

WGL QUARTERLY PROGRAMMING

January - March, 2022

- After 40 years, a Fort Wayne sports bar will shut down later this month, blaming the ongoing labor shortage. [Kaysan's 5th Down Bar and Grill](#), which is off Washington Center Road just west of Lima Road, will close its doors for good on January 29th. A sign on the door announcing the closure says it's because of "the labor shortage, supply chain problems and other difficulties" encountered over the past two years, as well as the owners' ages.

- An inmate who died in the Allen County Jail on Oct. 15 died from natural causes related to a brain tumor, the county coroner's office said Thursday. Byron McLemore died from panhypopituitarism – the reduced production and secretion of all hormones by the pituitary gland – because of a brain tumor, the coroner's office said.

- The Salvation Army announced Thursday it fell short of its goal of \$237,000, having raised \$222,403 to help those in need this year. Money can still be donated online at www.safortwayne.org or by mail to The Salvation Army at 2901 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46805.

- Five Allen County schools are switching to a remote format today because of staffing shortages fueled partly by COVID-19 cases and quarantines. Fort Wayne Community Schools – the area's largest district with almost 30,000 students – is implementing e-learning at Shawnee Middle School and Abbett, Fairfield and Franke Park elementary schools. Northwest Allen County Schools said COVID-19 cases and other absences contributed to the staffing shortage at Carroll Middle School. "We cannot staff and supervise the building safely (Friday)," Principal Brandon Basham said in a statement Thursday. "Therefore, our best option is to use eLearning for the day." A "significant" number of COVID-19 cases and quarantines also prompted Central Noble Junior-Senior High School to conduct lessons remotely today. The Catholic Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend said it has three schools – including St. Vincent de Paul School and St. Joseph Catholic School in Fort Wayne – that are fully virtual this week. The other is in Elkhart.

- Indiana's color-coded COVID-19 prevalence map turned even redder this week. All but 11 Hoosier counties qualified for red status. Allen County on Thursday again recorded more than 1,000 new cases in a single day. The daily total was the fifth highest reported by the county throughout the pandemic. Indiana reported 16,563 new cases and 75 deaths, bringing the totals to 1,410,021 cases and 19,393 deaths, the state's COVID-19 website said.

- Downtown building owners entered a total of 25 buildings into consideration for funding through Kendallville's \$2 million [PreservINg Main Street](#). Kendallville was one of 25 communities to apply for the new pilot program from the [Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs](#) and then was selected as one of five finalists for consideration. The state had originally said only a sole community would be funded but then ended up selecting two to get the \$2 million grant, with Kendallville and Brookville getting the awards.

- Two Fort Wayne men – both felons in their 30s – have been sentenced to prison on firearms charges. Will A. Harris Jr., 38, was sentenced to more than 21 years, or 262 months. He pleaded guilty to several charges: possessing with intent to distribute methamphetamine, possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and being a felon in possession of a firearm. Kevin D. Ricksy, 35, was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm, U.S. Attorney Clifford Johnson said. The sentence for Ricksy, also known as Kevin Tinsley, will be followed by two years of supervised release. Both cases were prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Stacey Speith and sentences handed down by U.S. District Court Judge Holly Brady.

- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) presented Car Recyclers Inc., 13685 N. Ind. 13, North Manchester, with their third Indiana Clean Yard-Gold Level award in recognition of the company's efforts to protect the environment. Hani Sharaya, IDEM's senior environmental engineer, presented a commemorative certificate to Kelly and Katrina Kerlin, owners of Car Recyclers Inc., during a site visit on Jan. 11.

- The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) on Thursday released data on school enrollment for the 2021-22 school year. Enrollment calculations are based on a statewide count of students in attendance in an Indiana school on Oct. 1. More than 83,000 students currently attend Indiana's accredited non-public schools, which comprises 7.4%. Warsaw Community Schools is 6,731. Fort Wayne Community Schools, 28,778. Other Kosciusko county school corporations include Wawasee Community School Corporation has a total enrollment listed as 2,937. Tippecanoe Valley School Corporation's total enrollment is figured at 1,805. Kosciusko and Whitley counties school corporation, Whitko is 1,243.

•Fort Wayne's Community Development Division will undergo a project to historically preserve three buildings and build on two empty lots on West Columbia Street as part of its revitalization of The Landing, Mayor Tom Henry announced Thursday. The \$11.9 million venture will see renovations made to the old Columbia Street West Bar and Grill and the upper floors to the building that houses Nawa just across the street. A new building will be built behind Columbia Street West and along the east side of the building. This is all being done in partnership with Model Group, a Cincinnati-based company.

•Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Indiana (BBBSNEI) has hired a new community development director, Tammy Smith, to build a stronger presence in Kosciusko County. Smith, a Warsaw native, has worked in the nonprofit sector her entire adult life. She has been a Big Sister for over eight years and has seen firsthand the impact that the organization has on youth. With plenty of kids on the waitlist, specifically in Kosciusko County, Smith hopes to bridge the gap left by COVID-19 and create a larger number of long-lasting, one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth.

•The Indiana House on Thursday voted 68-25 to approve a \$1.4 billion tax cut package that favors businesses while also giving some relief to individuals. Republicans focused on the individual income tax reduction, which would save a Hoosier making about \$50,000 a year about \$120 when fully phased in. The legislation now moves to the Senate, where the leadership has been more inclined to wait until next year to consider lowering taxes, when lawmakers will be crafting a new two-year state budget. Four Democrats joined Republicans in supporting the bill. Area lawmakers all voted in support except for Rep. Phil GiaQuinta, D-Fort Wayne.

•The plan for an IU Health hospital campus in Lafayette Township was approved Thursday by the Allen County Plan Commission with a 7-0-1 vote. The commission voted to rezone several variously zoned tracts containing 137 acres at Ernst and Lower Huntington roads in southwest Allen County to shopping center designation, a category that allows for many uses including a hospital campus, and approved a primary development plan. About 63 acres of the property are already zoned shopping center. The rest of its parcels are zoned agriculture, single-family residential, multiple family residential and professional office and personal services. The county commissioners have 90 days to approve the rezoning.

- Indiana lawmakers will consider a Republican-backed bill that would ban transgender women and girls from participating in school sports that match their gender identity. The proposal would prohibit students who were born male but identify as female from participating in a sport or on an athletic team that is designated for women or girls. The bill is slated to be heard by the House education committee Monday, committee chair Rep. Bob Behning of Indianapolis said. The ACLU of Indiana said in a statement Thursday that the bill “sends trans youth the message that they're not worthy of the same opportunities as their classmates.” If the bill passes the Legislature, Indiana could be the 10th Republican-dominated state to adopt such a ban on transgender women or girls. A separate proposal authored by Republican Sen. Dennis Kruse of Auburn would ban gender affirming medical care for minors, including surgeries or prescribed hormones, regardless of parental approval

- New Haven plans to invest \$35 million into deferred infrastructure improvements between now and the end of 2025, Mayor Steve McMichael said Thursday during his State of the City address. The speech was delivered during a noon meeting at the city's Community Center. “We're making progress. We're growing at record speed. We're working with great partners. We have a dedicated city team, and we're not stopping,” he said, “because we will not waiver in our quest to continue to make New Haven an inclusive, welcoming place for all.”

- Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry will deliver his State of the City Address at noon Feb. 16 at Grand Wayne Convention Center. The event won't be open to the public because of COVID-19. The theme for this year's speech is “Fort Wayne – The Best is Yet to Come.” The speech will be carried live on the city's Facebook page at facebook.com/cityoffortwayne. Warsaw Mayor Joseph Thallemer will deliver his "State Of The City" address on Wednesday March 9th at 1130am at a yet to be determined location. The Warsaw state of the city address will be broadcast live on WIOE 101.1FM with video streamed live at WIOE.COM

- A five-day jury trial for a Rochester man who allegedly plotted a Columbine-type massacre in Fulton County is set to begin at 8:30 a.m. Monday, Jan. 31, in Fulton Circuit Court. John Lawrence Schultz IV, 20, Rochester, is charged with two counts of conspiracy to commit murder, both level 2 felonies; and possession of methamphetamine, possession of a narcotic drug, and two counts of intimidation, all level 6 felonies. Schultz took the case to trial in July 2021. However, after about seven hours of deliberation, a 12-person jury came to an impasse in reaching a verdict. Since the mistrial, the State of Indiana has filed three additional charges against Schultz. A narcotic drug possession charge alleges that in July 2020, Schultz was in possession of heroin. Jury selection is taking place Friday, Jan. 28, in Miami County. If found guilty on a Level 2 felony, Schultz could receive up to a 30-year prison sentence.

- Positive COVID-19 test results spiked again Thursday in Allen County with more than three times the number of cases reported the day before. The local health department said it knew of 831 new cases and said four residents died. That's up from the 270 cases reported Wednesday. The state recorded 12,230 new positive cases Thursday, raising the number to 1,587,005 since the pandemic began in March 2020. In Warsaw today and Saturday the Indiana Department Of Health is sponsoring a free shot clinic. Walk ins are welcomed at the Center Lake Pavilion.

- Karen Richards, the county's first female prosecutor, will not seek a sixth term, Allen County Republican Chairman Steve Shine confirmed Thursday. Chief Deputy Prosecutor Mike McAlexander has filed to seek the Republican nomination for the office in the May 3 primary election. No one else has filed paperwork seeking to run for the office. Candidates have until noon today, Friday to formally declare their intentions to run in the May primary elections. A formal announcement is expected during a news conference Monday.

- Fort Wayne Community Schools leaders didn't know how many students would apply for the district's new immersive half-day program at Electric Works. They set their goal for the first round of applications at 250 – an apparently low bar. “We were blown away to have 358 students apply from across the district during the first round,” said Riley Johnson, director of Amp Lab at Electric Works. The second round of applications is open, he said. Interested high school sophomores and juniors can apply via their counselor. A lottery will be held to fill the remaining spots if necessary, Johnson added. Go to www.amplabfwcs.com for more information.

- Two Gary men have been arrested in the 2018 shooting deaths of three people whose bodies were found along a roadside and in a car's trunk after they had attended a birthday celebration. Erik P. Long, 43, and Huston J. Bond, 32, were being held without bond at the Lake County Jail on three counts of murder, according to Lake Criminal Court records. They're accused in the slayings of Darius Ross, 28, of Gary; his fiancée, Heather Talley, 27, of Hammond; and the couple's friend Nicholas Edwards, 28, of Gary. The three were slain in Gary on July 15, 2018, after spending a night out with friends and family celebrating Ross' birthday. According to court records, a man facing federal firearms charges told authorities in May 2021 that Bond had confessed to a role in the triple homicide.

- After a jury deliberated for nearly eight hours, the State of Indiana, John Lawrence Schultz IV, and Schultz's defense attorneys agreed to a resolution for the case. At 7 p.m., Fulton Circuit Court Judge Christopher Lee announced the parties in the case had reached a resolution. After the jury was dismissed, Schultz signed a plea agreement. He pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit murder, a level 2 felony. Through the plea agreement, five additional criminal charges Schultz was facing will be dismissed. Schultz's sentencing is set for 3:30 p.m. March 7, in Fulton Circuit Court.

- A Fort Wayne man has been sentenced to 120 months in prison on drug charges. 45-year-old Ronnie L. Rutherford, Jr. of Fort Wayne, Indiana, was sentenced in United States District Court following his plea of guilty to possessing with intent to distribute fentanyl. According to documents in the case, between June and July 2021, four controlled buys of cocaine and fentanyl were made from Rutherford. Based on the buys, a search warrant was obtained and executed on July 15, 2021. During the search, officers located 240 grams of marijuana, over 90 grams of fentanyl, over 60 grams of cocaine, along with other evidence of drug distribution and almost \$4,000 cash. Rutherford had a previous federal conviction for carrying a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime and for being a felon in possession of a firearm.

- A lengthy pursuit on the Indiana Toll Road of a stolen U-Haul landed an Illinois man in jail after he refused to stop for Indiana State Troopers. At approximately 9 p.m., Trooper Garrett Tharp saw the alleged stolen U-Haul as it traveled westbound on the Indiana Toll Road two miles west of the Elkhart exit. When Tharp attempted to make a traffic stop, the driver of the U-Haul accelerated away in an attempt to flee. The U-Haul ultimately came to a stop in Porter County. The driver, Geramie Evans, 26 of Wheaton, Ill., was taken into custody. Evans was taken to a local hospital for a certified test after troopers located suspected marijuana and believed Evans to be under the influence. While at the hospital a medical issue unrelated to the pursuit was discovered that required Evans to be admitted for observation. While at the hospital, Evans allegedly kicked a trooper and spit on him. Evans was released from the hospital on February 10 and was transported to the Elkhart County Jail. He was booked for Theft of a Vehicle, Resisting Law Enforcement, Battery on Law Enforcement, Reckless Driving, Possession of Marijuana, and Possession of Paraphernalia.

- A 60-year-old man was preliminarily charged with setting his own house on fire last night. According to information from the Allen County Sheriff's Department, William Doak, at 4089 Bass Rd., set his own house on fire and fled out the back door. Doak was taken into custody after county officers responded to reports of a fire at 8:35 p.m. Wednesday. He was charged with arson to a dwelling and misdemeanor criminal recklessness and unauthorized use of a railroad right of way, court documents indicate. He is being held without bond, according to authorities. Doak, who is known to county officers and has previously set his house on fire, pleaded not to be bit by the police dog and gave up, Stone said. Doak was just released from Allen County Jail last month, he added.

- The Fort Wayne Air Show announced Thursday that it has been selected by the U.S. Navy as a demonstration site for the F/A-18 Super Hornet "Rhino" Demo Team. The Super Hornet joins a lineup headlined by the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds. The air show is set for June 4-5 at the Fort Wayne Air National Guard Base. General admission is free.

- A former North Side High School substitute gym teacher was sentenced Thursday to one year behind bars for trying to seduce a 14-year-old girl in 2021. Aaron Michael Kimbrell, 30, of Fort Wayne was sentenced to a total of four years by Allen County Superior Court Judge Frances Gull. The sentence, which was for Kimbrell's Jan. 7 guilty plea to felony child seduction, included three years suspended and credit for 22 days served. As part of the plea agreement, the court dismissed felony charges of child exploitation, possession of child pornography and dissemination of matter harmful to minors.

- The Riverfront at Promenade Park, the high-rise mixed-use project now under construction at Harrison and Superior streets in Fort Wayne, has its first commercial tenant. Swiss Re, headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland, but with a regional office in Fort Wayne, has signed on to occupy the second and third floors. Swiss Re is an insurance industry company that handles reinsurance and other forms of insurance-based risk management. The company plans to move about 200 employees from its existing office on Magnavox Way to the new location by the end of the year, a news release from Greater Fort Wayne Inc. said Thursday.

- Indiana University Fort Wayne School of Dentistry is partnering with the Allen County Public Library and Fort Wayne Community Schools to offer free kid-friendly activities Saturday at the downtown library as part of Children's Dental Health Month.

The event will be from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and will include multiple activity tables that include brushing and flossing with puppets, coloring teeth pictures and Play-Doh dental kit fun.

- The city of Fort Wayne has shifted 17 employees from the Parks, Street and City Utilities departments from their departmental duties to aid the struggling Red River Waste Solutions, the city's lame duck trash and recycling collection contractor. City spokesman John Perlich said depending on Red River's staffing levels on a daily basis, city workers and Red River drivers combine to collect trash and recycling around the city. Work is done during regular shifts and some overtime with eight trash trucks – two owned by Solid Waste, two owned by Parks, and four leased by Solid Waste.

- A Chicago man landed in the Kosciusko County Jail after a police chase through Kosciusko and Marshall counties Thursday. At approximately 11:52 a.m., Indiana State Police Trooper Jeff Wampler attempted to stop a gray 2018 Chrysler 300.

When Wampler caught up to the Chrysler, he was able to determine that the license plate did not match the Chrysler. When he turned on his red and blue emergency lights on his unmarked Dodge Charger, the driver of the Chrysler refused to stop and sped up to speeds of over 100 miles per hour as it continued westbound on U.S. 30, eventually entering Marshall County.

A trooper was successfully able to deploy "Stop Sticks" near Iris Road, flattening both driver side tires. This did not stop the driver of the Chrysler and he continued to flee westbound.

The driver of the Chrysler continued to flee westbound while driving on three rims, according to the release. The driver of the Chrysler hit tried to pass a semi on the right side and lost control of the Chrysler. The Chrysler went into the ditch to the right, hitting two signs and rolling onto the roof. The driver, identified as Merieal Tolbert, 28, of Chicago, Ill., was safely taken into custody. He was transported to a local hospital to be medically cleared. Further investigation revealed that the Chrysler was reported stolen out of Fort Wayne earlier today.

Tolbert was transported to the Kosciusko County Jail after being arrested for resisting law enforcement and possession of a stolen vehicle.

- Global contract manufacturer Lincotek announced Thursday that it has closed the acquisition of a majority stake in Danco Medical from Danco Anodizing, Warsaw, strengthening the Medical Division of the group. The scope of the transaction comprises all the service activities focused on metal surface finishing for the medical market and includes the ISO-13485 certified facility in Warsaw. Danco Medical, headquartered in Warsaw, employees around 150 in Warsaw.

- Indiana's COVID-19 public health emergency ended at 7 p.m. Thursday – after 23 renewals dating back to its inception in March 2020. The conclusion is the result of Gov. Eric Holcomb signing House Bill 1001 into law Thursday and issuing a new executive order that rescinded the existing emergency declaration, which was set to expire at midnight Friday. “We feel like we hit the appropriate balance of trying to find the right place, ending the state of emergency, ... and providing protections for individual liberties for Hoosiers,” he said.

- Gov. Eric Holcomb lobbied for a detailed tax cut package Thursday and even Senate Republicans who had wanted to wait seem ready to accept reductions before the legislative session ends next week.

“Because we can, we should,” Holcomb said.

He said Hoosiers are being hit hard with price increases “and we believe that this targeted approach ... will grow not just our economy, but Hoosier paychecks as well.”

Holcomb supports dropping the individual income tax from 3.23% to 2.9%

Holcomb also supports eliminating a state utility receipts tax that every utility-paying household and business now pays. The cost of that cut to state revenues would be about \$220 million annually.

In addition, all sides seem supportive of eliminating a 30% depreciation floor on the business personal property tax for any new business equipment purchased.

Local units of government could see a loss of about \$100 million statewide.

- Fort Wayne City Utilities' water finished fourth in the municipal water category at the 32nd Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting event in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia. The rest of this year's top five included municipal water utilities from California and Ohio, with this year's winner being the Village of Montpelier in Ohio.

This is the second consecutive year City Utilities has placed in the top five, also finishing fourth last year.

- The Smith-Green Community Schools board will hold a work session at 6 p.m. Monday to interview applicants for the District 2 seat. Member Jane Elliott resigned last month because of medical reasons.

Candidates must live in District 2 and satisfy other requirements addressing citizenship, voter status, age and residency. This meeting will be in the Administrative Office, 222 W. Tulley St., Churubusco, and is open to the public.

- A man is accused of physically attacking his grandmother in Fort Wayne and stealing from her. Ryan A. Hawkins, 37, listed in court records as homeless, was formally charged Thursday with felony robbery resulting in bodily injury and misdemeanor domestic battery, and faces three to 16 years if convicted of the felony. Hawkins was staying at his grandmother's home the morning of March 4 when he asked to borrow her bank card to deposit money he owed her. Later that day, she discovered that Hawkins had instead moved \$200 from her savings account to her checking and withdrew it. Later when Hawkins woke up and told her he needed her card again. When she refused, he allegedly responded, "You have the money, and I have to get it." She continued to refuse, and he grabbed her by the collar and shook her. Hawkins pulled her hair and grabbed her legs, trying to pull her out of her chair. Hawkins tore the fanny pack from around her waist and took her car keys and bank card from it. He then electronically transferred \$160 from savings to checking. He threatened to harm her if she shut off the card while he was gone and left to get the money, court documents said. After he left, she called the bank and put a hold on the card and called police. Officers were waiting when he returned. Hawkins waived his right to an attorney and admitted to police that he is a drug addict, using heroin and fentanyl and spending \$100 to \$150 a day to maintain his habit. When police arrested him, he said he wanted drug help, not prison, according to the affidavit.

- Starting Monday, crews will begin work on the shoulders and median of Coldwater Road between Washington Center Road and Cook Road. The work is part of an overall project to "address deteriorated pavement and bridge conditions, provide adequate vertical bridge clearance and accommodate Ludwig Road alignment modifications being done by the City of Fort Wayne." The \$9.7 million project is scheduled to last until November. All work is weather-dependent and schedules are subject to change.

- The Fort Wayne Children's Zoo will look to hire more than 100 seasonal workers ahead of its 2022 season. The zoo will hold a job fair Saturday to fill more than 100 positions. The zoo said it was looking for "friendly and outgoing individuals" to serve its 600,000 annual guests. All openings are temporary positions, from 15 to 40 hours per week during the zoo season (mid-April through mid-October). Candidates should pre-register ahead of Saturday's job fair at kidszoo.org/jobfair.

- It took a jury a little more than an hour to decide Demetre Payton was not guilty of murder or other charges in the death of Jamarkus Kindred on July 27, 2019.

The jury went into deliberations early Thursday afternoon in the trial, which began Wednesday morning. Four of five witnesses testified that Kindred had his gun out first.

“All of the evidence supported self-defense,” defense attorney Ryan Gardner said after the verdict.

- A Fort Wayne man whose body was found in rural Whitley County earlier this week died of a gunshot wound to his chest. An Indiana State Police press release issued Thursday evening, March 17, states that the Whitley County Coroner’s Office has ruled the death of Curtis E. Thomas, 30, a homicide. An autopsy was performed on Thomas’ body at the Northeast Indiana Forensic Center in Fort Wayne. Thomas’ body was [discovered](#) by an Indiana State Trooper on Monday, March 14. ISP are continuing to investigate.

- Neighborhood infrastructure and programs to improve residents' mental and physical health may become two of the beneficiaries of \$50.8 million in federal pandemic relief money, Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry announced Thursday. The money, from the federal American Rescue Plan Act, also known as ARPA, is subject to rigid spending criteria. Funds can be invested in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure and respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts. Henry proposes to spend the money in the following way. 1) \$18.2 million will go to strengthening neighborhood infrastructure. 2) \$13.3 million will provide for “resilient” city government operations to “provide continuity and drive excellence”. \$13 million is slotted for uses that will better residents' physical and mental health and build “strong and healthy communities”. \$6.3 million will go to raising the city's profile and boosting the local economy. “Our top priority is to continue to ensure the needs of our residents and businesses are being met through the COVID-19 pandemic,” the mayor said in a news release.

- An Allen Superior Court jury on Thursday found Darryl Davis guilty of murder, unlawful possession of a firearm by a serious violent felon and using a firearm in the commission of a crime where someone died. Now, 40-year-old Darryl Davis is facing a long prison sentence. Davis is scheduled to be sentenced April 29.

- Northwest Allen County Schools and Superintendent Chris Himsel are preparing to officially part in June. The school board is expected Monday to consider a retirement and release agreement with Himsel, who has been on a leave of absence since Dec. 17. Details about the proposed agreement were released Thursday with the meeting's agenda. NACS can immediately begin the search for a permanent leader under the agreement and may continue to employ temporary superintendent, Steve Yager who has filled in since Feb. 1. Monday's meeting will start at 6 p.m. in the board room, which is accessible through Door 3 at 13119 Coldwater Road.

- Dometic Corporation of Elkhart has announced plans to lay off 159 workers. The company informed the state of the move as part of the [Indiana WARN program](#) Thursday. Dometic makes air-conditioning and warm air heating equipment, and commercial and industrial refrigeration equipment. The layoffs will begin in May and conclude within weeks, This layoff includes all manufacturing personnel, both hourly and salary, as well as Industrial Parkway support personnel including Human Resources, Sustaining Product Engineering, Quality, Manufacturing Engineering, Material Planning, and Maintenance.