

TODAY'S VERSE

Psalm 119:89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. (KJV)



FACES OF HAMILTON COUNTY

People who call our community their own.

What makes David Perry smile? "My family ... my children and my wife. They're my go-to to cheer me up," said the 43-year-old Carmel resident, who was found working at his family-owned business, Hoosier Armory in downtown Noblesville. He was born in Brazil and raised in California. What brought him to Noblesville? "The business, obviously, because we started in my father-in-law's garage and we moved to Noblesville." The business has been in Noblesville for more than five years. Being in the U.S. Navy for 10 years, he said, "So I've always been interested in firearms ... What I like about firearms, especially in a civilian world, is teaching people, training them. There are a lot of new gun owners, so to be able to teach them and have them be confident with what they're doing ... I think that's really awesome, especially when we go to the range." He has been married for 16 years and has three children, ages 13, 11 and 6. Plans for Valentine's Day? "Go out to dinner at a nice restaurant and have a nice night." Read about what men want for Valentine's Day in the Betsy Reason column in the Tuesday, Feb. 14, Valentine's Day edition of The Times.

And Another Few Things...

1. Pleasant Street

The City of Noblesville has provided several updates about the Pleasant Street Project:

Utility Relocation

Duke Energy and CenterPoint Energy crews are actively relocating utility lines for the future Pleasant Street alignment. Some minor traffic restrictions will be happening throughout the area as they complete their work by the end of March. You may also notice additional truck traffic in the southwest quad as materials are delivered to the project area.

Bridge Construction

The contractor is drilling the foundation shafts for the new bridge, and this work should be complete in the next 60 days. Drilling on the west side of the river is now complete. Equipment will move to the east side for drilling. Reinforcing steel placement and concrete pours will finish the below-ground foundation pieces.

Construction crews are preparing to remove the historic bridge that once carried the Midland Railway over the White River. Once the bridge has been removed, it will be carefully disassembled so that it can be reconstructed at a future date.

Sanitary Sewer and Storm Water Work

In the next 30 days, work will begin for improving the sanitary sewer system and installing new storm water systems. With drilling on the west side of the river complete, pipe crews will be in the area from the river to River Road installing the sanitary sewer and storm sewer systems. Service should remain uninterrupted during this time.

Each month, the City of Noblesville will provide updates, details and interesting aspects of the Reimagine Pleasant Street project in an effort to keep residents up to date on the progress. Make sure to follow the project on Twitter (twitter.com/reimagineplsnt) and Facebook (facebook.com/ReimaginePleasantStreet).

2. OCRA Leadership

The Office of Community and Rural Affairs recently announced Megan Zarazee as the new chief operating officer and Lydia Kirschner as the new communications director.

In Zarazee's new role, she will manage and oversee daily operations of the agency. Zarazee began her time in public service working for the Indiana governor's office in 2005 and most recently served as OCRA's director of operations. She holds a bachelor's degree in business management.

Kirschner joined OCRA in 2021 as the communications manager. She holds a bachelor's degree in telecommunications from Ball State University. Prior to joining OCRA, Kirschner served as a press secretary for the Indiana House of Representatives.

The chief operating officer and communications director serve the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs and the Lieutenant Governor.

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Boomer Bits



Ask Rusty - Canadian Expat Very Angry About His Reduced U.S. Social Security

Dear Rusty: I am a 62-year old Canadian expat who has lived in the U.S. for the last 30-years. I worked in both Canada and the U.S. throughout my career. I came to this country, worked hard and contributed faithfully to the tax base, but I am being cheated for what is rightfully owed to me. Everyone else's Social Security calculation is based on lifetime earnings; mine should be calculated using the same parameters, with the only difference being that some of my earnings were in Canada. I have filed an appeal to that end, but the end result is that I get taken to the cleaners. Why would they intentionally put in place a Totalization scheme with Canada which results in me receiving thousands of dollars per year less than someone who has the



ASK Rusty Social Security Advisor

Social Security Matters

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.

same lifetime earnings? This is just wrong and terribly unfair. Is there any legal recourse for me? Signed: Angry Ex-Pat

Dear Angry Ex-Pat: The so-called "Totalization Agreement" between Canada and the U.S. isn't "unfair" - rather it is a way for those who don't independently earn full Social Security eligibility in one country to still get benefits in that country using credits (not earnings) from the other country

to gain eligibility. It also allows a citizen of one country to work in another country without paying Social Security taxes in their home country on those foreign earnings. If you have worked in the U.S. long enough to become eligible for U.S. Social Security on your own U.S. work record, the Totalization Agreement doesn't apply to you nor affect your U.S. Social Security ben-

See RUSTY Page A6

Annual Wellness Exam is Key to A Healthy Year for Older Adults

(StatePoint) You've selected your insurance plan for the year. Now, it's time to start using your benefits, beginning with an annual wellness exam

An annual wellness exam with a health care provider is important for everyone, but especially for older adults. As we age, we are more likely to develop chronic health conditions, according to Dr. J.B. Sobel, chief medical officer for Cigna Medicare, which serves hundreds of thousands of older adults through its products. An annual wellness exam can help detect potential health issues early so they can be addressed before they worsen, he added.

"By meeting with your primary care provider early in the year, you can highlight the things that are important to you, and work together to develop a plan for your care for the year ahead," Sobel said. "This will

ensure you live each day with vitality, happiness and improved health.

Many providers will reach out to schedule an annual wellness exam. If your provider doesn't contact you, make sure to call them.

A number of annual check-ups are available at no extra cost to those with Medicare. They include a "Welcome to Medicare" visit for customers who have just reached Medicare eligibility and an "Annual Wellness Exam" for existing customers. Many Medicare Advantage (MA) plans offer more extensive annual visits at no extra cost. Some even offer incentives for completing a visit. Talk with your provider and Medicare insurer about your benefits.

Each annual exam may be a little different. Regardless

See ANNUAL Page A6

Manage Your Heart Health for Stronger Brain Health

(Family Features) The same risk factors that contribute to making heart disease the leading cause of death worldwide also impact the rising global prevalence of brain disease, including stroke, Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

The global death rate from Alzheimer's disease and other dementias is increasing even more than the rate of heart disease death, according to the American Heart Association's Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics 2022 Update.

Globally, more than 54 million people had Alzheimer's disease and other dementias

See HEALTH Page A6

Love, 'Sweet Love' Gets All in the Valentine's Day Mood



BETSY REASON The Times Editor

Noblesville is fortunate to be the home of EnPointe Indiana Ballet, where co-owners, classically trained and retired professional ballet dancers Robert Moore and wife, Pollyana Ribeiro, teach dance to all ages.

This weekend, Moore, along with Emily Franks, Jessica Smith and Shauna Boyd, will showcase their new work just for Valentine's Day, "Sweet Love," that is staged in an original performance that features

See BETSY Page A6



Photo courtesy of Beth Pack

EnPointe Indiana Ballet students dance to "The Greatest Show" from the musical, "The Greatest Showman," during the Noblesville ballet school's Valentine's program, "Sweet Love," with one more performance at 2 p.m. today.

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HONEST HOOSIER

On this date in 1990 Buster Douglas knocked out Mike Tyson and proved that nothing lasts forever.



TODAY'S QUOTE

"Other men said they have seen angels, but I have seen thee, and thou art enough."

George Moore

TODAY'S JOKE

What did the boy rabbit say to the girl rabbit on Valentine's Day? Hey, some-bunny loves you!

TODAY'S HEALTH TIP

The Institute of Medicine recommends 600 IU of vitamin D daily to age 70 and 800 IU after that. Today's health tip was brought to you by Dr. John Roberts. Be sure to catch his column each week in The Times and online at www.thetimes24-7.com



OBITUARIES

Leora Jane Richardson

The Times appreciates all our customers. Today, we'd like to personally thank JOHN KENLEY for subscribing!



⇒ OBITUARIES

Leora Jane Richardson

September 5, 1926-February 10, 2023

Leora Jane Richardson, 96, of Pendleton, passed away on Friday, Feb. 10, 2023, at Rawlins House in Pendleton following a brief illness.

She was born on Sept. 5, 1926, in Kansas City, Missouri, to Wilson and Emma (McKinney) Edwards.

She was a graduate of Lapel High School Class of 1944 and was one of the last of her graduating class. She attended Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

She was a homemaker. She was a member of Trinity United Methodist Church in Lapel. She attended a gardening club and played bridge. She was a great cook and loved her family deeply.

Music was close to her heart and she was a very good pianist. She was selected to play piano in a large performance at Butler University.

Leora is survived by three children, Carole (Vaughn) Bracken of Anderson, Tom (Deanna) Richardson of Derby, Indiana and Eric (Kathy) Richardson of Noblesville; eleven grandchildren, Andy (Tracy) Bracken, Stacey Bracken, Dustin (Olivia) Richardson, Courtney Richardson, Carrie Brann, Shane (LeeAnn) Ramsey, Jamie (Nick) Zellers, Destiny (Bruce) Webb, LeeAnna (Adam) James, Jennifer (Jeremy) Johnson and Steven (Valerie) Richardson; twenty-four great-grandchildren; a nephew, Michael (Robin) Richardson; a niece, Mitzi Richardson; two cousins, David Zile and Peggy Zile.

She was preceded in death by her husband whom she married June 14, 1947 at her parents home in Lapel, Thomas Richardson and her parents.

A graveside service will be held at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023, at Brookside Cemetery in Lapel with Rev. John Pflum officiating.

Online condolences may be shared at www.hersbergerbozell.com.

⇒ Meeting Notes

Noblesville Board of Public Works and Safety

Meeting Agenda
Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023
at 9 a.m.

City Hall, Council Chamber

1. Call meeting to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Petitions or comments by citizens who are present
4. Approval of agenda
5. Bid Opening: 2023 Street Rehabilitation – Contract I (EN-362-01)
6. Consent agenda
7. For approval

A. Approval of minutes: Jan. 24, 2023

B. Board to consider approval of 2023 Morse Park Summer Triathlon (René Gulley)

C. Board to consider secondary plat for Lots 11, 12 and 13 in Morse Overlook Section 1 (Kevin Martin)

8. Contracts/purchases under \$50,000

A. Agreement with O.W. Krohn & Associates for financial consulting to the Redevelopment Commission (Amy Smith)

B. Agreement with Evaluations Real Estate Appraisal and Consulting for oncall appraisal services (Amy Smith)

C. Contract with Veridus Group for architectural consulting services (Caleb Gutshall)

D. Contract with Lehman & Lehman for landscape design and planning services (Brandon Bennett)

9. New items for discussion

A. Board to consider Public Property Use Agreement between the City and Noblesville Community Gardens Project, Inc. (Matt Light)

B. Board to consider Engagement Letter for legal services with Bose McKinney & Evans (Matt Light)

C. Board to consider Financial Service Agreement with Reedy Financial Group (Amy Smith)

D. Board to consider Façade Improvement Grant for 40 North 9th St. (Aaron Head)

E. Board to consider Façade Improvement Grant for 161 Lakeview Drive (Aaron Head)

F. Board to consider Temporary Closure of Two Alleys for Warranty Work around Handholes (René Gulley)

G. Board to consider extension of parking space closures related to the Hamilton County Judicial Center renovations (René Gulley)

H. Board to consider temporary parking space, sidewalk and alley closures for the Façade Improvements at 40 North 9th St. (René Gulley)

I. Board to consider permission to advertise for bids for 161st Street Bridge over Vestal Ditch (EN-355-02) (Jim Hellmann)

J. Board to consider Professional Services Contract with VS Engineering for Mill Creek Road culvert over Sly Run Creek (EN-364-01) (Jim Hellmann)

K. Board to consider Road Impact Fee Agreement with River Road Land, LLC for River Road improvements related to Riverwest (Jim Hellmann)

L. Board to consider permission to advertise for bids for 2023 Street Rehabilitation – Contract II (EN-362-02) (ANDREW RODEWALD)

M. Board to consider Change Order No. 1 and Project Close-out for Pleasant Street Structure Demolition – Contract I (EN-231-14) (Andrew Rodewald)

N. Board to consider Professional Services Agreement with Shrewsbury & Associates, LLC for Federal Hill – Forest Park Trail (EN-363-01) (Andrew Rodewald)

O. Board to consider Funding Agreement with INDOT for 2022-02 Community Crossing Matching Grant (EN-362-05) (Andrew Rodewald)

P. Board to consider closure of South 6th Street for construction of storm sewer for East Bank Apartments (Odise Adams)

10. Adjournment

Westfield Kicks Off American Heart Month with Crowdfunding Campaign to Raise Funds for AEDs

The City of Westfield and the Westfield Fire Department are kicking off American Heart Month with a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for three automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to be placed at Grand Junction Plaza, at Quaker Park along the Midland Trace and the Monon Trail.

The AED is housed in a specifically designed, climate-controlled cabinet called a “SaveStation.” It can tolerate extreme weather and is available to anyone in the immediate area. The AED is safe to use and does not require specialized training.

The SaveStation wouldn't be the first of its kind in the area. The City of Carmel has purchased Hamilton County's first SaveStations, located along the Monon Greenway.

“Once people cross 146th Street along the Monon, we wanted to ensure we were consistent with what users know to look for,” said Westfield Fire Chief Rob Gaylor.



These AEDs will be accessible to the public and monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

More and more people are coming to understand the importance of quick action when someone suffers a cardiac arrest and are more aware of how vital AEDs can be in saving lives when used quickly.

“We know that our parks and trails continue to see increased usage, and it's important that residents know there are safeguards in place to protect them,” stated Mayor Andy Cook.

The Westfield Fire Department would also like to remind residents that the City participates in the PulsePoint program, launched in 2019.

PulsePoint is a free citizen emergency response app that allows anyone with a smartphone trained in CPR to register as a certified citizen responder.

Local emergency dispatchers activate an alert to notify nearby app users in a public emergency situation. The certified citizen responder can then provide help.

When someone suffers from sudden cardiac ar-

rest, each minute without CPR decreases survival by 10 percent. Even with adequate response times from local agencies, it can take several minutes for medic crews to arrive. Between six and eight minutes without CPR, brain death occurs.

The PulsePoint app alerts users within a quarter-mile of the victim if they can respond quicker than paramedic crews.

PulsePoint users are only notified if someone is suffering cardiac arrest in a public place. They are not notified if the incident occurs in a private residence.

Although app users should be trained in CPR, the Good Samaritan Law legally protects those who respond.

To donate to the crowdfunding campaign, visit crowdfunding.savestation.ca/fundraisers/AED-s4Westfield/ or contact Kayla Arnold, Westfield Welcome Director, at karnold@westfield.in.gov or (463) 214-1928.

Indiana Department of Corrections Prioritizes Mental Health Treatment



COLUMNIST NAME
Column Name

individuals suffering from a mental illness, or temporary impairment from drugs and alcohol, to the nearest facility providing mental health treatment. Sending Hoosier to these facilities can help provide them with a better chance at recovery by connecting them with the resources they need, and hopefully help them stay out of the criminal justice system.

This proposed legislation would also protect individuals from being released from a mental health facility or hospital due to an inability to pay. One of the main reasons individuals suffering from mental illness end up in jail is because hospitals often assume the costs of care for those who can't afford it, and it's a liability issue for the facility. This often leaves arresting officers two choices. They can take the individual to a hospital for treatment, which would

often let them out the next day, or place them under arrest.

Through this legislation, insurance and Medicaid could be used to pay for mental health treatment, ensuring hospitals receive payment and the individual receives help. House Bill 1006 also includes liability protections for law enforcement officers, hospitals and treatment centers that are trying to help affected individuals.

This legislation continues to build on our state's efforts to connect more Hoosiers to critical mental health resources while maintaining public safety. Our hardworking law enforcement officers routinely deal with these issues and overcrowded jails, and this legislation will provide another option to get people the help they need.

House Bill 1006 recently passed unanimously out

of the Indiana House of Representatives and now moves to the Senate for further consideration. We'll also look to ensure that we are investing in expanding mental health options in the state's proposed budget, which should begin moving through the legislative process in the coming weeks.

As the legislative session moves forward, I'll continue providing updates on what's happening at the Statehouse, and I encourage you to sign up to receive my e-newsletters by visiting in.gov/h88. You can also reach out with questions or input on these topics and others by contacting me at h88@iga.in.gov or (317) 234-0931.

State Rep. Chris Jeter (R-Fishers) represents House District 88, which includes portions of Hamilton, Hancock, Madison and Marion counties.

State Sues ATF to Protect Hoosiers' Gun Rights

Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita sued the Biden administration to challenge a recent rule by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) that infringes on Hoosiers' gun rights.

Specifically, the new ATF rule treats pistols equipped with stabilizing braces as short-barreled rifles subject to federal regulation. This policy contradicts more than a decade of agency practice, during which the ATF repeatedly assured manufacturers and the public that attaching a stabilizing brace to a pistol would not alter its regulatory or



Attorney General Todd Rokita

statutory classification. “As long as I'm attorney general, we will never willingly cede Hoosiers' cherished liberties to the whims of federal bureaucrats,” Rokita said. “This is a clear case of overreach

by the executive branch, and we fully expect to prevail in this lawsuit.”

Individuals with disabilities often rely on stabilizing braces to use their pistols. Others who benefit from the devices are those with below-average physical strength and beginners learning to use firearms.

The new federal regulations require anyone using pistols with stabilizing braces to provide their fingerprints to the ATF, be registered in a federal database and pay applicable taxes, among other things.

In addition to Indiana, 24 other states and various private businesses and

individuals have joined in the lawsuit filed earlier this week against the Biden administration. Rokita thanked West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey for his work organizing the multistate coalition.

“By standing together, the individual states can stop the federal government from riding roughshod over our people's freedoms,” Rokita said. “Standing up to tyranny is a time-honored American tradition. It requires us not only to resist broad sweeping power grabs but also to combat the incremental chipping away of rights.”

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Photo by Tom Campbell courtesy of Purdue Agriculture

Purdue Extension's Land Use Team collaborated with the Indiana Office of Energy Development to publish two renewable energy reports to help aid in the discussion of renewable energy land-use regulations.

Purdue Publishes Reports Exploring Land-Use Regulations for Renewable Energy

In spring 2022, the Indiana General Assembly passed Senate Bill 411, creating voluntary commercial solar and wind regulation standards. Indiana communities planning to qualify as a solar or wind energy ready community will need to examine their county ordinances in comparison with the Indiana state voluntary standards. Purdue Extension's Land Use Team, in collaboration with the Indiana Office of Energy Development, recently published two renewable energy reports to help

aid in the discussion of renewable energy land-use regulations. The studies compared the voluntary state standards to current Indiana county zoning ordinances using data from the Indiana Renewable Energy Community Planning Survey and Ordinance Inventory Summary, which was completed by the Land Use Team in 2021. The analysis did not include counties without planning and zoning or zoning standards specific to commercial solar or wind development.

The study found 54 counties with commercial solar energy defined as a use in their zoning ordinance. None of the counties comply with all 11 categories outlined in the updated Indiana legislation. A total of 52 counties defined commercial wind energy as a use in their zoning ordinance with two counties complying with all nine categories set forth in the legislation. "Planning and zoning regulations often reflect the local communities' characteristics, resources and considerations. These reports reflect that in the

myriad ways counties have chosen to regulate commercial wind and solar developments," said Tamara Ogle, community development regional educator for Purdue Extension and member of the Land Use Team. The two reports are available online. The Purdue Extension Land Use Team provides research-based resources and educational programs for Extension professionals, government officials, citizen planners and residents on land-use issues affecting their communities.

House Committee Approves Indiana Property Tax Relief Bill

By Casey Smith

Indiana lawmakers on Thursday approved major changes to a proposal that seeks to provide Hoosiers with temporary property tax bill relief.

But top GOP legislators cautioned the complex bill is still in its working stages, and other significant amendments are expected as early as next week.

The latest draft of the bill was amended in committee Thursday and advanced 18-6 to the full House chamber.

The measure would provide multiple remedies to temporarily drop tax bills, including through a short-term property tax cap and an increase in state income tax deductions. It would also curb how much local units can raise their tax levies.

The proposal was filed by Rep. Jeff Thompson, R-Lizton, who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee.

He emphasized that numerous provisions in the bill won't be definitive for several more weeks.

"This is probably an end-of-April type of discussion, going right at the end, and we kind of know that going into it," he said. State lawmakers have until April 29 to finalize the state budget and close out the 2023 legislative session.

It's not clear where lawmakers stand on Thompson's bill. The GOP-dominated legislature has so far expressed hesitation about addressing property tax spikes in the current session.

Leadership in the House and Senate have suggested they will wait until bills are mailed out before deciding whether to take any action at all on property taxes in the current legislative session.

What does seem certain, however, is that any property tax relief legislation is unlikely to affect taxpayer bills due May 10. Those taxes are expected to go up an average of at least \$228.

The latest crack at lowering property taxes Thompson's original bill temporarily reduced the homestead tax cap for taxes payable in 2024 and gradually increased the cap back to 1% over four years. It also provided a supplemental homestead credit to be applied to tax bills after all other credits are applied.

That reduction in the property tax cap was cut in half in an extensive amendment adopted unanimously by the House Ways and Means Committee.

Now, Thompson's bill sets caps at 0.95% for property taxes payable in 2024, and 0.975% in 2025.

The homestead tax credit was also deleted.

Instead, the new version of Thompson's bill increases the homeowners and renters deductions on Hoosiers' income taxes by \$1,000 each — up to \$3,500 for residential property owners and \$4,000 for renters.

"This thing has lots of moving parts," Thompson said. "I consider none of them real, real drastic — some may."

Local governments additionally have a new option to create their own property tax relief. Changes at the local level could take effect as early as this fall. But the bill, as written, does not offer locals any state support.

"But it's not the total responsibility of the state," said Rep. Bob Cherry, R-Greenfield. "We have local officials, too ... it's a combination — we're just trying to do our part."

Limits on levies

Another provision in the bill would establish a two-year process to decrease the rate of levy growth in 2024 and 2025.

The extent to which local

governments can increase their annual budgets — and how much they can collect in taxes — is based on the six-year average of nonagricultural income across the state.

The State Budget Agency calculated a 5% maximum levy growth quotient for 2023 property tax levies. It was the highest rate in 20 years, largely due to income growth and inflation in 2021.

Thompson's bill proposes either a 50% decrease to the maximum levy growth quotient in 2024 and a 25% in 2025, or a drop to 3% each year — whichever is lower.

The measure further limits, too, the total amount of operating referendum tax that can be levied by a school corporation for taxes due in 2024. Under the bill, schools could not increase the maximum operating referendum by more than 3% than could be levied in the previous year.

In the next year, local levies are expected to increase by about \$779 million, according to a new joint study conducted by the Association of Indiana Counties (AIC) and Indianapolis-based economic research firm Policy Analytics.

Roughly \$219 million of that demand is due to school debt.

AIC Executive Director David Bottorff told the Indiana Capital Chronicle that the group's study showed "a lot of units of government" have increased their borrowing to keep their debt levies constant. In turn, they benefited from higher assessed values.

"I think the language in this bill now that limits those rate based funds on how much levy they can increase year over a year is part of the reason (Thompson) put in the language about why they can only increase 3%," Bottorff said.

"I think this still just raises questions — what is this debt? Is it one-year borrowing? Is this long term-debt? That's part of what we still need to understand," he continued.

Who benefits, and who doesn't?

It's still unclear how much the average homeowner in Indiana would save under the relief proposal.

The latest AIC data anticipates homeowners' bills payable this year could increase as much as 18% — 3% higher than a recent calculation and more than double what previous reports estimated for the upcoming bills.

Questions also remain about how much Thompson's plan would cost local governments and schools.

A previous fiscal analysis showed that while property owners would pay reduced taxes under Thompson's bill, school corporations are estimated to lose more than \$364 million in revenue. Cities, towns, counties and other units are also expected to see decreased revenues into the millions.

Thompson doubled down his bill is not a reduction in revenue for local governments — rather, it's a reduction in the increase they will get.

He also said a new fiscal study that could shed more light on how the legislation affects local units — and how it might shift tax burden — is expected sometime next week.

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GOP Passes 'Parental Rights' Bill Targeting DCS Policies for Transgender Children

By Whitney Downard

A House committee voted to advance a bill Thursday enshrining parental rights and protecting parents who don't support their transgender children from allegations of abuse.

It is the latest example of transgender legislation sweeping the nation in Republican-led states.

Bill author Rep. Dale DeVon, R-Granger, said the bill wouldn't permit actual abuse, but would bar the Indiana Department of Child Services from removing a child from a home because their parents disagreed with the "child's want to be a transgender."

The agency, in an email to the Indiana Capital Chronicle, said it had no such policy and worked with the state's judicial branch to make decisions in the best interest of the child based on state statutes.

"We consider the needs and values of all we serve in our efforts to protect children while keeping families together whenever possible," the agency said in a statement. "To be clear, DCS does not — and will not — pursue a case solely on a parent's choice not to 1) affirm their child's gender identity, 2) obtain gender-affirming medical care or 3) enroll their child in gender-affirming therapy."

An October ruling from the Indiana Court of Appeals affirmed DCS' actions in a case involving a parent and their minor transgender child. In that case, the court upheld DCS' removal of a child whose parents didn't accept their child's transgender identity, were verbally abusing the child and refusing to treat the

child's eating disorder.

"We also conclude that Child's continued removal from the home does not violate the Parents' constitutional rights to the care, custody, and control of Child or to their rights to the free exercise of religion. The Parents have the right to exercise their religious beliefs, but they do not have the right to exercise them in a manner that causes physical or emotional harm to Child," the decision said.

A case study from Anderson Much of the testimony centered around an Anderson teenager who identifies as a transgender girl. Mary Cox claimed that DCS removed her child from her home, placing her with an affirming foster home, because she and her husband didn't accept their daughter's gender identity.

Cox said her rights had been "trampled by gender ideology in our schools" and her now-adult child was estranged from their family.

"We would not call our (child) by (their) chosen name or pronouns because of our faith and our belief that God created man and woman perfectly in his own image," Cox said, misgendering her child. "Children... are battling this on a daily basis in schools. It is peer driven; it is socially driven. It is driven from medical associations."

Later testimony from Cox's attorney, who represented her in court proceedings against DCS, revealed that the 16-year-old child had said she didn't want to return home to her parents — a factor that may be considered by courts in certain types of cases.

Other speakers

The bill doesn't explicitly mention schools, only DCS, but testimony repeatedly centered on the decisions of schools to not share student name or pronoun preferences with parents. Several other bills filed, but not yet heard, target transgender children in schools.

An Atlanta-based attorney with the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) said the Christian legal organization knew of several parents who had experiences similar to Cox and cited three Indiana school policies directing educators not to disclose children's gender identities to parents.

However, the attorney was unfamiliar with the geographical locations of those schools and couldn't provide more than anecdotes.

The Southern Poverty Law Center designates ADF as an extremist, anti-LGBTQ hate group and the organization actively coordinates anti-transgender legislation across the country, including Indiana's ban on transgender female athletes.

Corrine Youngs, who often testifies on behalf of Attorney General Todd Rokita before the General Assembly, attended the meeting but didn't speak — instead conferring with the ADF attorney throughout the hearing.

Full GOP support for the bill Only the Indiana State Teachers Association testified against the bill, sharing its policy for accepting and affirming of transgender children.

Jerrell Blakeley, the union's director of government, community, race & social justice, said

the bill is trying to solve a problem that isn't there.

"Quite frankly, trans kids exist. No amount of wishing it away is going to change that fact," Blakeley said.

The bill passed the committee along party lines, 9-4, with just one Republican expressing reservations.

"I think gender dysphoria and the gender affirmation journey of a child and family is hard," Rep. Ann Vermilion, R-Marion, said. "They are both walking that journey... letting them walk that journey together with the parent is fundamental. I think that they need to be part of every journey."

Vermilion said she supported the bill to continue the discussion but she would continue to research the issue.

When asked Thursday about the bill, and others like it, House Speaker Todd Huston affirmed the caucus' full support for parental rights bills.

"This piece of legislation is targeted at trans kids," Rep. Vanessa Summers, D-Indianapolis, said before voting no in committee. "You cannot legislate a person's inner feelings and their beliefs of who they are."

The bill now moves for consideration before the full House Chamber.

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BBB Warning: Quest Concrete Generating Lots of Complaints

BBB Serving Central Indiana is warning consumers to exercise caution before doing business with Quest Concrete LLC, a remodeling contractor headquartered in Indianapolis, Ind. The company currently has an "F" rating, the lowest on the BBB scale, due to 18 complaints including a pattern of collecting deposits, leaving projects incomplete, and failing to respond to consumers' concerns.

"I know companies get busy; I just want some communication," said Tony Hueston, a Franklin, Ind. consumer.

Hueston secured a \$12,000 project with the understanding his patio would be poured in eight to ten weeks. After signing his contract, "Quest" failed to provide Hueston a project manager.

Several weeks later, Hueston had yet to receive any sort of sufficient response regarding his project and \$6,000 deposit despite the multiple voicemails left with the business.

When speaking with consumers during BBB's investigation, confusion pertaining to the distinction between Quest Exteriors and Quest Concrete was apparent. BBB discovered Quest Concrete shared various business details with Quest Exteriors such as contact information, building address and office personnel. At one point, Quest Concrete did have a separate phone number and website, however, both were unavailable when BBB attempted to contact the business.

Originally, consumer complaints were filed against Quest Exteriors LLC, but Quest Exteriors notified BBB that complaints should be directed to a separate entity, Quest Concrete.

"Quest Concrete is a wholly separate entity with different ownership structure than that of Quest Exteriors," said Mike Gossett of Quest Exteriors in a statement. "The entity that owns



Quest Exteriors is also a minority owner in Quest Concrete. While I have been actively working with both companies, I have no control over the majority ownership of Quest Concrete or what direction they take the company. For startup purposes both companies ran out of the same office and used some of the same back-office staff until early November."

Gossett further indicated their office had to close in early November due to labor issues brought on by the nationwide raw material shortage of Portland cement (an ingredient used to make concrete). As a result, Quest Concrete was put on a material allocation for five to six weeks from mid-September through late October. Gossett claims Quest Concrete could not continue normal business operations after the five-to-six-week period when the business was unable to perform work.

"Our attorneys are working on the path forward as it relates to Quest Concrete," Gossett continued in its statement to BBB. "As it relates to Quest Exteriors, Quest Exteriors has met and continues to meet all its contractual obligations and did not contract any concrete work with the above-mentioned customers and should not have the complaints attached to its BBB Accreditation."

Quest Exterior's BBB Accreditation was revoked on Dec. 13, 2022 by BBB's Board of Directors due to the business's failure to adhere to two of the requirements BBB Accredited Businesses

must meet and abide by. The first unmet standard relates to transparency, which according to BBB.org, BBB Accredited Businesses must "openly identify the nature, location, and ownership of the business, and clearly and prominently disclose all material facts that bear on a customer's decision to buy." The second requisite pertains to responsiveness where BBB Accredited Businesses must "address disputes forwarded by BBB quickly and in good faith."

Prior to the revocation, BBB found additional information through an Indiana Secretary of State data search shortly after receiving Gossett's statement. The discovery indicated the co-owner of Quest Exteriors, Carie Gossett, is listed as "Manager" on a Change of Principal Address form for Quest Concrete. Quest Exteriors was asked to provide ownership clarification and reliable contact information for Quest Concrete but failed to respond to BBB's request.

As a result, BBB has been unable to identify a complaint handler for Quest Concrete outside of Quest Exteriors, leaving 18 unanswered complaints and a total monetary loss of around \$74,000.

BBB followed up with several complainants in November 2022. During these conversations, the pattern of complaint was discovered, as consumers' concerns pertained to unfulfilled contracts and lack of communication from the business.

Consumer, Justin Barkey, told BBB the business visited his home to begin the job but has since left his yard damaged and without the patio for which he paid a significant deposit. After several attempts to gain answers from Quest Concrete, the Fortville, Ind. resident was met with "excuse after excuse" as to why his project had been delayed, including a broken-down truck, dispatch issues, and the lack of cement powder.

"I am going to have to pay someone to come out and undo what they have done," Barkey stated. "All I want from Quest Exteriors at this point is my deposit money of \$4,500 back and nothing else."

A couple from Fishers shared a similar experience. Amanda and Dan Hackworth found the company online and stated "Quest" came out rather quickly to assess a project in the summer. In June 2022 they put down a \$7,600 deposit and agreed to a contract stating work would begin in five to seven weeks. A. Hackworth claimed they didn't receive much communication about their project after putting the deposit down and were left with quiet waiting periods. In fall 2022, they were told a new project manager was assigned to their project who came out to assess the project one more time. After that visit, all communication from "Quest" ceased and the Hackworths could no longer reach the business.

Indianapolis consumer, Brandi Belucci, put down a \$4,500 deposit when she signed a Quest Concrete contract in June 2022 for a project estimated to take six to eight weeks. However, Quest Concrete pushed the project back several times after their initial agreement.

"I understand that he couldn't complete the job, but he gave us the run around since August, said Belucci. "If he couldn't do the job, he should have just given us our deposit back."

Originally, Belucci assumed they "were just behind," but as of November 2022, she indicated she had been dealing with back-and-forth communication for months and can no longer reach anyone about her concerns.

Consider these tips when hiring anybody to work in your home:

• **Research and gather information.** Search for a contractor's BBB Business Profile at BBB.org for free information on their

history of complaints and read verified customer reviews.

• **Request references.** Ask the contractor for a list of recent local references you may contact to verify the services performed and their overall experience with the contractor and the quality of the work.

• **Ask for multiple quotes.** You should always shop around and get at least three quotes from different businesses. Make sure all bids consider the same set of criteria. Keep in mind, the lowest bid may not necessarily be the best bid; if one bid is significantly lower than the others, the contractor may be cutting corners or may not understand your work requirements.

• **Get it in writing.** Always get estimates in writing and never let any work begin without a written and signed contract. Do not be pressured into signing an agreement before you are ready and make sure you read and understand everything before signing. The contract should include contact information, start and complete dates, a detailed description of the exact work to be done, any material costs, payment arrangements, and warranty information. Specify who is to obtain the necessary building permits and who is responsible for clean-up. Make sure all verbal promises are included in the contract. Never sign an incomplete or partially blank contract.

• **Verify license and insurance.** Ensure the company you decide to hire has the necessary licenses and insurance to work in your region. Your local BBB can help with this. Once you have your contractor's insurance information, call the carrier to confirm appropriate coverage for worker's compensation, property damage, and personal liability in case of accidents.

• **Confirm building permits.** Your contractor

must have the correct permits before starting your project. They will usually obtain the permits, but you will probably pay for them which should be detailed in your contract. Request all final inspections be completed by the local building official prior to final payment.

• **Inquire about a lien waiver.** A lien waiver, in the United States, is a statement from your contractor that says all suppliers and subcontractors have been paid for their work.

• **Think about future service issues.** Make sure you are aware of your warranty coverage and how to deal with service issues.

• **Arrange a payment schedule.** Never pay in full up front. Stagger your payments so your final payment is not due until the project is complete and you have fully inspected the work. Do not pay cash; make sure your check is written to a company, not an individual, or that you use a credit card. Paying with a credit card will provide some recourse should the job not be completed as stated in the contract.

• **Get a receipt.** Request a receipt marked "Paid in Full" when the job is completed, and your final payment made.

• **Keep your contract.** Hold on to your contract for future reference or if any questions arise after the work is complete.

About BBB Serving Central Indiana: The Better Business Bureau has empowered people to find businesses, brands and charities they can trust for over 110 years. In 2021, people turned to BBB more than 200 million times for BBB Business Profiles on 6.3 million businesses and Charity Reports on 25,000 charities, free at BBB.org.

Local, independent BBBs can be found across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, including BBB Serving Central Indiana, which was founded in 1916 and serves 46 counties.

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BETSY From Page A1



Photo courtesy of Beth Pack

Joey Moore and Bella Gomillion of Noblesville, EnPointe Indiana Ballet Pre-Professional Division students, dance to Billy Joel's "This Night" during the Noblesville ballet school's Valentine's program, "Sweet Love," with one more performance at 2 p.m. today.

EnPointe modern and contemporary dance. I popped into dress rehearsals on Thursday night at Noblesville High School. And I was yet again amazed at the school's local talent that could rival any professional dance company across the nation. Some EnPointe students who attend the ballet school's pre-professional program actually hail from across the continent, while others live just minutes away. In this weekend's "Sweet Love" one-and-one-half-hour dance program, there are modern dance pieces and instrumental medleys. There are theatrical pieces from "Mama Mia," "Newsies" and "The Greatest Showman." And for those Billy

Joel fans, there is dancing to Piano Man favorites. Patrons to the show will love the music and dancing. A final performance of "Sweet Love" is at 2 p.m. today (Saturday, Feb. 11) at Noblesville High School Auditorium. Next week, EnPointe students who choose to be in the next dance program, will begin rehearsals for "The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland," which will be on stage June 1 and 2 at the NHS Auditorium. Tickets will go on sale this spring. If you see this weekend's performance, and you like what you see, the Moore family invites you to visit EnPointe ballet school in Noblesville. "Our students are



Photo courtesy of Beth Pack

EnPointe Indiana Ballet school dancers Sage Grimpe of Fishers and Luke Eller of Ypsilanti, Mich., dance to a modern piece during the Noblesville ballet school's Valentine's program, "Sweet Love," with one more performance at 2 p.m. today.

extremely dedicated, which is why all of our performances are designed to give the dancers a full professional company experience rather than a dance school recital," said Anne Moore, who with husband, Chris Moore, co-own the ballet school with Chris' brother and sister-in-law, Robert Moore and Pollyana Ribeiro. Robert Moore, a York, Pa., native, who at age 3 moved to Noblesville with his family for his dad's job with AT&T, moved back to Noblesville with his wife in 2016. He has fond memories of Noblesville, where he as a youth acted in The Belfry Theatre's "Bye Bye Birdie" musical, and first fell in love with ballet, studying under

White River Ballet Co.'s Shannon Jenkins, who became best friends with Moore's mother. "She (Jenkins) found out that I was kind of interested in gymnastics and dabbling in a little bit of ballet. She got wind of that and scooped me up and took me under her wing," Robert Moore told me during a previous interview. When Jenkins could teach him no more, she pushed him to get advanced training. With Jenkins' encouragement, Moore left home at age 14 to audition and study ballet in a pre-professional program at Harid Ballet Conservatory in Boca Raton, Fla., to study ballet. He started his dance career at age 18 with Boston Ballet where



Photo courtesy of Beth Pack

EnPointe Indiana Ballet students dance to the music of "The Greatest Showman" during the Noblesville ballet school's Valentine's program, "Sweet Love," with one more performance at 2 p.m. today.

Want TO GO?
What: EnPointe Indiana Ballet presents "Sweet Love," by Robert Moore, Emily Franks, Jessica Smith and Shauna Boyd.
When: 2 p.m. today.
Where: Noblesville High School, 1811 1 Cumberland Road, Noblesville.
How much: \$10 and up.
Info and tickets: Enpointe.yapsody.com

he met his wife, who was a soloist, and he had just gotten accepted as part of the corps de ballet. Her sister, when she came to visit, pointed out Moore in the ballet company. Shortly after they began dating, she was promoted to principal, they got engaged, and were married in 2002 in Brazil. They danced with Boston Ballet for 14 years, moved onto Pittsburgh Ballet for eight years and finished their

careers in San Francisco. Pollyana was a full-time teacher for the San Francisco Ballet School, and Robert retired from his stage career with the Smuin Ballet. Tickets start at \$10. Visit Enpointe.yapsody.com. Tickets will also be available at the door. Donations are also being accepted today. Contact Betsy Reason at betsy@thetimes24-7.com.

HEALTH From Page A1

in 2020, a 37% increase since 2010 and 144% increase over the past 30 years (1990-2020). Additionally, more than 1.89 million deaths were attributed to Alzheimer's disease and other dementias worldwide in 2020, compared to nearly 9 million deaths from heart disease. "The global rate of brain disease is quickly outpacing heart disease," said Mitchell S.V. Elkind, M.D. M.S., FAHA, the past president of the American Heart Association (2020-21), a professor of neurology and epidemiology at Columbia University's Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and attending neurologist at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center. "We are learning more about how some types of dementia are related to aging, and how some types are due to poor vascular health. It's becoming more evident that reducing vascular disease risk factors can make a real difference in helping people live longer, healthier lives, free of heart disease and brain disease." According to the statistics update, people with midlife hypertension were five times more likely to experience impairment on global cognition and about twice as likely to experience reduced executive function, dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The risk for dementia associated with heart failure was nearly two-fold. Experts recommend maintaining a healthy weight, managing your blood pressure and following other heart-healthy

lifestyle behaviors that can also support good brain health while studies show maintaining good vascular health is associated with healthy aging and retained cognitive function. Optimal brain health includes the ability to perform tasks like movement, perception, learning and memory, communication, problem solving, judgment, decision making and emotion. Cognitive decline and dementia are often seen following stroke or cerebrovascular disease and indicate a decline in brain health. Consider these steps to live a healthier lifestyle and protect your heart and brain health:

- Don't smoke; avoid secondhand smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight. Be mindful of your eating habits; eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and added sugars.
- Be physically active. Start slowly and build up to at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity (such as brisk walking) each week. As an alternative, you can do 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity, or a combination of the two, to improve overall cardiovascular health.
- Get your blood pressure checked regularly and work with your health care team to manage it if it's high.
- Have regular medical checkups and take your medicine as directed.
- Decrease your stress level and seek emotional support when needed.

Learn more about the relationship between heart health and brain health at heart.org.

ANNUAL From Page A1

of the type, Sobel offers the following tips to ensure you get the most from your visit. **Prepare.** Before you go, write down anything you'd like to discuss with your health care provider, including changes to your health over the past year. Bring your prescription and over-the-counter medications with you. Ask plenty of questions and take notes. You might even want to take along a family member, trusted friend or caregiver to ensure you understand everything your provider has shared. **Be open and honest.** It's tempting to make things look rosier than they are when talking to your health care provider, but minimizing what you are feeling can lead to an incorrect diagnosis or prescription. Speak openly about unhealthy habits, like smoking or lack of exercise. Your provider won't judge you. Being honest is the only way your health care provider can help you reach your goals. **Mind mental health.** Your emotional health impacts your physical health. Many people think depression is a natural part of aging, but it doesn't have to be. Talk to your doctor if you are feeling sad, anxious or hopeless. Treatments, such as talk therapy, medication or both, may be covered by Medicare.

Monitor medications. Adults age 65 and older tend to take more medications than other age groups, increasing the risk for adverse reactions, such as cognitive impairment and falls. It's a good idea to take your medications to your annual wellness exam and discuss any potential problems or side effects you're experiencing. Don't forget about over-the-counter drugs, vitamins or nutritional supplements you take. **Schedule screenings and get vaccines.** There are a number of important health screenings and vaccines that you may need depending on your age and gender, such as colon cancer screening, bone density test, mammogram, flu shot or COVID-19 immunization. Ask your provider about the screenings and vaccines you've had already and schedule any you need as soon as possible. You may even be able to do that before you leave the office. Also, don't forget to visit your eye doctor and dentist. These visits are covered by many MA plans as well. Find out more at www.cignamedicare.com. "You wouldn't drive your vehicle without proper preventive maintenance, so please don't ignore preventive maintenance for your most prized possession - your health," Sobel said. "An annual wellness exam is a great place to start!"

RUSTY From Page A1

efits. Overall, the Totalization Agreement is there to help those who work in both countries but aren't fully eligible for benefits. So, it's likely not the Totalization Agreement you take issue with - rather, it is a U.S. Social Security provision called the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). WEP reduces the Social Security retirement benefit of anyone who has a pension earned while not contributing to the U.S. Social Security program. That includes those with foreign pensions, as well as retirees with pensions from US employers who do not participate in the US Social Security program, including older US Federal retirees as well as state-retirees from any of the 26 U.S. state governments which have chosen to exempt their employees from paying into the national Social Security program. Without getting into the details of how the WEP reduction is computed, suffice to say your US Social Security benefit is based only on your earnings from working in the United States but, because you also have a Canadian pension earned without contributing to U.S. Social Security, and you apparently have less than 30 years of U.S. earnings, WEP reduces your U.S. benefit - just

as it does for nearly 2 million U.S. citizens who also have a non-covered pension. Legislation for WEP reform (or repeal) has been introduced in just about every U.S. Congress since WEP became law in 1983, but no such reform legislation has ever been enacted. Most in Congress understand that, although the formula isn't perfect, WEP better equalizes benefits paid to all Social Security recipients, thus helping to fulfill Social Security's original purpose - to mitigate poverty in our elderly population. Do you have any legal recourse? If you mean recourse that will exempt you from WEP or change the U.S. benefit formula to include both your U.S. and Canadian earnings when computing your US Social Security benefit, I do not believe you do. Many U.S. unions representing WEP-affected retirees have been wrestling with this issue for decades, to no avail. WEP can only be changed by an act of Congress, and Congress - for nearly 40 years - has been unwilling to change it. So, while I fully understand your frustration and respect your opinion, unfortunately I cannot be optimistic that your current appeal, nor any legal action you might take, will be successful.

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WEEKEND

In The Home

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Garden Longer With Less Muscle Strain and Fatigue This Year



MELINDA MYERS
Columnist

Keep gardening longer with less muscle strain and fatigue with these pain-free gardening techniques. You'll not only keep your garden looking its best but also make it a more enjoyable experience.

Keep tools handy to reduce the number of trips from the garden back to your garage or shed. A garden tool bag or bucket with a wrap-around tool organizer works well for small hand tools. Purchase a mobile garden tool caddy or convert a discarded wheeled golf bag, shopping cart, or wheeled trash bin into a tool caddy for long-handled tools. These make it easier to keep them handy as you move from garden to garden.

Store small tools right in the garden. Install an old mailbox in your garden filled with your favorite small hand tools and gloves. Then add a little paint or cover it with a mailbox planter or vine to make it an attractive and functional part of your landscape.

Keep tools clean and sharp. Regular maintenance will extend their life and improve their efficiency. It can also help reduce the risk of spreading disease.

Invest in ergonomic tools when replacement or new tools are needed. They have larger and softer handles for easier, less stressful gripping. Many are designed for the proper positioning of your body to reduce joint stress and fatigue. Longer handles extend your reach and help you retain good posture. Consider purchasing ratchet-type pruners designed to give you more cutting power with less effort.

Use wagons, carts, or old snow saucer-type sleds for moving heavy items to the garden. You'll need to make fewer trips, reduce muscle strain, and save energy when moving mulch, potted plants, and other



Photo courtesy of MelindaMyers.com

Kneelers with built-in handles make moving up and down easier, protect joints and allow you to garden longer.

items.

Divide heavy loads into smaller increments. You may need to make more trips, but it will be easier on your back and knees.

When shoveling, be sure to stand upright and take small scoops. Remember to pivot your body rather than twisting when emptying the load. Switch sides and take frequent breaks to reduce the risk of muscle strain, and fatigue.

Protect your knees with kneelers or wrap-around kneepads. No matter your age or physical ability you will benefit now and in the future by protecting your joints when gardening. These gardening accessories also reduce the pain and pressure on your joints. Kneelers with built-in handles make moving up and down easier, allowing you to garden longer.

Include a pair of safety glasses in your tool caddy.

It is too easy to end up with a stick in the eye when pruning and working around trees and shrubs.

Take time to warm up before digging in. Gentle backbends and lunges are great ways to engage your muscles. Adjust your gardening activities to the weather. If it's cold, try waiting for the weather to warm. If you are stiff in the morning, try gardening a bit later in the day.

Garden for shorter periods and try to take breaks every 15 to 20 minutes. Consider adding a few benches to the landscape to encourage you to sit, relax and enjoy your handiwork.

Wear gloves to protect your hands from cuts and bruises. Gloves also keep your hands warm and provide support as you dig, pluck and prune. Find a good-looking comfortable pair that you are likely to wear.

Protect your eyes and skin from sun damage. Wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen. You'll avoid sunburns and protect your skin from long-term damage. Keep yourself hydrated by drinking plenty of water as you garden.

Including these strategies in your gardening efforts can make gardening even more beneficial and enjoyable.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the recently released Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" instant video and DVD series and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.

Chores to Tackle to Get Your Home Ready for Spring

(Family Features) After months spent largely indoors while harsh elements battered your home's exterior, many homeowners are throwing open the windows and embracing spring's arrival.

Every home requires ongoing maintenance to ensure it's living up to its aesthetic and functional best. This checklist can help you create a comfortable home setting for enjoying the warmer months.

Check gutters. During the colder months, debris can accumulate in the gutters, which can be problematic when spring rains arrive. Clogged gutters prevent water from flowing efficiently away from the roof and house. When they're backed up, they can cause water damage in a short amount of time. Faulty guttering can also cause slow leaks that lead to damage you may not discover until major repair work is needed. Properly functioning gutters are clear of debris, flow freely and are securely attached to the home.

Inspect the roof. Your roof takes a real beating in all kinds of weather conditions. Making it a common practice to carefully inspect the roof with the change of seasons can help you identify potential problems while they're still in early stages, before a big storm hits and major damage occurs. Some roof issues can be addressed with simple repairs you can do yourself while others may require a professional. A roofing expert can help you determine whether any trouble areas can be patched or if a more complete restoration is in order.

Replace the dryer vent. Upgrading your dryer vent

is an opportunity to conserve energy and prevent flammable lint build-up in your dryers. One option for updating the exhaust system is a paintable version of InoVate's Prime DryerWallVent. Engineered for both vent replacement and new construction, the vent includes features such as a gravity-assist damper, integrated magnets and a drip edge to provide extra protection from the elements as well as pests.

A large, clean opening and lightweight angled damper promote exceptional airflow efficiency. Service air conditioning units. Your heating and cooling system works hard to keep your indoor climate comfortable when extreme temperatures make the outdoors unbearable. That's why it's important to have your systems serviced by a professional, and spring is a smart time to do so before they're hard at work throughout the warmer months. Service can correct problems and ensure everything is operating efficiently, which can lead to money savings as well.

Repair window screens. Throughout the winter, your home's window screens can accumulate a layer of dirt and grime that isn't just unsightly; it blows indoors when you open the windows to welcome a fresh breeze. What's more, if your screens have rips and tears, pesky bugs and other critters can make their way into your home more easily. Cleaning and repairing your screens can make your home more secure and help protect your indoor air quality.

Find more information to help get your home ready for spring at DryerWallVent.com.

Obituary deadline

The Times publishes obituaries daily at www.thetimes24-7.com, and in its print product every day with the exception of Sundays and Tuesdays. All obituaries must come from a funeral home. A photo may be included and should be sent as a high-resolution JPEG.

Daily obituary deadline is 4 p.m. for the following day's print publication.

To read more obituaries, visit www.thetimes24-7.com.

Flowers Bring Life to Your Home Office

Working from home is here to stay. In recent years, considerable investments have been made in proper home offices. It's important to keep your home office cozy and productive. This is best done with flowers, of course!

Continuing Working from home

started out of necessity, due to COVID-19. But even after the pandemic, businesses continue to focus on working from home. Research shows that working from home is more productive and improves work-life balance. If you are working from home, try to make

your office as cozy as possible!

Important aspects Flowers are important in your workplace. They reduce stress, boost your creativity and make things less businesslike. And whose mood doesn't improve with a colorful bouquet? So, don't hesitate

and seize this excellent reason to bring a bunch of happiness into your home. Spring bloomers such as tulips and hyacinths are guaranteed to lift your mood.

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WEEKEND

In The Home

Weekend, Feb. 11-12, 2023

A7

TIM TIMMONS, Publisher JOE LARUE, Vice-President of Readership MELISSA MEME, Account Executive BETH HEDGE, Business Manager

4 Steps to Live in the Present Every Day

FAMILY FEATURES

Living in the present means celebrating each moment as it happens without worries about the past or anxiety for what the future holds and enjoying life to the fullest. Many people find themselves thinking about what happened yesterday or what might happen tomorrow, making living in the now a challenge.

You can overcome those hurdles and live each day more fully by adopting habits that promote physical and mental well-being, including these suggestions from the experts at Natrol, the No. 1 drug-free sleep aid brand, according to data from Nielsen*.

Regular Exercise

You'll find exercise on virtually every list of self-care advice, and for good reason. Exercise stimulates your body in numerous beneficial ways, not the least of which is getting your heart pumping and oxygen flowing throughout your body, including your brain. Exercise also pairs well with meditation or mindfulness activities, which allow you to align your body's movement with your thoughts and focus on the act of nurturing your body while freeing your mind.

Quality Sleep

Getting quality sleep is linked to improved concentration and productivity, consciously managing your sleep habits can help you be more present each day. Creating a bedtime routine and establishing a comfortable, quiet sleeping environment are important steps. In addition, drug-free sleep aids like Natrol Melatonin products are designed to work with the body's natural cycles and help users fall asleep faster, stay asleep longer and wake up revitalized with a clearer, calmer mind†. Made with clean ingredients and no artificial flavors, sweeteners or preservatives, the line of melatonin products may help you rethink your relationship between sleep and living life to the fullest.

Deep Breathing

Focusing on the here and now can be easier said than done. However, it's possible to train your body and mind to concentrate on specific thoughts and tasks. Deep breathing exercises are an example of physically focusing yourself. Initiating a slow, steady breathing pattern and paying close attention to that rhythm can be an effective way to ward off negativity, whether it's fear, anxiety or another undesirable emotion. Managing your breathing gives you a degree of control that can help you navigate a tricky situation or establish a deeper connection between your body and mind.

Time Management

For many people, the modern world's frenetic lifestyle often demands constant multitasking. However, that continual juggling act makes it virtually impossible to give your full attention to any one aspect of your life. While a full stop to your multitasking tendencies may be impractical, you can carve out time to dedicate your mind more intentionally and completely. You may be surprised by how much joy you derive from simply being present.

Explore more advice and products to help you stay present at Natrol.com.

*Nielsen, xAOC, 52 weeks ending 09/10/22

†These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.



DEVELOP HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS

Healthy sleep begins with 7-9 hours of sleep a night, but there's more you need to know to achieve the sleep you deserve. By getting the recommended amount of sleep and hitting all your sleep stages, you can wake up feeling more refreshed and ready to own the day.

Create healthy sleep habits. Establishing a consistent sleep-wake schedule helps regulate your circadian rhythms and increases your quality of sleep.

Avoid bright screens 60 minutes before bedtime. Exposure to bright LED lights such as smartphones, laptops and TV screens before bed can interfere with your body's natural release of melatonin.

Consider taking a melatonin supplement. When you need a little extra nudge toward dreamland, melatonin may help you fall asleep and stay asleep so you wake up refreshed.†

Create a calm and dark bedroom oasis. A dark, noise-free bedroom can help you sleep better throughout the night. Mask noise pollution with calming sounds and block out disruptive light with darkening curtains or a sleep mask.

Walk or exercise daily. Walking as little as 10 minutes a day can help improve sleep quality.

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