

Friday, January 31, 2025

Volume 39 Number 48



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# Warren Weekly

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*Thought for the Week: The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is at all comprehensible. Albert Einstein*

## EOC FUNDRAISER

Salamonie Elementary 5th graders will receive all tips on February 11 from 5-8pm as part of the Salamonie Elementary Fundraiser at East of Chicago Pizza.

All tips will help lower the cost for students to attend Chicago and experience the Science and Industry Museum!

## BINGO

LaFontaine Arts Council will be hosting a Bingo Fundraiser for the Arts on February 18. Dinner will be at 5:30 with Bingo at 6:30. This will be held at the Huntington County Fairgrounds Beacon Credit Union Heritage Hall.

Cash prizes up to \$500 per game, 15 games.

More information can be found at <https://lafontaineartscouncil.org/f/bingo-for-the-arts>.

## COUNCIL NOTES

The Town Council of the Town of Warren met Monday, January 27, 2025 in a Regular Meeting at Assembly Hall, Council Meeting Room, 131 N. Wayne St, in accordance with rules of Council and applicable law.

Those present were: Council Members, Ron Boxell, Michelle Schweikhardt, Jeremy Rufener with Buzzard absent; Clerk-Treasurer, Marilyn Morrison; Employees, Dennis Spitler; others.

Schweikhardt, Vice President, called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Under Special Order of Business, review and consideration of Trash Collection Bids as opened at the previous meeting was conducted. Following discussion, Schweikhardt moved, seconded by Boxell, to

award the contract to GFL at \$17.50 per unit, Boxell and Schweikhardt voted for, Rufener voted no. As two members of a four member Council do not constitute a quorum, the motion failed. Rufener asked that he be given time to reconsider.

Minutes of the January, 2025, minutes were approved as submitted.

A roster of current Fire Department members was provided to Council.

Schweikhardt reported on the Accelerate Huntington County WHARMM Meeting held in Andrews and a summary of the meeting. Also, through Accelerate Huntington County and by consensus, a letter of support was signed in support of development of the Small Town Opportunity Initiative (STOI) within the State of Indiana.

Under unfinished business, Morrison reported that the contract sent for cash rental of the Eleventh Street Property had not been returned as of yet, the Real Estate Attorney had not forwarded any documents related to the closing on the Salamonie School Property or the Housing Developer Agreement, the Electric System Study is underway and should take approximately four months, and, Marshal Spitler reviewed a general summary of streets to be restricted from certain truck traffic and a general basis of implementation. An Ordinance will be drafted for Truck Traffic.

Ordinance 2025-1, an ordinance amending Ordinance 2024-13, to add a position within the Utility/Street Departments at the rate of \$20.19 per hour

was introduced. Dillon Farr will begin employment on February 3, 2025 so Morrison asked that consideration be made to adopt an ordinance at the same meeting as introduction. Schweikhardt so moved, seconded by Rufener, and the motion was approved unanimously. Schweikhardt moved, seconded by Rufener, to adopt Ordinance 2025-1 and the motion was approved unanimously.

Ordinance 2025-2, an ordinance establishing a janitorial position at the rate of \$15 per hour was introduced.

Morrison reported that AT&T had continued pressure for the Town to relocate a County Communication antenna and a lighting rod on the top of the Eleventh Street Tower for installation of additional AT&T equipment as per the lease agreement. Reported was that Poulson would be in contact with County Officials for direction.

Rufener moved, seconded by Schweikhardt, to add MLK day to the list of Employee Holidays. Motion approved. Ordinance will be drafted to amend the Personnel Policy.

Development of the Veterans Memorial Park continues.

Schweikhardt moved, seconded by Boxell to reconsider the vote on Trash Contract. Motion carried. Schweikhardt moved, seconded by Boxell, to award the bid to GFL. Motion was approved. The Contract will necessitate an increase in rate which will be determined at a later date. The Contract will go into effect on March 1, 2025 with carts provided.

The next Regular Meeting of Town Council is scheduled for February 10th.

## FIRST RESPONDER COURSE

Bowen Health will host an online course designed to help first responders and their families cope with job-related trauma beginning February 13.

First Responder REBOOT is a free 12-week, online, peer-led course that will meet on Thursdays from 5 to 7 p.m. facilitated by Bowen Health therapist, Paul Painter.

Unaddressed trauma is a root cause of suicide, especially among first responders and members of the military. The practical tools and teaching used in this course are specifically designed for those within the law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency communications, hospital emergency, and corrections communities.

Registration is required and can be completed at <https://rebootrecovery.com/RESPONDERS/>

## BATTLE REENACTMENT

Spring Mill State Park will offer an event that explores the hardships winter presented for soldiers of the Civil War on Feb. 22-23.

The Pioneer Village will be open from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. each day with "Abraham Lincoln" (a reenactor provided by Lawrence County Tourism) giving a speech at 12:45 p.m. in the Gristmill each day. A winter tactical battle reenactment will be presented at 2 p.m. on each day. At 1:45 p.m. on each day, guests will be directed to the viewing areas from where they can safely view the battle for possession of the village.

Both before and after the reenactment, visitors can tour the village and visit with Lincoln, talk to soldiers, and get warmed by the fires.

Park admission is \$7 per vehicle for in-state residents and \$9 per vehicle for out-of-state residents. Annual Entrance Passes for 2025 are also available for purchase.

Spring Mill State Park ([on.IN.gov/springmillsp](http://on.IN.gov/springmillsp)) is at 3333 State Road 60 East, Mitchell, 47446.

For more information on this and other upcoming Spring Mill events, contact Coletta Prewitt at 812-849-3534 or [springmillstatepark@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:springmillstatepark@dnr.IN.gov).

## NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK

America's largest-annual celebration of opportunity in K-12 education is underway. National School Choice Week started Sunday and runs until February 1. The Week aims to harness the energy of "school choice season" — including open enrollment windows at public, charter, magnet, private, and online schools in advance of the 2025-2026 school year — and empower families to better navigate the education options available for their children.

At 27,607 events and activities over the next six days, students, teachers, and parents will raise awareness of opportunity in K-12 education. The celebrations aim to help families better understand the options available for their children's education, from traditional public schools to public charter, public magnet, private, online, home, and nontraditional options.

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WARREN WEEKLY • Owner/Publisher: Nicki L. Zoda

Mailing Address: P O Box 695, Warren, IN 46792

Phone: (260)375-6290 e-mail: editor@warrenweeklyindiana.com

WARREN WEEKLY is a free paper for the Warren, Indiana area. It is available online only by noon on Wednesday. The paper can be read at the Warren Public Library for those who don't have internet access.

Email and Kindle subscriptions are \$24 per year. Mail name, address, and payment to WARREN WEEKLY at: PO Box 695, Warren, IN 46792 or you can subscribe online at [www.warrenweeklyindiana.com](http://www.warrenweeklyindiana.com) on the WW Forms tab.

Deadline for news and/or advertising is 10 a.m. Tuesday, for that week's edition. Call if you need something in but won't have it here on time.

Leave news and/or advertising at Town Hall or mail to PO Box 695, Warren or email to editor@warrenweeklyindiana.com.

WARREN WEEKLY will make every effort to see that all advertising copy is correctly printed. The firm assumes no financial responsibility for typographical errors in advertising, but will gladly reprint without charge that part in which an error may occur, provided that it is reported within five days of publication.

The publisher takes no responsibility for statements or claims made in any advertisement.

## Kudos, Kicks & Karats



## Treva's Recipe Box

by Treva Flemming

I love lemon cookies, cake, pie, it don't matter what as long as it's a good lemon then I love it.

Found a recipe for a glazed lemon cookie so had to try them. There not to bad, it gives a full punch of lemon, which I like. So I'll share the recipe, not sure I'll enter them in the state fair, but still good to munch on

### GLAZED LEMON COOKIES

|                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 2 1/2 c flour.          | 1 c. Sugar         |
| 1 tbsp. Cornstarch.     | 1 tbsp. Lemon zest |
| 1/2 tsp. Baking powder. | 1 lg egg+1 yolk    |
| 1/2 tsp salt.           | 1 tsp vanilla      |
| 1/4 tsp.soda.           | 1/4 c. Lemon juice |
| 1 c. Butter, soft       |                    |

In a large mixing bowl, beat the butter, sugar and lemon zest in medium speed until light and fluffy, about 2-3 minutes. Reduce speed to low and blend in the egg, extra egg yolk, vanilla and lemon juice until well blended.

Gradually add the flour, cornstarch, baking powder, soda and salt until just incorporated. Chill for 30 minutes

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line two cookie sheets with parchment paper. Portion the dough into 1 tablespoons balls and arrange two inches apart on sheets. Bake 9 to 11 minutes. Cool on sheet for 5 minutes then remove to wire rack to cool completely. Glaze with the following:

In a small bowl combine 1 1/2 c. Powdered sugar, 3 tbsp. Lemon juice and combine to a thick consistency. Frost cookies with the glaze and garnish with some lemon zest. Allow to dry then store in a container

*Obituaries, Birth Announcements, Wedding & Anniversary Announcements are always FREE in the Warren Weekly!*

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Drop off your  
news and advertising for the  
**Warren Weekly**  
at Town Hall  
Downtown Warren

**ASBURY CHAPEL  
UNITED METHODIST**  
8013W 1100S - 90, Montpelier  
Nick Miller, Pastor

Sunday School ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Worship ..... 10:30 a.m.

**BANQUO CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
8924S 900W 35  
Harold Smith, Pastor

Sunday School ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Worship ..... 10:30 a.m.

**BOEHMER UNITED METHODIST**  
Steve Nevius, Pastor  
Denise Heiniger, S.S. Supt.

Sunday Worship ..... 9:30a.m.  
Sunday School ..... 10:45a.m.

**CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
Van Buren, Indiana 765-934-2199  
Worship ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Youth Group 4:30-7:30pm at SwitchUp  
Handicap Accessible

Little Panther Preschool 765.934.2099  
**HEALING WATERS MINISTRY —**  
5811 W 600 S, MT ETNA  
Pastor Wayne Couch  
260/515-2517

Sunday Prayer ..... 9:15 a.m.  
Sunday School ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Worship Service ..... 10:30 a.m.  
Wednesday Bible Study ..... 6:00 p.m.  
Sunday Evening Service ..... 6:00 p.m.

Daycare provided during Worship  
**DILLMAN UNITED BRETHREN**  
8888S 1100W-90, Warren 375-2779  
Matt Kennedy, Pastor

Worship Service ..... 9:00a.m.  
Sunday School ..... 10:00a.m.

**HANFIELD GLOBAL METHODIST  
CHURCH**  
101 N 400 E - Marion 765/664-8726  
Curtis Banker, Senior Pastor  
Worship..... 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday School ..... 9:15 a.m.

**THE NEW BEGINNING**  
SR 218, 2 1/8 mile west of Poneto  
Steve Sutton, Pastor  
765/728-2065 for more info  
Sunday Worship..... 10:30a.m.  
Thursday Prayer Meeting ..... 7:00 p.m.

**HERITAGE POINTE**  
Chaplains Ginny Soultz, John Moyer &  
Cindy Osgood  
Sunday Morning Worship ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Mon-Fri Chapel Services ..... 9:15 a.m.  
Sunday Catholic Mass ..... 1:00p.m.  
Thurs. Catholic Mass ..... 10:30a.m.

**WARREN 1st BAPTIST CHURCH**  
727 N Wayne St, Warren  
260-375-2811  
office@warrenfirsbaptist.net  
Pastor Mark Joynerr  
Youth Dir: Peter & Mindy Fairchild  
Sunday School .....9:00 a.m.  
Sunday Worship .....10:00 a.m.  
Youth Group: Grades 5-12 ...Sun 11:30  
Ekklesia ..... Sun 6:30pm

**HILLCREST  
CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**  
375-2510  
Pastor Gale Sonny Bloom, Jr.  
Bus Service 375-2510  
[www.warrennaz.org](http://www.warrennaz.org)

Sunday School ..... 9:45 a.m.  
Worship ..... 10:30 a.m.

**SOLID ROCK CHURCH OF WARREN**  
485 Bennett Dr, Warren, IN  
375-3873

John Boyanowski, Pastor  
Sunday School ..... 9:00 a.m.  
Worship Service ..... 10:00 a.m.

**LANCASTER WESLEYAN**  
3147 W 543 S, Huntington  
765.251.2322

Ron Forsythe, Pastor  
Sunday School ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Worship ..... 10:30 a.m.  
Wednesdays:

Bible Study & Prayer ..... 7:00 p.m.  
**LIBERTY CENTER BAPTIST CHURCH**  
694-6622

Aaron Westfall, Pastor  
Sunday School ..... 9:15 a.m.  
Fellowship ..... 10:00a.m.  
Worship ..... 10:15a.m.  
Tues. Bible Study ..... 7:00 p.m.  
Wed. Choir ..... 6:30p.m.

Monthly Meetings  
1<sup>st</sup> Mon Ministry Team ..... 7:00 p.m.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sat Mens Prayer Breakfast 8:00 am  
4<sup>th</sup> Mon ABW ..... 1:30 pm

**LIBERTY CENTER  
COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
Pastor Diane Samuels  
Fellowship Time .....9:00a.m.  
Morning Worship .....9:30 a.m.  
Sunday School ..... 10:45 a.m.

**THE CHURCH AT MCNATT**  
375-4359  
Daniel Tucker, Pastor  
Lois Slusher, Supt.

Brittney Miller, Youth & Family Dir.  
Coffee Fellowship..... 8:30 a.m.  
Worship ..... 9:15 a.m.  
Sunday School ..... 10:30 a.m.  
Bible Study - Wed. .... 6:30 p.m.

**MT. ETNA COMMUNITY LIFE CHURCH**  
260/468-2148 Sr 9 & 124  
Rev. Michael Gallant - "Pastor Mike"  
Good Morning Church (Sunday School  
for all ages .....9:00 - 9:45  
Worship Service .....10:00 - 11:00

Everyone is Welcome  
**SALAMONIE  
CHURCH OF BRETHREN**  
468-2412  
Mel Zumbrun, Pastor  
Worship .....9:30 a.m.  
Church School ..... 10:45a.m.

**1st CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF WARREN**  
375-2102  
[www.firstccw.net](http://www.firstccw.net)

Troy Drayer, Senior Pastor  
Takarra Myers, Youth Director  
office@firstccw.net

Sunday Worship..... 9:30 a.m.  
Wednesday Bible Study ..... 6:00 p.m.  
Youth Sunday School during  
Worship Service

Youth Group-Wed ..... 6:00 p.m.  
Communion 1st Sunday of the Month

**VB CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**  
765/934-3321 Parsonage  
Jeff Slater, Pastor

Jim Knight, Superintendent  
Sunday School ..... 9:30 a.m.  
Adult Worship ..... 10:30 a.m.  
Children's Church ..... 10:30a.m.  
Evening Praise Hour ..... 6:00p.m.  
Hour of Power (Wed) ..... 7:00p.m.

**VB CHURCH OF THE VINE**  
765-934-1431  
Pastor Brad Hensley

vanburchurchofthevine@gmail.com  
Worship Service ..... 9:30 am  
Sunday School ..... 10:45am  
Not Home Alone - Wed ..... 3:00 pm  
Prayer Group (Thur)..... 6:30pm  
Men Serving God Group ... 4<sup>th</sup> Sat. 9am  
Little Ones Book Club 1st Tue 10:00 am  
Just Older Youth 3rd Tue ..... 12:00 pm

**WARREN CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
375-3022

Mickey Strong, Senior Minister  
Andrew Fisher, Youth Minister  
Liz Richardson, Childrens MinistryAsst.

Tara Bower - Secretary  
[www.warrenchurchofchrist.org](http://www.warrenchurchofchrist.org)  
Fellowship .....9:15 a.m.  
Worship & Communion .....9:30 a.m.  
Sunday School .....11 to 11:50 a.m.

Youth:  
K-6th grade, Mon ..... 6:15-7pm  
Jr/Sr Hi, Sunday ..... 6-8pm

**FARRVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
11044 E 200 N, Marion, IN  
765-618-0027  
Pastor Al Soultz

Sunday Worship..... 10:30 am  
Sunday School Classes .....9:30 am  
Wed. Bible Study .....7:00 pm



Please Attend The Church of Your Choice



AREA NEWS

MORE PAGE 1

This year marks the 15th anniversary of National School Choice Week, which is designed to raise public awareness about education options. More families are likely to pay attention to this year's activities, however, as 24 states have expanded school choice options in the last three years, giving parents more to consider than ever.

Events include school fairs, rallies at state capitals, open houses, school assemblies, homeschooling and online learning field trips, and community service projects, all planned and led by local schools or families.

Governors of 17 states have issued proclamations recognizing School Choice Week formally and encouraging citizens to use the opportunity to highlight and explore excellent schools in their communities. According to a survey released this month by the National School Choice Awareness Foundation, 4 in 10 parents plan to consider a new school for a child in their family in 2025.

"We've seen a transformation in not only the types of school choice options families have in this country, but how common it is for parents to consider making a change to their child's school or discuss school choice options with friends and family," said Andrew Campanella, president and CEO of the National School Choice Awareness Foundation. "I've never seen parents so informed and energized about the options available for their children's learning. This is an exciting time for K-12 education in America, and National School Choice Week is the perfect time to harness that energy."

National School Choice Week, which is nonpartisan and nonpolitical, is organized by the National School Choice Awareness Foundation (NSCAF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. In addition to hosting NSCW, NSCAF develops and promotes the nation's largest online portfolio of school navigation

resources for families, available at [myschoolchoice.com](http://myschoolchoice.com) and [opcionesescolares.com](http://opcionesescolares.com).

NITROUS OXIDE SALES

ILLEGAL

The Indiana Alcohol and Tobacco Commission issued notice today to over 8,200 tobacco sellers throughout Indiana, warning them about the illegal sale of nitrous oxide.

"It is illegal in Indiana to sell nitrous oxide for the purposes of intoxication, and Indiana State Excise Police have discovered an alarming trend of this activity among certain gas stations, convenience stores, smoke shops, and tobacco/vaping businesses throughout the state," said Jessica Allen, ATC executive director.

Pursuant to Indiana Code § 35-46-6-3, a person who knowingly or intentionally uses or distributes nitrous oxide with the intent to cause a condition of intoxication, euphoria, excitement, exhilaration, stupefaction, or dulling of the senses of another person commits a Class B misdemeanor (unless used for medical purposes). However, the offense is a Class A misdemeanor if the person has a prior unrelated conviction.

To date, 18 Indiana tobacco certificate holders have been cited for this illegal activity and some of their employees

have been referred for criminal prosecution.

"We're seeing some sellers hiding the nitrous oxide tanks and only offering them for sale upon request and selling nitrous oxide tanks with no additional culinary items such as whipping cream," warns Superintendent Matt Strittmatter of the Indiana State Excise Police.

Superintendent Strittmatter said some of these sellers are also giving customers, including minors, instructions on how to use a nitrous oxide tank for the purposes of intoxication. Excise also found some of the nitrous oxide products even appear to contain certain flavors such as blue raspberry, cotton candy, and watermelon.

While commonly used in clinical settings as a sedative or anesthetic, nitrous oxide is also used to make whipped cream. This makes the substance readily accessible to use it recreationally to get high or intoxicated.

When inhaled for recreational purposes, nitrous oxide can cause side effects including, but not limited to, blurred vision, dizziness, dissociation, disorientation, loss of balance, impaired memory and cognition, numbness, and weakness in the legs. In large amounts, nitrous oxide can cause a lack of oxygen amongst users which may lead to loss of blood pressure,

fainting, heart attack, and even death.

"Not only are these products risky to store and when used to become intoxicated, but they are also extremely costly to dispose of," said Allen.

Allen estimates that cost could amount to \$1 million by 2026 if the trend continues.

The ATC encourages the public to submit anonymous tips or complaints about this matter to Indiana State Excise Police or their local law enforcement agency.

2025 TAX SEASON

BEGINS

The Internal Revenue Service opened the 2025 tax filing season Monday and is accepting and processing federal individual tax year 2024 returns.

During Monday's early morning opening, IRS systems had already received millions of tax returns from across the nation for processing.

The IRS expects more than 140 million individual tax returns for tax year 2024 to be filed ahead of the Tuesday, April 15 federal deadline. More than half of all tax returns are expected to be filed this year with the help of a tax professional, and the IRS urges people to use a trusted

tax pro to avoid potential scams and schemes.

Taxpayers residing in a federally declared disaster area may have additional time to file and pay federal taxes.

Get free help preparing and filing taxes electronically

Taxpayers can visit [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) to get answers to tax questions. [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) is the quickest way for taxpayers to get help. The Interactive Tax Assistant (ITA) is a tool that provides answers to several tax law questions specific to individual circumstances. Based on input, it can determine a taxpayer's filing status, if a person should file a tax return, if someone can be claimed as a dependent, if a type of income is taxable, if a filer is eligible to claim a credit or if an expense can be deducted.

The IRS encourages people to file their tax returns electronically and choose direct deposit for more secure and faster refunds. According to Treasury's Bureau of the Fiscal Service, paper refund checks are 16 times more likely to have an issue, like the

CONTINUED PAGE 4



Weekly Specials  
Jan 30 - Feb 5

SHORT DATE ITEMS ARE BACK!

- Betty Crocker Suddenly Salad Creamy Macaroni **\$1.59 ea**
- EE Fruit Snacks **\$1.39 ea**
- Voortman Gingerbread Cookies **\$1.59 ea**

Outside Stand - Closed Inside Store Open Daily

Open Daily

|         |          |          |          |
|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| Sunday  | 1pm-5pm  | Thursday | 11am-7pm |
| Monday  | 4pm-7pm  | Friday   | 11am-6pm |
| Tue-Wed | 11am-6pm | Saturday | 9am-5pm  |

We accept EBT and SNAP

609 E. 1<sup>st</sup> St. Warren

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Community Calendar

Items listed here are open to the public. If there is an admission charge or items are for sale or a donation is necessary, there is a one-time \$5 fee to be listed. Events can be listed for as long as 6 months. (If an event is canceled, please notify WW.) Only event, place, time, and sponsor, for events in Warren, and the surrounding area will be listed.

|        |       |                                      |
|--------|-------|--------------------------------------|
| Feb 2  |       | GROUNDHOG DAY                        |
| Feb 5  | Noon  | W - Chamber Luncheon @ KBC           |
| Feb 5  | 7:00p | V - Town Council Meeting @ Town Hall |
| Feb 10 | 6:00p | W - Town Council @ Assembly Hall     |
| Feb 11 | 6:30p | W - SSF Meeting @ KBC                |
| Feb 14 |       | VALENTINE'S DAY                      |
| Feb 17 | 6:30p | W - KBC Board Meeting @ KBC          |
| Feb 19 | 7:00p | V - Town Council Meeting @ Town Hall |
| Feb 24 | 6:00p | W - Town Council @ Assembly Hall     |

Bread of Life Food Pantry - Wednesdays - 2 - 4:00pm at KBC;

Bargain Basement - Friday & Saturday - 9 - 4 at KBC

These Events Can Also Be Found at [www.warrenweeklyindiana.com](http://www.warrenweeklyindiana.com)

## AREA NEWS CONTINUED

### MORE PAGE 3

check being lost, misdirected, stolen or uncashed. Filing electronically reduces tax return errors as the tax software does the calculations, flags common errors and prompts taxpayers for missing information.

#### Free tax filing options

The IRS offers free online and in-person tax preparation options for eligible taxpayers through IRS Free File, IRS Direct File and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs.

**IRS Free File.** Taxpayers with income of \$84,000 or less last year can use IRS Free File Guided Tax Software now through Oct. 15. IRS Free File Fillable forms, a part of this program, is available at no cost to any income level and provides electronic forms that people fill out and e-file themselves, also at no cost.

**Direct File.** Now open in 25 participating states, taxpayers can use Direct File to file online directly with the IRS for free. It is a free web-based service – available in English and Spanish – that works on mobile phones, laptops, tablets or desktop computers. It guides taxpayers through a series of questions to prepare their federal tax return step-by-step. Direct File automatically guides taxpayers to state tools to complete their state taxes. Get help from IRS customer service representatives through a live chat feature in English and Spanish. Interested taxpayers can go to [directfile.irs.gov](https://directfile.irs.gov), where they can determine if they are eligible.

**Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA).** The VITA program offers free tax help to people who generally make \$67,000 or less, persons with disabilities and taxpayers whose preferred language is not English. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals.

In addition to VITA, the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program offers free tax help for all taxpayers, particularly those who are 60 and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement-related issues unique to seniors.

**MilTax.** This is a Department of Defense program available to members of the military and some veterans with no income limit. MilTax generally offers free return preparation and electronic filing software for federal income tax returns and up to three state income tax returns.

Most refunds issued in less than 21 days: EITC refunds for many available by March 3, 2025

The easiest way to check a refund's status is by using "Where's My Refund?" on IRS.gov or the IRS2Go app.

Many factors can affect refund timing after the IRS receives a tax return. Although the IRS issues most refunds in less than 21 days, the IRS cautions taxpayers not to rely on receiving a refund by a certain date, especially when making major purchases or paying bills. Some returns may require additional review and may take longer.

Under the federal Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act, the IRS cannot issue Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC)

refunds before mid-February. "Where's My Refund?" should show an updated status by February 22 for most early EITC/ACTC filers. The IRS expects most EITC/ACTC related refunds to be available in taxpayer bank accounts or on debit cards by March 3 if they chose direct deposit and there are no other issues with their tax return.

Report taxable income; don't file before receiving key documents

People should report all taxable income on their tax return and wait to file until they receive all of their income and informational documents. Taxpayers may receive various income and information statements such as Forms 1099 from banks or other payers, unemployment compensation, dividends, pensions, annuities or retirement plan distributions. Taxpayers receiving Forms 1099-K, for payments on sale of goods and services through an online marketplace or payment app, can visit What to do with Form 1099-K to help them figure and report the correct amount of income on their tax return.

Choose a trusted tax professional

More than half of taxpayers turn to a tax professional for help filing a tax return. While most tax preparers deliver exceptional and professional service, selecting the wrong preparer can lead to financial harm.

Taxpayers should review the tips for choosing a tax preparer and learn how to avoid unethical "ghost" return preparers who don't sign or include a valid preparer tax identification number (PTIN) on every tax return they prepare. Taxpayers can also use the IRS Directory of

Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications to find trusted professionals. The IRS also reminds taxpayers that choosing someone affiliated with a recognized national tax association is always a good option. Tax professionals accepted into the IRS electronic filing program are authorized IRS e-file providers, qualified to prepare, transmit and process electronically filed tax returns.

#### Be aware of tax scams

Be aware of scammers, who can become more active during tax season. They will attempt to mislead people about tax refunds, credits and payments. They pressure people for personal, financial, employment information or money.

#### Watch out for:

- \* A big payday. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Bad tax advice on social media may convince people to lie on tax forms or mislead them about credits they can claim.

- \* Demands or threats. Impersonators want people to pay "now or else." They threaten arrest or deportation. They don't let people question or appeal the amount of tax they owe.

- \* Odd or misspelled website links. Odd or misspelled web links can take people to harmful sites instead of IRS.gov.

Tax-related identity theft occurs when someone uses stolen personal information, including Social Security numbers, to file a tax return claiming a fraudulent refund. If a person suspects they are a victim of identity theft, they should continue to pay their taxes and file their tax return, even if they must file a paper return. Visit Identity Theft Central to find out more.

Know the signs of identity theft

Thousands of people have lost millions of dollars and their personal information to tax scams. Scammers use the regular mail, telephone and email to set up individuals, businesses, payroll and tax professionals. Check out the latest consumer alerts and

read more about the most recent tax related scams identified by the IRS.

More help is now available

The IRS also provides taxpayers help in-person at Taxpayer Assistance Centers nationwide.

Some improvements taxpayers will see during the 2025 filing season are:

IRS Individual Online Account. The IRS continues to add more functionality to this important tool. Individuals can create or access their IRS Online Account at [Online account](https://www.irs.gov/onlineaccount) for individuals. With an IRS Online Account, people can:

- \* View key details from their most recent tax return, such as adjusted gross income.

- \* Request an Identity Protection PIN.

- \* Get account transcripts, to include wage and income records.

- \* Sign tax forms like powers of attorney or tax information authorizations.

- \* View and edit language preferences and alternative media.

- \* Receive and view over 200 IRS electronic notices.

- \* View, make and cancel payments.

- \* Set up or change payment plans and check their balance.

New scam alert. To help protect taxpayers against emerging threats, there's a new banner on the Online Account homepage that alerts taxpayers of potential scams and schemes, along with a link to their Digital Notices and Letters page to view correspondence sent to them from the IRS. The feature helps to educate taxpayers on common scams and fraudulent efforts to steal taxpayer information and provide taxpayers with more ability to validate the legitimacy of IRS communications.

Redesigned notices. The IRS successfully redesigned 284 notices in 2024, exceeding the

**CONTINUED PAGE 6**

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## GENEALOGY REPORT

### PURTEE

Robert "Bob" A. Purtee, 75, of Swayzee, passed away at 7:16 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 16, 2025, in Tarpon Springs, Fla.

He was born in Marion on January 11, 1950, to Oliver and Betty (Baxter) Purtee.

On September 20, 1969, Bob married Janet White.

He graduated from Eastbrook High School, Marion, Class of 1968.

Bob was a tool and die maker for 17 years with Chrysler, Kokomo, retiring in 2012.

He previously worked at Foster-Forbes, Marion, and Owens Brockway.

Bob was a member of Van Buren Masonic Lodge.

He was an avid golfer and especially enjoyed golfing in Florida.

Bob had a great sense of humor and a personality that people simply loved.

He loved to travel, visiting several national parks and going on 22 cruises.

Bob was a fun-loving and hard-working man who made friends easily and will be dearly missed.

Survivors include his loving wife of 55 years, Janet Purtee, of Swayzee; daughter, Jennifer Smothermon, of Fort Wayne; sons, Marc (Stephanie) Purtee, of Hobart, and Brett (Jennifer) Purtee, of Marion; grandchildren, Tyler (Meranda) Purtee, Abigail (Joshua Espelita) Purtee and Zachary Smothermon; great-granddaughter, Adalyn Espelita; sisters, Kathy (Mick Cox) Purtee, of Summitville, and Debra Fulks, of Ohio; several nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Bob was preceded in death by his father, Oliver Purtee, mother, Betty Purtee, and sister, Susan D. Scott.

The family will receive visitors from 10 a.m. to noon on Friday, Jan. 24, 2025, at Needham-Storey-Wampner Funeral & Cremation Service, North Chapel, 1341 N. Baldwin Ave., Marion.

Immediately following the visitation, a service to celebrate Bob's life will begin at noon with Pastor Brian Williams officiating.

Burial will take place at Gardens of Memory Cemetery, Marion.

Memorial contributions may be directed to Gilead Ministries, 212 N. Baldwin Ave., Marion, IN 46952.

### BREEDLOVE

Kyle Ernest

Breedlove, 86, of Warren, passed away

on Friday, Jan. 17, 2025, at

Lutheran Hospital, Fort Wayne.

He was born on December 6, 1938, in Fort Wayne to Ernest and Gladys (Beardsley) Breedlove.

As a child, Kyle lived with his family in many places, such as Fort Wayne, St. Augustine, Fla., Franklin, Pa., and Havana, Cuba.

He married Barbara Breedlove on February 14, 1966, in Warren.

Kyle devoted his life to continuing his education and serving his country and community.

He received his bachelor of science in 1977 from Indiana-Purdue Universities and received his master's in business administration from St. Francis, Fort Wayne in 1982.

Kyle worked as a programs analyst and systems analyst at several Fort Wayne businesses, such as Lincoln National Bank and International Harvester, throughout his life.

He also was one of the first Tri-Township EMTs to serve Warren.

Kyle was an avid reader and had a love for history.

He enjoyed being a member of the Sports Car Club of America and enjoyed watching races.

Kyle enjoyed dancing and taught dance lessons on several cruise ships over the last 12 years.

As for his military service, he was drafted in the late 1950s into the United States Army.

After completing service with the United States Army, he joined the Air National Guard. Throughout his military career, Kyle served at McGee-Tyson Air National Guard Base in Tennessee, the 22nd Fighter

Wing at Fort Wayne Air National Guard Base and Hickman Air Force Base.

He had attended the Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College and Air War College, all in Alabama.

Kyle retired as Lt. Colonel from the Air National Guard in Fort Wayne and would continue to work for Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii as a civil servant.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Ernest and Gladys Breedlove, his wife, Barbara Breedlove, and brother-in-law, Claude Langford.

Loving survivors include Kyle's siblings, Doris Langford and Ian (Cheryl Boyer) Breedlove; special friend and dance partner, Rose Nartker, and many nieces, nephews and friends.

In honor of Kyle's wishes, a memorial service will be at a later date.

### STRALEY

Richard L. Straley, 77, of Warren, passed away at 2:50 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025, at his residence.

He was born on October 1, 1947, in Sturgis, Mich., the son of Gaylord Straley and Kathryn (Myers) Straley.

Richard married Barbara J. McDaniel on May 22, 1976, in Mt. Etna.

He worked for Foodliner Trucking Co. and C.F.S. Fertilizer Company.

Richard loved spending time outdoors, especially with family.

His favorite hobbies were hunting, fishing, canoeing and camping.

Richard also loved being a grandpa. He enjoyed attending all of Alexis and Elijah's extracurricular activities.

Survivors include his wife, Barbara J. Straley, of Warren; two sons, Michael L. (Kylie) Straley, of Warren, and Matthew R. (Amy) Straley, of Andrews; two grandchildren, Alexis (Reid Votaw) Straley, of LaFontaine, and Elijah (Harmony) Straley, of Fort Wayne; three great-grandchildren, Paisley, Lainey

and Josephine; sister, Rosella Gregg, of Huntington.

Richard is preceded in death by his father, Gaylord R. Straley, mother, Kathryn Straley, sisters, Dora Davis and Joan Mead, and brother, James Straley.

There will be a celebration of life at a later date.

### OMAN

James "Jim" Harold Oman of Bluffton, joined the Lord and the love of his life Jone Gregg Oman on Jan. 20, 2025, at the age 89.

On Feb. 5, 1935, Jim was born to Paul and Flossie Marie (Grove) Oman in Liberty Township on the family farm and grew up in Poneto. Wherever they went, Jim and Jone were best known walking hand in hand, competing in canoe races as state ranked mixed doubles and enjoying life together.

After graduating from Bluffton High School in 1953, Jim attended Radiology Technical School in Ft. Wayne and MRI Technician School in San Francisco, California. He served his country in the United States Army and Indiana Army National Guard for six years, honorably discharged in honest and faithful service. He worked for Caylor-Nickel Clinic for 46 years retiring in 2000 from the Heart Cath Lab with roles in X-ray (ARRT, ASRT and IRST), Special Procedures (SICP and SCI) and MRI (BMRI). Following in his mother's footsteps, he served as a Board member of the family founded Grove Cemetery and caretaker for many years with his family.

Jim married Jone on Aug. 13, 1958, at the home of the bride in Petroleum. Happily married for 64 years, their family was blessed with three children Todd, Cheryl and Lana. His integrity, sense of humor, commitment to family, exercise and health, inspired his family. He was well known for roller blading along the Rivergreenway, enjoying fast cars especially his '57 chevy, being a member of the Poneto Community Club, contributing to the "Poneto Indiana History

Book, 1871-2008", playing ice and street hockey, being the street basketball court for the Poneto neighborhood, and most of all enjoying family events with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was a lifelong faithful Christian, formerly a member of the Poneto United Methodist Church and Bluffton First Church of Christ.

He will always be loved by his children; son, Todd Paul (Linda Joyce) Oman of Greentown, daughter, Cheryl Lynn (Randy Wayne) Barger of Decatur, and daughter Lana Renee (John Garrett) Wietholter of Zionsville; seven grandchildren, Ryan Todd (Abby) Oman of Greentown, Dr. Trent James (Candice) Oman of Carmel, Dr. Tara Lynn (Bryson) Renbarger of Converse, Ross Paul Oman of Greentown, Brandon Wayne (Lauren) Barger of Decatur, Dr. Rachel Lynn (Felix) Baum of Mooresville, and Nathan (fiancé' Renee) Barger of Decatur; 18 great-grandchildren, Josey Elizabeth (Oman) Jones, Ryan Todd Oman, Jr., Lillian Rose Oman, Jenna Lynn Oman, Algird James Oman, Solomon Joseph Oman and Vivienne Nicole Oman; Liam James Oman, Malia Laine Oman, Henry David Moran and Sylvia Brooke Moran; Baer Joseph Renbarger, Cael Alexander Renbarger, Bayne Garrett Renbarger, Emily Jay Renbarger and Ansley Lynn Renbarger; Jacob Wayne Barger and Leah Marjorie Barger; sisters-in law and brother-in-law, Roberta "Bobbie" (Cy) Oman of Bluffton, Sharon Evone (William) Gentis, John and Dee Gregg, Jr. all of Bluffton, Joann (Ralph) Davison of Columbia City; and many nieces and nephews dear to heart.

Jim was preceded in death by his wife Jone; his parents Paul and Flossie Oman of Poneto; brother and sister-in-law Robert "Bob" Neal Oman, Sr., and Dorothy (Johnson) Oman of Taft, Texas; brother Wendel "Cy" Leon Oman of Bluffton; sister and brother-in-law,

## AREA NEWS CONTINUED

### MORE PAGE 5

Dorothy Evelyn (Oman) Lewis and John Hyser Lewis of Muncie; brothers-in-law, Ralph Eugene Davison of Columbia City and William "Bill" Gentis of Bluffton.

All our welcome at Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral home for visitation beginning at noon and service immediately following at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025, with Reverend Marsha Hutchinson officiating. Graveside burial service will follow at Elm Grove Cemetery, Bluffton, Indiana and join a celebration of life gathering afterwards at North Shores Activity Center across from Christian Care Retirement Center at 1111 W Shore Dr, Bluffton, Indiana.

Flowers, cards, or memorials may be made to Bluffton Free Street Fair, Bluffton Rivergreenway — care of Wells County Revitalization or Parkinson's Foundation — can be directed to the funeral home.

### COONS

Robert E. "Bob" Coons, 81, of Hartford City, IN, passed away at 7:24 PM on Wednesday evening, January 22, 2025 with his family by his side at St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis, IN.

He was born on Tuesday, September 21, 1943, in Hartford City, IN. Bob attended the Montpelier High School and graduated from Hartford City High School in 1961. He was a member of the Chester Center Christian Church. Bob was a well-known Blackford and Wells Co. resident. He served his country in the US Army. Bob was a Blackford Co. Sheriff's deputy under Sheriff's Howard McCullum, Ed Townsend, and Gabe Coons. He retired after 35 years of service from 3M where he worked in maintenance. Bob was a member of the Amvets, American Legion, and the Pennville Masonic Lodge. He enjoyed guns, hunting, fishing, and woodworking.



Bob will be sadly missed by his sons - Troy Allen Coons, Montpelier, IN, Dennis Dewayne (Tina) Coons, Hartford City, IN, Grandchildren - Dusten (Sarah) Coons, Evansville, IN, Darren (Brandy) Coons, Hartford City, IN, Kaleigh Coons Bales, Van Buren, IN, 9 Great Grandchildren, and several Step Great Grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his Father - Robert Austin Coons, and Mother - Julia Marie (Horton) Coons.

Family and friends may gather to share and remember at Walker & Glancy Funeral Home located at 109 W. Windsor St. Montpelier, IN. 47359 on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

A service to celebrate Bob's life will be at Walker & Glancy Funeral Home at 11:00 AM on Wednesday, January 29, 2025 with Pastor Wayne Moore officiating. Interment will follow in the Hartford City Cemetery in Hartford City. Graveside military rites will be conducted by the Royerton Amvets Post # 12.

Preferred memorials: Royerton Amvets Post # 12 7621 IN. 3 Muncie, IN. 47303

Arrangements are being handled by Walker & Glancy Funeral Home in Montpelier.

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### MORE PAGE 4

agency's 200 notice goal. It is important to note that 200 notices were redesigned and deployed in 2024 and an additional 84 redesigned notices are in line to be deployed in 2025. All notices will be added to Individual Online Account so taxpayers receiving a specific letter can see it.

Mobile-adaptive tax forms. Taxpayers can now access 67 forms on cell phones and tablets. The most recent forms feature "save and draft" capabilities, which allow the taxpayer to start a form, save it and return to it later. The addition of save and draft allows for future capabilities, including the ability for multiple spouses to sign a form.

Virtual assistants to help with refunds and other questions. Whether a taxpayer uses an online tool or calls the IRS, they will experience upgraded help features. During filing season 2025, the IRS will offer voicebot services to all taxpayers calling the IRS for refund information. The voicebot is available in English and Spanish and has helped thousands of callers without the need to wait for the next available representative. Taxpayers will have to authenticate their identity to gain access to their refund information by providing select information from their tax return.

Last year the IRS began using online chatbots for various functions. These chatbots use either guided help through choice buttons or an open text box for a customized question. The chatbots use natural language processing and understanding to interpret the input from the taxpayer to provide an appropriate response. To launch the chatbot, the taxpayer simply clicks on the "Chat" button in the lower right corner of the webpage. Currently taxpayers can use chatbots from eight webpages.

### HONOR ROLL

Students achieving Honor Roll status for the 1st Semester

and 2nd Quarter at Southern Wells Jr/Sr High School are as follows.

7th Grade - High Honor - Josiah Bricker, Tenley Fiechter, McKynleigh Flowers, Aubree Newenschwander, Ellie Nichols, Harper Reynolds, and Abigail Zaklikiewicz.

7th Grade - A/B Honor - Savannah Daugherty, Ryker Engle, Alexander Gaskill, Liam Leas, Trinity McClellan, Holly Pearson, Megan Schwartz, Tiffany Smith and Isaac VanDeman.

8th Grade - High Honor - Gabriella Hoffacker, Gwyneth Howell, Kyan Johnson, Lyla Lyons, Jacob Miller, Lucille Palmer, Amelia Penrod, Adelynn Robles, Grace Rockwell, Grace Rogers and Ella Schwartz.

8th Grade - A/B Honor - Brooklyn Blinn, Leighann Carpenter, Landon Clifton, Madelyn Deel, Alaina Edmonds, Mack Frauhiger, Rylen Gates, Avery Geesaman, Camryn Hamilton, Adelyn Heim, Chase Kirkwood, Logan Leas, Rylan Leas, Sawyer McEvoy, David McMillan, Lyric McQueary, Aubrey Michael, Olivia Newman, Annalyse Roe, Timothy Smith, and Logan Tarr.

9th Grade - High Honor - Adam Aulbach, Harlie Durham, Lucy Fairchild, Madison Grover, Kameron Hawkins, Sophie Heckman, Olivia Kahn, Violet McClain, Addison Miller, Laren Schneider, Lanilie Simpson, Drew Steffen, and Abrielle Zigler.

**CONTINUED PAGE 8**

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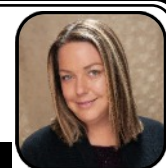


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10th Grade - High Honor - Joshua Aulbach, Cash Banter, Aliah Carroll, Miranda Holloway, Samantha Kahn, McKenna King, Sophia Meeks, Elisabeth Penrod, and Kila Shelley.

10th Grade - A/B Honor - Kaylea Coffel, Timothy Hamilton, Gavin Howell, Landon Johnson, Carson Liddy, Aubree Meyer, Chanie Mounsey, Reagan Needler, Lillia Paxson, Cataline Ramirez, Delinda Schortgen, Emma Shepard and Bailey Trosper.

11th Grade - High Honor - Kolbie Beavans, Peyton Bertsch, Samuele Danieli, Peyton Ellis, Korbin Eltzroth, Felipe Guentes, Keith Gartin, Addison Gaskill, Jazlyn Gillum, Lucas Goodrich, Danel Isasi, Emma Parks, Gracie Reeves, Adeline Sabinske, and Emily Steffen.

11th Grade - A/B Honor - Sydney Alstoft, Laura Benbow, Jailynn Chase, Chloe Enochs, Lexie Fiechter, Jarin Frauhiger, Lily Gartin, Shaylinn Geesaman, Levon Goodnight, Lucy Hayes, Kane Jenkins, Ronan Jump, Miley Martin, Isabella Maul, Jonathan McMillan, Miley Michael, Anthony Mills, Hayden Morgan, and Trey Slusher

12th Grade - High Honor - Ava Adkins, Aidan Carney, Avery Gaskill, Owen King, Nickolas Lee, Ashlie Needler, Dominic Ramirez, Collena Reeves, Caroline Ripperger, and Derek Rockwell.

12th Grade - A/B Honor - Hannah Armstrong, Matthew Aulbach, Harley Barton, Lydia Baumgartner, Colten Clark, Sebastian Couch, Quinten Darling, Gillian Garlow, Alyssa Green, Tyler Grover, William Johnson, Colter Kiel, Bryce Kilander, Hana McClain, Cohen Miller, Alaina

Nusbaumer, Kenzie Paxson, Brandon Reed, and Tucker Worster.

### BRANSON CHRISTMAS TRIP DAY 4, PART 1

by Larry Ryan

We were awakened again by the 7 am. alarm clock! Luggage was placed outside the door by 7:30 for staff to take to the bus. The second floor, breakfast alcove was bustling and crowded with additional tour groups as it had been on the previous day at this early hour. Again, the miniature shelf next to the toaster was my selected meal space. The previously difficult-to-find, hard-boiled egg container was located and one real egg escaped onto my plate. Sausage links, grapes, toast with an obscure berry jam, and OJ rounded out the first meal of the day. Food taken to the room for the sickly wife was hardly touched by her.

There was plenty of sunshine and a bright blue sky when the bus departed the Hotel Grand Victorian at 9:20 for an outskirts tour of Branson. Those travelers who preferred to rest longer before heading back to Indiana, opted out of the local tour; my wife included. The driver motored past Wild Wolly's go-cart track, Buck's Ice Cream Shop, the Flaming Margarita's, and a large sign advertising the "Dutton's" theater. The latter show was one that we had enjoyed on a prior visit.

Additional, prominent places that we passed while leaving Branson proper included the Titanic Theater, 7 Gables Inn, Ozark Hills Winery store, and "Jiglin' Georges." I have no information on what happens there! We were 18 miles out of Branson when the driver drove past a large fish hatchery that was on the down-stream side of the monstrous Table Rock Lake Dam. The hatchery was adjacent to Lake Taneycomo which was part of the White River that originated in northeast Arkansas. The colder water in this location was a favorite home for rainbow and brown trout.

Before accessing the road crossing the dam, we passed Moonshine Beach and the magnificent Chateau of the Lake Resort was pointed out to us. The bus moved across the 6,423 foot long and 252 foot high dam which separated the earlier-mentioned lake from Table Rock Lake. This latter body of water has 750 miles of shoreline and near the dam the depth is 220 feet. The dam was completed in 1958 after delays due to WW II and the Korean War. Hydroelectric power was initiated the following year. Moving forward, we passed the Dewey Short Visitor Center, Table Rock State Park, and the Branson Belle Showboat.

At 10 am, the bus pulled up to an announced, quick stop at a scenic overlook for long-distance, pictures of Branson. I remained onboard as my in bus view only showed tiny, white roof tops. One female passenger crossed the road in the opposite direction and entered the Vintage Paris Wine Shop. Why? Our driver went to investigate. They both retraced their steps shortly with the escaped passenger treasuring a cup of cappuccino! Coffee fix apparently. The former home of entertainer, Andy Williams was identified across the river.

A rest stop was scheduled at the Keeter Center Lodge at the College of the Ozarks, but it was closed for the day. This agricultural-related college does not charge tuition, but students work the farm in exchange for their education. Moving downhill, Old Town Branson was seen on the other side of White River where The Foggy River Restaurant was also located. The driver missed the turn onto the bridge which would have taken us across the river to a modern shopping venue named "The Landing." A round-a-bout ahead was utilized to change directions. At this location, a tangent street led to a closed gate with the letters above it that read: "God's Country." I presumed that it was a heavenly campground.

It was 10:25 when the bus door opened and let the passengers out into the cold air at "The Landing" which was adjacent to the Branson Scenic Railroad Station. For something to do to pass the 55 minutes here, I went window shopping. However, a 50% off clothing store caught my eye. Of course, only a few items fit that announcement. A T-shirt, with Branson lettering and a few unusual Christmas gifts were purchased. The shirt was passed on to my wife so she would have a gift for me on the 25th!

At 11:20 the bus headed back to the hotel for the remaining travelers.

### 'DURABLE' SMARTPHONES ARE NOT INDESTRUCTIBLE. HOW TO PROTECT YOUR DEVICE

(StatePoint) The latest devices are packed with pricey new features, like advanced AI capabilities, call transcription and displays large enough to be worthy of gaming and binge-watching. And while they're also getting more durable, they're not indestructible, according to new research.

For the past 13 years, Allstate Protection Plans has conducted a series of breakability tests to determine the strength of the latest and greatest devices. The mobile protection plan provider recently tested the new iPhone 16 Pro Max, which along with boasting a more contextual Siri, AI-driven writing tools and AI-powered image generation, has a display made of a ceramic-shield material that is said by Apple to be two times tougher than any smartphone glass.

If you've sprung for this new model or are thinking of doing so, you may be wondering how durable it actually is and how to protect your investment. Here to guide you are the results of Allstate Protection Plans Breakability Drop Test:

Front-down Drop Test: After one face-down drop on a

sidewalk from 6 feet, the iPhone 16 Pro Max shattered across its display and suffered scuffing along its titanium frame. Upon impact, the display went black, then flickered white for approximately two minutes, before finally going permanently black. This rendered the device unusable. However, it's possible the device could be saved with repair. Apple.com lists iPhone 16 Pro Max front screen repair as \$379 without AppleCare.

Back-down Drop Test: After one back-down drop on a sidewalk from 6 feet, the iPhone 16 Pro Max shattered across its rear panel and suffered damage to its raised glass camera housing. The device remained fully functional, including all camera capabilities, which is an improvement over the iPhone 15 Pro Max. However, it was not safe to handle with bare hands due to raised and loose glass. Apple.com lists iPhone 16 Pro Max rear panel repair as \$199 without AppleCare.

With the iPhone 16 Pro Max starting at \$1,199 and repairs costing as much as \$749 without AppleCare, Allstate Protection Plans highly recommends the use of phone cases and screen protectors. For added security, consumers are advised to get a mobile protection plan. For more information, visit AllstateProtectionPlans.com.

"As smartphones enter their AI era, they're also entering a new era of durability," said Jason Siciliano, vice president of marketing and global creative director at Allstate Protection Plans. "Nevertheless, Americans still spend billions of dollars on screen repairs every year, making it vital to continue taking steps to protect your device."