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February 2, 2024

New Franciscan Health Crown Point hospital opens at I-65 and U.S. 231

Franciscan Health Crown Point opened to patients at its new location at 12750 Saint Francis Drive in Crown Point on January 28.

The hospital, which replaces the 50-year-old Franciscan Health Crown Point hospital at 1201 S. Main St., follows Franciscan Alliance's regional approach to the latest in state-of-the-art healthcare, which optimizes facilities and resources to improve the level of care for all of Northwest Indiana.

"This second-to-none facility has been mindfully constructed to support the highest acuity of patients in a convenient location," Franciscan Health Crown Point President and CEO Daniel McCormick, MD,



Sunday morning. Aseves was one of 125 patients moved from the Main St. hospital to the new hospital when it opened.

September 2020.

The transition from the former hospital to the new hospital began at 6 a.m. that day, when the emergency room at the Main Street hospital closed as the emergency

balances beginning at 8 a.m. Nurses were moved via City of Crown Point trolley from the existing hospital to the new hospital.

The new, modern Franciscan Health Crown



to enhance patient safety and convenience. The hospital and its St. Joseph Chapel were blessed and dedicated on January

and sick.

"They did not have the technology or comforts that surround us today," she said. "What they did have and

continue to house a variety of outpatient services. The new Franciscan Health Crown Point hospital



(See *Franciscan* Pg. 2)

St. Mary's 5th graders learn life skills through Crown Point DARE program

Fifth graders at St. Mary Catholic Community School in Crown Point recently graduated from the DARE program. DARE, taught by Crown Point Police Officer Stanko Gligic, is a 10-week program which teaches students the importance of saying no to drugs and alcohol, recognizing the signs of bullying, and teaches positive ways to make good decisions. Officer Gligic was recently named the State of Indiana DARE Officer of the Year.

At the culmination of the program, students were asked to write an essay about their

experience in DARE class and each student was awarded a certificate. Daniella Flores, Emmett Reinke, Ana Bairaktaris, and John Buita were selected to read their essays at graduation. Two fifth graders, Mason Gettler and Jamia Prince said, "We learned about being an upstander (standing up for someone who is being bullied) and how many harmful chemicals are in cigarettes." Overall, all students took away a valuable lesson from the DARE program. "I pledge to not do drugs and will remember all the valuable resources Officer

G taught us," said student Lexi Corley. Fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Heather Williams was recently named the State of Indiana DARE Teacher of the Year.

St. Mary Catholic Community School in Crown Point offers grade levels Junior Pre-Kindergarten (for three-year-olds) through grade eight. St. Mary's faculty teaches a rich curriculum supported by cutting-edge technology. To learn more about St. Mary School's upcoming Open House January 28 from 10 a.m. to noon, or visit www.school.stmarycp.org.



Essay winners: John Buita, Emmett Reinke, Daniella Flores, Ana Bairaktaris, and Jamie Dumas (bicycle winner); Back Row: Officer Stanko Gligic, Principal Tom Ruiz, and Father Kevin Huber

Northwest Indiana resident crowned 2024 Indiana State Fair Queen

Alexxys Standish, Miss Newton County 2023, was crowned the 65th Indiana State Fair Queen at the Indiana State Fairgrounds & Event Center. She is the first representative from Newton County to receive the honor.

Miss Indiana State Fair 2024 was selected from a pool of over 80 contestants. The Indiana State Fair Queen plays a crucial role in representing the Indiana State Fair, embarking on a statewide journey of approximately 6,500 miles during June and July, visiting around 45 counties. This role serves as a vital State Fair ambassador, raising awareness and bringing the

vision of the Indiana State Fair to life: to be recognized as the best State Fair in the country, showcasing agriculture and youth in an educational and entertaining environment.

This year's pageant featured a talented group of finalists, with the Top 10 including participants from various counties: 1st Runner-Up: Maya Narayan, Elkhart County; 2nd Runner-Up: Sadie Herring, Vigo County; 3rd Runner-Up: Alex Kerkhove, White County; and 4th Runner-Up: Hannah Martinez, Steuben County. Participants from Jay County, Whitley County, Delaware County, Marion County, and Washington

County also made it to the final round of ten.

The title of Miss Congeniality was awarded to Avery Shrider from Wabash County.

Miss Indiana State Fair 2024, Alexxys Standish is a driven and accomplished individual with a clear career goal in the field of occupational therapy. She plans to pursue a Doctorate of Occupational Therapy at Indiana University Indianapolis, specializing in pediatrics to help children with routine activities. In terms of community involvement, Alexxys is an active member of various organizations, includ-

ing the Kentland Jefferson Volunteer Fire Department, Indiana Volunteer Fire Association, and the Miss Flame Organization. She is also engaged in volunteer work for cancer research, the Newton County 4-H organization, and Junior Achievement. Additionally, she is recognized for her academic achievements, such as being a scholar and member of honor societies at Indiana University, as well as her involvement in high school activities like sports, clubs, and community service. Alexxys' hobbies include reading, fitness, crocheting, and embracing scientific curiosity.



Alexxys Standish of neighboring Newton County has been crowned the Indiana State Fair Queen for 2024.

For the complete results, including the 16 Semi-Finalists, visit the Indiana State Fair website at www.indianastatefair.com.

The Indiana State Fair is the state's largest multi-day event, dedicated to celebrating the Hoosier spirit and agricultural fair.

(See *Queen* Pg. 2)

www.winfieldamerican.com

NIPSCO warns customers to be aware of scam calls and messages

Calls from scammers to homes and businesses posing as NipSCO employees are on the rise—an issue impacting many energy companies around the United States. With this uptick in scams, NipSCO is warning customers to be aware of scammers that might attempt to target them by impersonating a NipSCO employee.

Recent and common reports from NipSCO residential and business customers state that they have received calls, emails and/or texts from people claiming to be NipSCO employees and demanding payment to avoid their service being disconnected. However, the company wants to emphasize that NipSCO does not call and demand immediate payment via a prepaid card. Also, the official web site of the utility company is www.nipSCO.com – be vigilant for any imposter sites.

If customers are unsure of their account status, they may log into their account

at myaccount.nipSCO.com or contact NipSCO's Customer Care Center at 1-800-464-7726. Additionally, customers should NOT call any number they are given.

Additional tips for customers to avoid potential scams

- Call NipSCO – If you are unsure about a phone call, email, program, offer or person claiming to be affiliated with NipSCO, call the company's Customer Care Center at 1-800-464-7726.
- Guard your personal information – Never give personal information, including your NipSCO account number, social security number and/or banking information to unconfirmed sources. NipSCO only ask for a social security number when establishing new service or verifying a customer's identity.
- Know your payment options – NipSCO will never ask for a pre-paid debit card or money gram as a payment method. To more easily spot

a potential scam, learn more about NipSCO payment options at www.nipSCO.com/bills-and-payments.

- Never agree to meet in person – Some scammers ask customers to meet them in person to make payments with cash or prepaid cards, which you should avoid.

What to do if someone visits your home or business:

- Ask to see ID – NipSCO employees and contractors carry photo ID badges and will gladly show you upon request.
- Use caution with cash – NipSCO employees do not collect cash payments nor deliver cash refunds or rebates to customers. Refrain from sending cash through the mail to prevent loss or theft.

For more information on authorized, secure payment methods and locations, as well as flexible payment plan options for those experiencing a hardship, visit www.nipSCO.com/bills-and-payments.

(Queen from Pg. 1)

tural heritage. Over the course of 15 days, the fair brings together communities from across Indiana to commemorate everything that makes the state unique, while also attracting visitors from beyond its borders. With a reputation for providing exceptional entertainment, highlighting the achievements of youth in the 4-H program, offering interactive agricultural education programs, state-of-the-art facilities, and a wide array of delicious and distinctive foods,

the Indiana State Fair has remained a cherished tradition for generations of Hoosiers since its inception in 1852.

The upcoming Indiana State Fair is scheduled to take place from August 2nd to August 18th. Please note that the fair is closed on Mondays. To learn more about the event, including ticketing information, attractions, and schedules, please visit our official website at www.indianastatefair.com.

(Franciscan from Pg. 1)

is located at 12750 Saint Francis Drive in Crown Point, Indiana on the southeast corner of U.S. 231 and Interstate 65. It is accessible from the roundabout on U.S. 231 just east of I-65 by turning right onto Saint Francis Drive.

More information is available online at www.franciscanhealth.org.

Annual Hearts of Hope ceremony shines spotlight on advances in cardiovascular care

February is American Heart Month, and Community Healthcare System invites the public to join in the annual Hearts of Hope campaign. Funds raised help improve local access to treatment options achieved through research.

This year, the 19th annual event will take place at 4 p.m. Thursday, February 8 at St. Mary Medical Center, 1500 S. Lake Park Ave., Hobart.

The event will feature remarks from St. Mary Medical Center CEO Janice Ryba, interventional cardiologist Kais Yehyaw, MD, and a patient who benefited

from advances in cardiac care. Those gathered also will see the lighting of the Hearts of Hope tree. The lights represent donations to fund local clinical trials and studies for heart disease.

Community Healthcare System Cardiovascular Research works to improve heart health in Northwest Indiana through education and the advancement of knowledge from studies. These initiatives have made it possible for the system's hospitals to participate in national research trials directed at better detection, treatments and the prevention of heart disease. Over the years,

these advances proved to be transformative for patients with heart disorders.

A \$5 donation will honor a special person with a light on the Hearts of Hope tree. For a \$15 donation, send your honoree a Hearts of Hope lapel pin as well. Honorees will receive a card informing them that a light shines in their honor or in memory of someone who fills our hearts with love and joy. Donations will help fund vitally needed trials and studies for heart disease, close to home.

For more information or to make a donation, visit www.COMHS.org/HeartsofHope.

Kindergarten enrollment information for the Crown Point Community School Corporation

The Crown Point Community School Corporation is thrilled to welcome the future class of 2037! If your child will be five years old before August 1, 2024, and you live within the school district boundaries, CPCSC invites families to enroll for kindergarten at their future school on February 29.

In-person enrollment will take place at your child's future elementary school on February 29, 2024, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. or 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Crown Point Community School Corporation enrollment is NOT open to individuals who live outside the district.

Enrolling families must prove residency and provide

the following documents:

- Child's certified birth certificate (not hospital certificate)
- Child's immunization record
- Child's social security card
- Valid driver's license or state photo ID with current address
- Two documents from the following are required to prove residency: utility bills (NIPSCO, water), property deed or mortgage statement, or Lake County tax bill

Families are encouraged to visit the district's website to check which school their child will attend. More information is available at www.cps.k12.in.us/kindergarten or by calling Crown Point Community

School Corporation's central office at 219-663-3371.

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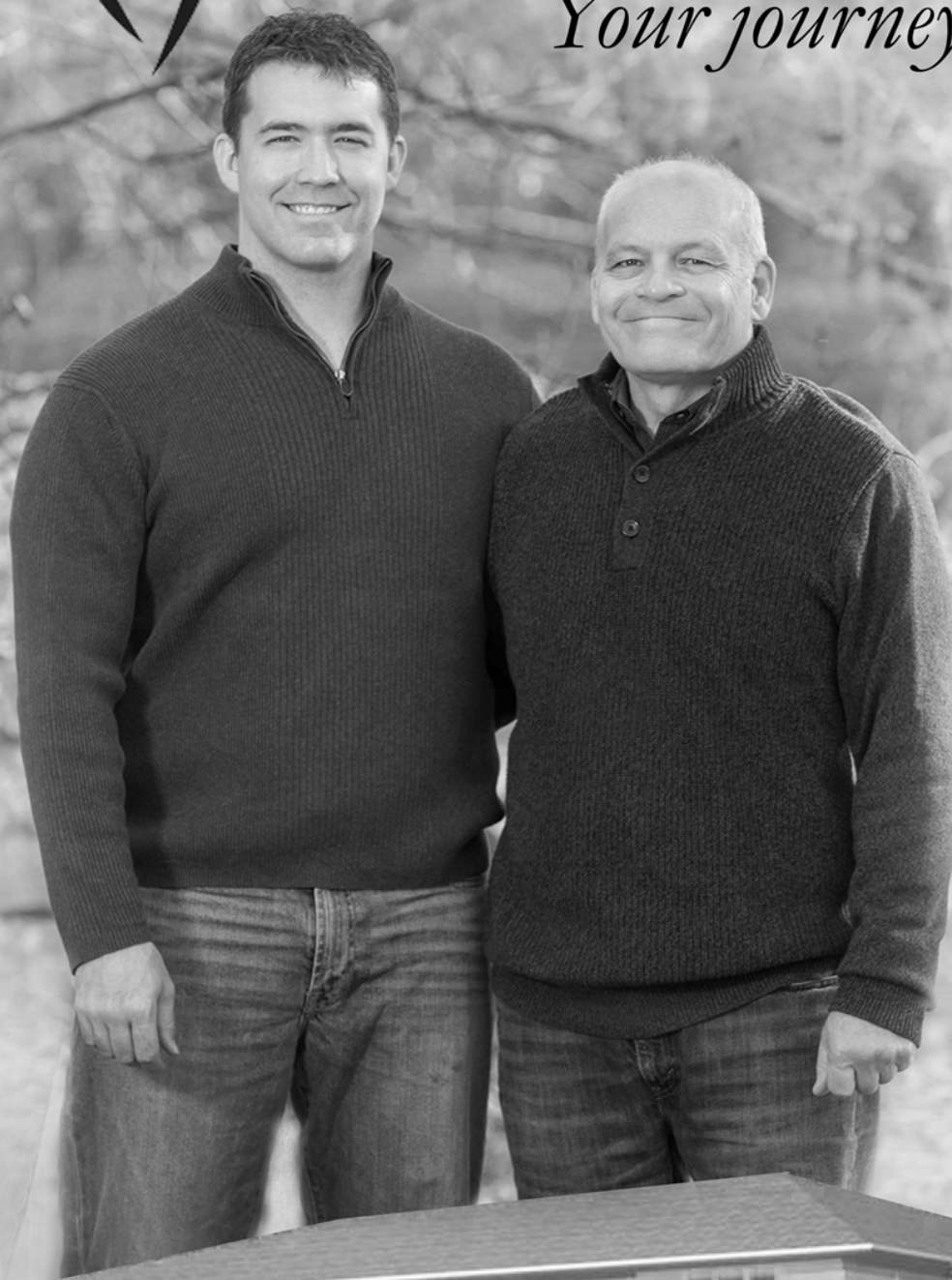
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Across the street from Lakes of the Four Seasons

Northwest Indiana Forum aims high for \$75 million READI 2.0 grant

The Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation has released a Call for Projects in anticipation of the Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) 2.0 funding. This strategic move aims to catalyze transformative infrastructure projects that will contribute to the economic growth and resilience of Northwest Indiana.

READI 2.0, a significant state initiative, seeks to pro-

pel regional development by investing in projects that foster innovation, create jobs, and enhance the overall quality of life for residents. The Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation is actively seeking proposals for projects that align with the goals and priorities of READI 2.0. This CFP will be available until January 19 with additional submission opportunities leading up to the IEDC award announcement

in April. This will allow for the NWI Forum Foundation to better understand projects looking for funding in the Region.

In February of 2024, the Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation will be applying for READI 2.0 through a competitive process that has a max award amount of \$75 million. The Indiana Economic Development Corp. (IEDC) is the grant ad-

ministrator of \$500 Million READI 2.0 grant approved through the Indiana General Assembly in 2022. They plan to award 15 regions around the State funding in April with final project selection beginning in May of 2024.

The Northwest Indiana Forum Foundation received \$50 Million in federal funding from READI 1.0 (also administered by the IEDC) that has generated over \$700 Million in investment through 37 projects impacting Talent, Infrastructure,

Placemaking, Business Development & Marketing, and Entrepreneurship & Innovation in Northwest Indiana.

"The success of READI 1.0 projects is a testament to the dedication and collaboration of our region. We are excited to leverage READI 2.0 dollars to continue to create greater opportunities in Northwest Indiana". Heather Ennis, President & CEO, Northwest Indiana Forum.

The Northwest Indiana Forum is the regional voice

for the business community and premiere source of a full package of services that promote economic development and retention of quality jobs. With more than 140 investor organizations, the Forum's mission is to increase the broad-based wealth in Northwest Indiana through economic development.

For more information or media inquiries, please contact Spencer Summers at 219-476-6523 or ssummers@nwiforum.org.

Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra presents a Sunday afternoon percussion ensemble

Enjoy a Sunday afternoon performance of the Symphony's Percussion Ensemble, Sunday, February 4 at 2:30pm at the Theatre at the Center in Munster. The concert will feature percussionist Andy Cierny, Brandon Podjacek, and Jeff Handley.

Percussionist will perform a variety of instruments in the percussion family including vibraphone, xylophone, congas, tom-toms, snare drum, drumset, and even their own hands! Some of the pieces they will perform include Stamina by Mithc Markovitch, Group Therapy for One by David Wach, Trance by David Friedman, Clapping Music by Steve Reich, and more.

Andy Cierny currently is the Principal Percussionist for the Northwest Indiana Symphony. He is also the principal at the Illinois Symphony and New Philharmonic and holds positions with the South Bend Symphony, Lansing Symphony, and Illinois Philharmonic. He regularly plays with Chicago Philharmonic and Chicago Opera Theater. From 2004-2008, he was a member of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic. He also performed in high capacity with the Milwaukee Symphony for ten seasons, traveling to Carnegie Hall

with the MSO in 2012 to perform in the "Spring for Music" festival. Alongside orchestral playing, Andrew plays drumset around Chicago with the jazz group Bopology.

Based in Chicago, percussionist Brandon Podjacek can be seen performing on many stages across the region. An active Broadway musician, Brandon has performed for productions at Broadway in Chicago theaters, The Chicago Shakespeare Theater, The Paramount Theater (Aurora, IL), and the Writers Theater performing such shows as "Wicked," "Mary Poppins," "Legally Blond," "Into the Woods," and many others. A regular on "period instruments" Brandon is Principal Percussion/Timpani for the Haymarket Opera, the Bella Voce Sinfonia, and the Callipygian Players. An active educator, Brandon is on faculty and North Park University and The Merit school of music.

Jeff Handley is a highly sought after percussionist and educator in Chicago. Jeff has organized Music Education programs in schools for over 25 years, collaborating with Chicago Sinfonietta, Fulcrum Point, Ravinia, and The DuPage Foundation. In 2019, Jeff received the "Ford Musicians Award for

Excellence in Community Service" by the American League of Orchestras. As a percussionist, Jeff performs with: Chicago Sinfonietta, Lyric Opera, Grant Park Symphony, and Tower Brass. Jeff was recently heard with Andrea Bocelli, Johnny Mathis, Placido Domingo, Hugh Jackman, Mannheim Steamroller, and productions of "Wicked", "Aladdin", "West Side Story", and "Beautiful".

Tickets for the concert are general admission, adults \$30 each and students are \$10. Call the Symphony office at 219-836-0525 or visit the website at www.NISOchestra.org to order tickets for this Percussion Ensemble!



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This week in history

February 2, 1847

The first woman of a group of pioneers commonly known as the Donner Party, died during the group's journey through a Sierra Nevada mountain pass. The disastrous trip west ended up killing 42 people.

A total of 87 people joined up in South Pass, Wyoming, in October, 1846, to make a trip through the Sierra Nevada Mountains to California. Most of the pioneers were farmers who had little experience with wilderness travel. Two large families, the Donners and the Reeds, were at the heart of the traveling group, with 7 adults and 16 children. George Donner was the group's unofficial leader.

The pioneers were soon faced with the early onset of a harsh winter. They had only a book as a guide and this led them through a mountain pass south of modern-day Salt Lake City. Trapped by snow, they were forced to make camp for the winter near a small lake northwest of Lake Tahoe.

With starvation setting in, a group of 15 adults attempted to get to Sutter's Fort for help. About half of the group died and the others were forced to eat their fallen companions' remains to survive. Finally, the seven remaining members of the expedition were able to reach a Native American village. News of their arrival spread quickly, and a rescue party was sent.

www.history.com

DIRECTOR PROFILE: MICHELLE KATSAROS



Crown Point resident, member of the Winfield Chamber of Commerce

Funeral Director with Geisen Funeral Homes for over 13 years

Monument Representative for Geisen Funeral Homes

Crown Point Tri-Kappa member, Co-Chair for Crown Point 4th of July Parade


Enjoys spending time with her husband Gus and daughter Ella



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- RESTLESS SLEEP
- MORNING HEADACHES
- IRRITABILITY
- DEPRESSION

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- TROUBLE CONCENTRATING
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I hope the groundhog sees the...



...sun so we can keep having winter fun.



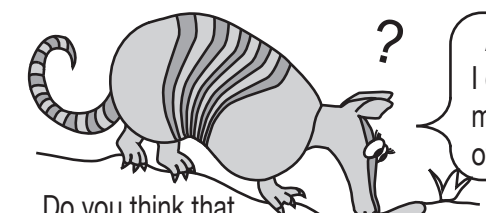
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Do you think that a groundhog can predict the weather? On February 2, some people will get up very early to watch the groundhog come out of its home. They will stand around the groundhog's hole in the ground and study the sky. As soon as they see the groundhog poke out of its hole they will snap pictures. Who do you think will see the funnier sight...the people or the groundhog?

- Read the clues to fill in the crossword puzzle:**
- a long winter's nap
 - a warm-blooded creature
 - another name for the groundhog
 - curls into this to sleep
 - something people believe in or think will happen without facts or proof
 - the groundhog's _____ pumps more slowly when it hibernates
 - the groundhog is part of this family
 - young are born in this month
 - males are about two feet long and weigh about twelve pounds; females are _____
 - to tell about an event before it happens

Are you awake, Mr. Groundhog? I don't mean to hound you, but maybe you can predict the winner of the Super Bowl, too? Hello!

Time to Rhyme!
Find and circle the ten words that rhyme with "ground."

count mound frowned pound crowed wound groaned hound crouch sound browned found sound pounce round crowd round

Our whole family doesn't weigh a pound!



Groundhog Weather Forecaster?

Hey, let me shine!

What's that sound? Do I hear cheering?

Ahhhh...I'm ready for springtime weather!

Look at the mound of dirt!

11. it is said that when the groundhog pokes out of his hole and sees the sun there will be six more weeks of winter, but when he sees clouds, _____ is near

12. where the groundhog lives

1. _____

2. squirrel

3. _____

4. _____

5. underground

6. forecast

7. _____

8. mammal

9. hibernation

10. ball

11. superstition

12. _____

heart

spring

woodchuck

smaller

Football Fever

Find and circle these football terms:

- touchdown tackle
offense referee
defense kickoff
teams field goal
huddle quarterback

Visitors

Home Team

Look at him bound off to watch the game!

Off to watch the Super Bowl...chicken wings, potato chips, veggies and dips...yay!

Word search grid:

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



Is Winter Almost Over?

Why did the groundhogs cheer when they came out of their burrows and saw only clouds? Use the alphabet code to fill in the blanks and find out:

Alphabet code:

^ _ #) { # *
^ _ + ^ (|| } ? { &
* + ({ # + }

Yay! It's cloudy.

Grid:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
+	!	@	*	#	□	&	○	?
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
\$	□	<	●	{	●		~	}
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
(^	*	*	*	>)	%	

Weather Superstitions and Forecasts?

Grrrr... Who woke me?

Don't look at me!

Fill in the blanks to spell weather words!

- __ ain __ ow
- cl __ ud __
- met __ oro __ ogis __
- __ liz __ ard
- o __ erca __ t
- cli __ at __
- tem __ era __ ure
- dr __ zzl __

r y e b o \ m p b e z s i v t o t

- Match these weather superstitions and forecasts:
(More than 1 superstition can have the same forecast...you'll see!)
- If squirrels store large numbers of acorns
 - When frogs croak louder and faster
 - If March comes in like a lion
 - When tree leaves flip over
 - "Red sky at night, sailor's delight
Red sky in morning,...
 - If animals grow heavy fur
 - If a groundhog awakens from hibernation and sees sunshine and his shadow
 - When your bones ache
- it is going to rain.
 - it will go out like a lamb.
 - it is going to rain.
 - sailors take warning.
 - it will be a long, cold winter.
 - spring is far away!
 - it will be a long, hard winter.
 - rain is coming.

Obituary ~ Dorothy Jean Rackouski

Dorothy Jean Rackouski, of Winfield, IN, passed away on December 16, 2023. She was born in Chicago, IL, on December 19, 1930, to Edward Hamer and Lillian (Burgoyne) Hamer. Dorothy's father was a well-known builder in their hometown of Mount Greenwood (Chicago, IL). She married Walter Rackouski in July of 1949. Along with his father-in-law, Walter proudly built the home the couple resided in, and reared their three children: Bruce Michael (Barb), Sandra Denise Scalise (Joe) and Walter Scott (Judy). Dorothy was a loving mother, skilled seamstress, and wonderful cook. Later in life, Dorothy assisted Sandi in her decorating business. Walter and Dorothy moved to Lakes of the Four Seasons in December of 2011. Walter passed the following

year. Dorothy remained in Lakes of the Four Seasons. She stayed active by daily walks with her beloved dog, "Bonnie," and monthly Garden Club meetings. Although she loved all of her grandchildren and great grandchildren, she especially enjoyed the numerous family get togethers and vacations with her granddaughters: Jessica (Shawn) Crane and Lauren (Jonathan) Almaguer, as well as her great grandchildren: Kennedy, Keira, and Greyson (Crane) and Saige (Almaguer). Dorothy's memory will live on in the hearts of all those who loved her. A private Celebration of Life will be held in January 2024. Burns Funeral Home & Crematory, Crown Point, IN, entrusted with arrangements. www.burnsfuneral.com

Indiana DNR Division of Forestry's Community and Urban Forestry program kicks off Arbor Day poster program

Join 5th grade students and teachers across the state in submitting original artwork for the annual Arbor Day Poster Contest by March 1, 2024, with winners being announced by April 12, 2024. Brought to you by the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry's Community and Urban Forestry program (CUF) and Indiana Project Learning Tree, this contest is designed to help students discover the important role of trees in Indiana's urban and forest communities and foster their understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of the trees around them. The theme for 2024 is Oak Trees: Superheroes of the Forest. All Indiana schools and homeschooling families/co-ops are eligible to hold a schoolwide contest and submit their winning poster to the statewide contest. Only one statewide entry will be accepted per school. Entries to the statewide contest must be scanned and sent to urbanforestry@dnr.IN.gov. The student who creates the winning poster will receive a gift card, a book for continuing their exploration of trees, and an Indiana native tree planting at their school. The winning student's teacher will receive a kit of educational materials to support their class's further engagement with Indiana trees, forests, and forestry, as well as a full scholarship to the Natural Resources Teacher Institute. Entries may also be featured on DNR social media. Participating teachers are encouraged to engage with the contest theme in their classrooms to help inspire their students' artwork. Teaching resources and standard alignments are provided on the contest webpage, along with full submission instructions, contest rules, and prizes. We are also looking for volunteers to help with judging. If you are interested email Racheal Stenger at rstenger@dnr.IN.gov.

Crown Point Athletics accepting registration for 2024 girls softball

Crown Point Athletics is accepting registration for its 2024 Spring/Summer Girls Softball League. In 2023, more than 1,300 girls played in the Crown Point Athletics softball leagues. All teams will be scheduled a minimum of 14 games. Games will be played Monday through Thursday at Legacy Fields at the Crown Point Sportsplex, located at 1313 E. North Street. A season-ending tournament will be held in July for players in the 8U-18U divisions. Girls ages 3 and up are

eligible to register, with divisions 4U-18U accepted. Sign-ups will be accepted online only at www.crownpoint.in.gov. The deadline to register is Friday, February 9. For more information, call Crown Point Athletics at 219-661-2271, or email athletics@crownpoint.in.gov. Participation fees are 4U, ages 3-4: \$60; 6U, ages 5-6: \$150; 8U-18U ages 7-18: \$200 (1 player); ages 7-18: \$320 (2 players*); ages 7-18: \$340 (3 players*). *Players must be in the same family.



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Fire Force Volunteers

Lakes of the Four Seasons Volunteer Fire Force, which serves LOFS, Winfield, Winfield Township, and the WPTFP district, is always in need of more dedicated volunteers to join our ranks. Want to help your community by giving back through service? Call 219-662-7576 or e-mail to chief@lofsfire.com.

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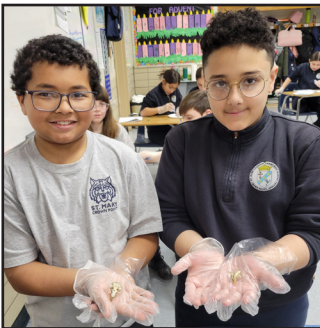
St. Mary students participate in interesting ‘hands on’ science lesson

Sixth graders at St. Mary Catholic Community School in Crown Point recently immersed themselves in a captivating conclusion to their ecology unit. They delved into the fascinating world of Barn Owl pellet dissection. The air in the classroom buzzed with excitement and curiosity as they were ready to unravel the mysteries hidden within these compact, regurgitated masses.

These young scientists

carefully dissected the pellets and sifted through the seemingly nondescript pellets, unveiling the remains of the Barn Owl’s last meals. The classroom became a hub of scientific discovery as the students uncovered an array of skeletal treasures – tiny skulls of rodents and delicate beaks of smaller birds. The intricacies of the food chain came to life before their eyes, as they pieced together the puzzle of the Barn Owl’s diet and its crucial role in the local ecosystem. “Mrs. Sarabia utilizes a great balance of ‘hands on’ learning to make science interesting and relevant for her students,” said Principal Tom Ruiz.

For more information visit www.school.stmarycp.org.



LaShawn Walker and Liam Parker found excellent examples of small rodent (vole) skulls.



DeSean Torres and Gwen Patti meticulously dissecting an owl pellet so as to not break the tiny bones within.



Increase in Indiana’s winter coyote sightings is no cause for alarm

Coyotes are on the move, and Indiana residents might see them more, but this should not be a cause for alarm.

Coyotes are common everywhere in the state, even in urban areas. Coyotes become more active during winter, and the bare vegetation this time of year increases the chance of catching a glimpse. Young coyotes leave their parents to find a new home, making them more likely to be seen during winter. And in January, coyotes will be looking to breed, making them even more active. Seeing more coyotes does not mean they are increasing in number.

Where people are, coyotes follow. Coyotes like to eat animals and plants that thrive around yards and homes, including rabbits, mice, fruit, and squirrels. They thrive around people because of the abundant food that comes with human development.

Coyotes are a common

member of Indiana’s urban wildlife community, as are raccoons, red foxes, and opossums. Coyotes are also an important member of Indiana’s wildlife community, helping control rodent populations and cleaning up carrion.

Coyotes typically weigh between 20-30 pounds and are similar in height to a German Shepherd. Winter fur, which is thicker, makes coyotes appear bigger than they actually are, potentially causing concern.

To reduce the possibility of pets having a negative interaction with coyotes or any other wildlife, keep pets leashed, in a kennel with a secure top, or indoors.

Problems between coyotes and people are uncommon. Follow these tips for making your property less attractive to coyotes:

- Clean up fallen fruit from trees or gardens.
- Keep garbage secure.
- Make sure pet food and

treats are not left outside.

- If you see a coyote around your yard, take down bird-feeders; coyotes could be attracted to the rodents eating the seeds.
- Never intentionally feed a coyote, which could result in its losing its fear of people.

Making a coyote feel unwelcome around people can help maintain its natural fear of humans, but never corner or chase a coyote – you should always allow it to have a clear escape path to get away from you. If you see a coyote and want it to go away, try to make it uncomfortable, yell; wave your arms; spray it with a hose; throw tennis balls or small stones at it, but don’t throw anything that could be food, like apples; or carry a jar of coins to shake or a small air horn to make noise.

Learn more about coyotes at www.wildlife.IN.gov/5688.htm.

Indiana Conservation Officers urge Hoosiers to practice ice safety: ‘No ice is safe ice’

Indiana Conservation Officers advise being mindful of the potential hazards of frozen lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.

It’s also important to keep a watchful eye on neighborhood retention ponds, lakes and other waterways for others who may venture out and find themselves in trouble.

Every winter, thousands of Hoosiers safely enjoy fishing, skating, hiking, or just sliding around on frozen ponds and lakes. And every year, people drown after falling through ice.

Just like driving differently on snow versus clear roads, some may need to re-learn how to safely have fun on ice.

Put safety first. The best rule of thumb is, when thinking about getting on the ice,

believe it is thin ice unless proven otherwise.

Here are a few tips to remember when considering standing on or walking on a frozen lake or pond:

- No ice is safe ice.
- Test the thickness of the ice with an ice auger. At least 4 inches of ice is recommended for ice fishing; 5 inches is recommended for snowmobiling.
- If you don’t know the thickness of the ice, don’t go on it.
- Wear life jackets or flotation coats.
- Carry ice hooks and rope gear.
- Before going on the ice, leave a note of your whereabouts with a friend or family member.

- Don’t test the thickness of the ice while alone.

Wearing a life jacket is especially important when on the ice. If you fall through, a life jacket will keep your head above the water until help arrives.

Snow can insulate ice, causing it to freeze at a slower rate. When snow and rain freeze into ice, it is never as strong as solid, clear ice.

If you see a pet or other animal in distress on the ice, do not go after it. Doing so can often end in tragedy. Instead, contact your local emergency response personnel, who are equipped to make a rescue.

Underground springs, wind, waterfowl, and other animals can also keep areas of ice thin.

NWI No Child Hungry presents the SWIFTY EXPERIENCE featuring Party Foul Band! Join us on Friday, February 23, 2024 at the Design Barn in Hebron for a cover band concert geared towards Swifties and their love of her music!

Scan this QR code for tickets. Each ticket is \$50 and includes entry into the concert, \$5 “Swiftly Bucks” for use with our vendors for food or merchandise and a ticket to spin our prize wheel!

Bring extra cash for extra merch, food or prize wheel spins. Doors open at 6, the concert starts at 7. All net profits go to NWI No Child Hungry and their Buddy Bag program. Thank you for helping us feed nearly 300 local students each week! See you there, Swifties! We would also like to thank our community partners: The Design Barn, Sundae Funday and Dear Dani Boutique!



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