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Vol. 19, Issue 934

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May 1, 2020

Nipsco stresses calling 811 before digging NWI funeral home finds creative ways to serve families amidst the pandemic

With springtime comes the start of more outdoor projects - including those at home tackling digging-related projects and professionals continuing excavation work – and Nipsco urges everyone to help protect one another from serious risk or injury by calling 811 at least two business days prior to starting any digging project.

Calling 811 is not only important for your safety and the safety of others — it's the law. Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in damage to gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines, which can lead to service disruptions and serious injuries.

In addition to the risk of serious injury, not calling

811 could result in fines up to \$10,000 and the cost to repair any damages. Last year, Nipsco reported approximately 850 cases of system damage by a contractor, homeowner or other outside party. Approximately 35% of those were from people failing to call 811 before beginning their digging project.

811 is a free, national call-before-you-dig phone number. Once a call or web ticket is made, a trained utility line locator will visit the dig site to mark the approximate location of underground public utility lines with paint or flags. Whether you're planting trees, installing a fence or pool, or performing any other outdoor digging project, Nipsco offers the following

(See *NIPSCO* Pg. 5)

Geisen Funeral Home has created a way for families to have a private funeral service and still feel the presence of the family and friends who can't attend funeral services due to COVID-19 state regulations. The funeral home has a program called 'Hugs from Home' in place currently, and families who have lost a loved one during the pandemic are grateful.

Because families cannot gather more than 10 people for a funeral service right now, families are missing out on the outreach of support from extended family members and friends who would have otherwise attended the service. This disruption in the grieving process can cause emotional distress, especially

during a time of quarantine.

The Geisen staff saw a way to give families a feeling of gathering, without the physical gathering. Those who cannot attend a service can fill out a form on the Geisen Funeral Home website, offering a condolence to the family. Those condolences are printed on individual cards and attached to white helium balloons. The balloons are placed throughout the funeral chapel during the service to symbolize all of the people that would be there if they could.

Families feel the love, too. "When families walk into the chapel and see the balloons and the condolences, it's an emotional time. Families tell us that our



Hugs from Home program has been extremely helpful during a rough time to begin with. We can see this is a unique way to do our part in helping families," owner Larry Geisen said.

The four Geisen Funeral Home locations (Crown

Point, Merrillville, Hebron, and Michigan City) are also live-streaming funeral services, at the request of families. Those live-streaming videos are available to watch after the time of the service as well, giving people the op-

(See *NWI* Pg. 6)

Emergency physicians urge public not to delay necessary medical care

As some communities face the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak in their area, others are preparing for a surge of COVID-19 related cases. Emergency physicians continue to encourage everyone to practice social distancing and stay at home when possible, but, do not delay necessary medical care, especially if you think you are having an emergency.

"Despite concerns about the coronavirus, there is no reason to delay or avoid treatment if you think you're

having a medical emergency," said William Jaquis, MD, FACEP, president of ACEP. "Waiting too long to seek medical attention could make the difference between life and death."

In the last month, some emergency departments across the country are seeing a reduction in patient volume of more than 30%. In some rural or underserved communities, emergency physicians are seeing fewer patients but report that those who do come in are more seriously ill

or injured, which may mean they are putting off necessary treatment.

"People continue to have accidents, heart attacks, and strokes, and the emergency department remains the best—and often only—source of lifesaving care, even during a pandemic. Emergency physicians are expertly trained to protect our patients during a pandemic, and we have protocols in place to prevent the spread of the virus," said Dr. Jaquis.

Emergency physicians and other frontline health care workers remain committed to providing care to those in their communities, 24 hours a day—regardless of the current public health crisis. Do not hesitate to contact your doctor or call 911 if you need medical attention. It is also important to know when to go to the emergency department.

Some of the warning signs and symptoms of a medical emergency include:

• Bleeding that will not stop

- Breathing problems (difficulty breathing, shortness of breath)
- Change in mental status (such as unusual behavior, confusion, difficulty arousing)
- Chest Pain
- Choking
- Coughing up blood or vomiting blood
- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Feeling suicidal or feeling homicidal
- Head or spine injury
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Injury due to a serious mo-

- tor vehicle accident, burns or smoke inhalation, near drowning, deep or large wound or other serious injuries
- Sudden, severe pain anywhere in the body
- Sudden dizziness, sudden muscle or general weakness, sudden change in vision
- Ingestion of a poisonous substance
- Severe abdominal pain or pressure

For more information, visit www.acep.org and www.emergencyphysicians.org.

Statewide mowing, litter pick-up and herbicide application begun by INDOT

Contracted crews with the Indiana Department of Transportation are scheduled to begin mowing, litter pick-up and herbicide application later this month into early May as part of the agency's multi-faceted roadside management program. Operations will take place throughout the spring and summer along Indiana's more than 11,200 miles of state roads.

INDOT performs mowing to maximize safety, improve sight distance and manage roadside vegetation. Crews

are required to mow 15 feet from the edge of the paved roadway, including around signs, ITS (intelligent transportation system) structures, guardrail and cable barrier. Mowing cycles are scheduled based upon geographic location, weather and route type (urban, rural, etc.)

Litter pick-up includes removal of trash and debris in state right-of-way. Last year, over 8,500 tons of litter was picked up along state roads. This effort is also supported through other INDOT programs, including Adopt-a-

Highway and Sponsor-a-Highway.

Herbicide application helps INDOT combat invasive species and noxious weeds along state roadways. Selective types of herbicide are applied to specific sections of right-of-way to aid in roadside management between mowing cycles. Application timelines are set to reduce impact on nearby crops and allow for development of desirable vegetation.

Motorists should watch for possible lane and

(See *Mowing* Pg. 5)

Fire Force, Winfield Police team up with Lions Club to bring Easter bunny to the community

On Easter weekend, the Easter bunny paraded throughout the Winfield community on a fire truck in order to bring much-needed joy to the community. The parade featured a fire and police escort, with the Easter bunny waving to the community from a Tower 3521.

The group went all-out, announcing the arrival of the Easter bunny with sirens blaring and lights flashing. Bringing the bunny to the people helped maintain social distancing during this time of community quaran-



time.

Fire Chief Jason Gikas added a tracking app, which could be launched from the Fire Force Facebook page,

so fans of the Easter Bunny could track his route through each community. This allowed spectators to line up

(See *Easter* Pg. 7)

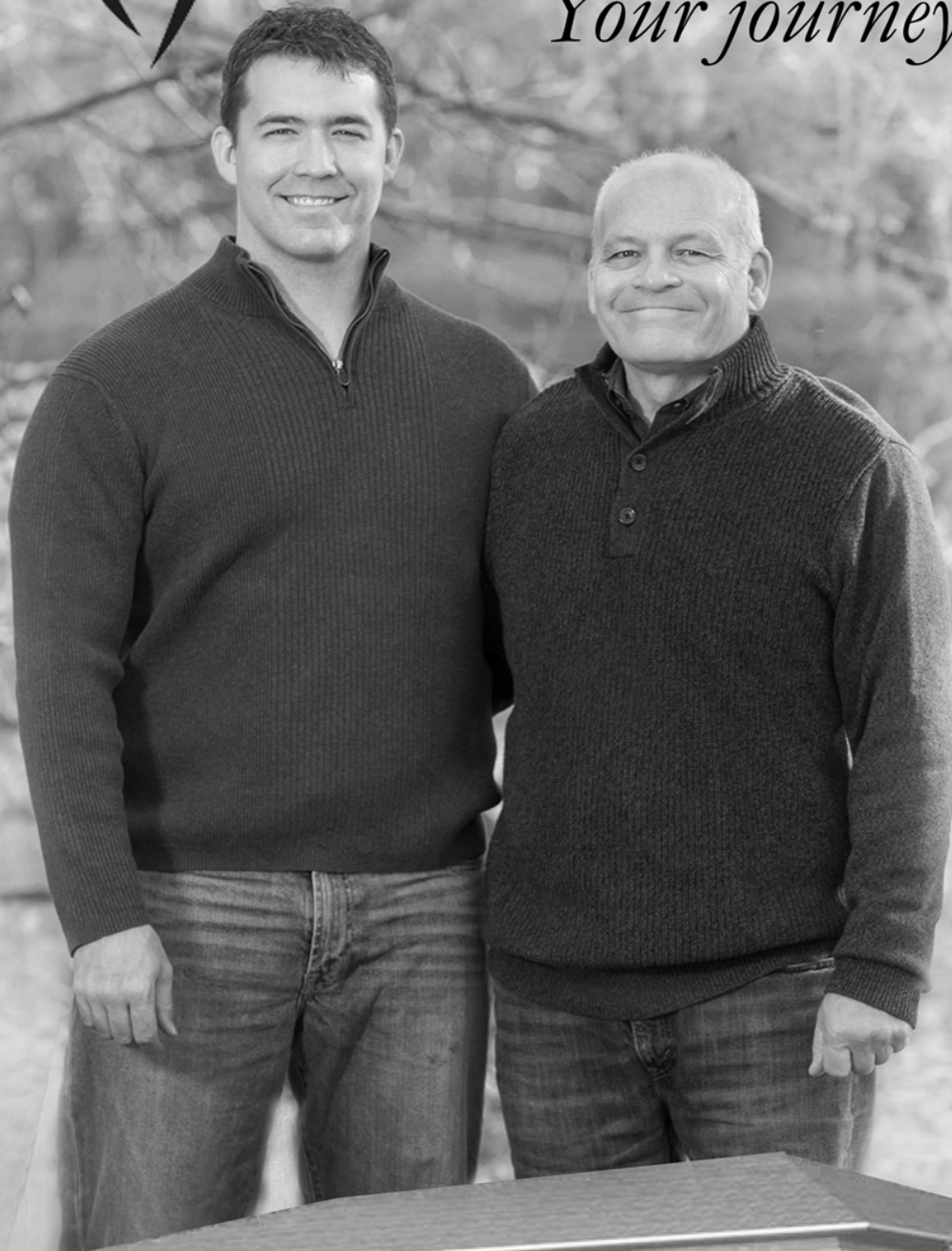
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See Coupons Pg. 7



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Across the street from Lakes of the Four Seasons

Department of Natural Resources reminds boaters to ‘clean, drain, and dry’ this boating season

As the boating season approaches, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources reminds boaters to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species by cleaning, draining, and drying their watercraft when they are finished on the water.

“We want to highlight how the public can do their part in protecting Indiana’s lakes and rivers from aquatic invasive species,” said Eric Fischer, aquatic invasive species coordinator for DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife.

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are non-native aquatic animals, plants, microorganisms, and pathogens that can hurt native aquatic plants and wildlife, harming the environment, human health, and businesses. They arrive in a variety of ways, including on trailers, on boat hulls and motors, on fishing gear, and through the pet trade.

- **Clean:** When leaving the water, clean all equipment that touched the water. This includes watercraft hulls, trailers, shoes, waders, life vests, engines and other gear. Remove all visible plants, algae, animals and mud.
- **Drain:** Drain accumulated water from watercraft or gear, including live wells and transom wells, before leaving the ramp or public access point.
- **Dry:** Once home, let all gear dry for at least five days before using it in a different water body.

If you suspect you have found an aquatic invasive plant, fish, mollusk, or crustacean, report it to the Division of Fish & Wildlife at www.dnr.IN.gov/6385.htm, through the Report IN app at www.eddmaps.org/indiana, or by calling the Invasive Species Hotline at 866-663-9684.

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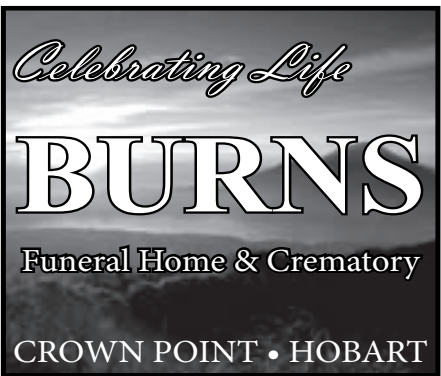
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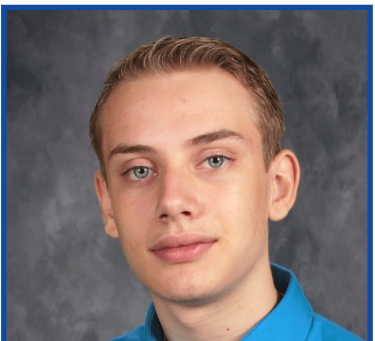
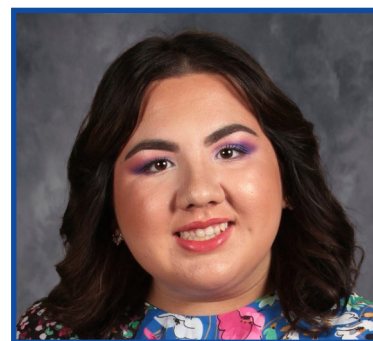
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People receiving SSI with dependents and who do not file tax returns need to take action

“Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who don’t file tax returns will start receiving their automatic Economic Impact Payments directly from the Treasury Department in early May,” said Social Security Commissioner Andrew Saul. “People receiving SSI benefits who did not file 2018 or 2019 taxes, and have qualifying children under age 17, however, should not wait for their automatic \$1,200 individual payment. They should immediately go to the IRS’s webpage at www.irs.gov/coronavirus/non-filers-enter-payment-info-here and visit the Non-Filers: Enter Your Information section to provide their information”

SSI recipients who have dependent children and did not file 2018 or 2019 taxes need to act by Tuesday, May 5, in order to receive additional payments for their eligible children quickly.

By taking this proactive step to enter information on the IRS website about them and their qualifying children, they will also receive the \$500 per dependent child payment in addition to their \$1,200 individual payment. If people in this group do not provide their information to the IRS soon, their payment at this time will be \$1,200 only. They would then be required to file a tax year 2020 tax return to obtain the additional \$500 per eligible child.

“I urge SSI recipients with qualifying children and who do not normally file taxes to take action now,” said Saul. “Immediately go to www.irs.gov so that you will receive the full amount of the Economic Impact Payments you and your family are eligible for.

“Lastly, a word of caution. Be aware of scams related to the Economic Impact Payments. There is no fee required to receive these payments. Don’t be fooled,” he said.

(Mowing from Pg. 1)

shoulder closures along state routes as crews perform roadside management activities. Drivers should slow down, move over and

avoid distractions as they encounter active crews. INDOT maintains more than 60,000 acres along Indiana’s highways. Additional infor-

mation on INDOT’s roadside management program may be found at www.greenecrossroads.com.

(NIPSCO from Pg. 1)

recommendations for a busy digging season:

- Always call 811 or enter a request online at www.811NOW.com two business days before the start of any digging project.
- Tell neighbors, coworkers, family and friends about 811 if they discuss their plans for an outdoor home improvement project with you.
- Plan ahead – Indiana 811 is always open. Just make sure you call at least two business days in advance of your project start date.
- Avoid starting projects until you’re sure all lines have been marked. When you call 811, you will hear a list of companies that should respond.
- Choose another location on the property for a project if

- the original planned site is near utility line markings.
- If your excavation is within two feet of any marked facility, only use hand tools or vacuum excavation with extreme caution.
- If a contractor has been hired, confirm that he or she has made a call to 811 before doing any digging. Don’t allow work to begin if the lines aren’t marked.
- After the site has been accurately marked, it is safe to begin digging carefully around the marked areas.

Nipsco utilizes two outside companies to assist with marking underground facilities for customers — Utiliquest and GridHawk. Thanks to an enhanced offering, Nipsco customers will now receive an email

confirmation that their requested project area has been located, complete with utility drawings and photos.

Visit www.nipsco.com/811 for more information about 811.

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~ Letter to the Editor ~

Horses at Four Seasons Equestrian Center need to eat

Four Seasons Equestrian Center was opened over 43 years ago under the ownership of Virginia A. Fox for the purpose of teaching, training, competing, and boarding horses. We have offered three generations the opportunity to experience the joys and satisfaction of horseback riding because the relationship that develops between the horses and riders lasts a lifetime.

Our equine family includes twelve school horses and nine ponies. Our main activities include riding lessons for adults and those five years and older, Pony

Birthday Parties at our farm and ponies delivered to your home, Build A Pony Workshops, Summer and Winter Day Camps for children 16 and under, Girl Scout programs, Barn Rentals, and Horse Leases.

Eighty-five percent of the income that supports the horses, ponies, and staff comes from these activities. We are normally open seven days a week all year round.

Now the Coronavirus now threatens our very existence.

The necessity of protecting the public's health and welfare eliminates our ability to continue lessons, barn ac-

tivities, and events that have made it possible for Four Seasons Equestrian Center to be a part of your community.

I have no choice but to ask for your help to care for our horses, ponies, and staff who are being adversely affected by this terrible pandemic.

Please feel free to donate towards the care of our wonderful Four Seasons Equestrian Center Family through our GoFundMe page or share our story with family and friends by any social media platform you are part of.

Our horses and ponies are not able to work right now

but they still need to eat. Please visit our website at www.horses4seasonsstable.com and click on the 'Go Fund Me' link. This will help to ensure we are here when this is over!

From time to time, you can see many of us on our Facebook page; featuring a different horse or pony every month. Thank you for your kindness and generosity during this time.

Sincerely,
Virginia A. Fox & Four Seasons Equestrian Center

Porter Lakes pre-school registration for fall of 2020 is now open

Students should be three (3) or four (4) years of age by August 1, 2020. Half-day and full-day options for both age groups are available. Three-year-olds will attend on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Four-year-olds will attend on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Call 219-306-8076 to register.

Kindergarten registration still taking place for Porter Lakes

Porter Lakes Elementary is still taking names for students for the 2020-21 kindergarten class. Children must be five years old by August 1, 2020 to enroll. E-mail the school at carol.magurany@ptsc.k12.in.us or leave a message at 219-306-8076.

(NWI from Pg. 1)

portunity to watch the service at a later time. Friends and family members appreciate a way to 'be there from home'.

The funeral home staff saw another need: the emergent need for masks. The Geisen Sew Thoughtful Workshop volunteers stepped to the plate and are among the many volunteers in the Region who took to their sewing machines, creating masks for healthcare facilities in NWI.

Typically, the group of volunteers gather at the Geisen Reception Centre a few times a year to create different sewing projects for various charitable efforts. The group's coordinator, Martha Dieckmann, researched the best pattern for a physician-style mask and asked the group to help out if they could.

Geisen Funeral Home Community Relations Director Jean Lahm said, "Our volunteers are making a more difficult mask to sew, but they are in high demand right now. The response has been amazing; we've been able to donate at least 200 masks, and there are more coming."

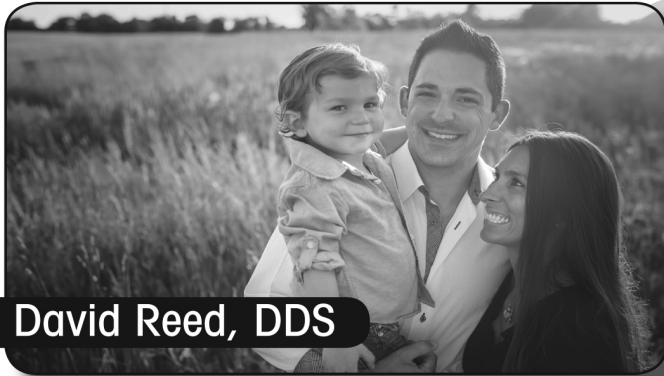
For more information on Geisen Funeral Home's COVID-19 response initiatives, please contact Jean Lahm at 219-663-2500, or visit www.GeisenFuneralHome.com.

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Help Wanted - Automotive Technician

In an effort to increase our level of service to our customers, Crown Point Auto Repair is adding technicians to our team. If you know of, or have friends or family that you feel would be a good addition to the Crown Point Auto Repair team, have them stop in at 1510 N. Main Street, Crown Point, IN, and talk to Bill. Or call the shop at 219-663-1847 or Bill's cell at 708-305-3666 for an appointment. (950)

Fire Force Volunteers Requested

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? Please call 219-662-7576 and speak with Chief Gikas, or he may be e-mailed at chief@lofsfire.com. (950)



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Local clinic now offering antibody testing for Covid-19

Midwest Express Clinic wants to do its part as the area and country grapples with COVID-19.

“We want to offer the antibody testing to give people the comfort of knowing whether they have developed immunity and help them get back to work and return to their daily lives,” MEC Medical Director Dr. Golsa Shahkar said. “Since we’re using the most effective test out there, we can give people that confidence.”

MEC is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week at locations in Crown Point, Dyer, Munster, Merrillville, Schererville, and Hammond. COVID-19 antibody testing

is available at all branches, including those in Illinois. Each office is adequately stocked with the most accurate tests available to take on the surge of patients since testing began. Results come in three to four days.

Patients must not show symptoms for a minimum of seven days for the antibody

test. MEC recommends waiting for 14 days.

COVID-19 swab testing is available to anyone experiencing symptoms, as well as front-line, critical care, first responders and essential workers. MEC is doing about 300 swabs each day - about 10,000 in total, so far.

All offices are experienc-

ing a high call volume, so patients are asked to check in online at www.midwest-expressclinic.com with an ID and insurance card. Most insurance is accepted, including Medicare and Medicaid.

Once patients arrive, they’re asked to stay in their vehicles and call or knock on the door when they arrive. If patients have a mask, they’re asked to wear it. But MEC will provide one at the door. Staff will run through a quick survey to determine if they can enter the building or will need curbside service.

Midwest Express Clinic is following Center for Disease Control protocols to ensure the safety of patients and staff. All tests are performed by a licensed medical practitioner wearing personal protection equipment. Doors and all surfaces are wiped down and disinfected between patients.

There are tents outside the buildings for drive-through and curbside care to ensure the office is not exposed to the virus.

New website provides Hoosiers free expert mental health resources during COVID-19

The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration today launched a new website, www.BeWellIndiana.org, that will provide Hoosiers with free mental health resources that have been vetted by experts. The site is designed to address the increase in anxiety, depression and other mental health issues caused by the pandemic, including both first-time issues as well as preexisting mental health concerns.

Initially, the website will focus on the various mental health challenges due to

COVID-19, but will be updated regularly and will continue to evolve as a resource beyond the current crisis.

Hoosiers can visit it to find trusted resources curated by FSSA’s Division of Mental Health and Addiction, including information ranging from coping mechanisms, crisis counseling, how to self-monitor for signs of stress, domestic violence resources, substance use disorder and recovery, and tips for helping children, youth and teens. Videos featuring medical experts, persons in recovery and other practicing Indiana

clinicians addressing specific mental health topics are also available on the site.

To help individuals and families cope during this time, there are resources and recommendations ranging from homeschooling tips, ways to work from home, information on coping with a job loss, and addressing medical questions and concerns. The site also includes resources for Hoosiers seeking help with insurance, unemployment, childcare, food insecurity and more. Experts agree that one of the best ways to cope throughout this crisis is by staying

informed and taking care of yourself and others as safely as possible.

For Hoosiers experiencing an increase in anxiety, mood swings, loss of sleep, change in sleep, uncertainty and more, www.BeWellIndiana.org also provides a link to simple self-assessments, offered by Mental Health America, to help users determine if they could benefit from seeking mental health support. The immediate results provide a quick snapshot of your mental health and are not to be used as a medical diagnosis.

(Easter from Pg. 1)

on their driveways or on their local roadside closer to the time of the Bunny’s arrival.

Stated one mom, “We had so much fun tracking the bunny Saturday morning and my daughter was so excited that he waved to her as they rode by!” The LOFS Lions assisted by bringing the Easter bunny, aka Lion Juan Hernandez, to the Fire House the morning of the event. The Fire Force team worked out a route in each community that maximized the number

of roads, further helping with social distancing.

The Fire Force and Easter bunny were on the road for 6-1/2 hours and enjoyed every minute. Thank you to the community for your support and enthusiasm during this event.

“On behalf of the LOFS Fire Force, Lions Club, and, Winfield Police Department it was our pleasure and privilege to bring the Easter bunny to the Winfield community,” they said.

This day in history

May 1, 2003

A record-breaking wave of tornadoes began across the southern and midwestern United States. By the time the wave was over, more than 500 tornadoes were recorded for the month, shattering the previous record by more than 100.

The spate of twisters followed an unusually quiet month of April, when tornadoes are usually most frequent. March and April also saw a lack of significant thunderstorms. The moist, warm air necessary for the formation of tornadoes did not arrive from the Gulf of Mexico until May and, when it did, weather conditions in these regions changed suddenly.

The first 10 days of May brought a very large amount of destructive weather to the central United States, including more than 300 tornadoes. The available records regarding tornadoes in the second half of the 20th century show that the previous high for tornadoes in a month was 399 in June, 1992. May, 2003, had 516 recorded twisters.

The worst stretch of tornadoes over a small stretch of time was recorded April 3-4, 1974, when 148 individual tornadoes touched down across the Midwest in an 18-hour period. During a single hour in the middle of this vast storm, 20 tornadoes were recorded at the same time. More than 300 people died in this single storm.

www.history.com

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Winfield American

Notes, cards, and drawings: A simple way to show appreciation for our Franciscan heroes

Right now, hospital employees are working harder than ever before. Whether it's doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, housekeeping, supply chain or dietary, teams of dedicated individuals are working around the clock and doing their part to save lives.

At the same time, Franciscan Health has been blessed by an outpouring of support, from children's drawings to donations of needed equipment and parades of first responders. These simple gestures confirm something we've long known: Public health is truly a partnership between the community and the health-care facilities that serve them,



they noted in a press release.

Now, that partnership is symbolized in the Gratitude Wall. These walls, located in each of our Franciscan Health hospitals, display notes, drawings, cards and more to show our staff how the community is responding

to – and appreciating – them as Franciscan Heroes. Items on the wall will be updated regularly and staff are encouraged to go to the wall for a moment of quiet, where they can recharge their batteries.

We're asking for the com-

munity's help to fill our Gratitude Walls with notes and cards. Get your children involved by having them submit drawings. Your words of encouragement go a long way in inspiring our staff.

Send your notes, cards and drawings for the Walls

of Gratitude to Brooke Dyrhaug, Service Excellence Manager at Franciscan Health Crown Point, 219-757-5924, and via e-mail to: Brooke.Dyrhaug@franciscanalliance.org

Submissions to the Gratitude Wall are great-

ly appreciated, but if you are looking to do more, you can help Franciscan fight COVID-19 by donating to our Preparedness & Response Fund at www.FranciscanHealthFoundation.org/COVID-19.

Indiana campers reminded about the 'firewood rule' by the Department of Natural Resources

With camping season possibly approaching depending on Covid-19 circumstances, visitors to Indiana Department of Natural Resource properties can help prevent the spread of invasive species by brushing up on the DNR firewood rule.

The rule helps protect Indiana's trees from the 140 known pests and pathogens that currently affect forests, as well as pests we don't know about yet. Several pests and pathogens are transported through firewood movement.

Under the rule, visitors to state parks, reservoirs, state forests, and state fish & wildlife areas can bring firewood from home as long as the bark has been removed. Removing the bark minimizes the risk of accidental infestation through firewood movement, because insect larvae live in sapwood under the bark.

Campers may also bring firewood into DNR properties, if it's:

- Kiln-dried scrap lumber
- Purchased outside the property and bears either a USDA compliance stamp or a state compliance stamp
- Purchased from the property camp store or on-site firewood vendor and has a state compliance stamp

Regardless of where visitors get their firewood, they should burn it all at the campsite before they leave. In short, the firewood rule means: Buy it with a stamp, bring it debarked, burn it all.

"There are several invasive species causing significant damage to Indiana's natural resources at this time" said State Entomologist Megan Abraham, who is the director of the DNR Division of Entomology & Plant Pathology. "Emerald Ash Borer, Callery pear, Gypsy moth, Kudzu, Hydrilla, and Purple Loosestrife to name a few."

"It's the species that we have not spotted in Indiana

that we need help from the public to keep an eye out for," she added.

The DNR asks members of the public to keep an eye on their local forests and natural resources for signs and symptoms of trees or vegetation dying off for seemingly no reason.

"The DNR would rather come out and inspect an area and find nothing to worry about than find out after the fact that someone had spotted a problem and failed to report it," Abraham said.

If you see signs of trees in decline with no explanation, call the DNR at 866-663-9684 with the date and location. Members of the public may report invasive species to the DNR through the Report IN website at www.eddmaps.org/indiana, or by downloading the Great Lakes Early Detection Network app on a smartphone.

For more about the rule see www.firewood.dnr.IN.gov.

Better Business Bureau feeding the front lines in Lake, Porter counties and more

The Better Business Bureau Serving Northern Indiana has delivered meals to hospitals, part of BBB's Feeding the Front Lines campaign, and seeks to deliver meals to frontline health-care workers in the BBB's 23-county Northern Indiana service area.

"From ER doctors and nurses to respiratory therapists and other support personnel, the staff of our area

hospitals are in an epic health-care battle the likes of which haven't been seen in the US for nearly a century," said Marjorie Stephens, president and CEO of BBB Serving Northern Indiana.

BBB Feeding the Front Lines plans to coordinate the delivery of 165 meals to seven emergency departments within Lake County with the help of local restaurants and delivery services near each

facility.

Each donation is a win/win: Local health care heroes get a much-needed meal and local restaurants that are, likely, feeling the pinch of the Coronavirus receive much-needed business.

For more information or to make a donation, visit the BBB Serving Northern Indiana's donation page at www.gofundme.com/f/bbb-feeding-the-frontline

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