County Bank & Trust; Kyle Brown of The Fountain Trust Company; Eric Dunaway of Wabash College; Gina Haile of The Boys and Girls Club of Montgomery County; Chuy Murillo of Acuity Brands and Blue Cactus Tacos & Tequila; Tyler Nichols of Taylor, Minnette, Schneider & Clutter; Natalie Pribble of Walmart Optical; and Margaret Sennett of Bane Welker and Sennett Cattle.

She also recognized Chamber Ambassadors, including Wayne Black from Lakeside Book Company; Jessica Bokhart from Market

Street Wealth Management Advisors; Shyana Busse from Busse's Excavating; Jami Harrington from Crawfordsville Main Street; Monica Hampton from Carpenter Realtors; Caryn Heisel from HHSB; Allison Heunemann from CEL&P; Brian Norman from Acuity Brands; Brian Swick from Everwise Credit Union; Anthony Wireman from Tri County Bank & Trust; and Giovanni Zappala from Freckles Graphics.

John Morgan, a Montgomery County native, served as the Spotlight Speaker for the evening. Morgan is a seasoned business leader and community advocate with a diverse background in global business, military service, and higher education. A 1972 Southmont High School graduate, he served in the Indiana National Guard and went on to study at Purdue University, Indiana University, Harvard, and Dartmouth, focusing on fields ranging from engineering to strategic

brand management.

His professional career included leadership roles at major companies, including CEO of Acuity Brands Lighting and Chairman, CEO, and President of Zepp Inc. In retirement, he became an entrepreneur involved in mechanical disinfectants, real estate development, and golf course ownership and operations. Deeply committed to

community service, Morgan has supported numerous nonprofits and advisory boards, notably founding the Georgia United Way Gifts in Time Program.

In his address, Morgan praised the award nominees for their dedication, innovation, and resilience, saying their work reflects the spirit of enterprise and community. He spoke about the

importance of commerce as the foundation of economic growth and a key driver of opportunity, progress, and quality of life.

Morgan emphasized that while the business world continues to evolve, one constant remains: the need for strong community engagement. He described the Chamber of Commerce as a vital part of this ecosystem, calling it

more than just a networking organization. Morgan said the Chamber unites local businesses and professionals around a shared goal — to strengthen the economy and improve community life — and highlighted the importance of supporting schools, first responders, and community services that help create safe, thriving environments where businesses can grow.

Ben Hur building reopens as apartment complex

Journal Review

The Ben Hur building celebrated a grand opening in late June with several people from the community in attendance.

The property has been vacant for nearly two decades but will now be home for many in Crawfordsville, with 49 one- and two-bedroom apartments in the five-floor building. The building was restored to preserve most of the historic aesthetic it held when it was first built. The lobby appears exactly as it did in 1940, down to the lunch counter, mailbox and staircase.

Some of the smaller details in the building were not able to be preserved due to a theft that occurred over a year ago. Several door handles, elevator buttons, railings and mail slots were taken and never relocated. These missing items have been replicated as authentically as possible.

John Anderson, the president of AP Development, took on the role of restoring the historical building, a project he said has taken at least



a decade to complete.

"This is a labor of love for us. This is what we do, but this one is special. It's close to home," Anderson said. "It's the first building I really fell in love with when I started becoming a developer."

Though there were hiccups and many delays in completing the project, including the Covid pandemic, Anderson said success was largely in part due to Mayor Todd Barton and the city's financial support.

"These kind of projects don't happen without this kind of mayor and this kind

of leadership. The city has been incredible," Anderson said. "Thank you for not tearing down the building. County commissioners, thank you for giving me the building. The city's financial support has been incredible and the moral support."

He also thanked other people and entities including Montgomery County Commissioners, Zahn's Flooring, C&F Fabricating, Sherwin Williams of Crawfordsville and Home Depot.

Barton described the grand opening of the building with one word, "monumental."

"This speaks to who we are as Crawfordsville and Montgomery County. And you should give yourselves a round of applause for that," Barton said. "Because for a building like this to sit here, I don't know that long, and still be here to be rehabbed is incredible."

While the building is open and apartments ready to be leased, Anderson said that rehabbing a historic building is never complete.

"We're not done. I mean, we have things that are on back order that we won't get for 40 weeks. We have things that we know we need to still touch up and fix," Anderson said. "We know that, all right? But it's magnificent. We'll be working on this building for the rest of my life because that's how old buildings work."

Leasing is now available for the apartments, which range from \$1,035-1,485 for one and two bedrooms.

For more information about the building or leasing an apartment visit the website www.liveatbenhur.com or email info@liveatbenhur.com.



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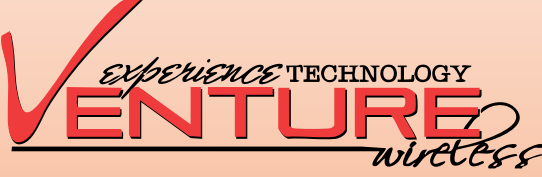




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CEL&P unveils new logo to mark 135th anniversary

Journal Review

Crawfordsville Electric Light & Power is proud to celebrate its 135th anniversary of providing safe and reliable power to the community. To commemorate this milestone, CEL&P unveiled a brand-new logo in January. It symbolizes the utility's enduring commitment to progress, customer service, and community connection.

Since its establishment in 1890, CEL&P has been an integral part of the Crawfordsville community. Throughout its 135 years of service, the utility has grown alongside the city, continually adapting to the changing energy landscape while maintaining a strong focus on customer satisfaction and environmental responsibility.

"We are incredibly proud to



celebrate 135 years of service to Crawfordsville," said Allison Huenemann, General Manager of CEL&P. "Our success over the years has been made possible by the trust and support of the community, as well as the hard work and dedication of our employees. This anniversary is not just about looking back on our rich history; it's also about looking forward to the future, and the new logo is a reflection of that forward-thinking spirit."

The new logo incorporates

elements that represent both the utility's long-standing history and its vision for the future. The logo design process incorporated feedback from the entire CEL&P team — from leadership to frontline employees — and how every employee plays an essential role in powering the community. The design blends modern, clean lines with a subtle reference to energy, creating a fresh, vibrant symbol for the next chapter of CEL&P's journey.

"Designing the new logo was an exciting process," said Andrea McArthur, a member of the design team. "We wanted to create something that not only represented the legacy of CEL&P but also reflected our commitment to modernization and long-term viability. It was a true team effort, and we are thrilled to share the result with

our community."

In addition to unveiling the new logo, CEL&P hosted a series of anniversary events throughout the year, aimed at giving back to the community and engaging with residents. Follow CEL&P on social media @cvillepower or visit www.celp.com for up-to-date anniversary celebration information.

"As we celebrate this major milestone, we remain deeply committed to our core values of reliability, innovation, and community partnership," Huenemann said. "We look forward to continuing to serve Crawfordsville for many years to come, and to building a brighter future for the generations that follow."

Allen Monument Co. reaches milestone

Journal Review

In March, the Crawfordsville/Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce was delighted to hold a Popper Ceremony celebrating Allen Monument Company for 30 years of service.

Allen Monument Company was founded in 1995 by Randy Allen and has remained family owned and operated since first opening its doors. It has grown into one of Indiana's largest monument manufacturers, serving the entire state of Indiana with an ongoing dedication to excellent customer service.



Every memorial is unique ranging from single, companion and family traditional memorials to bench memorials, cremation memorials, and more. Allen Monument can

create civic memorials in honor of those who have served our country. Other products and services include urns, pet markers, rock engraving business signs and granite

specialties.

Allen Monument Company has four locations: 212 Hamilton St., Crawfordsville; 2653 Teal Road, Lafayette; 1011 N. Main St., Monticello; and 5234 Madison Ave., Indianapolis.

Visit their website to learn more.

For additional information regarding the Chamber, visit the website at crawfordsvillechamber.com or email Stacy Sommer at ssommer@crawfordsvillechamber.com.



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Please remember to never flush anything down your toilets other than 2-ply toilet paper; this is especially true for all items that say that they are septic safe - that is usually not the case. Never pour grease down your sinks whether you are on a septic tank system or not. Never flush feminine products, prophylactics, syringes, latex gloves, q tips, batteries, wipes of any kind, or other products of any sort.

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Josh & Brittany McCloud

Crawfordsville Country Club under new management

Journal Review

A cornerstone of the Crawfordsville community since 1906, the Crawfordsville Country Club is entering a new era under the management of O'Neal Golf Management (OGM), which assumed operations Aug. 1. The transition marks the beginning of a major revitalization effort aimed at upgrading facilities, reimagining club services, and moving toward a fully private membership model.

The club's Board of Directors selected OGM for its extensive track record in successfully preserving and growing golf and club operations across multiple states. The management team, led by President Colin O'Neal and Doc O'Neal, brings more than 50 years of combined experience in the golf industry.

"This is an incredible opportunity to reimagine what Crawfordsville Country Club can be for our members and community," said Colin O'Neal. "We are committed to delivering an exceptional experience, from golf and recreation to dining and social events, in a welcoming environment for families and professionals alike."

Renovations are already underway and are expected to continue through 2026. Planned improvements include upgrades to the 18-hole championship golf course, driving range, and practice areas, as well as enhancements to the clubhouse, restaurant, banquet spaces, pool, and general facility maintenance. The club also plans to en-



gage local contractors for the renovation projects as they progress.

As part of its transformation, Crawfordsville Country Club is shifting from a public course to a private membership model. A variety of tiered options are now available, including individual, family, corporate, and social memberships. Lisa Wallace, marketing and communications representative for the club, emphasized the accessibility of the new structure.

"We're offering access to our facilities and golf course at affordable rates and various levels," Wallace said. "It's designed to be inclusive, whether you're here for golf, social events, or just to enjoy the pool."

Memberships are currently available at discounted rates through Dec. 19, 2025.

Beyond the physical upgrades, the club is also expanding its calendar of social activities, with regular events, league play, and networking

opportunities aimed at building a stronger, more engaged community of members.

The club remains under the oversight of its Board of Directors, with OGM handling day-to-day operations and strategic planning.

For more information on membership and ongoing improvements, visit crawfordsvillecc.com or contact the club at 765-362-2809 or info@crawfordsvillecc.com.



Penguin Random House expands distribution center

Journal Review

Penguin Random House celebrated the official ribbon cutting of its expanded national distribution and fulfillment center in Crawfordsville in August.

The expansion adds 650,000 square feet to the existing 950,000-square-foot facility, representing more than a 60 percent increase in size and marking a major milestone in the company's U.S. supply chain growth strategy.

Planning for the expansion began in the summer of 2023 following years of careful consideration. Construction broke ground in September 2024, and the new building was completed in less than a year.

With this investment, Penguin Random House will be able to double its annual shipments of physical print books to retailers nationwide, ensuring faster and more efficient delivery of titles to booksellers and readers. The project strengthens the facility's workforce of 800 employees and solidifies Penguin Random House's position as one of Indiana's leading employers.

The Crawfordsville distri-

bution facility is one of four major U.S. supply chain hubs for Penguin Random House, alongside two in Maryland and a third in Reno, Nevada. With this expansion, Crawfordsville becomes the largest facility in the network, underscoring its vital role in connecting authors with readers across the country.

As part of the project, Penguin Random House has also begun construction of a 6.3-megawatt solar field on the site, which will be among the largest in the region. Once operational, the solar field is expected to offset a significant portion of the facility's energy use and will generate enough electricity to power more than 750 U.S. households annually. This investment reflects the company's ongoing efforts to increase efficiency while reducing its environmental footprint.

At the ribbon cutting, Crawfordsville Mayor Todd Barton, along with Penguin Random House and local facility leadership, joined employees and community members to commemorate the milestone.

"Our Crawfordsville facility is at the heart of our mission to connect authors and read-

ers," said Jeff Abraham, Chief Operating Officer, Penguin Random House U.S. "With this expansion, we are building capacity for the future by helping us serve booksellers and readers more effectively while continuing to invest in our employees and our community."

Barton said Penguin Random House has proven to be a strong partner in moving the community forward.

"We greatly appreciate their continued investment in Crawfordsville," Barton said. "This investment not only positions their Crawfordsville facility in a flagship position, it is reflective of their ongoing commitment to the success and growth of their local operations."

With the completion of this project, Penguin Random House reaffirms its commitment to readers, booksellers, and the Crawfordsville community, ensuring that millions of books will continue to reach readers quickly and efficiently for years to come.

About Penguin Random House

Penguin Random House creates books for everyone. The company believes that books change us, connect us, and carry us toward a better

future. As the world's largest trade publisher, Penguin Random House reaches readers in more than 175 countries with stories and ideas across a wide range of viewpoints and experiences.

Each year, the company publishes more than 14,000 new works spanning fiction and nonfiction for readers of all ages in print, digital, and audio formats. Penguin Random House is home to many of the world's most influential voices, thinkers, and storytellers, including more than 80 Nobel Prize laureates, 140 U.S. Pulitzer Prize winners, 20 National Book Award winners, and 24 UK Booker Award winners.

As champions of free expression and access to books, Penguin Random House celebrates the right to read, think, and learn. The company continues to build a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable world through its global publishing network.

With operations in more than 20 countries, Penguin Random House was formed in 2013 and has been solely owned by Bertelsmann since 2020.

Midwest Bale Ties rebrands to Midwest Wire Group

Expands capabilities with new wire forming solutions

Journal Review

Midwest Bale Ties, a cornerstone of the Crawfordsville community known for its high-quality baling wire and bale ties, announced Wednesday that is rebranding to Midwest Wire Group. This change reflects the company's broader vision and expansion into custom wire forming solutions, enhancing its offerings to meet the evolving needs of its clients.

For more than 25 years, Midwest Bale Ties at 1200 E. Wabash Ave. has been a trusted name in the baling wire industry, dedicated to providing products that industry professionals rely on. The rebranding to Midwest Wire Group signifies a natural



progression, aiming to broaden the company's market reach and

introduce advanced manufacturing capabilities.

With the introduction of custom wire forming services, Midwest Wire Group is now poised to serve a wider array of industries, including automotive, construction, medical and electronics, alongside its longstanding commitment to the manufacturing, packaging and recycling sectors.

"Expanding into wire form-

ing allows us to leverage our deep knowledge in wire manufacturing to provide even more specialized solutions to our clients," said Jason Ramsey, President of Midwest Wire Group.

The company has invested significantly in the latest wire forming technologies, housed at its Crawfordsville facility. This investment not only boosts local employment but also contributes to the community's economic development.

"We're proud to continue our commitment to Crawfordsville, supporting the community that has been instrumental in our success," Ramsey said.

As Midwest Wire Group, the company will continue

to uphold the standards of excellence and reliability that clients have come to expect, now with even greater capabilities. The rebranding and expansion efforts reflect Midwest Wire Group's commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction.

Midwest Wire Group invites all clients and partners to visit the new website to explore the enhanced range of products and services now available. For more information about Midwest Wire Group and to view the full range of wire forming and baling wire solutions, please visit <https://www.Midwest-WireGroup.com>.

American Structurepoint, city receive recognition

Journal Review

In June, the Indiana Chapter of the American Planning Association awarded American Structurepoint and the City of Crawfordsville an honorable mention for outstanding economic development, celebrating their strategic efforts to drive local growth.

American Structurepoint's Planning + Economic Development Group partnered with Crawfordsville leaders to create the Crawfordsville

Retail Recruitment Strategy Plan. The data-driven plan includes a retail gap analysis that identified the city's retail potential. It also outlines several strategies to provide a clear path for future growth, particularly in attracting grocery retailers.

"Our goal was to create a practical, digestible plan that city leaders could immediately act on," said American Structurepoint Planning + Economic Development Group Leader Matthew O'Rourke. "We are grateful for the

opportunity to help Crawfordsville position itself for long-term success in attracting retailers."

American Structurepoint's planning experts conducted a detailed analysis of consumer demand for various business categories. The team then developed targeted strategies to market Crawfordsville to

commercial developers and national retailers. Results from the study have led to new economic development in Crawfordsville, including the construction of a new ALDI store.



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Governor presents Barton with Sagamore of the Wabash

Journal Review

INDIANAPOLIS — Governor Eric Holcomb recognized Crawfordsville Mayor Todd Barton with the prestigious Sagamore of the Wabash award, the highest civilian honor granted by the Governor of Indiana.

This distinguished award was presented to Barton during a special ceremony in January in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to the Hoosier state.

The Sagamore of the Wabash award is a time-honored tradition in Indiana, bestowed upon individuals who have demonstrated remarkable service, leadership, and dedication to their communities and beyond. Recipients of this award are those who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to make Indiana a better place to live, work, and thrive.

Barton's tenure as Crawfordsville's leader has been marked by innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to improving the lives of Crawfordsville residents. His leadership has spearheaded numerous community and economic development initia-

tives, placing Crawfordsville on the map as a forward-thinking and vibrant community.

The City of Crawfordsville celebrates this remarkable achievement and thanks Barton for his unwavering dedication to the community. His recognition as a Sagamore of the Wabash underscores the importance of leadership and the profound impact one individual can have on the lives of many.

Later in the year, Barton received the Spence Vanderlinden Public Official Award during the American Public Power Association's National Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. The award recognizes elected or appointed local officials who have contributed to the goals of the American Public Power Association.

The association cited: "Todd prioritizes public power and utility operations in his community. Todd has been active with APPA for 12 years — regularly championing public power at the local, state, and federal levels, and traveling to Washington, DC, to advocate for public power



at APPA's Legislative Rally.

"During his four terms, he has helped the city's electric system increase reliability and become more environmentally responsible while remaining a low-cost electric provider. Crawfordsville Electric Light & Power has earned the Sue Kelly Community Service Award under his leadership and has supported

the utility in providing mutual aid, negotiating service territory with an investor-owned utility, and consistently promoting the prestige of public power. Todd works closely with Crawfordsville's Utility Service Board and actively participates in decisions regarding utility funds and how they can benefit the community most effectively."



City awarded \$1.6M for Market Street railroad crossing elimination project

Journal Review

The City of Crawfordsville announced in January it was awarded funding by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration under the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program. Grant funding will be used for a \$1.6 million Market Street Railroad Crossing Elimination Planning and Development project.

This funding will support project planning and project development phases for a grade separation at the Market Street/State Road 32/State Road 47/U.S.136 and CSX Transportation railroad crossing in Crawfordsville. The planning process will qualify

the city to seek funding for construction. Final design and construction phases will be included in a future grant request once planning and development phases have been completed.

The convergence of several highways to one point at a busy rail crossing creates serious issues in the community, more than just traffic delays, the press release stated. While there is an overpass rail crossing on Wabash Avenue that should allow traffic to flow unimpeded when a train blocks this crossing, the surrounding road network is not able to accommodate the amount of traffic trying to use Wabash Avenue at once. Often, the combination of frustrated local

citizens, visitors to the community unfamiliar with the detour, and truck traffic unable to navigate around the blocked crossing creates an incredibly unsafe situation for residents and visitors to the community alike.

The future project will improve the crossing by eliminating the interaction between vehicles/pedestrians and rail traffic and will incorporate the necessary elements including sidewalks, bike lanes or multi-use trail paths within the project. Fencing and other access restrictive measures along the rail line will be implemented to further reduce the risk of pedestrian interaction with rail traffic, as pedestrians are also frequently spotted using the

railroad as a path.

DECADES OF STRUGGLES

The community has struggled with this issue for decades and several attempts to receive funding have been made in recent years, the release stated.

In 2018 the Indiana Department of Transportation announced the Local Trax Rail Overpass program, for which the city applied. Unfortunately, INDOT did not select Crawfordsville as a recipient community. Subsequently, the city applied for Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development grants from the Federal Transit Administration in 2018 and 2019, both of which were not selected for funding.

Following those failed attempts to secure funding the city shifted to a data focused approach which was used to support the successful FRA grant application. As part of this process, data from the crossing was collected for more than a year and compiled to empirically demonstrate the true impact to residents, businesses and public safety.

DATA FOCUSED

The data showed the crossing was blocked more than 277 hours during the study period, impacting the 16,492 vehicles that traverse the crossing on an average day, 9% of which are large semi-trucks. Using a formula created by Federal Highway Administration, it was determined that these blockages resulted in a \$2.67 million/year impact to residents and businesses in terms of lost

time and productivity. Additionally, the estimated annual CO2 emission value created by idling vehicles waiting on the crossing to be cleared, was valued at nearly \$33,000/year.

Lastly, the public was engaged in a series of meetings, in which they expressed the negative impacts the crossing has had on their daily lives and an online survey yielded 1,691 participants. Ninety-nine percent of survey participants reported having been stopped at the crossing and 43% had witnessed a pedestrian walk around the gates or through a stopped train. In a public meeting to obtain community input on the issue, one resident provided this accurate summary, "Stopped trains cause an atmosphere downtown that is supercharged with panic, speed, anger and frustration. Unhealthy for the

community and so unsafe."

PATHWAY FORWARD

"This problem has challenged our community for many years and we are excited to finally have a pathway for addressing it," said Crawfordsville Mayor Todd Barton. "This funding will allow us to plan for a grade separation and will position us well for obtaining the funding to construct it, creating a permanent solution that equips Crawfordsville to come to terms with this problem once and for all.

"I want to thank everyone for their patience as we've worked through addressing this matter and I especially want to thank Director of Operations and Community Development Brandy Allen for all her hard work on this successful grant application. She dedicated much time and effort to ensur-

ing our application resonated with the Federal Railroad Administration and the US Department of Transportation."

Despite this crossing being located on state highways, the city has committed to contributing the required match funding due to the importance of this issue to the community.

Barton said that amount is \$480,000 — or 30 %, and will come from tax increment financing funds.

He stressed that this project will be a multi-year project, and that the planning phase will better the city's odds of securing a construction grant in the future.

"This has been a problem for a long time, and it won't be fixed overnight, but we are moving forward in a way that will ultimately change the look of our community," he said.

Many deem MXoN a success

Journal Review

"Best MXoN ever!"

That is what local organizers heard from fans across the globe in the wake of the 2025 Monster Energy FIM Motocross of Nations championship race that was held at Ironman Raceway Oct. 3-5.

Members of the local planning committee gathered a week after the race for their final meeting.

Crawfordsville Mayor Todd Barton told the volunteers they were the reason for the event's success.

"I want all of you to know that you are the reason MXoN was so successful," Barton said. "I stood up here and led our meetings, but you did the work. It was an epic event and I thank you for all you did."

The committee took a gamble that paid off immensely.

Early on it was decided to have the Grand Parade in downtown Crawfordsville. At past MXoN events, the parade took place at the racetrack and only consisted of the race teams.

The committee made the parade a symbol of "Americana" and added the gallantry of a parade typical for an American parade. It included marching bands and a parade marshal. It was a learning experience for international fans.

The international fans and commentators on the worldwide telecast even had to have it explained why our local American Legion Color Guard led off the parade and that they were all veterans.

The color guard commander, Mike Spencer, said the reception they received from the crowd was a special moment.

"It was an honor to be a part of the parade," he said. "The Honor Guard members all said it brought cold chills down our backs. It was the most impressive thing I have ever been a part of. The city knocked it out of the park."

Moving the parade downtown meant the committee had to transport fans from the track located southwest of the city. Charter busses were utilized to bring visitors to the parade.

MX Sports Vice President and race director Tim Cotter admitted he was unsure how the parade would be received.

"The parade exceeded my expectations," Cotter said. "The parade committee gets a gold star not only from me, but from all the teams. The parade was over the top and set the tone for the rest of the weekend."

Many comments were made that a large number of local residents attended the parade. Barton said his dream of getting the residents to the parade to participate in the MXoN experience was successful.

After the parade, the Oktoberfest was conducted at Pike Place, which gave residents and visitors an opportunity come together.

"The crowd at the Oktoberfest was great," Director of the Montgomery County Visitors Bureau Heather Shirk said. "The vendors were happy, it was a fun party for all ages, and everyone had a good time. I saw a lot of local people enjoying the opportunity to gather with people from all over the world."

Downtown restaurants experienced a busy evening Friday and many had expressed their gratitude for the

MXoN event to several on the committee.

Attendance at the track totaled 76,174. The number included the total number of fans that came through the gates each day.

County public safety personnel reported no significant problems. Both Crawfordsville Police Department Chief Aaron Mattingly and Montgomery County Sheriff Ryan Needham were pleased with the way their officers responded to the crowds.

"I admit I was nervous," Needham said. "But the whole weekend exceeded my expectations. From our people to the State Police to

EMA and INDOT, everything worked as it should."

Crawfordsville Fire Department Chief Scott Busenbark said his department had no problems taking care of the usual calls within the community and the very few calls around the track.

One of the calls for service was a report of a trailer on fire in the track's campground. Busenbark said the firefighters were quickly on the scene and put out the fire within minutes.

Directors with the Montgomery County Emergency Management and the 911 dispatch center reported 91 calls for service went through

the call center established at the track, which helped the call load going to the main 911 center.

"We have never been so prepared for an event like we were for this race," Cotter said. "We did a lot of good things right. At the end of the day, we put Ironman Raceway, Crawfordsville and Montgomery County on the international motocross map."

Track owner Lori Shaver expressed appreciation and pleasure for the event's success.

"I don't think we could even imagine how good the weekend went," Shaver said.

"To see people happy and thrilled was awesome. It was an amazing four days and I was happy to see the weekend opened the door for new faces from the community."

Barton concluded the meeting by stating how the fans and community benefitted from the event, which was a break from what is going on in the world.

"Considering the geopolitical situations in the world today we can say there were no efforts to divide us," Barton said. "We had people from countries from across the world and everyone got along. We needed this."

Second colorful mural completed downtown

Artist draws inspiration from local elements

Hayley Jarman

hjarman@jrpress.com

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was conducted Thursday morning to celebrate the unveiling of a new mural in downtown Crawfordsville by New York-based artist Jenna Morello, her second in the city.

The mural, located on the south wall of 121 S. Green St., was funded by a READI Quality of Life Grant, with matching donations from the Montgomery County Community Foundation, the Indy Arts Council, and other local organizations.

"With the help of READI funds, but also so many partnerships, we made this happen," said Brandy Allen, the city's director of operations and community develop-



ment, during the ceremony.

The Montgomery County Community Foundation contributed \$10,000 toward the project. Allen also credited local property owner Mike Grant for offering his building's wall as a canvas.

Morello worked 12 to 13 hours a day over the past week to complete the mural.

Describing the inspiration

behind the design, Morello said: "They wanted a mural but they didn't know what they wanted to like kind of represent Crawfordsville in Indiana. So I kind of made sure to target points that reminded me of here and things that were a big deal here. To allow them to have something to connect to." Elements include Sugar Creek,

the state bird (cardinal), the state bug (firefly), and an iconic local house she said she remembered from her last visit to Crawfordsville.

Morello has been painting murals professionally for 12 years and has traveled across the U.S., including projects from New York to Puerto Rico.

New Ross kicks off sesquicentennial celebration

For the Journal Review

NEW ROSS — The town of New Ross, founded in 1875, kicked off its 150th celebration on Sunday at the New Ross Town Hall.

In 1975, New Ross held a four-day Centennial Celebration, which included the burial of a memorabilia time capsule to be opened July 13, 2025. A large crowd gathered at the town hall to open the capsule.

Nancy Hartley, the 150th Celebration Committee co-chairman, welcomed residents and guests. She spoke about the 1975 centennial event and recognized Kay Richardson and Ellen Teague as the only living Centennial Committee members.

Hartley recognized those who volunteered with the 1975 Centennial Celebration and introduced the members of the 150th Celebration Committee.

She outlined the planned events for the 150th celebration, which will take place Sept. 6-7.

On Sept. 6, the event will include yard sales, a corn hole tournament, craft vendors, historical displays, a reunion area, kids Fun Zone, Southmont "Sudden Impulse" choir, Walnut Elementary Color Run, New Ross Conservation Club pie contest, a magician and a parade celebrating 150 Years of Community.

There also will be many food options available during the day. The evening will end with the Backyard Revival Band followed by Steve Trent



and Small Town Band.

On Sept. 7, there will be a community worship service at the New Ross United Methodist Church. After the

service, a light lunch will be served then organizers will seal the Sesquicentennial Time Capsule.

Follow organizers and get

additional information about the upcoming events on Facebook.com / New Ross 150th Celebration.



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County-wide transit system to launch

Journal Review

Crawfordsville will launch a county-wide public transportation program in January 2026, marking the first time the county will have a general-access transit service. The announcement came during a public meeting Thursday, where officials shared the finalized results of a transportation needs assessment and unveiled a phased rollout plan.

The new system will build on the existing Sunshine Vans program, which currently serves seniors and residents with disabilities. While Sunshine Vans will continue to operate as a point-to-point, reservation-based service, the transition to a public system will expand its hours, increase vehicle capacity, and open it to all residents countywide.

“Every area needs some level of public transportation,” said Christy Campoll, senior associate and project manager for RLS & Associates, which helped conduct the needs study. “We don’t need the type of system found in Indy or Chicago, but everyone in the community may need this at some point in their lives.”

The service will initially operate Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fares will be \$3 for trips under five miles, \$5 for longer rides, and \$1 per mile beyond 10 miles. Seniors and individuals with disabilities will continue to ride on a donation basis.

Campoll emphasized that the program will not require new taxes. It will be funded



by a 50/50 federal matching grant through the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Rural Transit Program, with local support from existing budgets and partners like the United Way and the Montgomery County Community Foundation.

By mid-2026, the city hopes to launch limited “shopper routes,” particularly connecting east-side neighborhoods to shopping areas on the south side. These fixed routes will operate at a lower fare and are intended to help residents without cars access grocery stores and essential services.

A more traditional small-

scale bus route in Crawfordsville may follow in later years, depending on funding and ridership demand.

Campoll estimates the system will provide approximately 22,000 rides in its first year, significantly increasing mobility options for low-income workers, students, seniors, and residents without personal vehicles.

While the Sunshine Vans name will be phased out, a new name for the system has not yet been chosen. Community members are encouraged to submit ideas through an online form provided at the meeting.

With phase one launching

in January, the city plans to gather public feedback mid-year to evaluate performance and shape future expansions, including evening or weekend service.

“This is going to be a public transit program for the whole community,” Campoll said. “We’re taking the first big step toward meeting transportation needs that have been unmet for far too long.”



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United Way kicks off fundraising campaign

Goal set to raise \$350,000 through donations

Journal Review

United Way of Montgomery County, a collaborative social services organization, kicked off its annual fundraising campaign in September by announcing a new theme, spotlighting a new pilot program, and recognizing organizations that have significantly contributed to its mission.

Each year, United Way holds a community-wide fundraising drive to collect donations through payroll deductions, annual gifts, planned giving and special events. Funds are then distributed to nonprofit agencies serving Montgomery County residents, based on the direction of donors and supporters.

This year's campaign theme is "Meat the Need," with a goal of raising \$350,000 through donations and pledges. Donors who give at least \$50 per donation will be entered into a raffle. Four winners will each receive a quarter of a beef cow.

Kayla Miles, recently appointed director of United Way, shared an update on a new pilot program, First Door, created in large part with the help of Drug Free Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Commissioners' Opioid Settlement Fund.

The First Door program connects individuals and families to vital community resources, including hous-

ing, food, health care, legal services, financial support, education and more. Whether facing a crisis or in need of ongoing support, First Door serves as a central access point to help people navigate available assistance in the Montgomery County area.

Miles also highlighted several community programs that have seen recent developments, including the Sunshine Van Program, Crawfordsville Adult Resource Academy (CARA) and Trinity Life Ministries.

The Sunshine Van Program, which currently provides transportation for older adults, is set to begin

transitioning into a public rideshare service in early 2026. CARA is moving into a larger facility, the former Ivy Tech building. Trinity Life Ministries has acquired a new building, which is being renovated to expand its transitional housing program for men.

Food insecurity was also a key topic during the kickoff.

"Almost 15% of families in Montgomery County are food insecure," Miles said. "That's not acceptable, and together, we can change it."

She recognized two organizations actively addressing food insecurity in the community: FISH Food

Pantry and the Youth Service Bureau. YSB sends 145 kids home with Nourish Backpacks every Friday, totaling 1,160 meals each week. FISH Food Pantry has increased its reach from about 400 families per month last year to nearly 650 families per month today.

"So, this year we're tackling these needs in a big and maybe even a little unusual way," Miles said. "We're giving away a cow. An entire cow."

Miles announced this year's pace-setters as Crawfordsville and North Montgomery school corporations and Hoosiers Heartland State Bank, starting off the campaign with \$60,000.





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Group forms new aid organization in the county

Journal Review

Moco Mutual Aid is a new community organization that formed in April.

Mutual aid involves community members organizing to help each other, particularly when formal systems are inadequate or slow to respond. Organizers of the workshop, Aaron Morrison and Kay Whetstone, hope to educate and engage the community in practical ways to support one another.

The organization is working to improve community support by creating mutual aid efforts throughout the county, focusing on addressing gaps in traditional support systems.

Whetstone, a social worker, often sees clients whose needs are not met by existing programs. They have been actively involved in outreach efforts to the county's unhoused population.

"We've had a small group of individuals actively trying to interact with the unhoused population and are at minimum making, like, weekly

efforts to locate people or leave care packages," Whetstone said.

Morrison emphasized that mutual aid is about helping people meet their basic needs — housing, rent, food, and life skills — in ways that traditional institutions may struggle to accommodate.

"Mutual aid really is a very, very old concept. It's not necessarily a new thing," Morrison said. "It's something that has been practiced by people around the world in response to disaster and in response to when there's not a social safety net in place."

Whetstone's motivation for being involved in Moco Mutual Aid stems from their professional and personal experiences.

"I have to follow the NASW code of ethics for social work. And one of the top tenets of that is social justice," Whetstone said. "But also, I have worked with so many clients that fall through the cracks. Very, very rarely do I have a client where I can find programming that already exists that can help them, that fits

their need."

Moco Mutual Aid has several projects in development. One idea involves expanding access to community gardens, providing more residents with fresh produce and the skills to grow their own food. Another proposal focuses on a mobile meal service to supplement existing meal programs and address gaps in accessibility.

"Life is too fluid for programs to be this rigid," Whetstone said, describing the challenges many people face in accessing aid when their circumstances don't fit within established program criteria.

Another project involves building relationships with the unhoused population by simply engaging with them on a personal level.

"It doesn't have to be some kind of big thing," Whetstone said. "It's just pack an extra sandwich, maybe an extra bottle of water, have a conversation with them."

Both Whetstone and Morrison stress that mutual aid differs from charity.

"With charity, there's always kind of like this power dynamic," Whetstone said.

"Whereas mutual aid is just helping your neighbor. It's no different from if your neighbor were to come ask for a cup of sugar. It takes away that power dynamic and creates community connection."

"It's a horizontal relationship rather than a vertical one," Morrison added.

Moco Mutual Aid hopes to foster a culture of solidarity and civic engagement, counteracting negative perceptions of those in need.

"We want to say kind of what Martin Luther King Jr. said, that it is obscene to ask somebody to pull themselves up by their bootstraps when they have no boots to begin with," Morrison said.





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First United Methodist observes 200th anniversary

Journal Review

First United Methodist Church of Crawfordsville observed the 200th anniversary of its founding.

The church has celebrated its bicentennial throughout the year with activities including attendance at an Indianapolis Indians baseball game where the Chancel Choir performed the National Anthem. An historical timeline has been on display in the hallway outside the church parlor, and members have presented the history of the church in 25-year segments during summer Sunday morning worship services.

The Crawfordsville District Public Library had a special display outside its local history room to honor the church's bicentennial. In June, Church members took part in the annual Strawberry Festival worship service, and served strawberries and ice cream at a Montgomery County Civic Band concert in July. Also in July, the Church hosted a cookout with the Rainbows & Rhymes preschool families.

The bicentennial celebrations will culminate on Sunday with coffee and conversation in the church parlor at 9:30 a.m., followed by a special worship service in the sanctuary at 10:30 a.m.

The church was started in September 1825, by five women who were: Maria Winters Elston, wife of Major Isaac Elston; her mother, Sylvia Ann Winters; Mary T. Stitt, wife of Judge James Stitt; a Mrs. Killian; and a Mrs. Nicholson. Those five, who are re-

membered by the church as its "Mothers of Israel," were inspired by the preaching of Methodist circuit rider the Rev. James Armstrong to form a Methodist class which soon became the First Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1826, the Montgomery County Commissioners agreed to convey Lot 160 of the original plat of the town of Crawfordsville, located at the northwest corner of Wabash Avenue and Water Street, to the church for construction of a church building. In 1829, a 40 by 40-foot frame church was erected, the first of four successive Methodist houses of worship to be constructed on Lot 160. Members now attending Sunday services sit where their Methodist forbears first sat in 1829.

The church's ongoing ministries and outreach to the community include the Wesley Thrift Shop, located at 315 W. Market Str., which was started by nine women members in 1959 to sell used clothing, toys, household items, books and jewelry on consignment at affordable prices, with the Shop retaining 30% of the proceeds. The profits from the shop are returned to the community through donations to area church and service organizations.

The Montgomery County FISH began in 1969 under the leadership of the Rev. Frank Little, then pastor of the church. For more than 50 years, FISH has helped needy area residents through a food pantry, clothing closet and linen closet. From FISH's start until 2019, the church



hosted the FISH Food Pantry.

Since 1969, the church has broadcast its Sunday worship services to people who are homebound, in hospitals or nursing facilities, or otherwise unable to attend in person. The Sunday broadcasts began with the generous assistance of former member Myron Pattison, who started Crawfordsville Community Cable Corporation. They are now livestreamed on Facebook and the church's website, www.cvfumc.org.

From 1988 through 2018, the church sponsored week-long summer mission work trips to the sea islands of South Carolina, in connection with a program to rehabilitate the homes of impoverished residents there. Teams of church members

and other volunteers provided the labor and tools, while the cost of building materials was paid from church endowment funds.

In 1994, the church began a half-day preschool program called Rainbows & Rhymes. Beginning in 2019, Rainbows & Rhymes was expanded to provide full-day year-round preschool and daycare for up to 56 children. A scholarship fund established by the Church provides tuition assistance to families in need.

First United Methodist Church celebrates its 200 years of Christian witness and outreach in Crawfordsville, and looks forward to continuing to do so in the future.

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Grace and Mercy Food Pantry reopens

Journal Review

After closing its doors last summer to expand operations, the Grace and Mercy Food Pantry reopened as the Grace and Mercy Community Food Pantry in January.

The pantry, which has served local families and individuals for nearly 40 years, held its grand reopening, marking a new chapter in its mission to combat food insecurity.

Scott Lehr, head of operations, credited the reopening and expansion to overwhelming community support and contributions.

"We've made this name change because we need the help of the community to do everything we do here," Lehr said. "It's exciting to be back open, and I believe we can make a real difference with the community's support."

The reopening saw more than 140 families, Lehr said.

The pantry's origins date back to one woman, Andrea Miller, who began feeding those in need out of her kitchen cabinets. As demand grew, the effort expanded into the church's choir closets, and would eventually become a cornerstone of the Grace and Mercy Ministries.

With food insecurity on the rise, the pantry used its temporary closure to make vital upgrades. A \$10,000 grant from the Montgomery County Community Foundation funded the purchase of a commercial refrigerator, freezer, and additional food supplies. Contributions from Home Depot and the church itself further supported the project.



While contractor delays initially slowed the process, local business owners Jamie and Heather Gemino of Gemino Construction and Tree Services stepped in, offering labor at no cost.

"We just paid for the materials because they realized what this pantry means to the community," Lehr said.

The pantry also adjusted its hours to better accommodate working families. In addition to daytime hours on Wednesdays, the pantry will now operate later in the evening on Thursdays.

"Our goal is to feed people if they're hungry. Whatever we have, we give out, no questions asked," Lehr said.

The pantry's success depends on a dedicated group of volunteers, some of whom have been involved for more than 15 years.

Carla Vogt, dubbed the "pit bull" of the parking lot for her orderly management style, is one of those volunteers.

"It's the most fulfilling thing I've ever done," Vogt said. "It's heartbreaking sometimes, but seeing someone smile as they leave makes it all worth it. Even if you can come for just an hour to help out, every little bit makes a difference."

Vogt's husband, Bill, is another longtime volunteer, often starting his day early to prepare the pantry for operations. Other volunteers, like Wabash College freshman Reuben Canchola, have found a sense of purpose through their involvement.

"Being far from home, this has helped me connect with the community," Canchola said. "It's honestly been really fun. I just enjoy helping out."

Lehr wanted to also ac-

knowledge the contributions of Pastor Owen Mason & Church Alive of Lafayette for the many donations they made, along with Michael, Janet, and Keith Spencer and Donna Jones who helped with finishing and painting the whole facility.

He also thanked Brock Veach, Jim and Shirley Todd for donating numerous hours of labor.

Kyle Schultz donated his time and created the pantry's website and Facebook pages.

Lehr urges the community to get involved in the pantry.

"If we get the folks behind us in the community to help us, I believe we can make a real big difference."

More information can be found at gmfoodpantry.org or the Grace and Mercy Community Food Pantry's Facebook page.

Carriage House undergoes renovations, upgrades

Journal Review

Structural renovations to the Lew Wallace Carriage House took place earlier this year. Work on the structure, which was built in 1895, started earlier in January, and were finished by March.

Director Larry Paarlberg noticed the Carriage House, which is used as a welcome center and educational space, wasn't level and there was a tilt in the floor. After a structural engineer inspected the floors, it was determined that upgrades were needed on the beams of the house.

The \$200,000 renovation was funded by private donors, proceeds from the TASTE of Montgomery County and Holiday Tea as well as a grant from the Montgomery County Community Foundation.

The project was designed by Ratio Architects and work is being completed by Brandt Construction.

Previously, the building was saved from demolition by the city and volunteers over 20 years ago. It was extensively restored and opened in 2005 as the Lew Wallace Museum welcome center, Lynne D. Hohlbein Education and exhibit display space, office space, gift shop and artifact storage. Over the years, the site has hosted more than 100,000 people in the building. This attendance combined with the other uses caused some deterioration and structural issues.

Paarlberg said people probably won't notice the improvements being made, but he believes the work will



extend the life of the building.

The most difficult part of the renovation thus far has been moving the fragile materials housed inside. It took four people to move a plexi-glass case from the house across the lawn to the Study. In the end, everything made it in and out safely.

There have been several renovations on the Ben Hur Study grounds over the years, including in 2011, 2015 and most recently in 2021, when the walls surrounding the property started to lean. Paarlberg feared that someone could get hurt if the wall fell, so the property closed off the sidewalk while undergoing construction. Paarlberg added there may be further work done on the wall in the future.

Maintaining the historic property has taken a lot of effort and money. The

interior of the study was left untouched for more than 100 years until 2011, when the roof was leaking. Before repairs were made, the property had several buckets placed under the ceiling to collect water before it could cause any further damage.

After fixing the roof, a bigger question came to Paarlberg, what was the original color of the ceiling? No one knew because all photos of the study were taken in black and white. After raising money and doing chemical tests on the ceiling, the original color of the ceiling was determined to be a shade of light blue.

Paarlberg added that renovations are important to keep historical landmarks like the Lew Wallace Museum alive and bring visitors to them. Last year visitors from 41 different states made their way

to Crawfordsville. However, until the project is complete, the museum and grounds are closed to the public.

When the museum re-opens in mid-April, the 2025 exhibit will look at the epic silent film version of Ben-Hur that was released in 1925. Often considered the first film blockbuster, the movie is given credit for saving MGM studios and changed the film landscape forever.

In addition to the Carriage House renovation project, the museum is sending off two of Wallace's pieces of elaborate cast iron garden decoration for restoration. These features were expected to be reinstalled in late 2025.

For more information, contact Paarlberg at 765-362-5769 or email lpaarlberg@ben-hur.com.

‘People Helping People’

Local Eagles Aerie 1005 marks 120 years of service

Journal Review

Crawfordsville Aerie 1005 marked its 120th anniversary in March by combining celebratory festivities with a fundraiser.

Aerie members will join its auxiliary members to raise money for the newly opened Peyton Manning Childrens Hospital Neonatal Unit and the Indiana Donor Network Donor Hero Camp.

Fundraising effort begin at noon Saturday.

A members-only banquet was conducted. Dinner was followed with a performance by the Dapper Dan Band, which was open to the public.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles was founded Feb. 6, 1896 by six theater owners in Seattle Washington. The Crawfordsville Aerie 1005 was chartered a few years later on March 9, 1905, with 330 charter members. It is part of the International Fraternal Order of Eagles in the United States and Canada. It is also the second oldest continuously chartered fraternal organization in Crawfordsville.

On Oct. 29, 1942, the Aerie purchased the post office building on the northwest corner of Main and Water streets. It remained there until May 21, 1969, when it moved to a new building at 920 E. South Blvd. The Aerie remains there today.

The local Aerie has had six state presidents — William McKeown, Harold Lannan, Jim Jones, Gary Harrison,

Frank Escamilla Jr., Greg Dargie and one Honorary Past State President Roy Lee Moore. It also has had four Indiana State Hall of Fame honorees and one Grand Aerie Hall of Fame recipient. The local group also boasts having a six-time International Champion Ritual Team and an Indiana Hall of Fame recipient.

The Auxiliary to Aerie 1005 was chartered in August 1953 and the two have worked hand in hand during events through the years. The local auxiliary has had one Madam State President, Stella Havercamp, and currently two members serve as state officers.

The Eagles motto is “People Helping People.” They accomplish this through many fundraising events and

donations to local organizations.

The Eagles also support international charities, including heart fund, cancer fund, diabetes, child welfare, kidney and many others. No donated funds may be used for overhead or administration costs, all donations must go toward research. Many years ago the Eagles partnered with the University of Iowa and created the Fraternal Order of Eagles Diabetes Research Center with an initial pledge of \$25 million over five years. The center is now world renown and the cure is now in testing stages.

Locally, the group has purchased equipment for the Crawfordsville Fire Department and supported the Boys & Girls Club of Montgomery County, local school sports

and bands and the Crawfordsville Park & Rec. They also sponsor scholarships for seniors at the three high schools.

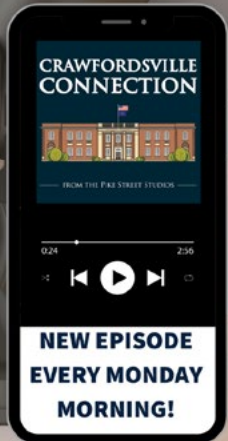
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MCCF recognizes volunteers at annual meeting

Journal Review

Montgomery County Community Foundation conducted its annual meeting Thursday at the Hoosier Heartland State Bank's Success Center. President Erin Gobel presided over the meeting.

Following the standard items of business, outgoing and incoming board members were recognized. Outgoing board members included Sheila McCormick and Debbie Schavietello. Each joined the board in 2019 and served two consecutive three-year terms. McCormick served on the scholarship committee all six years and has chaired it since 2020. Schavietello served on the governance and grants committees, chairing the governance committee. She also served as board secretary from 2023 to 2025.

Newly-elected board members recognized were Pam Bradley and Shawn Ramey. The balance of the 13-member board includes: Tracey Barr, Chris Cox, Gary Isenberg, Brenda Lovold, Jack Grimble, Erin Gobel, Cathy Caldwell, Preston Bost, Anna Bravo-Moore, Wendy Feller and Zach Hockersmith.

Since 1996, the recognition of outstanding volunteers has been a staple of the MCCF annual meeting. Two awards were presented, one to an adult and another, the Peggy Herzog Youth Volunteer award went to a young person.

The 2025 MCCF Volunteer of the Year is Jessica Bokhart, nominated for her service and dedication to the Lew



Wallace Study Preservation Society. Bokhart has been an extraordinary force behind the success of the Lew Wallace Museum. With her financial expertise, she has strengthened the museum's investments and dramatically increased revenue for the TASTE of Montgomery County — an event she has led with unmatched dedication. From securing sponsors and vendors to writing personal notes and making follow-up visits, Jessica's thoughtful, hands-on approach has made a lasting impact.

As current board president, Bokhart has energized the board with forward-thinking initiatives, including off-site planning sessions to shape the museum's future. She has helped recruit new board members, supported programs like ArchiCamp by enrolling her own children, and modernized pricing structures to ensure sustainability.

She leads with a "can-do" spirit, strategic insight, and a deep commitment to community. Her ability to balance family, work, and extensive volunteerism sets her apart. Introduced to the museum through another volunteer, she quickly became an indispensable leader, repeatedly declining opportunities to step back, because, in her words, she "loves the museum and the role it plays in the community."

"Jessica is not just a volunteer — she is a true philanthropist in both spirit and action, and an inspiration to us all," said Larry Paarlberg, museum director.

Gobel presented Bokhart with a plaque commemorating her service and a \$1,000 grant to the Lew Wallace Study Preservation Society in her honor.

Three other individuals were nominated and each received a certificate of recognition and a gift. They

included:

- Bill Durbin, Veterans Memorial Park

Durbin is the heart and soul of Veterans Memorial Park. Officially the board secretary, he far exceeds the bounds of his title — installing commemorative bricks, welcoming school groups, and even raising and lowering flags as needed. Whether it's coordinating displays or creating new sponsorship opportunities, Bill is always "on duty" with unmatched energy, commitment and care.

One of Durbin's most significant contributions is his visionary design of the park's four-pad concentric layout, which features a central monument, flags and memorial bricks. His ability to clearly communicate that vision has attracted donors and inspired community support. His leadership, engineering expertise and passion for honoring veterans have

been essential to the park's development and continued success.

As a member of the Sons of the American Legion and the Byron Cox Post 72 Honor Guard, Durbin lives out his mission to ensure that no veteran is forgotten. His service to VMP is truly a labor of love, and it's no exaggeration to say the park would not exist without his dedication.

- Sally Gooden, Animal Welfare League

Gooden is the engine that keeps the Animal Welfare League running. Known affectionately as the person who "knows everything," Sally is the go-to for questions, support, and solutions. Her daily tasks range from coordinating spay and neuter transport, managing office work, answering phones and posting adoption updates to jumping in wherever she's needed — including fundraising and community outreach.

Her leadership shines through in her consistency and dedication — rarely missing a day at the shelter, Gooden brings stability to an environment with ever-changing demands. Whether she's educating the public, solving problems, or patiently helping individuals navigate the challenges of surrendering pets, Gooden leads with compassion and focus on what matters most: the well-being of the animals.

Her journey with AWL began with fostering a special dog named Chance. That experience sparked a lasting commitment fueled by her love of animals — especially black Labs. Today, she's a cornerstone of the shelter, and her tireless efforts have made a meaningful impact on animals and people alike.

- Marvin Swick, FISH Food Pantry



Swick is the quiet strength behind the FISH Food Pantry. As both a volunteer and board member, he plays a crucial role in ensuring the pantry is stocked and ready to serve the community. Twice a week, he collects food donations from Kroger and delivers them to FISH. He also steps up at mobile pantry events across the county, always ready to lend a helping hand.

Swick leads not with words, but with action. He's known for his reliability, honesty and humility — if there's a task to be done, Swick will get it done, and do it well. His personal motto, "Whatever you do, do to the best of your ability," guides everything he touches. He's a pillar of support to the pantry's leadership simply by being present and steady.

Motivated by a desire to help others, Swick began his journey by organizing donations at his church, moved by the contrast between abundance and need. That passion quickly grew, and today, he is a vital part of the FISH team — serving others with compassion, integrity

and quiet determination.

Next up was the Peggy Herzog Youth Volunteer of the Year Award, which went to Liam Venis for his service to Nourish, a program of the Youth Service Bureau. Every Wednesday morning, Venis shows up at the Youth Service Bureau ready to pack food bags for local students to take home for the weekend — and he does it with a huge smile. He's been volunteering since 2021 with his mom (or grandma when needed), and it's become a meaningful routine for them. What started as a way to build life skills for Venis, who's on the autism spectrum, has grown into a real passion for helping others. He also recycles all the packaging and helps with summer programs. His energy and excitement are contagious. The work gives him a sense of accomplishment and has helped him learn some independence.

Gobel presented Venis with a plaque commemorating his service along with a \$1,000 check to Youth Service Bureau's Nourish program, in honor of his service.

Also nominated was Evelyn

Zachary, Volunteers for Mental Health in Montgomery County

Zachary doesn't just attend board meetings — she brings ideas, energy and leadership to everything she does. From helping plan a mental health movie night to presenting to the United Way board and leading student volunteers, Evelyn is always ready to step up. She's thoughtful, creative, and leads by example. One of her best moments? Rethinking a toiletry kit project and cutting the time in half while keeping everything running smoothly. She also helps run tech trainings across Indiana, organizes big community events, and even works the polls and writes for the Journal Review.

Gobel wrapped up the accomplishments of 2024 in which just over \$2 million was awarded in grants and scholarships. A video capturing highlights of the past year was shown. The video, along with the electronic version of the 2024 Annual Report is on the MCCF website, www.mccf-in.org. The meeting adjourned.

Trinity Life Ministry expands services

Men's residential addiction program breaks ground on new facility in Linden

Journal Review

LINDEN — Trinity Life Ministry conducted a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday for a new 10,000 square foot facility in Linden.

The building is an expansion of the ministry's faith-based, 12-month residential program for men struggling with addiction. This building, 210 N. Meridian St., Linden, will house men who have completed the initial 12-month program in Crawfordsville and is being referred to as the second phase of the program.

Trinity Life Ministry has been a part of Montgomery County's community for 20 years, providing support and a place to live for men struggling with addiction.

"Not everybody is ready to go back out in the world, and they still need help getting on their feet," Trinity's Executive Director Phil Gabriel said. "One of the hardest things for people, especially coming out of jail, is what it costs to start over."

Gabriel said that almost 80% of people released from corrections in Tippecanoe County, where the organization originated from 40 years ago, are homeless.

"Most of these guys came with just the clothes on their back," he said. "They don't have cars, they don't have licenses, they can't even afford a place to live. I want to give



them an opportunity to start a new life."

The facility will help men prepare for life on their own, teaching them to build their credit, leadership skills and find stability.

The expansion is a \$1.2 million project that received a matching grant from United Way along with generous donations from the community and from the Montgomery County Community Foundation.

"On behalf of Montgomery

County Community Foundation and our anonymous donor, we congratulate Trinity on their unswerving commitment, which has led to make this day a reality," said Cheryl Keim, MCCF Grants and Community Relations Director. "The foundation's mission is to build bridges to support the future of Montgomery County."

"We were honored to have been able to bridge the gap between the need and our donors' charitable goals,"

Keim continued. "We built that bridge, but you all are building a bridge with this building to help restore hope and transform men's lives, to build better futures for themselves and for their families."

There are still many details to be decided, Gabriel said, but the goal of the facility is to be a peer support system with men who have already gone through Trinity's initial program and want to help others in the same situation.

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Veterans Memorial Park dedication set for Memorial Day

For the Journal Review

The Veterans Memorial Park Board announced that the official dedication of Veterans Memorial Park will take place at 11 a.m. on Memorial Day, Monday, May 26. The community is invited to attend this special ceremony, which will serve as both the park's formal dedication and this year's Memorial Day service.

Located on South Washington Street, between Byron Cox Post 72 and the National Guard Armory, Veterans Memorial Park stands as a powerful tribute to all who have served in the United States Armed Forces. Created by a dedicated five-member board, the park's mission is to provide a dynamic, educational space that honors the sacrifices and service of all

veterans, past and present.

The park features several historic military artifacts, including an M110 Howitzer, an M42 Duster, a WWII Japanese anti-aircraft gun, and a 1969 Huey Helicopter. A dignified flag display, illuminated by Acuity Lighting, adds to the park's solemn beauty and atmosphere of remembrance.

Sabrina Thomas, Ph.D., a military historian and professor at Texas Tech University, praised the site, calling Veterans Memorial Park in Crawfordsville "the best in the country." Dr. Thomas previously served as the David A. Moore Chair in American History at Wabash College and is widely recognized for her scholarship on American military history.

"We wanted to create a space that not only honors

veterans but also educates future generations on the cost of freedom," said Kevin Cobb, president of the Veterans Memorial Park Board. "This park is a tribute to every man and woman who has worn the uniform and defended our country."

As part of its educational mission, the park has already welcomed four school groups for guided tours, engaging students with hands-on learning and stories of military service throughout American history.

Recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and a proud member of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, the park has also received approval for interstate signage through INDOT and the Logo Sign Group—helping to draw visitors and

promote tourism in Montgomery County.

The Memorial Day service, traditionally held at a local cemetery, will take place this year at the park during the dedication ceremony at 11 a.m. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early and bring lawn chairs if desired.

For more information or to support the continued development of Veterans Memorial Park, donations can be made directly to the Veterans Memorial Park organization. Contributions of any size are welcome and deeply appreciated.

Let us come together this Memorial Day to honor our heroes, past and present, and celebrate the opening of a place that will stand in their honor for generations to come.



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EDUCATION

Crawfordsville Adult Resource Academy named Program of Excellence for third consecutive year

Journal Review

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) recently notified 17 adult education programs across the state of their designation as Programs of Excellence.

DWD launched this designation in the 2022–23 program year to recognize adult education programs that meet multiple state and federal metrics around student academic achievement, enrollment, partnerships with employers, high-demand wage training, and high school equivalencies earned.

The Crawfordsville Adult Resource Academy (CARA) has earned this designation for the third year in a row. Montgomery County experiences the positive impact of adult education success through increased economic activity and workforce participation by students who are upskilled through career training and foundational education credentials.



The U.S. Department of Labor estimates the average yearly wage increase from earning a high school credential at \$8,400. The high school credential also provides access to postsecondary education or training, which further increases Hoosier employment and economic opportunities.

“Indiana continues to excel as a state, leading the nation in student outcomes for the past six years, due to the hard work, dedication, and innovative practices being implemented at the program

level in communities every day,” said DWD Commissioner Josh Richardson.

All Programs of Excellence will be recognized by DWD Adult Education leadership at the Indiana Association of Adult and Continuing Education award ceremony on Sept. 24.

Dr. Meredith Boaz, CARA director, experiences firsthand the impact adult education services can have on adults.

“In the brief time I’ve served in this role, I’ve been continually inspired by our

students’ dedication, perseverance and strength — qualities that transform not only their own lives but also the lives of their families,” Boaz said. “It’s a privilege to work alongside our exceptional teachers and staff as we support Montgomery County residents in achieving their educational and career aspirations. Our previous Director, Kathy Tobias, established an exceptional standard of excellence, leading our program to three consecutive years of outstanding achievement. I’m committed to building upon this strong foundation and continuing that legacy of excellence.”

Indiana Adult Education enrolled more than 27,000 adult students across the state in the most recent program year and is a national leader in student achievement, high school equivalency diplomas earned, career certifications, and employer-based education.



CCSC opens new building

School board conducts first meeting in new space

Journal Review

The Crawfordsville Community School Corporation celebrated the official opening of its newly constructed administration building in May with a ribbon cutting ceremony held just prior to the board of school trustees meeting.

District administrators, board members, staff, project partners, and representatives from the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce gathered at the new 6,200-square-foot facility at 3 Athenian Drive, located adjacent to Crawfordsville High School's athletic parking lot. The building provides cen-

tralized office space for key district operations including the superintendent, assistant superintendent, curriculum director, food service director, accounting and payroll staff, corporation treasurer, and receptionist. It also includes a lobby, board room, large conference room, kitchenette and storage areas.

"This building is part of the past vision of our leaders, and from here, future leaders will continue to lead Crawfordsville Community School Corporation to provide great schools where students 'enter to learn, to go forth to serve,'" said Superintendent Rex Ryker. "From this site, boards and administration will cast

the vision, plan the mission, and carry out the commission to provide our community's students and students from all over the state with a foundation for a successful future as responsible, productive citizens in a global society."

Ryker acknowledged the contributions of both current and former board members, including former Superintendent Dr. Scott Bowling and current Board President Steve McLaughlin, as well as project collaborators CSO Architects, Baker Tilley, Ice Miller, and contractor Kettelhut Construction. The \$3.8 million project broke ground in April 2024.

McLaughlin, who had the initial vision for the building in 2020, praised the board's persistence and the staff's support throughout the multi-year process.

"With the completion of this project, Crawfordsville schools will have created a space that will house the administrators and staff who work every day to provide our students with the tools they need to achieve great success," McLaughlin said. "This building will provide a good place for teachers to collaborate and plan for great things in the classroom for generations of students now and in the future."

Norman recognized for classroom commitment

Journal Review

Cyndi Norman, a longtime special education teacher at Meredith Nicholson Elementary, was named a top 10 finalist in the Indianapolis Colts' Classroom Quarterbacks program, presented in collaboration with Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

Norman, who has dedicated 33 years to teaching special education at Crawfordsville schools, currently leads the Essential Skills class at Nicholson. Throughout her career, she has taught at all three Crawfordsville elementary schools: Nicholson, Hoover and Hose.

"Special education is exactly what it means. It's specializing and being there for kids of many abilities," Norman said. She emphasized the importance of love and flexibility in her teaching approach. "I come into it with a lot of love for these kids, and passion for them. I want to see them be successful, whether it's something small or something big. I'm proud of them, because they work hard."

Norman's impact on students is one of the biggest highlights of her career. She said that she has students she's taught that are now in high school and knowing that they remember her and she has made a lasting impact only furthers her passion for teaching.

Her commitment to students goes beyond the classroom. Norman is actively involved with Special Olympics, Autistic Rhythm, a golf fundraiser organization, and



respite care services for families of children with disabilities. She's even opened her home to a mother and child in need.

"I want to make a change for someone, and I want to help them," she said.

Norman, who earned her undergraduate degree from Anderson University and a master's in Special Education from Ball State University, said the recognition as a Classroom Quarterback is shared.

"This recognition isn't just mine. I couldn't do what I do without my two aides and support from other educa-

tors."

Her dedication to her students is echoed in her personal life, both of her daughters are teachers, one of which teaches special education alongside her at Nicholson.

This year is especially emotional for Norman as she prepares to say goodbye to one of her students who has been with her for four years. "She'll be going to Hoover. It's hard without her," Norman said. "Because she's come so far. Coming from a child that couldn't do a whole lot, that is actually walking up and down the halls and doing

things now that she couldn't do. They're all different, and it's different with each child. But I enjoy seeing them grow."

As a Classroom Quarterbacks finalist, Norman received two tickets to the Colts' first regular-season home game, a \$100 Amazon gift card, a \$50 Walmart gift card, a swag bag, and other prizes.

She lives by a favorite quote from Helen Keller: "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."

Early Learning Center opens on south side

Journal Review

A crowd of nearly 100 people, including representatives from the Montgomery County Early Learning Center's 16 partners, gathered in March to mark the completion of the new center — a project that was years in the making.

Discussions for the creation of the center at 110 W. South Blvd., began in 2019, and construction kicked off following a groundbreaking ceremony in April 2024.

KinderCare, known for its research-based curriculum and nationally accredited programs, will operate the center and provide 124 childcare spots for infants through preschool-aged children. Their focus on early childhood development ensures that children not only receive quality care but also a strong foundation for lifelong learning. The facility includes dedicated rooms for infants as young as six weeks, toddlers, two-year-olds and pre-K students. An indoor recess room offers space for physical activity when using the outdoor playground isn't an option, and infants will engage in sensory stimulation exercises.

"We wanted a partner that would value educators and create relationships for our families and children who would enter this facility. KinderCare Learning Company is that partner," said Montgomery County Community Foundation CEO Kelly Taylor.

At the ribbon-cutting, Taylor emphasized the signifi-



cance of the new center.

"Today marks an exciting milestone in our community, a place where our youngest learners will grow, explore, and develop in a safe and nurturing environment," she said.

The project, a \$5 million investment, was made possible through a partnership between businesses, government entities, and philanthropic organizations. Partners in this endeavor included Acuity Lighting, City of Crawfordsville, DES Engineering, Early Learning Indiana, Hoosier Heartland State Bank, Lakeside Book Company, Montgomery County government, Montgomery County Community Foundation, North Central Health Services, Nucor, Penguin Random House, State of Indiana, Tempur Sealy, Tipmont, Tri-County Bank &



Trust and Wabash College. Halstead Architects served as the project architect, and Patterson Horth, Inc. acted as the construction manager.

The collaboration aims to address the shortage of high-quality childcare in Montgomery County, where fewer than 40% of children under five currently have access to such care.

KinderCare, which operates nationally accredited early learning centers across the country, will run the facility with a research-based

curriculum.

"When this center opens in a few short days, 124 children will have access to high-quality early childhood education, which will prepare them for a lifetime of learning while also offering their families much-needed support," said Dan Figurski, president of KinderCare for Employers and Champions.

The center is now accepting enrollments for infants through preschool-aged children. Families interested in learning more can contact



Behind the Blue Door Boys & Girls Club offer behind the scenes look

Journal Review

The Boys & Girls Club of Montgomery County gave the community a look behind the scenes in July during its “Behind the Blue Door” tour, highlighting the daily experience of kids who attend the facility and outlining where the club is headed under chief executive officer Gina Haile.

The club serves youth ages 5 to 17 with an annual membership fee of \$30 per child. Discounts are offered for families with three or

more children, and scholarships are available for those in need. The membership allows children to participate in programming throughout the year.

After school programming costs \$50 a month for kindergarten through fifth grade and \$20 a month for grades six through 12. That program runs from 2 to 6 p.m. every school day. During the summer, the club operates Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. with regular pool trips and additional field trips throughout the week.

This year, the club added a spring break program and is planning to offer a fall break program in the future. Leadership and staffing changes in the past year have allowed the club to expand its offerings and serve more kids consistently.

Haile, who was appointed to her post earlier this year, has made it clear she wants the club to grow stronger across every level. Her focus is on becoming better in how programs are delivered, bolder in meeting the needs of the youth and bigger in capacity

and impact.

Kids are grouped by age and rotate through activities each day that include STEM labs, arts and crafts, computer time, gym use, outdoor play, games and free time. There is a focus on building structure and creating intentional experiences for every age group, especially teens and tweens.

Haile wants to expand the club programs, looking to offer evening open gyms and football games along with other events to give older youth a safe space when op-

tions are limited. She wants to use the facility to its full potential and offer resources that reflect the growing needs of the community.

Last year, the club served 335 regular members and reached another 750 youth through outreach programs. So far in 2025, daily attendance has already jumped from an average of 84 kids in the summer of 2024 to between 120 and 130 this year. More than 150 children were registered to attend daily during this summer alone.

Haile said those numbers show the potential of the club's current space but also raise the possibility of needing more room in the future. That could mean expanding into additional locations or creating an adjacent structure to handle the rising demand.

Transportation is provided in coordination with local school corporations. Crawfordsville schools buses students directly to the club while staff vehicles are used to pick up kids from South Montgomery and North Montgomery schools to eliminate barriers.

Haile presented recent data on the club's participants which indicated 61% of school-year participants qualify for free or reduced lunch and 29% come from single-parent households. Haile said the demographics closely reflect the makeup of Montgomery County. She says that the club's biggest mission is centered around helping youth who need support the most, whether that's a safe place to go after school, academic help or a connection with a caring adult.

"We are more than a glorified babysitter," Haile said. "Everything we do is geared towards moving them closer to their full potential."



She said the club is designed to be a place where students can decompress after school, get their homework done if needed and prepare for the next day. Snacks are provided and staff are available to help, but the experience is flexible. The idea is that when kids leave the club, they are ready to go home and spend quality time with their families.

Haile is also working closely with the board to build a stronger organizational structure. That includes improving staff training, strengthening financial oversight, securing sustainable funding and restoring stability following several years of interim leadership.

The club continues to be the largest out-of-school-time program in Montgom-

ery County. With academic challenges, mental health struggles and a rising number of working families, the need for reliable youth services is growing. Haile said the club is well positioned to lead the way and help prepare kids for great futures.

"We're just getting better about what the club experience is here," Haile said. "And we're not done yet."

Miles for Meals

Brian McDonough runs 50K to feed local students

Journal Review

After months of training through Indiana's sweltering summer heat, Brian McDonough's mission to make a difference hit full stride on Sept. 20. That morning, McDonough set out early from his home in Crawfordsville and completed the Miles for Meals 50K, a 31.12-mile run to support free and reduced lunch meal programs across all three Montgomery County school corporations.

"It was not an easy day," McDonough shared in an update on his GoFundMe page. The heat and humidity proved relentless, and midway through the run, the rubber on one of his shoe soles gave out. But McDonough pressed on, motivated by the word "Onward" written on his legs and the encouragement of family, friends, and supporters who had rallied behind his cause.

By the end of the day, he had done more than just conquer 31 miles. He had raised \$4,600 to help ensure local students have access to healthy meals. Donations from Wabash College and others are still expected, and McDonough says the total will continue to grow.

The Miles for Meals campaign has resonated deeply with the Montgomery County community. Funds raised will benefit the Crawfordsville, North Montgomery, and South Montgomery school



corporations, all of which have faced challenges in keeping their meal programs funded. McDonough's efforts have drawn support from family, friends, colleagues, and even strangers, along with local partners such as Brother's Pizza and Wabash College, which hosted and planned fundraisers in support of the initiative.

"This run was about more

than miles; it was about community stepping up together," McDonough said. "I am deeply grateful for everyone who gave, shared the fundraiser, or sent encouragement."

McDonough's journey from idea to impact started with a simple goal: to raise awareness and funds for students who rely on school meals. Along the way, it became

a story of perseverance, generosity, and the power of community.

To contribute to McDonough's Miles for Meals campaign, donations can still be made at gofundme.com/f/miles-for-meals-benefiting-montgomery-county-in-schools.

West Central CTE launches youth apprenticeships

New program to give students experience in education professions

Journal Review

West Central Indiana Career & Technical Education announced in March the launch of its youth apprenticeship program in partnership with Ascend Indiana. This initiative will provide 18 students with hands-on, paid apprenticeship opportunities in education professions, beginning with the 2025-26 school year.

The demands on today's educators are increasing while the pool of candidates continues to diminish. Teacher pay in this region is competitive and already exceeds the \$45,000 minimum salary expectation of legislators. Increased compensation helps, but administrators continue to struggle with filling vacancies in math, English, special education and science.

Recruiting and retaining classroom instructional assistants and early childhood support staff is also challenging. The funds needed to pay these positions are not adequately supported by the state or federal level.

It is the hope of West Central CTE that the youth apprentice program will inspire interested students in continuing their pursuit of a career in helping students grow and learn. Additionally, a study by the Indiana Department of Workforce

Development projects a workforce deficit of 102 early childhood education professionals in our region by 2030. Recognizing this critical shortage, program officials saw an immediate need to develop a strong talent pipeline. Education became the natural focus for its first-year youth apprenticeship program, directly addressing workforce gaps within our community.

The program will feature two specialized tracks: Future Educator (K-12) and Early Childhood Education (ECE). Through collaborations with Crawfordsville, North Montgomery, Southmont and Western Boone school districts — as well as KinderCare at the Montgomery County Early Learning Center — students will gain real-world classroom experience while working toward their professional goals in education.

This initiative is made possible through a grant from Ascend Indiana, with funding from the Walton Family Foundation, which is supporting the expansion of youth apprenticeships across the state. Participating students will engage in meaningful, structured learning experiences within educational settings while earning wages as employees of their respective districts. The program is designed

to provide students with the opportunity to develop essential teaching skills, gain real-world experience, and establish professional connections that will support their future careers in education.

“As the nation — and state — continue to struggle with elementary school teacher vacancies, West Central CTE's focus on engaging high school students in an early childhood education career path couldn't have come at a better time,” said Brad Rhorer, president and CEO of Ascend Indiana. “Data show that students overwhelmingly express interest in some form of work-based learning experiences. Through these apprenticeship programs, West Central CTE is filling an important unmet need by connecting students to employers in their communities.”

Key program highlights:

- Open to students from Crawfordsville, North Montgomery, Southmont and Western Boone high schools.
- Paid apprenticeship roles with school districts and KinderCare.
- Hands-on experience in classrooms with mentorship from seasoned educators.
- Dual credit opportunities, allowing students to earn college credits.
- Alignment with workforce needs in education,

preparing students for in-demand teaching careers.

“This apprenticeship program is a significant step toward addressing our educator pipeline while providing our students with invaluable career experience,” said Chase Justus, Work-Based Learning Coordinator for West Central CTE. “By integrating hands-on learning with structured mentorship, we are equipping future educators with the skills and experience necessary to thrive in the classroom.”

The youth apprenticeship program offers students a unique career pathway, ensuring they receive practical training and academic preparation while still in high school. This initiative also supports local education systems by fostering a pipeline of dedicated, well-trained professionals committed to shaping the future of learning in our communities.

For further details on the program, including eligibility and application information, contact Justus by email at cjustus@cville.k12.in.us.





HEALTH

Local wound healing center now open

**For the
Journal Review**

The new Franciscan Health Advanced Wound Healing Center Crawfordsville is now open at 1710 Lafayette Road in Crawfordsville.

The facility will be open once a week on Tuesdays, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., by appointment only.

The advanced wound healing team at Franciscan Health Crawfordsville is a diverse group of medical experts comprised from units and departments throughout the hospital. Team members are assigned based on patient need and could include physicians, nurses, therapists, pharmacists, dietitians and surgery staff.

"We are very grateful to be able to bring an Advanced Wound Healing Center to Crawfordsville," said Shari Overdorf, Franciscan Health Advanced Wound Healing Center Crawfordsville nursing manager. "This is great service for our patients, who will now be able to receive wound care close to home and not have to travel long distances for this specialized type of care. We have an amazing team that will provide exceptional and compassionate care."

The team of specialists at



Franciscan Health Advanced Wound Healing Center Crawfordsville use clinically proven methods to achieve positive results for patients. Treatment may include a variety of traditional, medical, surgical interventions and advanced technologies, along with patient education.

In addition to treating wounds, the staff also provides

patient and caregiver education, help with specialty equipment ordering, on-site access to take home wound care products. They also provide dietary screening and referral to a dietitian if needed, as well as access to hospital support services such as radiology, laboratory, physical and occupational therapies and outpatient services and coordination of

wound treatment with other medical care.

The wound healing team works with patients and their families to create an individualized treatment plan based on needs.

Learn more about the new Franciscan Health Advanced Wound Healing Center Crawfordsville.

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Carolyn Snyder honored for 56 years of service as nurse and community volunteer

Journal Review

Carolyn Snyder has spent 56 years as a dedicated nurse and volunteer, and in March nearly a hundred people gathered at the Wabash Club to honor her.

The ceremony, hosted by the Montgomery County Free Clinic, recognized Snyder's lifelong contributions to public health and her pivotal role in the founding and evolution of the Christian Nursing Service, now known as the Montgomery County Free Clinic. Those in attendance included former patients, colleagues, family and friends, all of whom had been touched by Snyder's unwavering commitment to healthcare.

"Her lifelong commitment to volunteering has touched countless lives and inspired many of us to follow in her footsteps," said Ashley Menard, MCFC executive director.

Snyder began her career as a school nurse, serving in the North Montgomery school district from 1966 to 2001. She also played a fundamental role in establishing the Christian Nursing Service in 1968, which initially operated out of the Milligan Memorial Presbyterian Church. As the first secretary of CNS and a two-time board president, she helped steer the organization through crucial transitions, including the retirement of volunteer physician Dr. Keith Baird.

Recognizing the need for a long-term solution, Snyder collaborated with colleagues, including Wabash College



professor Bill Doemel, to evaluate local healthcare needs and develop a new structure, which ultimately became the MCFC.

"Carolyn's steady and compassionate nurse leadership over many decades is a testament to her lifetime of service," Menard said. "We are honored to recognize her accomplishments so that she may inspire the next generation of volunteers. Carolyn, your steady and compassionate leadership has been a beacon of hope and inspiration for so many."

Snyder's involvement in public health began in 1968 when the Rev. Charlotte Hotop of the Milligan Memorial Presbyterian Church gathered seven women from various churches to address the healthcare needs of the disadvantaged community. Among them was a 27-year-old Snyder, then expecting her first child. At the time, pregnant women were not allowed to work in schools, so she redirected her nursing skills toward home visits

through the visiting nurse program.

Over the years, Snyder chaired a committee of 18 volunteer nurses and two aides while continuing her work as a school nurse. Even after retirement, she remained deeply involved, assisting with the transition to the Montgomery County Free Clinic in 2008 and volunteering at the Dr. Mary Ludwig Free Clinic when it opened in 2013. Until last year, she continued to contribute by answering phones and performing office work.

Chris Amidon, a healthcare professional and former school nurse, emphasized Snyder's advocacy for public health and school nursing.

"Carolyn always knew about school nurses, what a crucial public health role they played," she said. "And so, she made sure that a school nurse was always ex officio on the board of Christian Nursing Service. And that was really important to making sure that we kept children's needs and fami-

lies' needs in the forefront of what we were doing. And so over the decades, Carolyn has been a steady and compassionate leader in the community. She really elevated the role of nursing. I think people really started to see nurses as leaders because of what Carolyn did in our community."

During the ceremony, Rebecca Lang, a lifelong friend and colleague, reflected on Snyder's dedication.

"I was kind of confused when I heard that we were having a retirement party. Historically, it's the end. And every time I heard Carolyn retire, she's found something else to drive people in, a new challenge. And let's see, how many people can I get on board? And you've done that so well. You've been the voice of encouragement and caring. And that's what I celebrate."

Now that she has moved to Noblesville to be closer to her family, Snyder shared that she may find a way to continue volunteering there.

Crawfordsville EMS marks 50 years

Journal Review

Crawfordsville Emergency Services reached a milestone earlier this year.

On Jan. 1, the EMS department marked 50 years of service to the community.

Crawfordsville Mayor Todd Barton, Fire Chief Scott Busenbark, Deputy Fire Chief Paul Miller and one of the department's original first responders, Mike Kadinger, reminisced about its history.

Before Crawfordsville had its own EMS department, private agencies, including funeral companies, responded to medical emergencies alongside firefighters.

In 1974, the State of Indiana began regulating responses to emergency calls and established the Emergency Medical Services Commission.

Kadinger, a retired firefighter and veteran, was one of the first six members of Crawfordsville's EMS department in 1975.

When Kadinger started with the department it had two emergency vehicles but only one cot.

"First run we had, we didn't even have uniforms," Kadinger recalled.

Prior to the establishment of the EMS department, firefighters received minimal medical training and responded to such emergencies as best they could. As early as 1935, the CFD provided emergency medical services and purchased a pulmotor, a mechanical device that pumped oxygen in and out of the lungs.

Even though Crawfordsville established the EMS department in 1975, and the EMTs worked in the same building as the CFD, they were con-



sidered a separate entity from the fire department.

Integration of emergency services and the fire department didn't begin until the mid-1990s. Emergency Medical Technicians, or EMTs, were considered regular civilians and that created some hostility between them and the firefighters.

Barton, who served as a firefighter and paramedic for 26 years before he was elected mayor, said the animosity between the EMS and fire departments took two generations to settle.

EMS was like the step-child of the fire department.

"Bob Oliver was chief when we started, and each shift had their food bill and ate together," Kadinger said. "So each shift got to vote whether the two of us on each shift got to eat with them. And we were turned down three times."

Kadinger also recalled that EMTs dare not call for firefighters to aid them during calls — they wouldn't show.

Most of the time police officers were their backup.

"Well, there were times when we had a bad patient, we'd have a police officer drive the ambulance," Kadinger said. "And you do not want a police officer driving the ambulance."

Barton and Busenbark both remember the tension between EMS and the firefighters.

"We were hired into the ambulance service as civilians. And you were, it was made very clear that you were not one of them," Barton said.

"Yeah, I remember the rift about the T-shirts," Busenbark said. "We wore the fire department T-shirt, and they were trying to get us to go to just wearing white T-shirts."

"They were going to make us wear white, wouldn't let us wear fire department T-shirts because we weren't firefighters," Barton added.

It wasn't until the 1990s'

when Dennis Weir became the fire chief that things began to change for the EMS department. Members of the EMS department were no longer considered civilians and firefighters had to become trained as EMTs as well as firefighters. This also is when paramedics were introduced into the department.

The cross training helped Crawfordsville become the first fire department in the state to be certified to provide ambulance services.

Training also began to improve.

Kadinger had all of 20 hours of training before he went out on his first emergency call, and most of his training was done in a high school.

Today, Miller said it takes nearly 16 months of initial training to become an EMT, and training is done in-house at the fire department. Once that training is done, the EMT will have to go through medic training, which is roughly

1,400 hours.

Miller believes Crawfordsville's EMS department is one of the more progressive agencies in the country.

Barton agrees, but believes emergency services in Crawfordsville have always been ahead of the game. Before the department was established the fire department had an iron lung, which even the hospital didn't have at the time.

On Jan. 1, 2023, the CFD

began providing emergency medical services county-wide. CFD ambulances now respond to all 911 EMS calls in the county, supplementing the initial response by the community fire departments and emergency medical responders in each of the rural townships and towns in the county.

The department has more than 40 licensed paramedics and operates six paramedic ambulances, five advanced

life support non-transport vehicles, three command vehicles, a mass casualty response trailer, a heavy rescue unit, four fire engines with basic life support capabilities and two boats. CFD responds to more than 4,500 runs per year.

As Crawfordsville celebrates 50 years of dedicated emergency medical services, it's clear how far the department has come — from humble beginnings with

minimal equipment and training to becoming a model of progressive and integrated emergency care.

This anniversary not only honors the pioneers like Kadinger, Dick Gardner, Bob Frees, John Runge, Glenn Foye and Weir, who laid the foundation, but also reflects the commitment of the community and leadership in pushing forward.



New veterans group formed

Journal Review

A new nonprofit with a mission is to spread awareness that 22 veterans a day commit suicide has been formed in Montgomery County.

Y22? also offers help to veterans facing financial crisis.

"We are trying to help veterans with utility bills, gas, groceries, or rent," said director Nick Kashon. "We never know the last stressor that may cause a veteran to commit suicide, we do know that not being able to meet essential needs is a huge trigger. Right now a veteran is four times more likely to die from suicide than to have

died in combat."

Nearly 10% of all adults in Montgomery County are veterans, which is much higher than the national average of 6% who served in the armed forces.

"At Y22? we understand that the Veterans Administration, and various other organizations are able to help," Kashon said, "but sometimes that takes time to get the available resources. We are trying to help with immediate needs."

Y22? is a recognized 501c charitable organization, with half of its officers or board members having served in various branches of the

armed services.

"We have a very dedicated group of volunteers," Kashon said, "and all have personal experiences of having lost someone to suicide, who make this all happen. Without all their help and planning this mission would not be a reality."

To help raise funds the group has scheduled a charity golf scramble for Aug. 9 at Rocky Ridge in Darlington.

"Teams are filling up quickly," Kashon said. "Community support has been amazing, but if you would like to enter a team, sponsor a hole, or donate a raffle prize we can be reached in these various

methods: Facebook at Y22, email whytwentytwo@yahoo.com or 260-239-5115."

Furthermore, Kashon said if a veteran needs help, reach out.

"We will do whatever we can to help with your immediate problems," he said. "Then we will help you make contact with other available resources."

So Y22? — because even one is too many.

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