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Ashworth will run for Vanderburgh County Sheriff in Democratic primary

Major Jason Ashworth has 28 years of law enforcement experience all with the Vanderburgh County Sheriff’s office.

He has worked his way up from Corrections Officer in 1993 to his current position of Major and Commander of the Operations Division. During Jason Ashworth’s tenure with the Vanderburgh County Sheriff’s Office, he has worked with every law enforcement agency in the area, including at the local, state, and federal levels.

Jason Ashworth was assigned to the Criminal Investigation Section early in his career where he investigated and later supervised detectives who investigated high-level felonies and large-scale drug trafficking enterprises. After 14 years in the Criminal Investigation Section, Jason Ashworth was promoted to Lieutenant where he was assigned to protect the Civic Center, our Courts, and those who worked or visited there each day. Jason Ashworth was then promoted to Major



MAJOR JASON ASHWORTH

and assigned to command the Operations Division. The Operations Division consists of Motor Patrol Deputies, Detective Office, K9 Teams, Sex and Violent Offender Registry, Motor Fleet, Civil Process, Evansville-Vanderburgh County Joint Drug Task Force including those assigned to the Drug Enforcement Administration, and personnel assigned to the United States Marshals Fugitive Task Force. Major Jason

Ashworth feels this experience will be vital while collaborating with members of our community,

to continue keeping our residents and community safely, and to tackle the many issues facing law enforcement.

Major Ashworth says that he is humbled by the support of many in the community who have sparked immense gains in the campaign, including Vanderburgh County Commissioners Ben Shoulders and Jeff Hatfield, Evansville City Councilman Zac Heronemus, Vanderburgh County Coroner Steve Lockyear, Vanderburgh County Councilman Mike Goebel, and State Representative Ryan Hatfield.

Major Jason Ashworth is proud to have the support of the last three Vanderburgh County Sheriffs. Their collective support is further indication that the people that best know what being the Sheriff entails, know that Jason Ashworth is the right person to lead the Office of Sheriff.

Major Jason Ashworth is a life-long resident of

SEE ASHWORTH/PAGE 10

Renewable energy offers options to landowners

Farmers and landowners across the Tri-State are excited this year at the prospect of having yet another year that becomes a bumper crop this coming fall at harvest time. Farmers and landowners are at the mercy of Mother Nature and the commodity markets and both of these drivers of prosperity or famine are not the most reliable or predictable things on earth. With prices for the principle crops in the region rising to short term highs things are looking good. Today is a great time to look at just what one can do with an acre of land in Southwest Indiana, Southern Illinois and Western Kentucky where prime farmland now fetches over \$10,000 an acre.

Before delving into the modern world of land management, it is worth mentioning that land has been used for transportation and energy since the dawn of civilization. It takes approximately two acres of pasture land to support one horse with enough “fuel” to provide and sustain transportation for a year. When horses ceased to be used for transportation land was repurposed for modern agriculture thus making the land more valuable. After all, spending \$20,000 for a place to fuel and sustain a horse seems a bit much.

TRADITIONAL CROP ROTATIONS

There are many crops that can be grown in the

SEE ENERGY/PAGE 12

Southwest Indiana, Growth Alliance for Greater Evansville and Southwest Indiana Chamber complete merger

EVANSVILLE, Ind. (April 1, 2021) –Today, the Economic Development Coalition of Southwest Indiana, Growth Alliance for Greater Evansville, and Southwest Indiana Chamber – and their respective Boards – announce the official merge of the three organizations now operating in unison as the Evansville Regional Economic Partnership (E-REP).

“Now is the right time for this new public-private partnership to seize the opportunities that build on the regional cohesion that our three organizations

have cultivated,” said Jim Ryan, the initial chair of the Evansville Regional Economic Partnership. “We are coming together to build an organization that is greater than the sum of its parts; an accomplishment which we can all be proud.”

The unified organization will work to advance regional prosperity and global relevance by building on the trusted relationships and legacy of its predecessor organizations. E-REP areas of impact include new business attraction, a focus in business retention and

support of existing industry expansions, advancing pro-economy public policies, community development, entrepreneurship, talent attraction, quality of place enhancement, and strategies for regional growth.

“E-REP’S foundational principles are based on our commitment to equitable prosperity and to keeping small business front and center. We look forward to listening and learning from regional residents and businesses to deliver

SEE MERGER/PAGE 12

COMMENTARY

Background checks are infrastructure

BY MICHAEL LEPPERT
FRANKLIN COLLEGE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

For what seems like a lifetime, most of us have been anxiously waiting for life to return to normal. Two mass shootings in consecutive weeks remind us that regardless of how much we have grown to miss in the last year, not everything that is “normal,” is OK. These horrific events and the circular nature of the gun control debate that accompanies them has become sadly routine. The sequence is predictable, commonplace and usual. But only in America.

On March 16, a 21-year-old suspect in Georgia purchased a 9mm handgun and later the same day began his rampage in and around Atlanta, killing eight people. On March 22, another 21-year-old suspect shot and killed 10 people at a grocery store in Boulder, Colorado, using an SR-556, an AR-15 style, semi-automatic pistol, that he had bought just days earlier. Both gun purchases were made at licensed retailers.

Is there something, anything, that we could do that could have slowed, altered or prevented these two young, likely mentally ill, people from obtaining their weapons? That is a rhetorical question. The problem with the list of possible alternatives is not that it is too small, it’s that it is too large.

“Our problems are man-made; therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants,” is part of my favorite speech from President John F. Kennedy, given at the



American University on June 10, 1963. He was talking about diplomacy differences between us and the former Soviet Union. That generational and perilous crisis was frightening and expensive to the U.S.

Fighting the Cold War for nearly half a century took infrastructure. Today, after four full years of anxiously waiting for “infrastructure week” to actually occur, we have a new president preparing to push a big infrastructure bill through Congress. And again today, people think of roads, bridges, pipes and communications networks when the word is used. But the military is also infrastructure, like the enormous U.S. military that grew in the post-World War II years to combat the Soviets and the threat of communism.

Staying in the dictionary for a moment, the word, “infrastructure” means “the basic, underlying framework or features of a system or organization.” Our schools, public safety systems, health care networks, and a good list of other things meet that definition equally well.

A modern information system to provide a background check on

every person attempting to make any commercial purchase of a firearm is also infrastructure. Currently, that system is underdeveloped and underfunded, but it is definitely a basic, underlying necessity of this country. The support for properly building, implementing and investing in it has a similar level of support as roads, schools and broadband funding.

How is President Joe Biden planning to finance his \$3 trillion infrastructure plan? In a word, taxes. How will he expect to pass a new tax plan through a Senate that needs 60 votes to pass anything? Through the budget reconciliation process that Democrats used to pass the American Rescue plan a few weeks ago.

Are you following me? A universal background check system should be part of the infrastructure package and could be paid for by increasing the federal excise tax on guns and ammunition. And it can be done with 51 votes in the Senate. So, while the political class keeps debating the virtues and the perils of the filibuster, I recommend the Democrats

get on with the business of the people.

Yes, I believe America’s gun crisis has been more harmful than the Cold War. Maybe it has not been as expensive in dollars, but far more Americans have died by home grown gun violence. And the “man-made” aspect of our globally unique gun problem was created not by some phantom in a faraway land, but by the men living next door. Presumably, those men are taxpayers.

The federal excise tax on guns and ammunition generated \$653 million dollars in 2019. In April of 2015, Mother Jones published its investigation, in collaboration with Ted Miller of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, “The True Cost of Gun Violence,” which estimated it to be \$229 billion, annually. Americans instinctively want to put all of their energy into arguing about how to shrink that big number. But growing the smaller number is the easier task. Let’s do that.

Our gun violence problem is not a pothole or a main break, but it is equally obvious. Maybe if we could view it as a fiscal issue like any other infrastructure need, we could actually make some progress.

Michael Leppert is a public and governmental affairs consultant in Indianapolis and writes his thoughts about politics, government and anything else that strikes him at MichaelLeppert.com.

CITY-COUNTY OBSERVER posted this article without bias or editing.

COMMENTARY

WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

The right to assemble and to seek redress of grievances is enshrined in our Constitution

BY STAFF THE OF THE CITY-COUNTY OBSERVER

Over the last several months we have witnessed peaceful and violent protests alike throughout America.

It’s obvious that outside groups and agitators are attempting to foment lawlessness and unrest to advance their own objectives to cause anarchy in America. We are a nation born of the revolutionary spirit

of protest, coupling expressions of grievances against injustice with the desire to be free.

We deplore the theft, looting, and burning of businesses and historical landmarks caused by the random acts of lawless anarchists and thugs. In fact, we believe that these lawless thugs should be arrested and thrown in jail.

Everyone has been on edge, waiting to see when and where the next protest or riots will break out

and chaos reign. We’re optimistic that restraints will be displayed by both the protesters and law enforcement alike.

However, criminal behavior, such as harmful objects being thrown at members of law enforcement, looting, and burning down businesses and historical sites shouldn’t be tolerated and the lawless thugs should immediately be arrested and thrown in jail.

Law enforcement officers are human

and they make mistakes. We know that the overwhelming majority of law enforcement officials understands that carrying a badge carries a responsibility and understands when to use force and when to use restraint. We believe they also understand that they know what one bad decision will unleash. Finally, we oppose the DEFUNDING of law enforcement!

We support those who have taken to the

streets to peacefully exercise their First Amendment rights to and express their opinion, anger, sorrow about issues that concern them. We don’t support social disobedience or anarchy.

We also oppose economic, social, religious and political discrimination of people of all races, color, creed, and sexual orientation.

May God continue to bless America and help guide us through these troubling time.

COMMENTARY

Gries is serving us well

Thanks for job well done

Joe Gries has worked within the Vanderburgh County government for over 20 years. His governmental career started in the Knight Township Assessor's office where he valued property and ended up as the Real Estate Supervisor for the 2002 township wide reassessment. In 2005 Joe became the Chief Deputy Auditor supervising the county's finances and payroll departments. Joe was



JOE GRIES

elected Vanderburgh County Auditor in 2010 and 2014. The County Auditor is the chief financial officer of the county and works closely

with the County Council and Commissioners as well as all county elected officials preparing the yearly county budget. In 2016 Joe joined the Health Department as the Administrator and has worked closely with our Health Officer, Board of Health, and staff to continue to improve the public health services provided to our community. The City County Observer staff appreciates the way that Mr. Gries has handle every aspect of the COVID-19

pandemic. We consider his handling of the COVID-19 to be his crowning achievement in his 20 years in working in the pubic sector. If you happened to see Mr. Gries sometime this coming weeks please thank him for a job well done during an extremely stressful and challenging time. We are also very appreciative with how the fine staff at the Vanderburgh County Health Department have also perform during the pandemic.

COMMENTARY

Cleaner, greener and sustainable energy is a great step forward

BY JOE JACK WALLACE

It was recently revealed that CenterPoint Energy, the electric and gas utility provider for much of Greater Evansville and Southern Indiana is embarking on a mission to introduce more renewable energy technology into their generation operations. It was furthermore made known that CenterPoint Energy is adopting a number of Smart Energy strategies designed to provide cleaner power generation through investing in clean technologies and the sophisticated management techniques to deliver cleaner, more reliable power to their customer base at competitive pricing. All of this is good news and will make the Tri-State more attractive to companies seeking locations that are not only cost effective for their business operations that are concerned about environmental issues. As a former resident who has been living in Southern California and working to advance renewable energy technologies, I applaud these commitments. The large solar generation facilities that CenterPoint Energy is planning have much potential for cost effective clean power delivery. We have many facilities like this in the deserts and their status as static generators of electricity has been providing clean energy for over a decade now. Some of the recent projects are actually less expensive to operate than the fossil fuel generation stations that they are replacing. Personally, I invested in rooftop solar on the carbon neutral home we built when we moved to Palm Desert. In our case our rooftop system paid for itself in roughly five years. With the 20+ year life of the solar panels we are already enjoying the financial benefits of solar



ownership. This ability to do this is enhanced by time-of-use billing that enables us to sell our solar power to our local provider during the day and to buy our evening power at reduced rates after the sun has gone down. Time-of-use rate structures accelerate the adoption of clean power at the residential level and there is little or no transmission required when the power generation is literally on the roof. Smart Energy strategies often utilize multiple power generation sources along with managed energy storage solutions like batteries and pumped hydro power. In a pumped hydro power station, solar panels pump water into a reservoir that is utilized later for power generation much like a dam does when the power demand is needed. Storage is vital to an integrated solution to be reliable. One of the things that California could do a better job on is reliability as storage has not kept up with the transition to renewable power. As we all know, solar does not work when the sun is down and wind power does not work when the wind is not blowing at a sustained speed above what it needed to spin the blades. In most large wind turbines the minimum wind speed to sustain generation is between 12 and 14 miles per hour. Wind turbines also need to be throttled down when wind speeds are

so high that the dynamic forces of rotation literally can destroy the turbines. Energy storage of some type is vital to an effective Smart Energy strategy. When I was an engineering student at the University of Evansville, my interest was to seek a career in the nuclear power industry. During my junior year, the accident at Three Mile Island set off an emotional national reaction that was fueled by a movie named The China Syndrome. The American public went into a media fueled paranoia that has led to the near demise

of nuclear energy. That is a crying shame because nuclear energy has zero green-house gas emissions and has literally generated safe clean energy now for more than half a century. I will not be the least bit surprised to see nuclear come back into the Smart Energy strategies of power providers. Quite frankly, Hollywood manipulated the minds of Americans to rob us of clean energy long ago. CenterPoint Energy is embarking upon a series of investments and strategies that have the potential to slowly transition Greater Evansville from dirty expensive solutions to clean affordable power. This is a path to prosperity that I most certainly want to encourage. Our good friend and former CCO Editor Joe Wallace wrote this article in support of CenterPoint Energy new mission to bring renewable solar technologies in our region. We totally support Mr. Wallace's opinions that he expressed in his well crafted Commentary.

THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONER

If you have questions, concerns or suggestions pertaining to county governmental issues contact me.

Ben Shoulders

812-000-000
bshoulders@vanderburghgov.org
Paid for and Authorized by Shoulders for Commissioner

Community News

O'Brien sworn in as new state representative for House District 7

STATEHOUSE-April 2021 – Tim O'Brien of Evansville took the oath of office Tuesday to serve as state representative for House District 78.

Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta H. Rush administered the oath via Zoom with O'Brien in the House Chamber at the Statehouse in Indianapolis.

"It is an honor to serve my fellow Hoosiers, and I'm ready to represent House District 78," O'Brien said. "My experience in business and connection to our community will drive my votes and conversa-

tions to prioritize the needs of Vanderburgh and Warrick counties."

O'Brien moved to Evansville to attend the University of Southern Indiana, where he graduated in 2015 with a bachelor's in economics. To pay for his education, O'Brien sold houses while attending classes. Because of his enthusiasm, financial know-how, and understanding of the marketplace, at age 26, he became the youngest president of the Southwest Indiana Association of Realtors.

As a young professional,

O'Brien is a real estate broker with F.C. Tucker Emge Realtors. He represents clients in Evansville and the surrounding area, advocating on their behalf and assisting them on the path to homeownership. O'Brien is involved in the community through volunteerism and serving on several local boards.

O'Brien resides in Evansville. He will serve out the remaining term of former State Rep. Holli Sullivan (R-Evansville), who was recently appointed to serve as the Indiana Secretary of State.



DOR announces individual filing and payment deadline extensions

Governor Eric Holcomb announced the Indiana Department of Revenue (DOR) is extending individual income tax filing and payment deadlines to align with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) deadline of May 17, 2021.

"Last week, the IRS announced tax deadline and payment extensions for individual tax returns. By aligning with the IRS filing deadline, we are ensuring we are making filing and paying taxes as easy as possible for Hoosiers,"

stated DOR Commissioner Bob Grennes. "Even with the extended filing deadline, we encourage individuals to utilize electronic filing. Electronically filing is a superior process that allows customers to securely submit a more accurate return and experience a faster turnaround for their refund."

Individual tax returns and payments, originally due by April 15, 2021, are now due on

or before May 17, 2021.

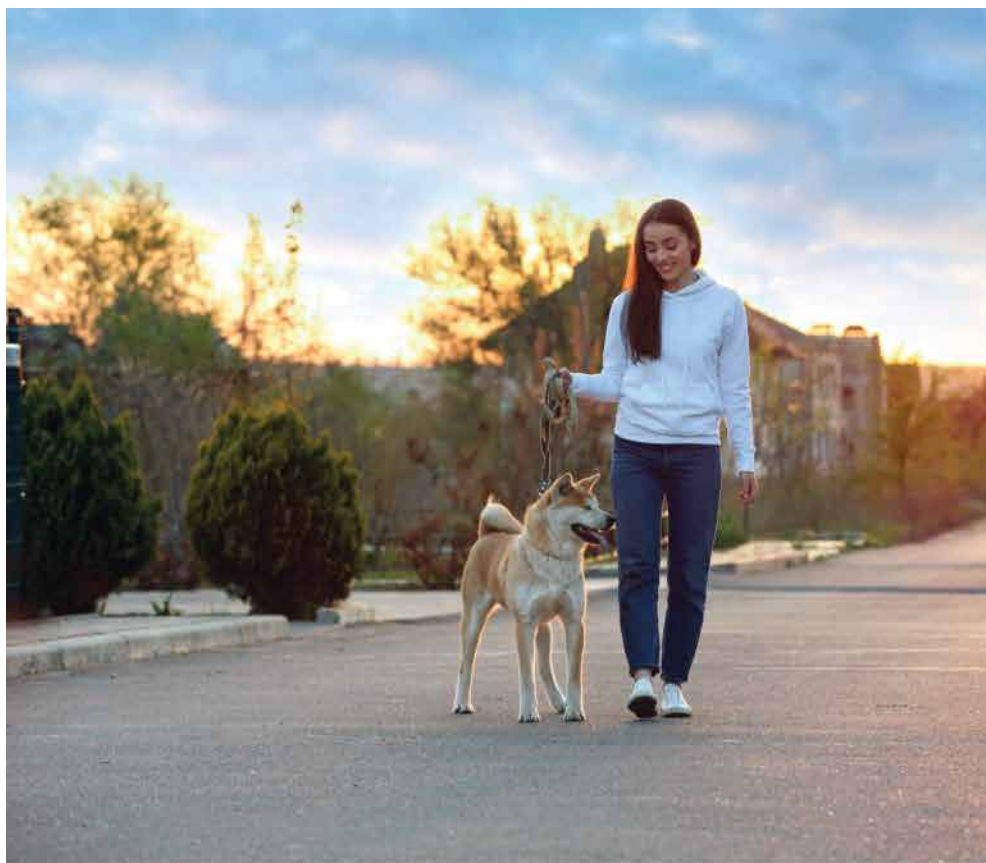
All other tax return filings and payment due dates remain unchanged.

Individuals who are not able to file by the May 17, 2021, deadline can file an extension directly with DOR or with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). If the IRS extension is granted, the Indiana extension is automatically granted. A timely filed extension moves the fed-

eral tax filing deadline to Oct. 15, 2021, and the Indiana filing deadline to Nov. 15, 2021.

It is important to note that the extension only shifts the filing deadline and not the payment deadline. Ninety percent of the taxes owed are still required to be paid by May 17, 2021, to avoid penalties and interest.

Other helpful information including the latest forms, FAQs and tax tips for those who collected unemployment in 2020 is available at dor.in.gov.



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Ascension St. Vincent to offer free colon screenings in April

For April, Ascension St. Vincent will be offering free colon cancer screenings to Evansville residents. The kits are an at-home, stool-based screening and are available to adults ages 45-75. After surgery, other recurrences, Christy Bayer knows all too well how important colon cancer screening is. In 2015, Bayer was diagnosed with colon cancer after experiencing blood in the stool, lethargy, and pain. Following her diagnosis, Bayer had surgery to remove cancer and 12 rounds of chemo. Two years later, cancer was found in her abdominal wall. They believed this to have originated in her colon. Those who would like to take advantage of the free screening can do so by calling 812-485-4308 between April 1-30. Christy and her physician, Dr. Sheri Ziegler, an oncologist at Ascension St. Vincent Evansville, are available for interviews to share more about this story and the importance of colon cancer screenings. Please reply to set up a time.



Right To Life announces Owens as banquet keynote

Right to Life of Southwest Indiana (RTLWIN) announces Candace Owens to be the keynote speaker for the 2021 Annual Banquet to be held on Thursday, August 26 at the Old National Events Plaza in Evansville, Indiana. Candace Owens is the founder of the BLEXIT foundation, an organization dedicated to driving conservative principles into urban communities. She is also a published author, speaker, and host of the weekly “Candace Owens Show”. “A big percentage of the mission of Right to Life is education on life issues,” said Mary Ellen Van Dyke, executive director for Right to Life. “As a voice for young conservative thought, we’re excited to hear from Candace Owens about what is happening on the national landscape in regards to the future of the pro-life movement.” Reserve your seat, table or sponsorship for the 2021 Annual Banquet by visiting www.rtlswin.org/annual-banquet or calling the Right to Life Office at 812-474-3195.

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JOHN MONTRASTELLE

Meet the president of the Vanderburgh County Council

John Montrastelle is a second-generation lifelong resident of Evansville. He is a graduate of Reitz Memorial High School and the University of Evansville. His father, Bill Montrastelle, was a retired Army Reserve Colonel and a local physical therapist with strong community roots. John has been employed at Anchor Industries, Inc., for the past 24-years serving in multiple managerial roles, most recently as the lead of the government sales division responsible for the distribution of military-grade tents and Fire Shelters in the United States and abroad. He has been married to his beautiful wife, Karen, for 36-years and together they have three daughters and four grandchildren.

John has been involved in local City / County pol-



itics since 2014. He began his community service on the Board of Commissions of the Evansville Convention and Visitors Bureau (ECVB) ultimately serving as its President for his final two years. He and his team were fundamental in the development of the Deacon-

ess Sports Park, an eight-field complex, designed to boost local tourism primarily through competitive sports. It is estimated that the Park has increased local revenue spending by \$85 million since its opening.

In 2014, John resigned from the

ECVB and was elected to the Vanderburgh County Council where he continues to serve, currently as the organization's President, while also serving as a member of the Area Plan Commission. He is also an alumnus of Leadership Everyone, formerly known as Leadership Evansville. The Vanderburgh County Council is the fiscal body of the County government primarily responsible for annual budgeting and appropriation of funds and the control of County-wide tax policy and implementation. The Council is also responsible for all positions/employees funded by the County. As President, John ensures that the Council is run with a fiscally responsible mindset ensuring that County taxes are appropriately utilized and that waste is reduced/eliminated.

John also believes in full government transparency. He understands that he is an elected official and it is a privilege to serve on the Council. John has an immense sense of pride in this community - our home. He considers the people of Evansville caring, compassionate, generous, and motivated to continually improve their community. John has one goal: to continue to make Evansville better for its family members. He does this through policy that improves public safety; promotes community involvement and volunteerism; promotes job growth; and by making fiscally strong decisions. John promises to remain creative, passionate, and to continue serving the County with a strong sense of duty, integrity, and respect for others.

BEN SHOULDERS

Meet the president of the Vanderburgh County Commission

Ben Shoulders has been in the banking industry for over 17 years. He has served in many capacities in banking - from branch banking to management to mortgage lending and, most currently, commercial lending. He joined Banterra Bank in September 2019 as a Senior Commercial Lender III after spending over six years at Old National Bank. Shoulders continues to mentor young bankers in the Evansville market while growing and cultivating banking relationships within the southern Indiana footprint. Shoulders began his banking career in 2003 at Wells Fargo in Indianapolis.

Ben was first elected as Vanderburgh County Commissioner in November 2016 as a Democrat. Shoulders quickly made an impact his first year in office by sponsoring numerous ordinances such as adding age and gender to the county's Human Relations Commission's anti-discrimination ordinance. He stated at the time, "we want Vanderburgh County to be as inclusive, engaging and welcoming to our fellow citizens as possible. There is no



tolerance for discrimination of any kind at any time." Shoulders became President of the Commission in 2019. During 2019, he facilitated the largest road pavings in county history (over 30 miles of newly paved roads); passed the county's first ever Minority Owned/Women Owned Business consultant contract to ensure general contractors are incorporating minority businesses within the scope of construction projects and co-sponsored many road

projects such as Kansas Rd, Oak Hill Rd, Boonville New Harmony and Green River Road Trails, to name a few. Ben also helped to form the inaugural Vanderburgh County Bicentennial Park which celebrated to 200 years of Vanderburgh County. Ben and his fellow two County Commissioners were recognized statewide in 2019 for their infrastructure vision by working together alongside the private sector and forming the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan);

an infrastructure master plan for Vanderburgh County.

In 2020, Ben Shoulders became the first Vanderburgh County Commissioner to be re-elected with opposition since Pat Tuley in 1996. Ben was then again voted to serve again as President in 2021 after overcoming a near 7,000 straight ticket deficit and defeating his opponent by over 2,500 votes. 2021 has already seen Ben and his fellow Commissioners rewarded by the state with a \$770,000 grant for their work on trails and greenspace on N Green River Road. Shoulders says his main two county priorities are getting out of Covid and ensuring that Broadband placement occurs for the entire county so all parts of Vanderburgh County have high speed internet access.

Ben's many professional achievements include:

- #1 Top ONB Producer Evansville / Southern Indiana Market - 2015
- Top 20 Under 40 Courier Press - 2011
- Top 20 Under 40 NEWS4U - 2015
- Community Service Award Boys & Girls Club - 2021
- Community Service Award CCO - 2020

Harrison High School Hall of Fame - 2020 • "Big Dawg" Award Chamber of Commerce - 2014

Shoulders has continued to give back to our community by serving and volunteering with such non-profit boards as Board and Girls Club (Past President), Leadership Everyone, Habitat for Humanity, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Woodmere Dog Park, EVSC Foundation, Harrison High School Athletic Hall of Fame (Chair), Corridor of Champions (past president), Children's Theater of Southern Indiana, Darrell Ragland Foundation, African American Museum Gala, Commission on Homelessness, Vanderburgh County Resource and Awareness Task Force, Blue Ribbon Committee and many more. Ben also served as Treasurer on the Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Commissioners (2014-15) and spent time working and volunteering for WNIN Radio and WNIN Public Auction. Ben and his entire family were born and raised locally and currently his children; Emma, Parker and Sadie, attend Hebron Elementary.

TOM MASSEY

It's official: New Vanderburgh County Superior Court Judge

EVANSVILLE — Gov. Eric J. Holcomb recently appointed the popular and highly respected Evansville Attorney Thomas A. Massey as the next Vanderburgh County Superior Court.

Today Tom Massey succeeded the Honorable Superior Court Judge Richard G. D'Amour who retired on April 1, 2021.

A large group of supporters, family members, state and local dignitaries attended the swearing ceremony of Judge-Massey.

The swearing-in event was held at the ONB Event Plaza at noon today.

Judge Tom Massey was sworn in by the Honorable Leslie C Shively, Chief Judge of the Superior Court of Vanderburgh County.

Chief Judge Shively made the following interesting remarks about newly appointed Judge Tom Massey before he administered the oath of office.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF TOM MASSEY PRESENTED BY THE HONORABLE CHIEF JUDGE LESIE C. SHIVELY JUST BEFORE HE TOOK THE OATH OF OFFICE

Tom grew up the oldest of 4 boys in South Bend, IN. His father was an Electrical Engineering Professor at Notre Dame and his Mother worked in a hospital laboratory. Tom graduated



from South Bend Clay High School. For those of you old enough to remember, South Bend Clay beat Memorial for the State baseball championship in 1970.

Tom enjoyed playing summer league baseball and went out for the Clay High School football team his junior year. He made the Varsity that year, and during his senior year, he was a back up tight end on Clay's first and only undefeated football team in school history.

Tom is proud to have graduated in the top half of his high school class. He applied and was accepted to Indiana University, Notre Dame and Purdue University. Living next to Notre Dame, he decided to go to a "party school" and ended up in W. Lafayette, IN.

In high school and during college, Tom worked in restaurants washing dishes, worked second shift at McCormick

& Company food plant making salad dressings from 16 oz. bottles to 55-gallon drums. Tom also drove a refrigerated truck for 2 summers as he had a chauffeur's license.

Tom graduated from Purdue in 1981 with a Management Degree from the Krannert School and then attended Valparaiso law school. While in law school, Tom wrote a note that was accepted for law review the first semester second year and he became a Teaching Assistant in the Legal Research and Writing Program second semester second year and all of the third year.

Tom started with the Bowers Harrison law firm in July 1984 as their newest associate. 25 years later he left Bowers Harrison as one of the Managing Partners. In 2009, Tom started the Massey Law Offices in the Curtis Building. Shortly thereafter, Joe Harrison and

Lee Veazey joined him in the practice of law. They are very proud that they never had a formal meeting during their tenure and there was never a crossword spoken.

While at Bowers Harrison, Tom hired Kristy McDaniel and Heather Zimmer. Neither had any legal experience and both are now among the top legal assistants in the city. Kristy and Lee Veazey are joining the Dentons Birmingham Greenebaum law firm. Heather and Joe Harrison, Jr., are starting the Harrison Law Firm. At Massey Law Offices, Tom hired Laurie Nevil who is now his Bailiff. Laurie is tougher than she looks as her first employment in the legal profession was as John Clouse's assistant. Tom said he is very fortunate to have Kendra McLeod and Jennifer Hoover stay on to help train him.

Tom and Joanne married in 1989. Joanne is an artist and some of her work is on display in Tom's new office in Room 218. Tom and Joanne have 3 children. Rachel Alban is now married and works as a Manufacturing Scientist for Eli Lilly having graduated from Purdue University in Biological Engineering. Scott Massey graduated from Purdue in Mechanical Engineering Technology and is the Founder/CEO of Heliponix, which produces wine cooler sized hydroponic growing units for residential customers. Their young-

est, Ellie Massey, is a senior at Purdue majoring in Industrial Management and will be working for Belden Corporation when she graduates this May.

Tom has been active in Community Service since starting with Bowers Harrison. He worked as a Deputy Election Commissioner for a number of years before being appointed to the Vanderburgh County Election Board, first serving with Election Board President Wayne Trockman and Clerk Betty Knight Smith. Since then, Tom has served as President of the Vanderburgh County Election Board under Clerks Susie Kirk, Debbie Stucke and Carla Hayden. Tom took a break from the election office when Russ Lloyd appointed him to the Evansville Police Merit Commission where he served from 2000 to 2004.

Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch called Tom on February 18, 2020 on behalf of Governor Holcomb to advise that he had been selected to replace retiring Judge Richard G. D'Amour. Judge D'Amour's docket is in family law and civil law. Tom practiced both family and civil law for many years. It is Tom's goal to do the best job he can to fill the large shoes left by Judge D'Amour's retirement.

With that introduction and background, it is now time to administer the oath of office.

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Drug recognition experts recognized for impaired driving enforcement

INDIANAPOLIS — Announced today, the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute recognized 23 law enforcement officers as part of the annual Indiana Drug Recognition Expert Awards Program. A drug recognition expert (DRE) is a police officer who has received specialized training to help identify drivers under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Now in its sixth year, the awards program was created by the agency to recognize the contributions made by Indiana’s DREs. In total, ICJI presented 18 longevity awards for years of service, two leadership awards for going above and beyond, and two emeritus awards for contributions made in retirement. Awards were also presented to one officer based on the number of evaluations conducted and to Louisiana-based J.O. Jones Consulting, LLC, for its support of the program.

“Drug recognition experts are critical to taking impaired drivers off the road,” said Devon McDonald, ICJI Executive Director. “Their efforts have saved countless lives, and it was an honor to recognize their service and commitment to public safety.”

Every year, two leadership awards are presented to one officer and one instructor. Formerly known as the DRE Officer of the Year and DRE Instructor of the Year, the awards were renamed in 2017 in honor of fallen DRE officers: Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Officer David Moore, who was killed in the line of duty in 2011, and Indiana State Police Lieutenant Gary Dudley, who was struck and killed while participating in a charity bike ride for the Indiana chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors in 2006.

County	Name	Agency	Award
Allen	Matthew Wilson	Ft. Wayne Police Department	Longevity Award (5 years)
Bartholomew	Corbin Smith	Indiana State Excise Police	Longevity Award (10 years)
Boone	Ben Phelps	Lebanon Police Department	Longevity Award (10 years)
Dekalb	James Bailey	Indiana State Police	Longevity Award (5 years)
Elkhart	Dustin Lundgren	Bristol Police Department	Longevity Award (10 years)
Floyd	Dustin Zehnder	Indiana State Police	Longevity Award (5 years)
Hamilton	Kevin Crask	Hamilton County Sheriff's Department	Longevity Award (5 years)
Hendricks	Michael Wittl	Avon Police Department	Lt. Gary Dudley DRE Instructor of the Year Award
Jasper	Richard Trail	Jasper County Sheriff's Department	Longevity Award (10 years)
Johnson	Nathan Tompkins	Greenwood Police Department	Longevity Award (5 years)
LaPorte	Timothy Shortt	LaPorte County Sheriff's Department	DRE Emeritus Award
Marion	David Bowles	Indianapolis Airport Police Department	Longevity Award (5 years)
Marion	Robert Duckworth	Indiana Criminal Justice Institute	Longevity Award (15 years)
Marion	Chris Smith	Indiana State Excise Police	Longevity Award (15 years)
Marion	Susan Reidenbach	Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department	Longevity Award (25 years)
Marion	Daniel Shragal	Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department	DRE Emeritus Award
Martin	Chris Roberts	Crane Naval Support Police Department	Longevity Award (10 years)
Orange	Noah Ewing	Indiana State Police	Officer David Moore DRE Officer of the Year Award
Spencer	Jason Overfield	Rockport Police Department	Longevity Award (15 years)
Steuben	Matthew Kling	Angola Police Department	Longevity Award (10 years)
Tipton	Adam Moor	Indiana State Police	Longevity Award (5 years)
Warrick	Timothy Huber	Newburgh Police Department	DRE Evaluation Award
Wayne	Adam Blanton	Wayne County Sheriff's Department	Longevity Award (5 years)
	Joey Jones	J.O. Jones Consulting, LLC*	DRE Ambassador Award

*J.O. Jones Consulting, LLC, is located in Louisiana.



This year, the Officer David Moore DRE Officer of the Year Award was presented to Indiana State Police Trooper Noah Ewing. Ewing, a Pennsylvania native, has been with Indiana State Police for 5 years. After graduating from the 75th Indiana State Police Recruit Academy in 2015, he was assigned to the Jasper Post patrolling Orange County.

Ewing completed his DRE certification in 2019, and although relatively new to the program, for the past two years, he has conducted the most DRE evaluations out of any officer in the state – 35 in 2020. This honor adds to the growing list of awards Ewing has received over the past couple of years including the Jasper District Trooper of

the Year, Jasper District’s Top OWI Trooper, and the Life Saving Award.

“Our drug recognition experts and instructors are some of the most committed officers in the state,” said Robert Duckworth, ICJI Traffic Safety Director. “They have devoted their entire careers to stopping impaired driving and have acquired the skills and training in order to do so.”

The Lt. Gary Dudley DRE Instructor of the Year Award was presented to Officer Michael Wittl with the Avon Police Department. Witt began his career with the department after graduating from the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy in 2003. He completed his DRE certification in 2007 and became an instructor the fol-

lowing year. Wittl assumed the duties of Assistant State Coordinator in 2017.

Last year, Wittl was responsible for managing two DRE courses and their accompanying field certifications. In addition, he managed two Standard Field Sobriety Testing Instructor Development courses and instructed numerous Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement courses. He received the award this year, not only for those efforts but also for his devotion to public safety and mentoring DRE officers statewide.

Indiana DRE Program Coordinator Marshall Depew commended the award recipients. He said the program was created in 1988 in Indiana to enhance enforcement effectiveness and that there are approximately 200 DRE-certified officers in the state.

“DREs represent some of the best and brightest of Indiana’s law enforcement community,” Depew said. “They are a true testament to the program and are out there every day working to save lives and keep dangerous drivers off the road.”

The 2021 award recipients were recognized at a ceremony recently held in the Youth Pavilion at the Indiana State Fairgrounds.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT UTILITY-SCALE SOLAR

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF SOLAR?

There are no proven health risks from solar fields, and homeowners commonly have solar panels installed on their residences. A 2017 white paper from NC Clean Energy Technology Center¹ states:

“Photovoltaic (PV) technologies and solar inverters are not known to pose any significant health dangers to their neighbors. The most important dangers posed are increased highway traffic during the relative short construction period and dangers posed to trespassers of contact with high-voltage equipment. This latter risk is mitigated by signage and the security measures that industry uses to deter trespassing. As will be discussed in more detail below, risks of site contamination are much less than for most other industrial uses because PV technologies employ few toxic chemicals and those used are used in very small quantities. Due to the reduction in the pollution from fossil-fuel-fired electric generators, the overall impact of solar development on human health is overwhelmingly positive.”

In fact, solar fields are known for having a positive benefit on air quality. Solar fields generate clean, renewable power with zero air emissions and often replace older and less-efficient fossil fuel-based sources of power with significant air emissions. A study from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory² shows that this corresponds to a lower risk of respiratory issues and heart attacks.

Solar fields are generally not associated with health risk from electromagnetic fields (EMFs). Humans are exposed to EMFs in their daily life, such as from a refrigerator. Similarly, EMFs generated within the solar field is at a low level and not enough to harm humans. You can read more about EMFs on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s website³.

¹ https://nccleantech.ncsu.edu/resource_library/health-and-safety-impacts-of-solar-photovoltaics-pv/ | ² <https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy07osti/41998.pdf>
³ <https://www.epa.gov/radtown/sources-electric-and-magnetic-radiation>

WHAT IS THE FIRE RISK OF A SOLAR PROJECT SUCH AT THIS?

The risk of fire is extremely rare. Fire safety systems include sensors in the solar array that can pick up on a fire occurring in a specific section of the array. The sensors can notify maintenance and operation crew members and can then be powered off. The facility and equipment will be monitored 24/7 to ensure proper safety of the equipment and surrounding area.

The project is required to have a safety and security plan that details fire protection and related training. The project will work with local fire departments to ensure they have a thorough understanding of the project’s low fire risk and the training/equipment necessary should a fire at the site occur.

WILL INCLEMENT WEATHER DAMAGE THE PANELS?

Solar panels are very robust and go through an extensive amount of testing for production and manufacturing approval. The glass is tempered, much like the glass used in automobiles. It is designed to withstand weather elements such as hail, rain and wind. Studies show panels can withstand quarter-sized hail for 30 minutes without significant damage.

Additionally, the site operator will have the ability to tilt panels based on weather radar to avoid direct weather element exposure. For example, the panels can be tilted in the opposite direction of incoming hail or snow to avoid impact or accumulation.

WILL THERE BE GROUNDWATER OR SOIL CONTAMINATION?

No adverse impact to ground water or soil is anticipated.

Solar panels do not consist of any liquids; therefore, if one were to be damaged, there would be no risk of contaminants spilling on the ground. The project will utilize solar panels composed of monocrystalline solar cells sandwiched between glass with a metal frame. This glass is strong and designed to last.

Furthermore, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s established tests demonstrate solar modules do not leach toxins into the environment.

Our project will be continuously maintained and monitored to ensure operations remain safe and environmentally sound. If a solar panel is damaged, the maintenance team will remove it and replace it.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON PROPERTY VALUES?

There are numerous factors that influence property values and the housing market, and no credible studies have shown an association between the presence of an operating solar field and negative long-term impact on the value of adjacent properties. Various reviews of solar fields and neighboring property values and home sales, including those utilizing data from Indiana, have confirmed there is no long-term impact.

We recognize that this perception exists among those opposed to solar, regardless of fact. The solar project has offered Good Neighbor Agreements to neighbors whose homes are in proximity to the solar field. The Good Neighbor Agreement serves to include neighbors in the project and provide compensation for perceived impacts. Similar to a lease agreement, the compensation provided through the Good Neighbor Agreement is an annual payment over the life of the solar field.

Operating solar fields have minimal impact on the surrounding area: no sound outside the fence line; no odor or emissions; no tall towers or equipment (solar panels typically sit 15 feet or less from the ground); and no increase in local traffic.

WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM IMPACT TO THE LAND?

Using farmland for solar under the current local ordinances does not change the long-term zoning classification for the land, allowing it to be returned to farming in future years. This is different from most other types of land use.

Using land for solar is similar to landowners putting farmland into the CRP program and comes with similar benefits to the land. For example, the land has time to rest and rejuvenate, and there is reduced use of fertilizer and pesticide – all factors that can improve soil quality. Soil erosion and run-off are controlled.

It is standard practice for a solar field to have a decommissioning plan and cost estimate prior to the start of construction.

Our plan calls for all solar panels and related infrastructure to be removed at end of the project’s life. This includes the removal of all foundations. The land, rested and restored, is then returned to the landowner, at which time it can be returned to farmland or other previous use.

Education



Lawmakers shield schools from funding loss due

BY DYLAN PEERS MCCOY

As of September, about 360,000 Indiana students were enrolled in school virtually because of COVID-19, according to data collected by the Indiana Department of Education.

Alleviating a big worry for education leaders, Indiana legislators agreed Tuesday to provide full funding to most public schools for students studying virtually in the pandemic.

The long-expected funding fix, which state political leaders widely supported, now heads to the governor's desk. The change will shield schools from losing as much as \$161 million this spring, based on estimates from the fall.

The state will fund students who attend

remotely due to the coronavirus as though they were attending in person under the measure, which applies to schools that traditionally operate in person. Last fall, state officials approved a temporary measure on an emergency basis.

The Senate signed off on the final bill 44 to 4 Tuesday.

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"We did what we said we were going to do," said Sen. Jeff Raatz, an author of the bill. "It shows the General Assembly recognized the difficulties presented by COVID and the extra effort that school districts had to put forth."

Indiana has long provided virtual

schools with less funding per student because those schools are presumed to have lower costs. Since 2019, virtual schools have received 85% of the per-student allotment for in-person instruction.

But that policy ignited an avalanche of worry this year that schools that typically operate in person would precipitously lose funding. Many districts began the school year remotely because of the pandemic, and thousands of families chose virtual options.

Indiana schools receive funding based on enrollment counts in September and February. As of September, about 360,000 Indiana students were enrolled in school virtually

because of COVID-19, according to data collected by the Indiana Department of Education.

It's likely that fewer students are learning remotely this semester because several large school districts that began the year largely online have brought more students in person. Data from the February student count is not yet available. But nearly all Indiana schools now have in-person options and 90% have returned to fully in-person instruction, according to the Department of Education.

After approving a similar stopgap measure last fall, the Indiana State Board of Education left spring funding to lawmakers, who returned to session in January.

The funding increase does not cover students who were already enrolled in online programs before the pandemic, or students who are enrolled in online-only schools.

The change only applies to the 2020-21 school year, despite efforts from some Democratic lawmakers to extend it to next school year.

But virtual funding could be different for all schools next year. Amid the pandemic, online-only schools have seized the opportunity to lobby for increased funding for virtual education going forward. And they have some powerful allies — including Indiana House Republicans, who have proposed full funding for all virtual education.

ASHWORTH

FROM PAGE 1

Southwest Indiana having graduated from Mt. Vernon High School in Posey County, and the University of Southern Indiana. Major Ashworth holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology and

Criminal Justice and received his master's degree in Criminology from Indiana State University. Major Ashworth's wife Kendyl is a life-long resident of Vanderburgh County and a graduate of Reitz High School and the University of Southern Indiana. She too holds a master's

degree in education, from Indiana Wesleyan University. Kendyl is currently a teacher at Highland Elementary School and has worked for the EVSC for 29 years. Kendyl and Major Jason Ashworth have been married for 28 years and have 2 children, Autumn age 25, and Brock age 23. Autumn is now a

middle school teacher and Brock is finishing his college degree.

Major Jason Ashworth is not only a 28-year law enforcement officer running to be the next Sheriff, but he is also a volunteer for several Vanderburgh County groups such as Keep Evansville Beautiful, Cops Connecting

with Kids, 911 Gives Hope (Guns and Hoses & Toy Drive), Boys and Girls Club of Evansville, and the Legal Aid Society which provides legal services to those in need.

To learn more about Major Jason Ashworth and his campaign, please view his website at www.ashworthforsheriff.com.

Ivy Tech announces two upcoming events

EVANSVILLE, IN – Ivy Tech Community College Evansville Campus has two events planned to help potential students learn more about the Community College experience and learn how to advance or start their careers.

The events are:
 April 13, 6 p.m.: College 101

Ivy Tech will offer a virtual or in-person information session on college enrollment at Ivy Tech and within our community. During the session interested individuals will learn more about:

- The College Enrollment Process

- The Ivy Tech Evansville Campus and Programs of Study

- Financial Aid and the importance of filing your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

The presentation will begin at 6 p.m. in Ivy Tech’s Vectren Auditorium, Room 147, on the main Ivy Tech campus, as well as through Zoom.

Those interested should RSVP at link.ivytech.edu/EVCollege101

April 20, 6 p.m.: Associate Accelerated Program (ASAP) Night

ASAP is an accelerated associate degree opportunity where students take their classes together as a cohort and complete in just 11 months, with the ability to transfer to a four-year institution as a junior. Typically, students ages 18-21 are best suited for this program.



This event will provide individuals with information about the program, how it works, the benefits of an accelerated degree, and insight from current students and graduates. The event will be offered in-person in Ivy Tech’s Vectren Auditorium, Room 147 on the main campus, and virtually on Zoom at 6 p.m.

Those interested should RSVP at link.ivytech.edu/ASAPnight

A follow-up message with details to access the virtual and in-person info sessions will be sent to the email provided in the RSVP for both events.

UE receives grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

\$5M grant will support collaboration among four Midwest Higher Education Institutions

EVANSVILLE, IN (03/25/2021) The University of Evansville (UE) has received a grant of \$5 million from Lilly Endowment Inc. through the competitive Phase 3 of its initiative, Charting the Future of Indiana’s Colleges and Universities. The grant will support the establishment of a shared, cloud-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) system with a single set of standardized business practices.

UE is one of 16 Indiana colleges and universities that will be supported by funding in the final phase of Charting the Future, an initiative designed to help colleges and universities in Indiana assess and prioritize the most significant challenges and opportunities they face as higher education institutions and develop strategies to address them.

Over the span of several months, UE collaborated with three other institutions to request the grant. Those institutions included Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa; North Central College in Naperville, Illinois; and Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. Valparaiso also received a \$5 million from Lilly Endowment through the Charting the Future initiative. That grant will fund Valparaiso’s participation in the collaboration.

Through the collaboration, the four institutions will form an independent, non-profit organization called the College and University Sustainability Project (CUSP) to house the collaborative effort toward providing efficient and effective non-academic services. Once significant progress has been achieved, the intention is to enable additional institutions to join CUSP and achieve similar efficiency and effectiveness.

Concepts and initiatives for the grant were established by a steering committee of members from each of the four institutions. In addition to the four presidents, it was comprised of chief financial officers, chief information officers, and other key administrators.

“The University of Evansville is very grateful to Lilly Endowment for its generous grant and commitment to supporting higher education,” said Christopher M. Pietruszkiewicz, president of UE. “Technology is an ever-evolving industry that directly impacts our University, and this grant will provide remarkable opportunities and expand our capabilities for modernization among core information systems.”

“Indiana’s colleges and universities face myriad challenges as they work to fulfill their educational missions while adapting to growing financial pressures, rapid demographic and technological changes, and evolving needs and demands of students,” said Ted Maple, the Endowment’s vice president for education. “We are pleased with the creative and collaborative approaches the colleges and universities are taking to address these challenges and seize opportunities to better serve their students, institutions, communities and the state of Indiana.”

Lilly Endowment launched the three-phased Charting the Future initiative in 2019 to help leaders of the state’s 38 colleges and universities engage in thoughtful discernment about the future

of their institutions and to advance strategic planning and implementation efforts to address key challenges and opportunities. Collaboration was encouraged, especially in the third phase of Charting the Future, and several schools proposed collaborative programs and strategies. Through three phases of grantmaking, Lilly Endowment awarded more than \$138 million to the schools.

Through earlier rounds of the initiative, all 38 schools received planning grants, which were approved in December 2019, and implementation grants approved in June and September 2020. The implementation grants funded strategies to improve efforts to prepare students for successful futures and strengthen the schools’ long-term institutional vitality.

ABOUT LILLY ENDOWMENT INC.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based, private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly, Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. Although the gifts of stock remain a financial bedrock of the Endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders’ wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion. The Endowment funds significant programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion. However, it maintains a special commitment to its founders’ hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.



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ENERGY

FROM PAGE 1

Tri-State but most large parcels are used for either corn or soybeans. A skilled farmer can expect to yield about 200 bushels of corn per acre that is selling today on the futures market for \$5.50, which means an acre will generate about \$1,100 of revenue for the farmer. For soybeans the yield is more like 60 bushels per acre but soybeans command \$14 per bushel and produce revenue of \$840 per acre. Both of these prices are up from previous years leading to increased land prices and money in the pockets of both farmers and land owners. Land owners who do not farm can expect to be able to rent large parcels of prime farmland for between \$200 and \$300 per acre depending on the quality of the soil and the ease of farming it. Last

year was a good year for all and 2021 is expected to be as well. Renewable Energy as a Crop Farmers have been taking advantage of alternative fuels for years in the form of ethanol. The only purpose for selling a crop to manufacturers of ethanol is to see it used as a fuel in internal combustion engines. With the broad acceptance of renewable energy such as PV (photovoltaic) Solar or Wind Turbines, the output becomes electricity that can be sold at the grid level for significant revenue. According to GreenCoast, a PV Solar installation can be expected to generate 357,000 kilo-Watt hours per year of electricity. At a rate of 5 cents per KWhr, a PV Solar farm will generate electricity that will sell into the wholesale power markets for \$17,850 per acre. At 15 cents per kWhr the

revenue increases to \$53,550 per year. Crops do not approach this kind of revenue. To install a grid level Solar Farm rated at 1 MW requires about 5 acres according to the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL). An equivalent Wind Farm according to the same NREL report requires more like 85 acres but wind farms do make multiple uses possible. While it is true that when the sun goes down and the wind does not blow these devices produce nothing but the predictability and reliability of the output is favorable to crop farming. PV Solar is predictable to within less than 5% in most locations over time. Renewable energy farms offer farmers and land owners an alternative to traditional farming and in many cases the crop of electrons is more lucrative.

People do need food and so do the animals we eat. Farming for food will always be something that is needed. With modern agricultural techniques yields are higher than ever and soil does get depleted. Renewable energy is a real viable alternative to crop farming for landowners and it may just make the land value increase just like discarding the horse as the primary form of transportation did a century ago.

MERGER

FROM PAGE 1

purposeful services that will enhance the quality of life and prosperity for all,” stated Tara Barney, Co-CEO of E-REP. By unifying essential economic development functions into a single entity, the new organization will operate with a bolder vision, a stronger voice, and the ability to invest in larger regional development strategies adding value to residents and businesses. “In a very competitive environment for talent and opportunity, working together will significantly strengthen our region’s capacity to promote the unique assets of the region and increase opportunities for measurable success,” said Greg Wathen, Co-CEO of E-REP. Located at Innovation Pointe in downtown Evansville, the new partnership will operate within the Evansville MSA including Gibson, Posey, Vanderburgh, and Warrick Counties. Among our partners are the Southwest Indiana Small Business Development Center, area Chambers, local economic development organizations, WorkOneSouthwest, and other entities that strengthen the region’s opportunity to prosper. Operating with a combined team of 24 subject-matter-experts, Evansville Regional Economic Partnership will be supported by a regional board of directors representing the public, private and non-profit sectors.

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Sports



Deaconess Sports Park preparing for a robust 2021 season

BY JAMES T. WOOD, FCDME
PRESIDENT & CEO AT VISIT EVANSVILLE

Last year we were extremely fortunate to open Deaconess Sports Park even though it was to a greatly reduced number of tournament events due to the COVID-19 virus. With all the CDC guidelines in place, Deaconess Sports Park hosted 19 tournaments that attracted 829 teams with an estimated economic impact of \$8,973,190 in 2020. Deaconess Sports Park also saw a decline of nearly 40% of those family members who would normally travel with their team to cheer on their favorite players, primarily due to the COVID-19 virus.

This year things should begin to normalize as the COVID vaccine reaches the masses. “2021 is shaping up to be a banner year for

the Deaconess Sports Park as things begin to return to normal,” said Tim Fulton, Evansville Sports Complex Director of Facilities. “We are very excited to get Deaconess Sports Park open for a full season,” said Fulton. “Last year was a challenging season as we didn’t know from one week to the next what exactly to expect, but we managed through the crisis while still providing a great experience for the tournaments and teams,” said Fulton.

Tournament bookings are returning and there is a high level of excitement as teams are preparing for an exciting 2021 season. “Currently, we have 40 tournaments scheduled for this year which will attract an estimated 2,035 teams to Evansville from late March

through early November,” said Cate Simon, Evansville Sports Complex Program & Events Manager. “After a fall off from last year, we are also anticipating fan attendance to return to near-normal levels this year, barring another unexpected COVID-19 outbreak,” said Simon. Visit Evansville is projecting that over 20,000 hotel rooms will be used during the 2021 season, providing a much-needed boost to our area hotels as the hotel and lodging industry slowly rebounds from a very difficult past year and a half. In 2021 the Deaconess Sports Park will have an overall estimated economic impact for Evansville’s local economy of approximately \$27.4 Million.

Following the end of the 2021 tournament season,

Deaconess Sports Park plans to replace its clay infields with new synthetic infields from its’ bond refinancing. These new infields will provide more opportunities to host additional tournaments, including boys U-12 and U-13 baseball tournaments. In addition, the new infields will greatly diminish rain-out weekends while quickening the turnaround time of getting games back in action following a rainstorm.

Since the Deaconess Sports Park opened, the facility has generated over \$85 Million to Evansville’s local economy. Add in the 2021 projected economic impact, and Deaconess Sports Park will have generated over \$112 Million to our local economy since its opening in 2015.

Ohio Valley Conference Tennis Championships coming to Evansville

Evansville, IN - The Evansville Sports Corporation (ESC), in partnership with the Evansville Tennis Center is bringing the Ohio Valley Conference Men’s & Women’s Tennis Championships to Evansville on April 23-25, 2021. The Championships will be held at the outdoor courts at Wesselman Tennis Center with the Evansville Tennis Center serving as a backup indoor location in case of inclement weather.

While this will mark the first time the OVC Men’s and Women’s Tennis Championships have been held in Evansville, this will be the 72nd contest of the men’s championship (it was first held in 1949), while the women’s championship will be held for the 46th time (it was first held in 1977). In 2019, the Tennessee Tech men claimed its fourth-straight title while the Austin Peay women

capped a perfect season to win its first title since 2010. The 2020 Championships were canceled due to a public health emergency. The top four men’s and women’s teams will compete for the conference championship at the conclusion of the 2021 conference season.

“The OVC Tennis Championships build on a strong partnership established between the OVC Conference and the City of Evansville,” said Steve Schaefer, Deputy Mayor and Chairman of the ESC Board of Directors.

OVC Commissioner Beth DeBauche reiterated the strength of the partnership between the City of Evansville and the conference as initially established through the OVC Basketball Championships. “We are excited to bring our tennis championships to the Wesselman Tennis

Center and come back to the Evansville Community that has been so supportive of our OVC Championships in the past.”

The Evansville Sports Corporation bid on and secured the OVC Basketball Championships in 2018, 2019, and 2020. The OVC Basketball Championships had been held in Nashville, TN the previous 24 years. The basketball championships are committed to Evansville through 2023 while the tennis championships are a one-year commitment.

Wesselman Tennis Center and the Evansville Tennis Center already hold several US Tennis Association championships each year. Eric Marvin, President of the ESC said, “Wesselman and the Evansville Tennis Center are high-level, tournament quality facilities that are tremendous assets for our community. We

are excited to work with the team at the Evansville Tennis Center to showcase high-level tennis competitions and bring more people to our community as we continue to reopen Evansville for events. We are committed to following strict health and safety protocols to ensure the safety of all.”

For additional information regarding the Evansville Sports Corporation, visit evansvillesports.org or contact Eric Marvin at emarvin@evansvillesports.org or (812) 434-7699.

FOOTNOTE: The Evansville Sports Corporation is a 501(c)3 Not-for-Profit with the mission of enhancing Southwestern Indiana’s economy, image, and quality of life through the attraction, promotion, and development of high-profile, signature sporting events.

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