



PLAYER FEATURE

Patrick Henry's Thomas Smith is in the spotlight

SPORTS, B3

Northwest Signal

A COMMUNITY FOCUSED NEWSPAPER SERVING HENRY, FULTON, LUCAS AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES

VOL. 62, NO. 1

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024

\$1.75

INSIDE

Weather



Tonight's low is 30

TOMORROW
37/23

Page A6

Obituary

Nina A. Christen

Page A2

Celebrating a healthy new year



Family activities, heart-healthy foods and new habits can help you kick off a healthier 2024.

Page A6

ODOT project updates



The Ohio Department of Transportation detailed recent improvements made to Interstate Route 75, which included work in Lucas and Wood counties. ODOT is also putting a safety focus on other roadways in the future. This includes U.S. Route 24 projects scheduled for Henry and Defiance counties in 2026.

Page A3

Contact us:

419-592-5055

contactus@northwestsignal.net

Northwest Signal

595 E. Riverview Ave.
Napoleon, Ohio 43545



Sandy Rose Schwieterman | Northwest Signal

Pictured is a rehabilitated 1999 Pierce fire truck for the Wauseon Fire Department.

Wauseon Fire Department opted to rebuild equipment

By Sandy Rose Schwieterman
contactus@northwestsignal.net

WAUSEON — The Wauseon Fire Department has a program that saves taxpayer dollars while keeping their fleet in good order.

Fire Chief Phil Kessler said the main way to do this has been rebuilding older equipment rather than buying new.

In the latest example, Kessler said their 1999 Pierce Manufacturing truck was sent back to Pierce factory for rehab. He said the truck was broken down to the frame and rails where they found no corrosion in power train or frame. Improvements included a new interior and adding air-conditioning, and a foam injector. They also had the exterior body

repainted in department colors after removing any corrosion or body damage.

Kessler said for a total of \$425,000, the refurbishment extended the life of the vehicle for 20 years.

"It cost \$385,000 to buy that engine in 1999," he said. "In 2023, a similar vehicle was estimated would have cost \$1.2 million."

Pierce, a single source leader in custom fire apparatus innovation and manufacturing, kept the truck from the fall 2022 to spring 2023.

Kessler said the Pierce refurbishment program includes an orientation when the rehab work is done, with fire department representatives spending two days at the Pierce factory to go through the changes. Kessler added this lat-

est rehab of a fire department vehicle is not a first because all the fire department vehicles and their current condition is being tracked.

"We created a spreadsheet with an estimated grading scale of all our vehicles in order to re-prioritize whether to buy a new engine or fix," said the chief. "We ended up with a 52-page plan that allows our department to track fleet conditions."

When the time comes to rehabilitate a vehicle, personnel sit down with a Pierce sales rep decide what features to upgrade to, as well as what features are no longer applicable in 2023, Kessler said.

He added one reason why the rehab of a vehicle

See FIRE on Page A3

Group aiming to reduce depression

By Jen Lazenby
jenl@northwestsignal.net

Editor's Note: The Henry County Health Partners recently gathered to review progress in four different areas — access to health care, mental health, housing and substance misuse — which were identified as priorities in the 2023 Henry County Community Health Assessment to improve the health in the county. This article focuses on mental health.

NAPOLEON — The goals of this work group focusing on mental health include reducing the number of youth and adults in Henry County with depression by 2028, as well as reducing the number of adults and youth contemplating, attempting or dying by suicide by 2028.

There are four main areas the work group is focusing on — increasing community awareness and breaking the stigma of mental health, depression and suicide; increasing awareness of mental health resources; increasing community mental health re-

sources; and holding fatality reviews for overdoses and suicides.

The community awareness piece included 21 events in Henry County, plus a marketing campaign. In addition, there were six mental health first aid classes offered in the county, with 117 adults 59 students trained to recognize a mental health crisis and how to get help.

"It's really teaching people how do I recognize something's going on," explained Karen VonDeylen, chair of the Four County Suicide Prevention Coalition. "How can I start a conversation and what are the resources that are out there? So it's how can I, as a general community person without a lot of mental health knowledge or experience, what can I do to help somebody?"

Also, a peer-to-peer education group at Patrick Henry High School has the goal of increasing youth resiliency around mental health and other public

See GROUP on Page A2



Jen Lazenby | Northwest Signal

Patrick Henry High School students (from left) Grace Haas, Karsyn Weber and Brenton Rettig recently shared information about the peer-to-peer program at the school during the annual meeting of the Henry County Health Partners.

News update: Two were injured in Friday crash



Brian Koeller | The Bryan Times

Ridgeville Fire and Rescue and Archbold Fire and Rescue responded to a two-vehicle accident on Ohio 34 and Henry County Road 24 Friday morning. An accident report by the Henry County Sheriff's Office uploaded to the Ohio Department of Public Safety online crash site states Kyle A. Schrader, 38, of Tekonsha, Michigan, was southbound on County Road 24 at 9:28 a.m. and stopped at the stop sign at Rte. 34 before proceeding into the intersection. It was reported a vehicle operated by Kraig P. Bostelman, 35, of Bryan then struck Schrader's vehicle in the intersection. Bostelman's vehicle went off the right side of the roadway, flipped and then skidded back onto the roadway. Schrader's vehicle came to a stop on the roadway. Schrader had non-incapacitating injuries and was transported to Bryan Hospital by Archbold Rescue. Bostelman had incapacitating injuries and was transported to St. Vincent's Medical Center by Ridgeville Township Rescue. Damage to both vehicles was disabling. Schrader was cited for failure to yield the right-of-way at a through highway.

Fulton County EMS calls down slightly

WAUSEON — EMS calls were down slightly in Fulton County in 2023.

Clayton O'Brien, Fulton County EMS coordinator, recently met with the Fulton County commissioners and shared the total amount of EMS calls from Jan. 1 through Dec. 17 was 2,752, slightly down from 2,870 in 2022.

In regard to billing, O'Brien reported 1,209 had been sent to Accumed in 2023, with an average recovery of \$383.11. Year-to-date, \$917,270 has been recovered, with estimated revenues to be approximately \$708,000.

Expenses in disposable supplies totaled \$112,000 year-to-date in 2023, a decrease compared to 2022 and 2021. Expenses in disposable supplies were \$115,000 in December 2022 and \$143,000 in December 2021.

Also in 2023, the ambulance replacement plan included putting two trucks in service that went to Delta. In regard to software, SOMA is still a work in progress.

Looking ahead to 2024, O'Brien shared one ambulance will be ordered

See EMS on Page A3

ODOT recaps I-75, explains Rte. 24 focus

COLUMBUS — The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) recently reported Interstate Route 75 has seen multiple projects to modernize or expand the route, which includes area work in Wood and Lucas counties. ODOT also reported it has 2026 projects on tap for Henry and Defiance counties.

Recognition of this major transportation accomplishment was made in August before traffic was placed on the northbound side of the Michael DiSalle bridge over the Maumee River in Toledo. The bridge was the last remaining piece to be completed of the Rte. 75 projects through Wood and Lucas counties. The total investment was approximately \$1.1 billion.

"This is a different kind of celebration. Normally we mark the beginning or end of a specific project with an event such as this. Today, we recognize several projects, completed over several years that represent an unprecedented investment in northwest Ohio in the state's most-traveled corridor," said Pat McColley, ODOT District 2 deputy director.

Work on the bridge, pavement, and structures within the project area between Wales Road and Dorr Street has concluded for the year. All lanes are now fully open for the winter, but some finish work in the spring will require lane closures.

The first projects began in 2012 and have continued for just over a decade:

- Allen County — Reconstruction of just over nine miles of existing pavement on Rte. 75 from the Auglaize County line to State Route 81, completed in 2016.



Photo submitted by ODOT

An estimated 400 people accepted an invitation to walk the DiSalle bridge over the Maumee River, Toledo, prior to its opening. The walk was part of a dedication in August of the completion of the Interstate Route 75 corridor throughout northwest Ohio.

- Toledo — Rehabilitation of Rte. 75 from Interstate Route 475 to Dorr Street, completed in 2016.

- Hancock and Wood counties — Reconstruction and addition of a third lane of nearly 32 miles of Rte. 75, completed in 2017.

- Lucas County — Reconstruction and addition of a third lane on Rte. 75 from Rte. 475 to Interstate Route 280, completed in 2019.

- Hancock County — Reconstruction and addition of a third lane of five miles of Rte. 75, completed in 2020.

- Wood and Lucas counties — Reconstruction and addition of a third lane from Wales Road to Dorr Street. The project will be complete in spring 2024.

ODOT also detailed efforts to change highway access in northwest Ohio to promote safety. It was reported two overpass bridges over State Route

15 in Hancock County were opened to traffic in November, and similar access projects will occur on U.S. Route 24 in the future.

This includes an interchange project that will occur on Rte. 24 at Henry County Road 17D, as well as a Defiance County overpass project on Rte. 24 at Independence Road and right in-right out/cul-de-sac projects on Rte. 24 at Flory and Jewell roads. All four of these projects will start in 2026.

The projects are part of an overall effort to improve the safety of four-lane, divided highways in the region. The ultimate goal for ODOT is to eliminate at-grade intersections through a combination of minor, low-cost projects, such as removing medians and installing cul-de-sacs or reduced collision U-turns (RCUTs); and major, high-cost projects,

such as constructing overpasses and interchanges.

"This will be our focus for the next decade. As funding becomes available, projects will move forward in planned progression," said Chris Hughes, ODOT District 1 deputy director.

It was explained the need to transition highways through these methods have been driven by increased traffic volumes, making it more difficult for motorists to negotiate at-grade crossings. Using the Rte. 15 example in Hancock County, it was reported this area saw 5,000 vehicles per day in the 1960s, and this is now 18,000 vehicles per day. Similarly, U.S. Route 30 in Van Wert county saw 5,000 vehicles per day in the 1970s, and this is now 20,000 vehicles per day.

(Information submitted by the Ohio Department of Transportation.)

Fire

Continued from Page A1

would go smoothly was due to all of their equipment being so well cared for by the Clinton Township mechanics.

"Pierce had no problem with sending the 1999 model to their factory because of the constant maintenance done by the local township mechanics. This meant that the vehicle came to Pierce with minimal issues that their staff did not have to deal with," explained Kessler.

Another rehab was to a 1993 truck, which they purchased from Blue Ash, Ohio, for \$30,000 and spent \$318,000 to rehabilitate the vehicle, including adding EMS equipment so EMTs can work out of the fire truck.

Now, Kessler said they are starting on ambulances, most recently with a new patient care box being placed on new chassis. The department has three ambulances with a fourth for back-up.

In the past, the trucks rehabilitated include: Engine 806 was refurbished in 2018; Engine 802 was refurbished and returned in 2023; Tender 803 was built new using the refurbishment process in 2005,

meaning they purchased a chassis and delivered it to the refurbishment center to be designed and completed; and Brush Truck 809, which was requisitioned through a government program that re-utilizes used military equipment. The department staff then worked with a vendor to modify it for wildland fire fighting.

Kessler said the important point about refurbishing vehicles is that it allows taxes to remain low.

"But this rehabilitation process can only extend equipment life, and at times new vehicles would be purchased," he said. But at this point, a purchase is not on the radar.

The department building itself is an example of rehabilitating rather than building a new facility. In the 1960s, the city had taken over a 1927-era school building for city administration offices, which included the fire department. They have continued to extend the size of the fire department station, with the last renovation done in 1994, completely gutting the building and adding bays.



Sandy Rose Schwieterman | Northwest Signal

Wauseon Fire Department crews check equipment after a run.

Defiance County grand jury issues indictments

DEFIANCE — The office of the Defiance County prosecuting attorney reported a Defiance County grand jury recently indicted multiple individuals.

Ashley N. Roddy, 35, of Defiance, Sean L. Nelson, 51, of West Bloomfield, Michigan, and Melissa A. Schwinnen, 32, of Defiance were each indicted on one count of aggravated possession of drugs, a felony of the fifth degree.

Authorities allege on March 1, at Roddy's residence in Defiance, each individual was found in possession of methamphetamine, a Schedule II drug.

Derek A. Alvarez, 37, of Stryker was indicted on three counts of voyeurism, each a felony of the fifth degree, and two counts of attempted

illegal use of a minor or impaired person in a nudity-oriented material or performance, each a felony of the third degree.

Authorities allege on or between Jan. 1-Nov. 11, Alvarez invaded the privacy of a female juvenile in order to spy upon and record said individual in a state of nudity, for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying himself. Authorities further allege Alvarez also attempted to photograph a female juvenile in a state of nudity.

Delon A. Johnson, 27, of Toledo was indicted on one count of breaking and entering and one count of theft, each a felony of the fifth degree.

Authorities allege on June 15, Johnson trespassed in a business in Defiance, where he then stole

property valued at more than \$1,000, but less than \$7,500.

Jessica L. Stoller, 32, of North Adams, Michigan, was indicted on one count of aggravated possession of drugs, a felony of the fifth degree.

Authorities allege on Oct. 27, on State Route 15 in Defiance, Stoller was found in possession of methamphetamine, a Schedule II drug.

Alexander J. Estrada, 25, of Defiance was indicted on one count of possession of a fentanyl-related compound, a felony of the fourth degree.

Authorities allege on Sept. 28, on East Second Street in Defiance, Estrada was found in possession of more than one gram of a fentanyl-related compound.

Romerol Lawrence, 54, of Defiance was indicted on one count of aggravated possession of drugs and one count of possession of cocaine, each a felony of the fifth degree.

Authorities allege on Dec. 4, on North Clinton Street in Defiance, Lawrence was found in possession of methamphetamine, a Schedule II drug, as well as cocaine.

Bobby Thompson, 45, of Antwerp was indicted on one count of grand theft, a felony of the fourth degree.

Authorities allege from Feb. 1-7, Thompson stole more than \$7,500, but less than \$150,000, from a business in Defiance.

(Information submitted by the office of the Defiance County prosecuting attorney.)

Vehicle purchase approved by NwOESC Board members

ARCHBOLD — The Northwest Ohio Educational Service Center Board recently approved the purchase of a new vehicle.

It was reported the board approved the purchase of a nine-passenger van to replace a van that was canceled (cancellation of chassis production). A new vendor, Bus Service Inc., will provide the van through the Ohio Schools Council's 2023 Spring bid process, which has been completed.

In personnel matters, the board approved:

- The resignations of Megan Alvarez, paraprofessional, effective Dec. 11; Ashley Hogrefe, paraprofessional, effective Dec. 15; and Madison Stairhime, floating paraprofessional, effective Dec. 7.

- Certified one-year limited contracts for Susan Smith and Mackenzie Bishop. Classified one-year limited contracts were approved for Gregory Bates, Taylor Holbrook, Ashton Johnson, India Kenner and Catherine Royal.

- A classified salary notice was approved for Ellen Wolfrum.
- Tamarah Chamul, Hicksville, was approved as a 21st Century program assistant.
- Substitute paraprofessionals to include Amya Coulon, Eli Kolodi, Paige Kunsman and Jenifer Whewell.

- Substitute teachers to include Leslie Albring, Karsyn Ashbaugh, Lowynn Atkinson, Olivia Bergman, Kiera Bohn, Lillian Burkholder, Scott Chambers, Amya Coulon, Rhode Cusick, Rebecca Dadisman, Ann Frake, Lucy Jones, Gwendolyn Kinsman, Allison Kozina, Paige Kunsman, Morgan Leppelmeier, Caitlyn Lyons, Carlina Mansfield, Matthew Manson, Stephanie Martinez, Samuel Medina, Grace Meuleman, Alex Morr, Charis Netcher, Gunnar Oakes, Sarah Scheub, Chayse Singer, Kenneth Williams and Christopher Wood.

- Jordan Bok for field experience and student teaching as a Purdue University-Fort Wayne student.

- Mikaela Funchion as a van driver.

It was also reported the board commended outgoing board members Ronald Crawford, Four County Career Center appointee, 30 years of board service, and Bill Green, Penta appointee, 28 years of board service.

The board's 2024 organizational meeting will be held Tuesday, Jan. 30 at 6 p.m. in the conference room. Deborah Gerken was appointed as the president pro-tempore for the meeting.

(Information submitted by NwOESC.)

EMS

Continued from Page A1

and will go to Archbold and a decision will have to be made in regard to radios. Eighteen mobile and 12 portable radios will need to be purchased to replace older styles that will no longer

work in 2025. O'Brien noted the radios would need to be ordered in the first quarter if they will be received in time.

Also, O'Brien shared a committee will be assembled to review new ventilators as current

ventilators are approximately 15-plus years old. The current ventilators will be moved to back-up trucks. Budgeting includes one ventilator for each department estimated at \$17,000 each.

In other matters,

O'Brien reported there were some large repairs in 2023 to their trucks; they are looking to remount the old ALS2 on a gas chassis in 2025; and the contract for Handtevy is up for renewal in January.