

The Times of Noblesville presents...

# Iceland's Magical Northern Lights



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booking #1232517

March 18 - 24, 2025

Hosted by Dick Wolfsie

**TODAY'S VERSE**

*Psalm 117:1 & 2 O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.*

## Hamilton Happenings

Everyone in the family gets a turn in the 5th annual Top Spinner Contest at Indiana Artisan Gifts & Gallery at 22 N. Rangeline Rd. in Carmel, from 4-8 p.m. June 8. It's just part of the fun during Allied Solutions Meet Me on Main gallery walk in the Carmel Arts & Design District. The contest is free to enter and is open to all ages. Indiana Artisan provides the top. Wood artist Tim Kennedy from Fishers will be on hand to talk about his work and will provide the Top Spinner plaque for the evening's longest spin.

## Three Things You Should Know

- The state legislature has made significant changes to the filing dates for those wishing to run for the school board in the upcoming General 2024 election. The filing period had been from July to August. This year, petitions opened on May 21 and will close at noon on June 20.
- The American Red Cross critically needs blood donors following a concerning trend over the past month – fewer donors rolling up a sleeve to give lifesaving blood. In fact, about 20,000 fewer blood donations were collected over the past month than needed to maintain the Red Cross national blood supply. Make an appointment to give now by visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org), calling 1-800-RED CROSS or by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App.
- During the month of June, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture will accept submissions for the 17th annual Indiana Agriculture Photo Contest. The contest is open to all Indiana residents. The categories photos can be entered under are:
  - On the Farm: Showcasing any building, piece of equipment or activity that is a part of life on an Indiana farm.
  - Faces of Agriculture: Featuring those who grow and produce food, fuel and fiber in Indiana.
  - Agritourism: Spotting Indiana's seasonal and agricultural destinations, such as orchards, wineries and farmers markets.
  - Conservation: Highlighting Indiana's natural beauty with landscapes, water and wildlife.
 Contestants can submit up to five photos in digital format accommodated by a submission form for each photo. Entries must be submitted by 5 p.m. June 30. For more information visit [ISDA.IN.GOV](http://ISDA.IN.GOV)

# The TIMES



NOBLESVILLE, INDIANA

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**BTN** By The Numbers, a look at what's in the news . . . by the numbers. These are just numbers, not suggestions that they mean more or less than what they are. We do not suggest that one number is connected to another. These are simply facts with no extraneous details, bias or slanted reporting. To borrow (and perhaps mangle a bit) a quote from legendary fictional detective Joe Friday, it's just the numbers, ma'am!

## ROLL OUT THOSE . . .

What was it Nat King Cole sang? **Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer** . . . Dust off the sun and moon and sing a song of cheer. By The Numbers takes a look this week at one of our favorite seasons – summer! (And remember Mitch Miller's fun version of this one as well?)

**17**

The number of days until the astronomical first day of summer in the northern hemisphere. For those keeping score at home, summer officially begins on June 20 at 4:51 p.m. here.

**14:59**

The amount of hours of sunlight we should get in Indiana on that first day. Sunrise on June 20 occurs at 6:17 a.m. and sunset follows 14 hours and 59 minutes later at 9:16 p.m.

**94**

That's how long summer lasts this year. We don't know about you, but we'll be enjoying every minute of it until Sept. 22

**2**

The number of degrees our friends at Accuweather tell us that temperatures are forecast to be above historical averages this summer.

**6-1 to 8-31**

Those are the dates for summer, at least the meteorological one. Some meteorologists divide the year into four seasons and use the calendar to do so. Either way, as of this afternoon a little before 5, it's officially summer!

## On Memorial Day, 'Let Us Never Forget'



The Times photo by Betsy Reason

**U.S. Army Vietnam veteran James Martin of Noblesville, the former emcee of many years, returns from the Laying of the Wreath at the Hamilton County War Memorial during last Monday's Memorial Day services in downtown Noblesville.**



**BETSY REASON**  
Columnist

A good crowd gathered last Monday morning for the annual Memorial Day services in downtown Noblesville.

The weather was about perfect but a little cool.

The ceremony is a tradition made possible by the Ralph Lehr Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 6246 and the Noblesville American Legion Frank Huntzinger Post 45.

The Navy Club USA Ship No. 29, the Indiana National Guard, retired military personnel and the Hamilton County Honor Guard are usually among the volunteers.

VFW chaplain James Eichelberger said the opening prayer. This year, Noblesville VFW Quartermaster Mike Cisternino of Noblesville emceed the ceremony that for the past several years has been led by U.S. Army veteran James Martin, who was glad to pass on the duty.

"Our country owes you a debt of gratitude that we can never repay, but at least let us never forget," Cisternino said to the crowd who gathered around the War Memorial.

"Memorial Day has many different meanings to many different people," he said. "For some, it's just a kickoff to the great season of

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**TODAY'S HEALTH TIP**

Applying heat to an injury the first few days can actually make it worse.

Today's health tip was brought to you by Dr. John Roberts.



**TODAY'S QUOTE**

"Dad, a son's first hero and a daughter's first love."  
Unknown

**TODAY'S JOKE**

What's gray, has four legs and a trunk?  
A mouse on summer vacation.

**OBITUARIES**

None

The Times appreciates all our customers. Today, we'd like to personally thank **RICHARD M. DELLINGER** for subscribing!



## OUR GENERATION with the Times

Melissa Shaw's interview with Alison Voss from American Family Insurance

Click to **WATCH NOW**

Be sure to subscribe so you don't miss a single interview!



## Friends of Parks Launches 'Active People' Project

Founded in 2006, the Friends of Hamilton County Parks, Inc. Foundation is entrusted with the stewardship to advance development, promotion, and preservation of public parks and green spaces for the recreational, cultural, and educational benefit of Hamilton County residents and visitors. FHCPA accomplishes this by actively seeking donations, grants, and other financial support through relationships and partnerships with patrons, donors, and granting organizations, sustaining an enthusiastic corps of volunteers, and abiding by informed, visionary and creative practices.

Friends of Hamilton County Parks, Inc. Foundation is excited to announce the launch of the Active People Healthy Hamilton County Campaign.



April Williams

According to the CDC, this project is based on a foundation of inclusion and health equity where physical activity is a universal social norm regardless of age, race, income, socio-economic status, disability status, and geographic location.

proclamation.

"This initiative aligns very well with our board's plan to fill the gaps in needed recreational resources throughout Hamilton County," April Williams, Executive Director of FHCPA, said.

The Friends of Hamilton County Parks Foundation is joining the CDC in their nationwide initiative to get 27 million people more physically active by 2027. The initiative is based on a foundation of inclusion and health equity where physical activity is a universal social norm regardless of age, race, income, socio-economic status, disability status, and geographic location.

FHCPA serves the greater Hamilton County by advocating for parks and recreational resources. FHCPA believes APHHC will create momentum throughout Hamilton County and encourage people to think about the resources around them. Communities will also have an opportunity to vote for their favorite project. A \$50,000 grant toward the chosen project will be announced at a culminating event hosted by FHCPA at the Lucas Mansion in April of 2025.

FHCPA challenged each Hamilton County municipality to propose a project that will align with the APHHC criteria and FHCPA's mission to create recreational amenities and/or "active access" to parks and green space to get people out and moving and enjoy their recreational resources.

"We're thrilled to be the collaborative platform to bring our municipalities together in making Hamilton County an even healthier place to play," Bruce Snyder, President and a founding member of FHCPA, said.

Each Hamilton County city or town is launching the campaign with a

"Recreation is one of the best medicines for both physical and mental health."

## Students Recognized by Governor



Photo courtesy Noblesville Schools

Congratulations to (L-R) Alden Newby and Connor Lehman for receiving a work ethic award from Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb. The award recognizes outstanding achievements, the ability to persevere through challenges, positive attitude, service to others and commitment to school and community. The students are part of the Noblesville Schools Limitless program for young adults with special needs and they earned more than 200 hours of work training with Wyndham Hotel, Embassy Suites, Fueled for School, Noble Cause Food Pantry, Salvation Army and Perkins Restaurant. Limitless students lobbied state representatives, the Indiana Department of Education, and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development to have their work training efforts be recognized. These students are the first to receive the Governor's Work Ethic Certificate and thanks to their efforts future Limitless students will also now qualify for consideration. They were recognized at a class celebration with parents, school leaders, and state government representatives.

## School Board Candidate Filing Dates Changed

The state legislature has made significant changes to the filing dates for those wishing to run for the school board in the upcoming General 2024 election. The filing period had been from July to August. This year, petitions opened on May 21 and will close at noon on June 20.

Candidates interested in running for the school board must gather at least 10 signatures from registered voters within their school district. The required

documentation includes the Can-34 petition form and the Can-12 Statement of Economic Interest. Both forms are essential for a complete submission and must be filed with the Hamilton County Clerk's Office.

For additional information or assistance with the filing process, candidates can visit the Hamilton County Clerk's Office or go to <https://hamiltoncounty.in.gov/224/Candidates-Resources>



## BETSY

From Page A1



Noblesville Veterans of Foreign Wars Quartermaster Mike Cisternino of Noblesville emcees and calls VFW chaplain James Eichelberger to do the opening prayer



Noblesville Police Officer Josh Blocher (from left), Hamilton County Honor Guard member Angela Lovins, Marine Corps Bugler Victor Alvarez of Noblesville and Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen chat and pose for a photo at the Hamilton County War Memorial



The Times photos by Betsy Reason

Congresswoman Victoria Spartz of Noblesville speaks to the crowd at the Hamilton County War Memorial during last Monday's Memorial Day services in downtown Noblesville.

summer and a preview of all the great times we'll have with family and friends ... For others and many gathered here, it's a reminder of the great sacrifices of so many family members, friends, comrades who paid the price for freedom with their own lives. For some, it's merely a day off work to rest their bodies...."

Cisternino suggested another meaning: "Memorial Day itself is a solemn promise to never forget the sacrifices made on our behalf. But may it also be a pledge to honor the legacy of our fallen heroes by upholding the principles for which they fought and died."

He said, "One way we can honor that legacy is to not ignore or forget the sacrifices of so many that are standing here today. We are all lucky enough that we made it home. But many of you left pieces of yourselves in battlefields all over the world. You've left behind physical abilities and ... your own inner peace ... on deserts, in jungles and at sea."

Cisternino said, "On this Memorial Day .... Let us honor the sacrifices of our fallen heroes by renewing our commitment to helping all veterans in need."

Noblesville Mayor Chris Jensen was welcomed to the service. "It's an absolute honor to stand here today, yet again, as we honor and thank those who served our country," Jensen said. "I'm proud that we live in a state and in a city that truly acknowledges the meaning of this weekend."

Jensen said, "I'm so proud to be the mayor of a city that's home to 77,000 people who have diverse opinions, who have strong opinions. I hear those strong opinions often. But what a blessing it is to have a country and a city and a state that allows for strong opinions. How lucky are we to live in a city that's constantly marked by the flag around our historic downtown square ... I feel lucky to live in a city that honors our veterans, not just on this weekend or weekend in July or weekend in November but also on days throughout our year."

Congresswoman Victoria Spartz of Noblesville is always a faithful guest at the Memorial Day service in her city of residence. "Memorial Day is a day of remembrance," she said as she took centerstage in her patriotic red dress and blue jacket. "Remember those who are no longer with us. Remember what they fought for. We remember the sacrifice they made for us. Also remember their legacy and why this is important. It is important because they fought for us to carry on our freedom. We need to teach our children this courage, because that is the most important virtue, is the courage. That is what makes us the greatest country in the world because we had courage and were willing to go and fight for our freedom." She thanked all veterans in attendance, including

➔ See BETSY Page A4

## NOBLESVILLE BABE RUTH BASEBALL 2024 Fall Ball Season

**When:** August 17th/18th - October 5th/6th, 2024  
• 7 game season to be played on weekends  
• Weekday games may be scheduled based on interest or in the event of rainouts  
• Single-elimination tournament played the weekend of Oct. 5 & 6

**Where:** Noblesville Babe Ruth Facility - Logan and Emmerson Fields Forest Park, Noblesville

**Who:** Everyone - 7th-8th Grade and 9th-12th Grade (based on 2024-2025 School Year Enrollment)  
• 7th - 8th Grade Rec League  
• 9th - 12th Grade Rec League  
\* **Note:** Post HS players are not eligible for Fall Ball  
• There is no Travel Division for the 2024 Fall Ball season

**Cost:** \$90 per individual registration (plus processing fee applied at checkout)  
\* **Note:** Registration does not include jersey or hat. Teams are free to choose their own jerseys/hats (if desired), but the cost is not included with the registration fee.

How Do I Register?

[www.noblesvillebaberuthbaseball.com](http://www.noblesvillebaberuthbaseball.com)

Thank You For Reading The Times



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# White River Paddle Days Coming to Noblesville



For decades, the White River has been enjoyed by thousands seeking adventure or a relaxing summer afternoon, but nearby organizations are looking to shake things up a bit.

The White River Alliance is kicking things into high gear with the 2024 Paddle Days and Festival Races from June 14-16 at locations in Daleville, Indianapolis and Noblesville. The festival lasts for three days, filled with live music and plenty of opportunities to get out on the water and race with friends and family.

The Alliance is a 16-county consortium of local governments, industries, utilities, universities, agriculture organizations and regional community members that work together to steward the river and its watershed. Their ultimate goal is to protect and improve the quality of water resources in central Indiana.

Maintaining the quality of the water is essential for agricultural and safe community use, but there's limited financial support and ever-changing regulations. "Getting people out and recreating on the water is the first step to getting more folks invested in water issues," explained London Heist, the White River Alliance's Community Outreach Coordinator. "These races are a great way to get more people interacting with our waterways, making them more likely to care about water quality and its advocacy."

By drawing in new visitors, they hope to expose locals to the importance of having accessible water sources and nature

conservation.

Awards will be handed out to the first three finishers by boat type: canoes, tandem kayaks and kayaks. If your team races in themed outfits or costumes, you will be entered for a chance to win the team spirit award. Enter all three races at Daleville's Canoe Country, Indianapolis's Frank's Paddlesports Livery and Noblesville's White River Canoe Company, and you will be entered for the participation award.

Participants and spectators can also earn points through the free Discover White River Rewards Pass by attending any of the races, which can be redeemed for exclusive prizes like stickers, t-shirts and on-water experiences.

Registration for the event is required for all paddlers and will cover canoe or kayak rentals, food, entertainment and fundraising for the Alliance.

In addition to the White River Paddle Days and Festival, the Alliance's programs include the Indiana Water Summit, the national Clear Choices Clean Water® program, the River Assessment Field Team (RAFT) and several other regional public engagement and professional training programs.

As more people are moving to Indianapolis and its surrounding cities, there's many opportunities to introduce newcomers and long-time residents to what all White River has to offer. Anyone of any canoeing or kayaking experience is welcome to join in on the fun.

To learn more about the White River Alliance and its mission, visit [thewhiteriveralliance.org](http://thewhiteriveralliance.org).

# Westfield Schools Break Ground

Westfield Washington Schools recently held a groundbreaking ceremony for the much-anticipated expansion of the Virginia F. Wood Early Learning Center and the renovation of the Monon Athletic Fields. The event marks a significant milestone for the district and the rapidly growing city of Westfield, which is the sixth fastest-growing city in the United States.

The Virginia F. Wood Early Learning Center, which opened its doors in 2022, quickly reached full capacity, underscoring the need for expansion. The center has 330 children enrolled and provides essential services including daycare for district staff's children starting at 8 weeks old, speech therapy, developmental preschool, and a pre-kindergarten program called All Aboard. The expansion project will add 13 new classrooms, multi-purpose rooms, offices, and storage, as well as an enlarged playground enclosed at the center of the facility. Additionally, the administration wing will see a small office addition, and significant improvements will be made to the soccer, rugby, and baseball fields at the Monon Athletic Fields.

"Today's groundbreaking is a testament to our commitment to providing exceptional educational opportunities for our youngest Rocks," Superintendent Dr. Paul Kaiser said. "This expansion will allow us

to better serve our community and accommodate the growing number of families choosing Westfield Washington Schools."

Marci Derado, Director of Early Learning, highlighted the impact on the community. "These early education programs have been a cornerstone for early childhood education in Westfield," she said. "This expansion ensures that we can continue to meet the needs of even more children and provide a nurturing environment for them to thrive."

The client services manager for CORE Construction, Brice Johnson, said his company was excited to help. "As a father to a toddler, I know how important the early years of education are to our little ones. Our team at CORE is honored to help expand the thriving early learning environment at Westfield Washington Schools with this project. The design and construction team has been hard at work to prepare for this day and we can't wait to see this project come together."

The expansion and renovation projects come at a pivotal time for the district, which has seen an influx of 550 new students this school year alone. As Westfield continues to grow, the improvements to the Early Learning Center and athletic fields will play a crucial role in maintaining the district's reputation as the top destination district in Indiana.

# Meyer Najem Announces ESOP

Meyer Najem, one of central Indiana's most trusted construction company's, is proud to announce their transition to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), marking a significant milestone in the company's history.

"An ESOP approach allows even more incentive for our employees to stay and grow here," said Founder and CEO Anthony Najem. "This transition supports our plans for strategic growth, ensuring we remain competitive and resilient in a rapidly changing market."

The decision was made to further empower employees, foster a culture of shared responsibility and collective success, and position the company for even more stability and growth.

"Starting as a Project Manager and Estimator in 1988, then on to becoming President and Partner, and now seeing our transition to an ESOP has been an incredible journey," said President Tim Russell.

Meyer Najem was founded in 1987 by Anthony Najem and Karl Meyer. Since then, the organization has grown by taking

care of their employees, focusing on culture, safety, and making a positive impact in the communities they serve. Meyer Najem's dedication to these core values has been the driving force behind their success and will continue to guide the future.

The company's first project was Ellenberger Park Ice Rink Enclosure in Indianapolis. Since then, Meyer Najem has expanded into several markets, project types and delivery models in central Indiana and the southeastern United States. Some notable partnerships include the Veterans Health Administration and countless municipalities, school corporations and healthcare systems.

Coming in at number five, Meyer Najem was recently recognized as one of the IBJ's Fastest Growing Companies and as a Top Workplace in Indiana and Florida by the USA Today, accomplishments that underscore their commitment to excellence.

"Our commitment to our employees, our clients, and our community remains stronger than ever," said Founder and Chairman of the Board, Karl Meyer.

**We appreciate our readers!**

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# Stubby is Gone Home Alone Four



**CARRIE CLASSON**  
The Postscript

It may be that Stubby is gone for good.

In the summer of 2022, I started writing about my mother's new pet, a red squirrel who she reluctantly began to care for.

My parents live on 20 acres in the woods up north in a house my father designed when he retired 35 years ago. The house looks over the lake and, for most of the winter, my parents have few neighbors, except for the birds at their feeder and the deer making their way through the deep snow and, of course, red squirrels.

Red squirrels are not friendly, like chipmunks. They are more rascally than gray squirrels. They are timid around people and aggressive around other squirrels and they will eat all the bird food they can get their paws on. My mother was not a fan of red squirrels.

But when one particular red squirrel began hanging around my parents' house, my mother began to reconsider. Their relationship got off to a rocky start when the red squirrel tossed pine-cone seeds on my father's head and dug up my mother's flowerpots and made a terrible mess of the deck.

But, after the mysterious loss of his tail, my mother began to feel sorry for this little scoundrel. She began to leave him a few seeds on the railing. Eventually, the red squirrel, who we decided to call "Stubby," became quite attached to my mother, and would stand with its little paws knit together, looking into the window after my mother left seeds out for him on the railing.

Stubby now appears to be missing.

There is another red squirrel and, as hard as my mother would like to believe otherwise, it is not Stubby.

"Could it be that his tail has grown back?" my

mother asked.

I'd heard of salamanders growing new tails, but this seemed unlikely in a red squirrel. We both stood silently at the window for a long time, trying to convince ourselves that this was Stubby—thinner after the long winter, with a new scar on his side and a much longer tail. But we knew it was not Stubby.

"I saw two squirrels chasing each other around," my mother said. "I thought one of them was Stubby. Do you think this squirrel chased him away?"

Of course, I didn't know. I didn't even know how long red squirrels lived. Three years, I later learned, is average, although some have lived up to 10 years in captivity. But even with a steady supply of seeds, I don't think Stubby was living under optimum conditions. Somebody had already gotten the end of his tail, after all. And we have no idea how old he was when that happened.

"Where could he have gone?" my mother wondered aloud.

We do not know, and I don't suppose we ever will. I had hoped Stubby would be around this summer, tossing more pine-cone seeds onto our heads and peering earnestly at my mother through the window. I would like to believe that, after an extended convalescence, Stubby was well enough to seek out new territory, perhaps find a mate, start a new life with his refashioned tail.

But I know that none of this is likely. And it makes me sad.

Stubby was a good friend to my mother. He made a big impression with his short life and his short tail and his surprisingly courteous manners. He was a fine example of how we can rebound from tragedy, make new and unexpected friends and behave better than people expect.

Till next time, Carrie



**DICK WOLFSIE**  
Funny Bone

This is the longest time I have ever been home alone. My wife is in Boston with my sister,

Linda. Before Mary Ellen left, she gave me precise directions on what to do and what not to do. My wife hopes that when she returns from her trip, she will walk into a house that looks somewhat like the one she left.

Mary Ellen's plane gets in this Saturday at 3:45 pm. She should walk in the door at about 4:30 pm. Our housekeeper is scheduled to leave that day at 4:15, just before Mary Ellen arrives. After Nettie leaves, I am not allowed to cook anything or open the fridge. I can't walk out the front door and then come back in the house unless I take off my shoes. And if I go outside barefoot, then I'm not allowed to come back in the house at all.

Mary Ellen is particularly concerned with our cat, Angel. This cat hates me. Every time she sees me she snarls and her hair stands up on her back. She tries to bite me when I come near Mary Ellen. That's why I haven't kissed my wife good night in 14 years.

But Mary Ellen wants me to play with Angel because she doesn't want Angel to miss her too much, get bored, or wish she had someone to snuggle with. Hey, what about me? That's in the rules, as well. I'm not allowed to have anyone to snuggle with.

After Mary Ellen had been gone about a week, I sent her this note:

Hi Mary Ellen,

I just wanted to update you on what's going on here at home...

Angel is fine. She did get out once, but she seems very content to be on the roof. I'm sure she'll be okay, even if we have that expected tornado.

\*\*\*

I borrowed your Prius

one day to save on gas.

Bad news: I hit a guy in the rear. Good News: No damage to your car. He was a pedestrian.

\*\*\*

When I came home the other day I heard this dinging noise in the house. I thought that maybe Angel was playing with her toys. But no, it was the fridge signaling me the freezer door had been left open. But only for 12 hours. Don't worry, I refroze everything that had melted. Then someone told me this wasn't a safe thing to do. You might want to google every item on the list attached to see which foods are deadly to refreeze.

\*\*\*

I am proud that I ran the dishwasher all by myself. I couldn't find the dishwasher soap you said to use so I just put in some liquid hand soap. Did you know bubbles can stick to the ceiling? The house is so festive now. We should do this next Christmas.

\*\*\*

The lawn has not been cut in two weeks. Not my fault. We have no mower. I left the garage door open one night. All my beer is gone, too. I hope whoever took all my winter coats off the garage rack will donate a few to kids who need them. Spring is here, so I'm sure the crook will find good use for all your gardening tools.

\*\*\*

Finally, our son is doing great. He just pulled into the driveway. He's going up on the roof to chase Angel.

\*\*\*

Well, I hope you are having a great vacation. All is good, here.

Dick

- Dick Wolfsie spent his career sharing his humor, stories and video essays on television, radio and in newspapers. His columns appear weekly in The Times. E-mail Dick at Wolfsie@aol.com.

## BETSY

From Page A2

recognizing her neighbor, for being at the service.

Spartz ended by saying: "May God bless this great United States of America."

Veteran James Martin of Noblesville, the former emcee of many years, did the Laying of the Wreath. The ceremony was followed by a 21-gun salute and Taps and a remembrance service

at Crownland Cemetery. There was no service at Riverside Cemetery this year due to construction of the East Bank project. A pitch-in lunch followed at the VFW.

-Betsy Reason writes about people, places and things in Hamilton County. Contact The Times Editor Betsy Reason at [betsy@thetimes24-7.com](mailto:betsy@thetimes24-7.com).

## WHS Senior Recognized at Youth Service Awards



Senior Keegan Connor from Westfield High School was awarded the 31st Annual Hamilton County Youth Service Award recently. The ceremony was sponsored by the Hamilton County Commissioners and the Hamilton County Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs (HCCOAO). Connor was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

Connor is a member of the Thespian Honor Society, National Honor Society, and a dance captain for her school's show choir. She is currently Miss Indiana's Teen and has performed in numerous musical theater productions. Connor considers her greatest accomplishment to be the creation of her nonprofit Keegan Cares: Advocating for Scoliosis Awareness. She has partnered with State Rep. Victoria Garcia Wilburn (D-Fishers) on House Bill 1054, also known as the "Keegan Cares Bill."

It would create guidelines for scoliosis screenings for children between 9- and 13-years of age.

Six other students were nominated for the Youth Service Award by their school's counseling department. The other nominees include Sydney Schultz representing Carmel High School, Drew Wheeler from Fishers High School, Andrew Morrison from Hamilton Heights High School, Gloria Lane from Hamilton Southeastern High School, Maya Narsinghani from Noblesville High School, and Gage West from Sheridan High School. They will each receive a \$300 scholarship.

"We are proud of each of the applicants that have chosen to lead a drug free lifestyle and contribute their time to help make positive changes in the lives of others," says Monica Greer, executive director of HCCOAO.

## NHS Lion Leos Raise \$625



Photo courtesy Noblesville Kiwanis

Last week the Lion Leo Club sold coffee and baked goods before school as a fundraiser. They made \$625. The club is guided by sponsor Lion John Smith, a NHS teacher. From left, Izzy Nealy, Diya Nair, Cristina Andrews, Hannah Dugan, Ella Miller, Ella Rinker and Alanna Puckett

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# 2024 Lexus RX450H+ is The Sumptuous Luxury Electric Crossover That Can Travel Near and Far



**CASEY WILLIAMS**  
Auto Reviews

A well-respected automotive journalist recently went on a rant about plug-in hybrids. To his point, they're not efficient. When running as an EV, they must tote around an unnecessary gas engine. And, when running in gas mode, it's lugging heavy batteries. I'm all in with his logic... until I have to plug in somewhere away from my garage. While I may like owning a Tesla Model Y, Cadillac Lyriq, or Genesis GV60, it might be easier to own a Lexus RX450H+ plug-in hybrid.

### Evolved Lexus Style

Let's pause for a moment to remember the RX pretty-much invented luxury crossovers in the late '90s, and when Lexus joined its corporate parent Toyota in offering hybrids, the RX was one of the first to gain batteries for compact car fuel economy. Like its powertrain, design has evolved progressively over the generations.

If you parked the original RX next to this one, you'd recognize similar high arching

profiles, but a large monochrome spindle grille, 21" wheels, accentuated bodylines, and floating roof add distinction today. Squinty LED taillamps and thin-line taillamps underlining LEXUS lettering across the power-opened hatch connect the RX to other Lexus crossovers.

Lush interiors are a Lexus hallmark, and the RX450h impresses with sueded swaths on the dash and doors, sueded leather seats, and a wood-and-leather steering wheel. Light woodgrain trim lends an airy atmosphere. Add to that heated/ventilated front seats, heated steering wheel, and heated rear seats for carnal luxuries that extend to the panoramic glass moonroof and drenching Mark Levinson audio system. The RX is a serene place to travel.

It also has all of the latest technology. A 14" touchscreen intuitively conjures conjure navigation, phone, radio, and media. Thank Lexus the decrepit joy-mouse has been retired. Wireless connections through Apple CarPlay and Android Auto plus wireless console

charging add convenience.

Safety starts with a head-up display but also includes adaptive cruise, automatic emergency braking, and rear cross path detection with auto brake. Blind spot warning, lane tracing, and safe exit assist go further. It's all great, but I could do without the constant beeping and buzzing as I no longer require a nagging mother and auto brake was a pain when backing past a bush to my home charger. Wouldn't have it!

### Go-anywhere Hybrid Powertrain

So, what about that powertrain? Plug it into a 240v "Level 2" charger to get 37 miles electric range, after which the 2.5-liter gasoline engine fires up to form the basis of a normal hybrid. Total system rates 304 horsepower. Employing the full range of batteries, motors, and gasoline engine, delivers 83-MPGe. Off the grid, expect 35-MPG combined. All-wheel-drive keeps this energy display moving no matter the weather.

I spent an entire week driving the RX450h and didn't burn a drop of gasoline. I commuted to work, ran errands, dropped my daughter at school, and carried her to piano lessons. With chargers at home and work, it was easy to plug and play. Acceleration is anything but brisk, and the suspension can be a bit firm, but it's all fine for daily jaunts. And, had I decided to drive to, say Alaska, I could have done so without looking for another plug.

It makes no sense to use two unique powertrains for one vehicle, but until we have reliable chargers, plug-in hybrids like the RX450H+ are super convenient. The fact this crossover does it with all the style and luxury expected from a Lexus makes it all the better. While the RX starts at a reasonable \$49,950, our 450H+ comes to a lofty \$76,505. At that price, compare against the Volvo XC90 Recharge, Mercedes-Benz GLE 450e, and BMW X5 xDrive50e.

*Storm Forward!*

Send comments to Casey at [AutoCasey@aol.com](mailto:AutoCasey@aol.com); follow him on YouTube @AutoCasey.



### 2024 Lexus RX450h+

Five-passenger, AWD Crossover  
Powertrain: 2.5-liter I4 Hybrid  
Output: 304hp combined  
Suspension f/r: Ind/Ind  
Wheels f/r: 21"/21" alloy  
Brakes f/r: regen disc/disc  
EV Range: 37 miles  
Fuel economy gas/hybrid: 35/83-MPGe  
Assembly: Fujikoka, Japan  
Base/as-tested price: \$49,950/76,505

### Likes

- Lush interior
- All-electric range
- Advanced safety

### Dislikes

- Polarizing design
- Firm suspension
- How much \$\$\$???

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# Fishers Surprises Teachers With \$50,000 in Grants

Fishers Mayor Scott Fadness visited local schools this past week to surprise seven teachers with more than \$50,000 in funding as part of the new Educator Innovation Grant program. The program launched this year, with \$500,000 allocated from the 2024 budget to empower educators within HSE Schools with the resources to bring innovation to the classroom and inspire students to rethink learning.

Recent grant recipients included:

- **John Hochstetler (5th grade teacher at Riverside Intermediate):** \$35,000 to modernize the school's makerspace to better support its STEM program, which centers upon environment, agriculture, and engineering. Along with funding renovations to the makerspace, the grant will also fund professional development workshops for educators within the space, teaching them to adapt curriculum and utilize the new equipment for project-based activities to ensure longevity of the makerspace and STEM curriculum within Riverside Intermediate.
- **Anthony Sturgeon and Kevin Stumpf (7th grade teachers at Fishers Junior High School):** \$1,500 for professional development at the Library of Congress on implementing Primary Sources in the classroom. This professional development opportunity will assist Sturgeon and Stumpf with leading civics education in the classroom and the We the People team at Fishers Junior High. HSE Schools has historically put forth strong performances at We the People competitions nationally—both at the junior high and high school levels. This opportunity allows Sturgeon and Stumpf to better prepare students for We the People in junior high as they progress to high school.
- **Heather Butz (8th grade teacher at Fishers Junior High School):** \$600 to attend 1st Amendment Professional Development at the Constitutional Center in Philadelphia. As a We the People teacher, Butz anticipates this professional development

opportunity will help her better prepare students for We the People competitions and continue to deliver strong performances nationally.

- **Ashley Eaton (4th grade teacher at Southeastern Elementary):** \$1,095 to bring the Orff-Schulwerk Method of Teaching Elementary Music to her fourth-grade classes. The Orff Schulwerk Method of Teaching is an innovative form of music education that allows students to learn music in a hands-on, interactive, and creative way. The method incorporates singing, movement, instruments, composition, and improvisation to lay a strong foundation for students' future musical endeavors.
- **Jennifer Suskovich (Teacher-in-Residence at Fishers Maker Playground):** \$6,000 to purchase two 3D printers for the Fishers Maker Playground to enhance science education for fifth grade students around the HSE Schools district. The Maker Playground 5th Grade Study Trip at Hub & Spoke provides hands on STEM activities for students to prepare them for future careers in STEM fields. The investment in 3D printers will further impact students' creativity, problem solving, and technology literacy skills learned at the Maker Playground.
- **Jennifer Harmon (2nd grade teacher at Geist Elementary):** \$6,300 to implement Vex Robotics, computer science and coding with Geist Elementary students. Students will learn algorithms, loops, engineering, problem solving, design thinking, and more. Harmon would like to continue building upon the investment until Geist Elementary has a strong coding program, to prepare students for intermediate, junior high, and high school with foundational STEM skills.

The City has awarded more than \$80,000 in grant funding to ten educators to date. In April, three educators were awarded more than \$30,000 in grant funding for projects including bringing the LEGO Education SPIKE program to the classroom, a pilot virtual reality

program, and a STEM lab expansion and robotics program. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and there is no funding cap on project requests.

"I'm thrilled that our local educators are seizing this opportunity and pursuing projects that not only enhance learning in their classrooms, but also demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning through professional development," said Mayor Fadness. "Their innovation, creativity, and passion are inspiring and speaks to the excellence of the HSE Schools system."

Grants are awarded by a selection committee comprised of former educators from HSE Schools, community entrepreneurs, and HSE alumni. Committee members include Mike Fassold (retired junior high educator); Kaleigh Arndt (former elementary educator); Brad Jackson (retired junior high educator); Amy Murch (Conner Prairie teacher in residence); Jordin Alexander (HSE alum and City of Fishers Chief of Staff).

Learn more about the grant program at [fishersin.gov/InnovationGrant](https://fishersin.gov/InnovationGrant).

# Beckwith Plans to Change Property Tax System

Micah Beckwith, Republican candidate for Lt. Governor, announced that he will lead the fight to make Indiana affordable again by using all of his influence to lower property taxes. As the next Lt. Governor, Beckwith will push to end property taxes for seniors and veterans and freeze property taxes at the point of purchase.

"We need to make Indiana affordable. Too many of our citizens are being taxed out of their homes by surging property taxes. It has been said that ending the property tax surge is complicated and hard. I have always believed that when there is a will there is a way," Beckwith said. "As the next Lt. Governor, I will have the energy and determination to provide relief. I will use my business experience to find a solution to the problem that will end property taxes for our seniors who have paid their entire life and for veterans who put their lives on the line to protect our freedoms. I will also work to cap property taxes at the time of point of purchase.

Our state has been running ahead of projected tax revenue for a few years. It is time to find a way to stop surging property tax bills. It could not

be more critical with inflation soaring. Our seniors are having to decide between food on the table or a roof over their head. That's wrong. I will provide the leadership to end this over taxation," he added. Beckwith's plan is to:

- End property taxes for seniors over the age of 65 who have lived in Indiana for over 10 years.
- End property taxes for veterans who served our nation for 10 years
- Cap property taxes at the same level as when the home was purchased.

"As a homeowner and like so many Hoosiers, I fear when I get the updated mortgage statement on how much our monthly payment has increased due to increases in property taxes and insurance. I know how this takes a huge bite out of family budgets," Beckwith said. "It is time to put government spending on a permanent diet to make Indiana affordable again."

Beckwith is a devoted husband, proud father, pastor and small business owner. He and his wife Susan and their two children have been serving Hamilton County and surrounding areas for over 15 years. He is a graduate of Huntington University with a degree in

business and economics. Currently, Beckwith teaches a high-school constitutional literacy class for a Christian school in Carmel. He also co-hosts the popular podcast "Jesus, Sex and Politics" with Pastor Nathan Peternel.

Beckwith is an inspirational speaker and has served as the keynote speaker for several not-for-profit and community groups and over the past year has toured the state as an advocate for healthcare freedom. He currently serves in leadership positions for several organizations, including: Noblesville Campus Pastor for Life Church, Executive Director of Indiana Family Action PAC, Co-Founder of Indiana Coalition Conservatives, Indiana Chairman of U.S. Term Limits, and Executive Director of Hoosier Leadership Series.



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# Big Ten Football Going Head to Head with High School' Friday Night Lights



**KENNY THOMPSON**  
Columnist

The Big Ten Conference's lottery winnings - a.k.a. the \$7 billion to be paid by Fox, CBS and NBC

over the next seven years - comes at a price that trickles down to just about every community in central Indiana.

Seeking to receive the most return on its investment, Fox has mandated a series of Friday night football games beginning Sept. 13. With two exceptions, these games will kick off at 8 p.m. or right about halftime of our local high school football games.

Unlike their college peers, high school athletic departments need to raise every dollar possible to fund their teams. Helmets, shoulder pads and cleats don't come cheap.

I won't be the old man yelling at the clouds but Friday nights used to be traditionally off limits for major college football. Fans could support their local high schools without having to look down at their phones to check the Purdue or Indiana score.

In a development that shouldn't shock anyone in Big Ten country, fans at Michigan, Ohio State and Penn State won't have to worry about Friday night football. Those schools have the clout, and the bank accounts, to say no to Fox.

Thirteen of the now "Big 18" didn't have a choice. Indiana is the only other conference school that won't have a Friday night game on Fox in 2024. Had Michael Penix not gone off to the NFL, the Hoosiers' Oct. 26 home matchup with Washington might have been more attractive than USC vs. Rutgers at 11 p.m. EST the night before.

Purdue has two Friday night games, Oct. 18 in Ross-Ade Stadium against Oregon and Nov. 22 at Michigan State. High school regular season finales take place on Oct. 18 across Indiana.

Five of the schools in The Times' area have home games on Oct. 18. Noblesville hosts Avon, Westfield welcomes Franklin Central, Hamilton Heights takes on perennial Class 3A power West Lafayette, Brownsburg travels to Hamilton Southeastern and Carmel hosts Lawrence Central.

Sheridan and Guerin Catholic head into Purdue country that night with games at Carroll and Lafayette Central Catholic, respectively. Fishers travels to Zionsville.

IHSAA football semistate games are scheduled for Nov. 22.

### Big Ten football gossip

Every week, college football media ask coaches to discuss their upcoming opponent. Every week, that coach always praises the opponent even if it is 0-11 and has no chance of winning. Think Lou Holtz at Notre Dame when he was asked about the Fred Akers-Jim Colletto Purdue teams of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Not interested in coach speak, Athlon Sports offered anonymity to Big Ten coaches to be candid about the league's 18 schools. Surprisingly, Purdue and Indiana are viewed mostly positively coming into the 2024 season.

Ryan Walters' reputation as a defensive coach has raised some expectations in Year 2 with the Boilermakers.

"Watch these guys for a

defensive breakout. They didn't fully understand the system Ryan installed in Year 1. They've brought in some really talented transfers, and a lot of their key guys are back. This is going to be the identity of their team."

"The freshman safety from last year (Dillon Thieneman) who was All-American, he's their kind of guy. That's their model."

"Hudson [Card] is a solid and experienced quarterback, and he's got another year under his belt in (offensive coordinator Graham) Harrell's system."

"They need to develop the O-line and receivers better, but expect them to improve overall this season."

Most of Indiana's positive vibes are the result of bringing in coach Curt Cignetti from James Madison to replace Tom Allen.

"There's a lot of talk about the program for the first time since any of us can remember."

"Cig is a really good hire; it shows that the school wants to be competitive and respectable in football. They're taking football seriously in NIL, too."

"They brought in a few studs from James Madison, and they've worked the portal well."

"The competition level in this league is still above them, but they should look more talented, especially on offense. The MAC quarterback (Kurtis Rourke) is pretty solid."

"If you're setting reasonable Year 1 expectations, I'd look for them to build an offensive identity to help recruiting."

### Big jump for Purdue recruit

The latest addition to the Purdue tradition of 7-footers, incoming 7-3 freshman Daniel

Jacobsen, played his way onto the USA Basketball U18 National Team this week.

In recognition of that accomplishment, and perhaps admitting his recruiting service severely underrated Jacobsen, Adam Finkelstein of 247Sports announced Jacobsen's ascension to No. 86 in the Class of 2024. Three weeks ago, Jacobsen was the 149th overall prospect in the 247Sports ratings.

"(Jacobsen) has always been an intriguing prospect thanks to his combination of size and skill. But, there was always a bit of a gap between his potential and production," Finkelstein writes.

"This week in Colorado Springs, we didn't see the tallest player on the floor drift out to the 3-point line or be reluctant to assert himself in the paint like we have sometimes in the past. We saw the opposite. We saw Jacobsen assert himself at the rim on both ends of the floor from the start of the event."

Before Purdue fans begin dreaming of Jacobsen filling the huge shoes of Zach Edey, Finkelstein notes that Jacobsen weighed in at 251 pounds at the Team USA trials. At Brewster Academy, Jacobsen began the season at 234.

"This rating reflects the recent growth that we have seen first-hand, and simultaneously accounts for the time it may still take for him to continue to fill out his frame and grow into his body," Finkelstein writes. "But make no mistake about it, Purdue now has another 7-footer with a very exciting future."

Jacobsen and Team USA travel to the FIBA U18 Men's AmeriCup tournament in Buenos Aires from June 3-9.

During the past decade, the Team USA U18 and U19

squads have been launching pads for future success at Purdue for Caleb Swanigan, Carsen Edwards, Trevion Williams, Jaden Ivey, Caleb Furst and Myles Colvin. Two-time National Player of the Year Zach Edey earned a bronze medal with Team Canada three years ago.

### Number change

Las Vegas Raiders coaches and fans probably won't mind if quarterback Aidan O'Connell's switch to No. 12 produces similar results to another Purdue quarterback who wore that number in the NFL.

Bob Griese led the Miami Dolphins to two Super Bowl championships on his way to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Griese passed for 25,092 yards and 192 touchdowns from 1967 to 1980.

During an appearance on Raiders defensive end Maxx Crosby's podcast, O'Connell said he asked to change from the No. 4 he wore as a rookie a year ago out of respect for the team's all-time passing leader.

Derek Carr sits atop the Raiders' passing yards and touchdown passes list, more than 16,000 yards and 60 touchdowns ahead of Super Bowl champion Ken Stabler.

"When the offseason came, it felt to me it was Derek's number," O'Connell said. "It felt disrespectful, so I just wanted to kind of give that back to him."

"I just didn't want to be (No.) 4 anymore. I didn't pick four. As a rookie you just kind of do what you're told, so I was cool with it."

O'Connell, who wore No. 16 at Purdue, threw for 2,218 yards and 12 touchdowns while starting 10 games. Wide receiver Jakobi Meyers wears No. 16 for the Raiders.

*-Kenny Thompson is the former sports editor for the Lafayette Journal & Courier and an award-winning journalist. He has covered Purdue athletics for many years.*

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