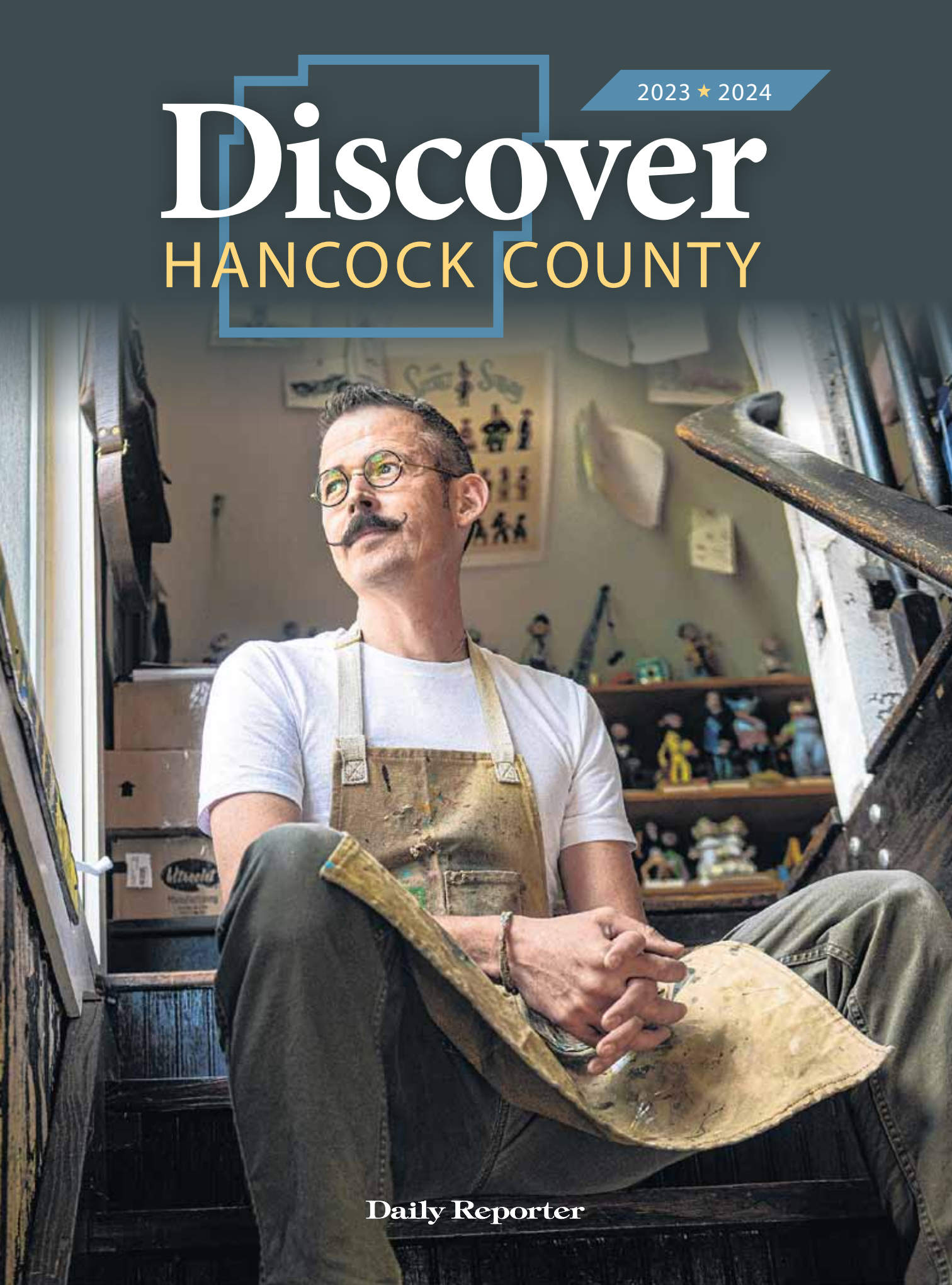


2023 ★ 2024

# Discover

## HANCOCK COUNTY



Daily Reporter

A photograph of a modern 3Rivers building with a blue roof and large windows. The 3Rivers logo is visible on the building's facade.

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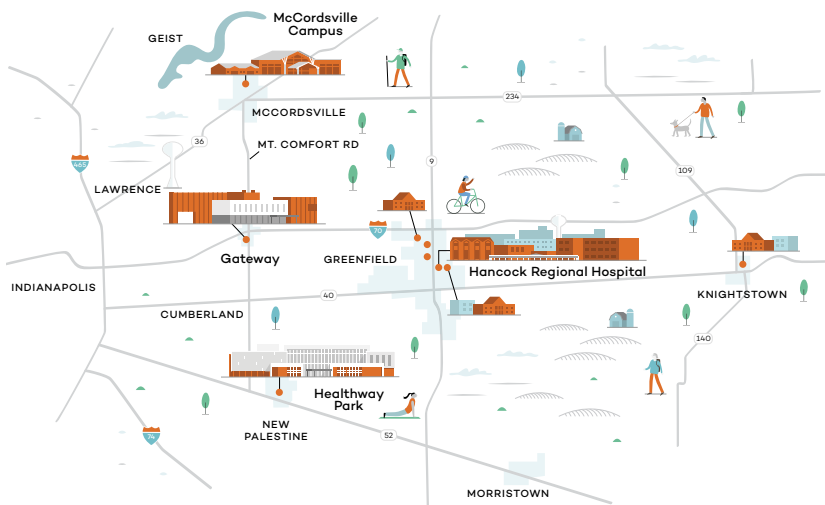
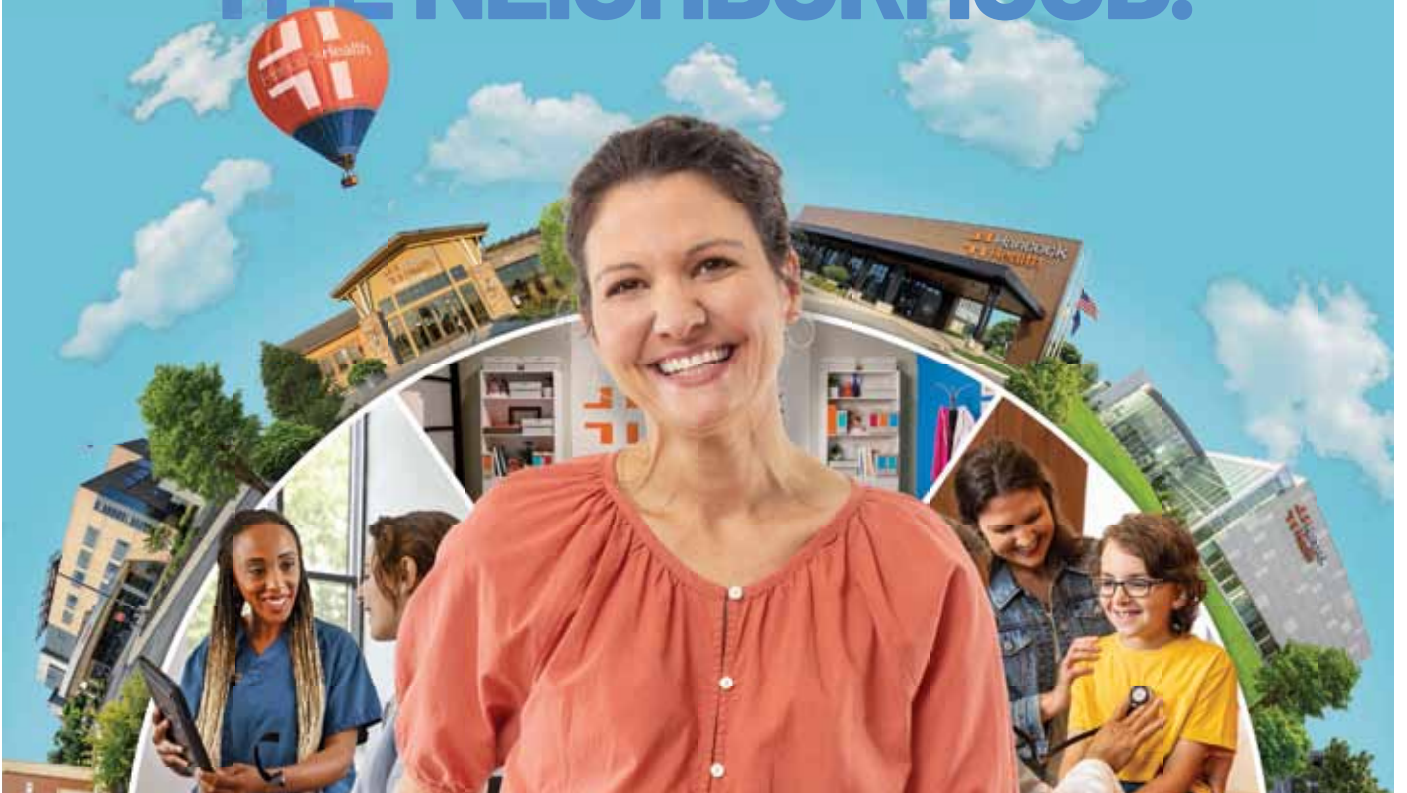
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**MAYO CLINIC  
CARE NETWORK**  
Member



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## Daily Reporter

22 W. New Road  
Greenfield, IN 46140  
317-462-5528

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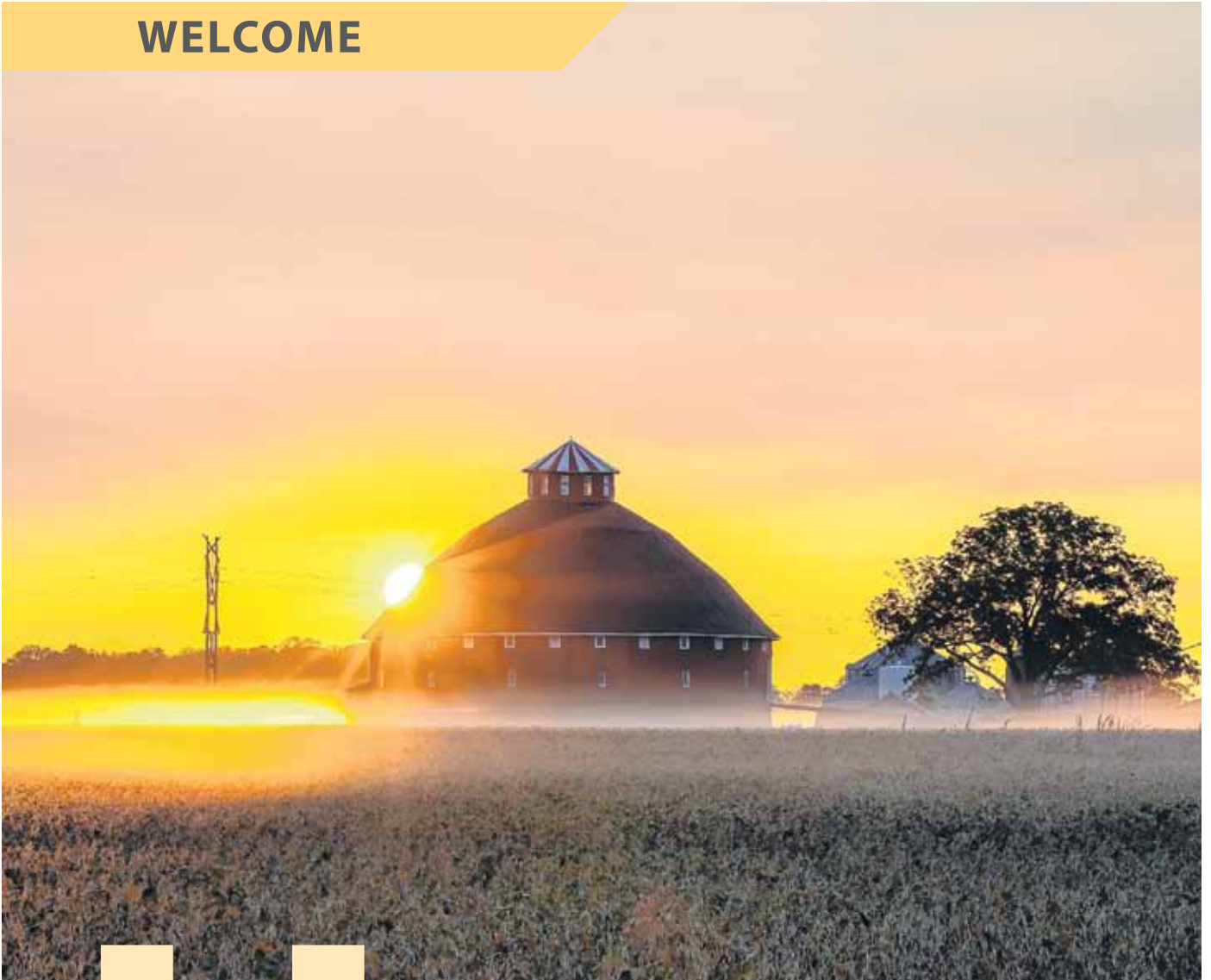
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On the cover: Artist Chris Sickels in  
his Greenfield studio. Sickels' work  
as an artist and illustrator has been  
seen worldwide with his diverse  
clientele. See page 24.



# WELCOME



Hancock County is rich in color, shape and form.

In this 2024-25 edition of Discover magazine, we take a look at the wealth of talent and creativity the county has to offer in its arts scene.

Beyond our spotlight stories on visual artists, art teachers and art organizations, you will find some stories of faith from the past 12 months,

featuring some of the other great people, places and things to be found within Hancock County.

We hope you enjoy these stories and continue to discover the people, places, events and other things that give Hancock County its unique character.

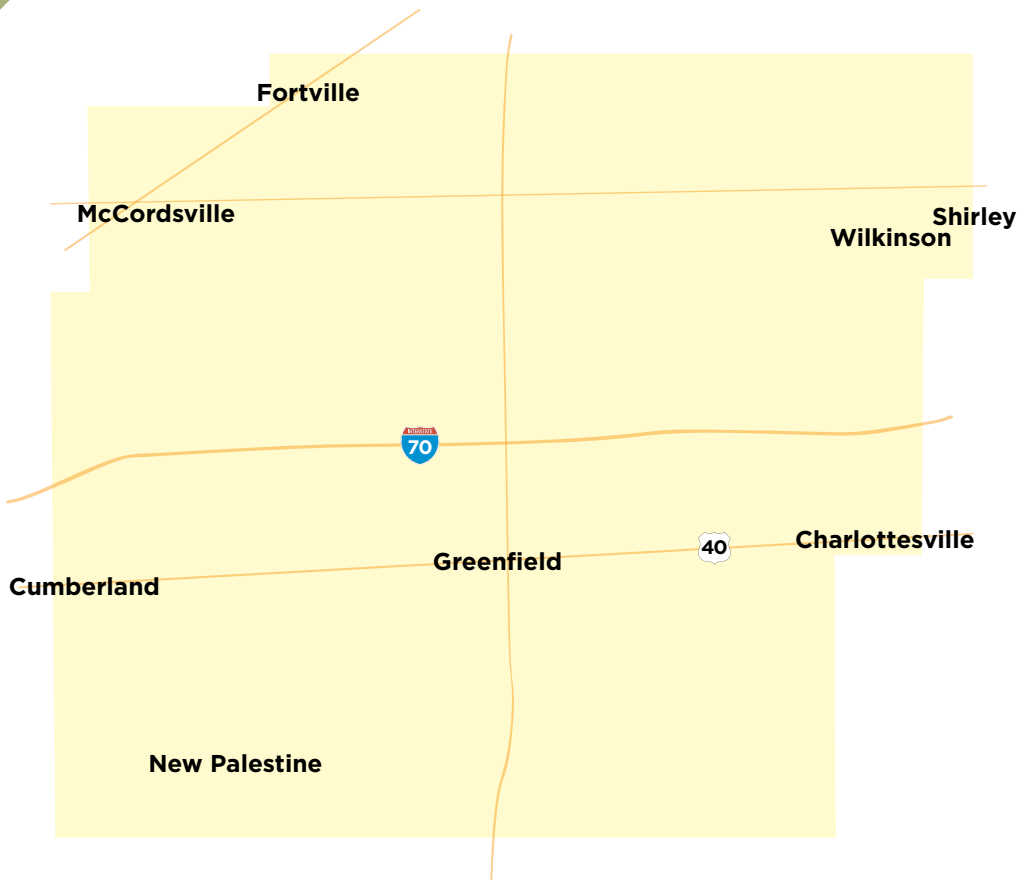
— AARON KENNEDY  
editor, the Daily Reporter

---

Pictured: Jackie Horton of Greenfield recently took this photo of a sunrise at the Kingen family round barn near McCordsville.



## OUR COMMUNITIES



### Charlottesville

Charlottesville was platted in 1830. It is a quiet little town in eastern Hancock County, in Jackson Township. Described by those who live there as a close-knit community, Charlottesville is home to Eastern Hancock Schools, the smallest of Hancock County's four public school corporations.

### Cumberland

With a population estimated at 5,954 in 2020, the town of Cumberland straddles both Hancock and Marion counties. It was established in 1831 along East Washington Street, or U.S. 40, which is also known as the Old National Road. It connects with Indianapolis to the west and Greenfield to the east.

### Fortville

Fortville, a town incorporated in 1865, is located at Ind. 67 and Fortville Pike in Vernon Township. The town is named after Cephas Fort, who platted the original settlement on his land in 1849. Fortville has a vibrant Main Street, and significant efforts have been made in recent years to turn the downtown area into a destination for shoppers, diners and visitors. Fortville's most recent population count, in 2020, was 4,784.





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## OUR COMMUNITIES

### Greenfield

The heart of Greenfield is centered at Ind. 9 and U.S. 40, an area dotted with boutiques and restaurants in a vibrant downtown community. Its population in 2020 was estimated at 23,488. Selected as the county seat of Hancock County in 1828, it was incorporated in 1876. Greenfield was once a stop along the old Penn Central Rail Line, on which presidents and the Liberty Bell traveled, historians say.

### McCordsville

McCordsville, one of the fastest-growing towns in Indiana, is located in the northwestern corner of Hancock County. The heart of this town of over 8,500 residents is at Ind. 67 and CR 600W (also known as Mt. Comfort Road). A new town center complex of government offices, shops, restaurants and green spaces is nearing completion.

### New Palestine

Located in southwestern Hancock County, the town of New Palestine is a quaint, quiet town with a population estimated at just under 2,700 residents. The town sits along



Bikes in Bloom is back in downtown Greenfield, as local nonprofits display their bikes to beautify the downtown.  
Tom Russo | Daily Reporter

U.S. 52, about 20 minutes east of downtown Indianapolis. New Palestine was established in 1838. It first consisted of 15 blocks and 36 lots. The area became incorporated as a town in 1871.

### Shirley

Shirley was established in 1890 when the Cincinnati, Wabash and Michigan railway extended to the area. The town's name comes from Joseph A. Shirley, a railroad official, and nods to the community's railway past are still visible today. With about 819 residents, the town straddles the Hancock and Henry county lines, claiming both Brown Township

in Hancock County and Greensboro Township in Henry County.

### Wilkinson

Located in the northeast corner of Hancock County, Wilkinson has a population of 414, according to the latest U.S. Census estimate. Ind. 109 runs through the heart of this small town, connecting it with Anderson to the north and Knightstown to the south. Celebrated aviation pioneer Harvey Weir Cook was born and raised in Wilkinson. The town's favorite native son is often called a flying ace for his distinguished career during World War I.



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IN-35173318



# Festivals celebrate our diverse communities

## Riley Festival

[rileyfestival.com](http://rileyfestival.com)

The works of Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley are the focus of the annual Riley Festival, but even folks who aren't familiar with his poetry can find something to their liking during this four-day celebration, which coincides with Riley's Oct. 7 birthday. Each year, the festival selects one of Riley's poems as the festival's theme. The festival features entertainment, arts and crafts vendors, a Riley Festival queen, carnival-style food and contests in poetry writing, photography, baking, pumpkin decorating and more. Highlights include the Parade of Flowers, in which children place flowers on the Friday of the festival at the base of the Riley statue on the north side of the Hancock County Courthouse; a large parade at 11 a.m. on Saturday morning; and an entertainment tent. The 2024 festival is Oct. 3-6 with the theme "A Barefoot Boy."





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Medium - Hot - Atomic - Nuclear - Mango Habanero - Thai Chili - Garlic Parmesan - Chi-



potle BBQ - Sweet & Tangy - Honey Mustard - Jerky BBQ - Lemon Pepper - Teriyaki - Honey BBQ - Old B





Families gather to decorate pumpkins during the 2022 New Palestine Harvest Festival .

### Lord's Acre Festival

[mccordsvilleumc.org](http://mccordsvilleumc.org)

The festival, which traditionally happens in mid-September at McCordsville United Methodist Church, features a fish fry, live entertainment, vendor booths and children's activities. The event, which started in 1952, takes its name from the concept of farmers donating proceeds from an acre's crops to the church. This year's festival was Sept. 13-14, 2024.

### New Palestine Oktoberfest

[nplions.com](http://nplions.com)

New Palestine's fall festival is a German-themed Oktoberfest. Sponsored by the New Palestine Lions Club, the event was Sept. 14 with a parade at 11 a.m., traditional German food, American food, beer and wine, and even a root beer garden kids area with activities, bounce

houses and games. Bring lawn chairs for live music by Der Polkatz in the evening.

### Pumpkins and Peddlers Festival

[townofshirley.com](http://townofshirley.com)

The town of Shirley's Pumpkins and Peddlers festival features vendors, entertainment and food in Shirley Park, east of Main Street inside the town limits. This year's event will be Oct. 19. For updates, visit [facebook/shirleyindiana](https://facebook.com/shirleyindiana).

### Greenfield Christmas Festival and Parade of Lights

[greenfield-community.com](http://greenfield-community.com)

Downtown Greenfield lights up for Christmas in early December with the Parade of Lights and the arrival of Santa Claus by fire truck. The event typically includes musical entertainment and the lighting of the plaza tree during opening ceremonies. Following the parade and

entertainment, children can visit with Santa in his house on the plaza to share their Christmas lists. The parade is usually the first weekend of December, but holiday festivities continue the rest of the month with events through Greenfield Main Street, including a downtown market, breakfast with Santa and holiday movies at the historic theater.

### Strawberry Festival

[facebook.com/bradleyumc](https://facebook.com/bradleyumc)

A community fundraiser hosted by Bradley United Methodist Church has become a downtown summertime tradition. The event, started in 1984 by First Presbyterian Church, originally relied on local hand-picked strawberries. Today, frozen berries are mixed with fresh ones to pour on top of shortcake and ice cream. Proceeds from this early June event result in thousands of dollars donated to local organizations.



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The Shirley Strawberry Festival is located at the Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House.

### **Will Vawter Juried Art Competition**

[hancockcountyarts.com](http://hancockcountyarts.com)

The Will Vawter Juried Art Competition features a juried art exhibit as well as an en plein air competition designed to capture scenic Hancock County on canvas. This June event is organized by the Hancock County Arts Council. Entertainment @ Depot Street Park [facebook.com/greenfieldparks](https://facebook.com/greenfieldparks) Greenfield Banking Co. has sponsored free concerts since 1987 originally on the courthouse plaza but starting in 2022 at Depot Street Park, Greenfield's newest park and stage in the downtown district. The concerts feature musicians performing everything from oldies to

patriotic marches and Southern Gospel. The musical series is a collaboration with Greenfield Parks Department and frequent updates can be found on [facebook.com/greenfieldparks](https://facebook.com/greenfieldparks).

### **Hancock County 4-H Fair**

[yourhancockfairgrounds.com](http://yourhancockfairgrounds.com)

This event every year in June celebrates the achievements of children and teens who have spent months preparing to show animals and compete a wide variety of projects including foods, tractor maintenance, sewing and model rocketry. Fairgoers can enjoy the projects on display in the 4-H building in addition to checking out the fun at the pet parade, tractor pull and talent show. Family-centered fun also includes live music, carnival rides

and fair food. From tangy barbecue to gooey grilled cheese and refreshing lemon shake-ups, there's something to satisfy any hankering.

### **Penny Trail Art Fair and Music Festival**

[facebook.com/pennytrailartfair/](https://facebook.com/pennytrailartfair/)

Artists, musicians and local food vendors combine for the Penny Trail Art Fair and Music Festival. Visitors can peruse a range of artistic offerings from pottery and basketry to chic jewelry and fine art. The festival, scheduled for the last weekend of July, features interactive art therapy activities for children and adults, arts and crafts vendors and live music. The event is a benefit for Mental Health Partners of Hancock County.





Alice Hedden of the Hancock County Arts Council hangs a portrait at the Twenty North Gallery.

# Discover art groups

## ARTS GROUPS AND VENUES

### **Hancock County Arts**

*20 N. State St., Greenfield*

The mission statement of Hancock Arts is to “provide leadership for the creative community by encouraging, celebrating, and promoting arts and culture throughout Hancock County.” This arts organization showcases gallery shows, workshops and events that promote local art and artists, including the Will Vawter Fine Arts Competition. Visit [hancockcountyarts.org](http://hancockcountyarts.org) or [facebook.com/HancockCountyArtsCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/HancockCountyArtsCouncil) for more information.

### **Twenty North Gallery**

*20A N. State St., Greenfield*

317-967-2461

A venue of Hancock County Arts, Twenty North Gallery features exhibits in downtown Greenfield, showcasing something new every month and offering classes. For a list of hours, classes and exhibits, visit [hancockcountyarts.org](http://hancockcountyarts.org).



Kidsplay founder Chris Schaefer

## THEATER GROUPS

### CrazyLake Acting Company

The CrazyLake Acting Company is a community theatre that performs one to two productions a year at the H.J. Ricks Centre for the Arts. Recent productions include “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee,” “Play On!” and “Mamma Mia!” Visit [crazylakeacting.com](http://crazylakeacting.com) or email [c.schae4er@gmail.com](mailto:c.schae4er@gmail.com) for more information.

### Friends of the Theater

Friends of the Theater is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support the H.J. Ricks Centre for the Arts, a venue in downtown Greenfield. The group has periodic volunteer days and raises money through a membership program, grants, donations and an an-

nual holiday variety show. The Friends help assure the Ricks remains a place for all ages to enjoy. Visit the website to learn more: [hctheaterfriends.org](http://hctheaterfriends.org) or email [info@hctheaterfriends.org](mailto:info@hctheaterfriends.org).

### Hancock County Children’s Theater

The Hancock County Children’s Theater is a summer workshop for Hancock County children in grades 4-8. Students spend the month of June learning all aspects of theater production culminating in two performances. Participants rehearse and perform at Greenfield-Central High School. For more information, visit [hancockcountychildrenstheater.org](http://hancockcountychildrenstheater.org) or email [pjohnson@gcsc.k12.in.us](mailto:pjohnson@gcsc.k12.in.us).

### KidsPlay Inc. children’s theater

KidsPlay Inc. children’s theater is an all-volunteer community theater for children in the third through eighth grades. The group performs two shows a year with children from Hancock and the surrounding counties. For more information visit KidsPlay on [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/kidsplayinc) or email [kidsplayinc@me.com](mailto:kidsplayinc@me.com).

### Ricks-Weil Theatre Company

Performing classics to musicals to premiere plays, the Ricks-Weil Theatre Company delivers the community artists in productions at the historic, art deco H.J. Ricks Centre for the Arts. Ricks-Weil Theatre Company is home to artists, theatre administrators and loyal patrons and donors. For more information, visit [facebook.com/RicksWeilTheatreCompany](https://www.facebook.com/RicksWeilTheatreCompany) or email [ricksweilinfo@gmail.com](mailto:ricksweilinfo@gmail.com).



## MUSIC GROUPS

### Brandywine Wind

Call Jerry Bell at 317-652-2033 or Gary Davis at 317-440-0834.

[facebook.com/brandywinewind](https://facebook.com/brandywinewind)

Greenfield's all-volunteer community orchestra regularly performs in various venues throughout the county.

Its mission is to provide an artistic avenue for area musicians to prepare and perform music for the enjoyment of our community and each other.

### Greenfield Community Choir

[greenfieldcommunitychoir@yahoo.com](mailto:greenfieldcommunitychoir@yahoo.com)

[greenfieldcommunitychoir.com](https://greenfieldcommunitychoir.com) and on

Facebook

The Greenfield Community Choir, Inc. is all about bringing quality choral music to the Greenfield community. Concerts are designed to be of high quality, entertaining, engaging, and will bring a smile to your face.

Hancock County Children's Choir

[hancockcountychildrenschoir.org](https://hancockcountychildrenschoir.org)

[info@hccchoir.org](mailto:info@hccchoir.org)



Hancock County Community Choir practices at Greenfield Christian Church recently under the direction of Bill Ball.

317-620-0096

Hancock County Children's Choir strives to bring excellent musical education and mentorship, equipping youth with essential life skills while igniting a community interest in youth and the arts. The choir has several community performances throughout the year.

## DANCE GROUPS

### Wilkerson Dance Studio

1114 W. North St., Greenfield

317-462-1673

[wilkersondance@gmail.com](mailto:wilkersondance@gmail.com)

[wilkersondance.com](https://wilkersondance.com)

Wilkerson offers year-round dance classes for all ages and seasonal performances. Classes

are available in tap, jazz, ballet, hip-hop, modern and contemporary dance.

### Hearts Ablaze Clogging Team

3254 W. CR 400S, Greenfield

317-498-5566

[facebook.com/heartsablazeclogging](https://facebook.com/heartsablazeclogging)

[knowhimjc@heartsablaze.me](mailto:knowhimjc@heartsablaze.me)

Hearts Ablaze Studio is a recreational and competitive clogging studio that also offers private piano and violin lessons convenient to both New Palestine and Greenfield families.

Ricochet Cloggers

260-409-3005

[Ricochetcloggers@gmail.com](mailto:Ricochetcloggers@gmail.com)

[www.facebook.com/ricochetcloggers](https://www.facebook.com/ricochetcloggers)



## Hancock County Senior Services

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IN-35175818

**317.462.3758 Senior Services**  
**317.462.1103 Transportation**

**1870 Fields Blvd., Greenfield • [hcssi.org](https://hcssi.org)**







Crystal Fox, left and her mother Becky Teeguarden visit the Farmers market at the Hancock County fairgrounds.

# Discover farmers markets





Dave Kearns works outside of the Gilded Nest sculpting pottery. Kearns sells his work at the local farmers market around the count.

**Hancock County has an active farm-to-table community that includes a number of farmers markets. Here's a list:**

**Cumberland Farmers Market**

[facebook.com/CumberlandINFM](https://facebook.com/CumberlandINFM)

8 a.m. to noon Saturdays, May to October at Cumberland Town Hall, 11501 E. Washington St., Indianapolis.

**Fortville Farmers Market**

[fortvillefarmersmarket.com](https://fortvillefarmersmarket.com) or [facebook.com/FortvilleFarmersMarket](https://facebook.com/FortvilleFarmersMarket)

4 to 7 p.m. Thursdays, mid-May to September, at Landmark Park, 305 S. Main St., Fortville.

**Greenfield Farmers Market at the Fairgrounds**

[facebook.com/FarmersMarketAtTheFairgrounds](https://facebook.com/FarmersMarketAtTheFairgrounds)

May to October: Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon, at the Hancock County 4-H Fairgrounds, 620 Apple St., Greenfield  
 July through September: Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to noon at the fairgrounds.  
 November through April: First and third Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the heated show arena at the fairgrounds

**Healthway Park Farmers Market**

4 to 7 p.m. Tuesdays from May through September, Hancock Wellness Center parking lot, 4055 S. Roy Wilson Way, New Palestine. The Market in McCordsville  
[Facebook.com/townofmccordsville](https://facebook.com/townofmccordsville)  
 Select dates June through October at 6280 W. 800N., McCordsville. Markets are held in conjunction with Cars & Coffee events.

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**317.462.4434** [www.gcsc.k12.in.us](http://www.gcsc.k12.in.us)  
110 West North Street, Greenfield, IN 46140

IN-3517598



City of Greenfield employees and volunteers with local American Legion and VFW made quick work of setting out hundreds of flags at Park Chapel in preparation for Memorial Day.

# Discover area parks

## CUMBERLAND

### Lions Park

*301 Buck Creek Road, Cumberland*

This 6.5-acre park features a variety of playgrounds and equipment, green space for kickball and more, a sandy beach volleyball court and pickleball courts. There are two covered shelters that may be rented. Both shelters have electrical outlets. There is also a full-size basketball court and a separate small court with an 8-foot goal. Lions Park also features the Buck Creek Trail for walking and biking.

## FORTVILLE

### Hampton Fields

*400 block of West Church Street, Fortville*

This 6-acre park includes two tennis courts, a picnic shelter, paved parking, concession station (in season) three baseball diamonds, seven bleachers, playgrounds equipment and six picnic tables.



## Memorial Park

9088 West CR 1025S, Fortville

This 25-acre community park is situated at the junction of Stottlemeyer Ditch and Jackson Ditch that creates rolling hillsides and running water. The park also has many facilities for activities and recreation as well as playground equipment. Amenities include four shelters, three playgrounds, two tennis courts, two softball/baseball diamonds, a basketball court, foot trails and sledding.

## GREENFIELD

### Beckenholdt Park

2770 N. Franklin St., Greenfield

Beckenholdt Park includes a large pond with a fishing pier, wetland with an observation deck, a two-acre dog park, walking paths, interpretive signs, a picnic shelter and more.



Roxy, a chihuahua, stays afloat on a raft as her owner Sabrina Nikos looks on at the annual Paws Pool Party event at the Kathy Dowling Aquatic Center in Greenfield.

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### Brandywine Park

900 E. Davis Road, Greenfield

Brandywine Park is a 60-acre sports complex offering 20 soccer fields, three softball fields (two adult, one youth), playground equipment, a paved trail and a wooden trail along Brandywine Creek. The park is now connected to the Pennsy Trail via a connector trail; its trailhead is located by the playground.

### Depot Street Park

251 Depot Street, Greenfield

Inspired by history, Greenfield’s newest park features railroad decor in an urban setting. Located along the Pennsy Trail adjacent to the historic grain elevator, the centerpiece of the park is an amphitheater that hosts free community concerts and events. Downtown businesses nearby offer food and treats, and visitors can take a photo with an interactive statue of artist Will Vawter. Picnic tables on rolling railroad tracks, fountains, and large swings pay tribute to the area’s railroad heritage. Park construction also led to the renovation of Depot Street, the last brick street in Greenfield.

### Greenfield Parks and Recreation Department

280 N. Apple St., Greenfield

The city’s parks and recreation department offices are located in the Patricia Elmore Center in Greenfield. The facility hosts activities for seniors, a preschool and art classes. For more information about activities and events available throughout the year, visit [greenfieldin.org/recreation](http://greenfieldin.org/recreation) or call 317-477-4340.

### James Whitcomb Riley Boyhood Home and Museum

250 W. Main St., Greenfield

The home of Greenfield’s famous son offers tours year-round, including references to Riley’s poetry and facts about his life, family and community involvement. The museum features artifacts and occasional displays of other notable historical figures. An interactive statue on site allows visitors to pose next to Riley and read a book. There is also a garden and Lizabuth Ann’s Kitchen, which hosts community events.



Cheyenne Price enjoys a quiet moment out on the Pennsy Trail at 400W.

### Kathy Dowling Aquatic Center

280 N. Apple St., Greenfield

Greenfield’s aquatic center features a free splash pad and paid entry to a large swimming pool featuring water slides, a toddler play structure, diving boards and climbing walls. Concessions are available. The splash pad is open May through September; the pool is open Memorial Day weekend through the first weekend of August.

### Michael’s Playground

1414 W. McClarnon Drive, Greenfield

Michael’s Playground is Greenfield’s first inclusive playground, dedicated to access for children of all abilities to play. The city’s northside playground is located behind Greenfield Central Junior High School, among youth baseball diamonds and a pavilion with picnic tables.

### Pennsy Trail

Just south of U.S. 40 between Hancock County roads 150 West and 400 East

The Pennsy Trail is a 5.6-mile path, following the old Pennsylvania Railroad Line that once ran through Greenfield. This paved multi-purpose trail features

historical markers, parking areas, water fountains, accessible restrooms, an arts garden, play and exercise equipment, and tributes to Greenfield’s sister city: Kakuda, Japan.

### Riley Park

Apple Street and U.S. 40, Greenfield Riley Park is 40 acres and offers a 7,200-square-foot skate park, two basketball courts, pickleball, tennis courts, playground equipment, disc golf, sledding hills and plenty of open areas for play and fishing along Brandywine Creek. Located within the park is the Riley Park Shelter House, Riley Park Pavilion, the Patricia Elmore Center and the city’s public swimming pool and splash pad.

### Thornwood Nature Preserve

1597 S. Morristown Pike, Greenfield This 40-acre woodland features seven trails, two creeks, a suspension bridge and educational posts. A campground is available on weekends only with a staff member present. The preserve includes diverse habitats, wildlife, birds and native plants. A new nature center features classroom space and exhibits.



## NEW PALESTINE

### Jacob Schramm Nature Preserve

1926 S. CR 600W, New Palestine

The Jacob Schramm Nature Preserve features mature woods that seem to arise out of the surrounding farm fields. An easy loop trail takes you through the property, which features American basswood, American beech, American hornbeam, shagbark hickory, slippery elm, sugar maple and sycamore trees. In spring, beautiful wildflowers blanket the forest floor. For more information, visit [conservingindiana.org/preserves/jacob-schramm-nature-preserve/](http://conservingindiana.org/preserves/jacob-schramm-nature-preserve/)

### Southeastway Park

5624 S. Carroll Road, Indianapolis

Though technically part of the Indianapolis Parks system, Southeastway Park is located in New Palestine. The 188-acre nature park features walking/biking trails, forest trails in 80 acres of forest, several prairies, a pond, Buck Creek, a sledding hill, six picnic shelters, several picnic sites, playgrounds and an activity center with seasonal educational programs. Visit <https://parks.indy.gov/parks/southeastway-park/> for more information.

### Sugar Creek Township Park

4161 S. CR 700W, New Palestine

The 88-acre park features a playground, a fitness trail and a nine-hole frisbee golf course. Visit [sugarcreek-twp.com/park/](http://sugarcreek-twp.com/park/) to learn more.

## SHIRLEY

### Shirley Park

200 Second St., Shirley

Shirley's main park offers an outside shelter, a community building, playground equipment, baseball diamonds, an outdoor stage and volleyball and basketball courts. Informative signs tell the story of Shirley's railroad heritage.

### Malcolm Grass Memorial Park

201 Main St., Shirley

This small park, named for the late Hancock County sheriff, features a seating area, a war memorial and a memorial to Grass, who was killed in the line of duty in 1986.

## WILKINSON

### Weir Cook Community Park

147 N. Main St., Wilkinson

This small park offers playground equipment, shelters, green space, basketball court, veterans memorial, and a memorial to Harvey Weir Cook, the flying ace who was born in Wilkinson.

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FROM  
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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



# Chris Sickels' Unmistakable Style



# S GREENFIELD

By Noelle Russell  
FOR DAILY REPORTER

Artist Chris Sickels in his Greenfield studio. Sickels' work as an artist and illustrator has been seen worldwide with his diverse clientele.

Sheryl Thurston can still picture it – her little boy, stretched out on the living room floor, crayons in his hand and an idea in his head.

Six-year-old Chris Sickels was determined to recreate the picture of a buffalo he saw in the family encyclopedia. The sketch he handed his mother later that day left her pleasantly surprised.

There were, of course, telltale signs of a child's handiwork – green scribbles for the grass – but also a remarkable grasp of proportions that made for an impressive likeness.

She kept it, that first glimpse of the artist her son would become.

Sitting in his Greenfield studio today, Sickels, now 50, is sure the buffalo drawing is lying around somewhere.

After all these years, there's no telling what might be tucked beneath the hundreds of carefully crafted figures that line every surface – creations that have graced the covers of New York Times bestsellers, been featured in film festivals around the world and landed Sickels more than a few accolades from the arts community.

Sickels, a 3-D illustrator and animator, is best known for what he calls his puppets – whimsical figures that he crafts, poses and photographs in miniature sets he also creates.

It's a tedious process, bringing each piece from concept to completion. Working on a picture book, from rough sketches to final photos, might take north of a year.

He's not fussy about materials, making use of any scrap within reach. Clay, wire, wood, foam, fabric, metal, and – admittedly – “lots of cardboard.” Turn a set piece around, and you're as likely to find it fashioned from an old cereal box as any professional product.

He doubts the owners of The Sweet Shop on Main Street have any idea the second life he gives so many of their boxes. There's just something about those donut containers. Nice and flexible.

No two characters he creates are alike, but each bears Sickels' unmistakable style with angular, exaggerated features and a playful combination of both the everyday and the surreal.

“Wonky,” Sickels says.

He's going for wonky.

Early encouragement

Sickels grew up in a small town in Randolph County, the second of three children.

It was blue-collar country, dotted with homesteads, where a person in search of work need look no farther than the nearest family farm.

And a career as an artist?

“It wasn't in the vernacular,” Sickels said. “If you were an ‘artist,’ you were a Sunday painter or a hobbyist.”

He's thankful Terry Martin disagreed.

Martin, a stickler of an art teacher who had Sickels in class both in junior high and high school, saw potential in her young pupil (who at the time thought perhaps he'd be an astronaut).



Sickels' work as an artist and illustrator has been seen worldwide with his diverse clientele.

He remembers her early encouragement: “Your drawings could take you places.”

She did her part to make sure they did.

Martin drove Sickels to portfolio reviews, where professors from the area’s top art schools provided feedback on student work while admissions counselors kept a close eye on potential recruits.

Sickels remembers Martin as a foundations-driven instructor. A student of hers wouldn’t get by on talent alone. Under her tutelage, he learned not only how to create works of art but the basic principles that inform their expression.

She prepared him for the rigors of art school, though he admits he was still rather intimidated, stepping into that first class.

As it turned out, he was more prepared than most of his freshman class.

Sickels graduated from the Art Academy of Cincinnati in 1996 with a degree in communication design. He married high school sweetheart Jennifer that winter.

Over the next few years, Sickels worked in museums and galleries while building his personal portfolio. Jennifer, an occupational therapist, was unfailingly supportive, ready to go anywhere his dream might take them.

That included Los Angeles, where Sickels worked for a couple years in hopes his animations might catch the attention of a studio exec offering full-time work.

“Coming right out of school, it’s hard to get established with any kind of business,” he said. “I was blessed to be naive enough to believe I could actually do it.”

But when a contract finally did come his way, Sickels was no longer interested in being tied down. He didn’t want to sacrifice the freedom to pursue projects of his own.

“I knew that he would have never been happy doing something that wasn’t his,” Jennifer said.

So he turned down Nickelodeon.





## Coming home

In 2001, the couple returned to Indiana, settling into the house on State Street where they've lived ever since. Their family has grown – with four children and the most recent addition, a Boston Terrier pup they call Maisie.

Watching her son's artistry go from pastime to profession has been rewarding, his mother said. She remembers some of his early successes, including the lasting legacy he left as a student of the Randolph Southern School Corp. – the rebels mascot design still in use today.

Her son has always been humble, she noted. She usually finds out about the latest successful venture not from him, but someone else in the circle of family and friends.

Thurston may very well be responsible for some of that success. Long after the kids were grown and gone, Sickels' mother picked up a paintbrush and discovered a talent of her own. She, too, is now an accomplished painter.

One piece Thurston gave her son hangs from the ceiling in his studio – as do many mementos from over the years – a bouquet painted in pastels with a handwritten note in looping cursive. Her message – "...If you like what you're offering, it doesn't matter if someone else likes it or not" – sought to remind her son that art is subjective. What impresses one judge today might be overlooked by another tomorrow.

Hanging nearby is a note in all caps with a more straightforward mandate: STOP DOUBTING.

His wife can't remember exactly what had happened the day she made it for her husband, only that her favorite artist needed to see in himself what others did.

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### **‘Just Dad’**

It took time – and plenty of trial and error – for Sickels to find his place in the art world. Feedback on one of his early puppets, for example – that he ought to ease up on the red on the figure’s face – inspired the name of the shop he’s run since the early 2000s: Red Nose Studio, where a single puppet sells for anywhere from \$1,000-\$3,000.

Jennifer recalls traveling with her husband a few years ago to New York, where Sickels was presented with the Hamilton King Award, one of the industry’s most prestigious honors. The Hamilton Award is presented to one artist annually by the Society of Illustrators, which, founded in 1901, is the nation’s longest-standing nonprofit

dedicated to the art of illustration. It was a reminder of the impact Sickels has had on his profession, Jennifer said.

“You get outside of Greenfield, and you find out that he’s respected nationally – and internationally – for what he does.”

Though the work could easily monopolize his time, Sickels has always prioritized their family, Jennifer said. When a deadline is looming, it’s Jennifer who points him toward the studio.

“Sometimes, ... I have to tell him, ‘Look, I got this. I can wash the dishes. I can put somebody to bed,’” she said.

As far as Sickels’ celebrity, the kids haven’t a clue, she added – “it’s just Dad.”

### **‘A good struggle’**

Sickels rarely travels without sketchbook in hand – always ready, should inspiration strike.

The little book comes in handy, as Sickel’s surroundings have influenced a number of his creations.

Take the house on the cover of “The House on the Cerulean Sea,” a YA novel by bestselling author T.J. Klune. Locals will find it strikingly similar to the old prosecutor’s office across from the county courthouse.

There’s no telling what – or who – might catch his attention.

“He’ll see somebody’s facial structure and he’ll go, ‘Oh, wow – that would be a cool puppet,’” Jennifer said.

There are projects in progress in every corner of Sickels’ studio.



When he's stumped, he resorts to an old trick – writing “keep it wonky” across his work.

“That wobbly word – there’s a sense of freedom in that word,” he said. “There’s a lot of room for doubt, there’s a lot of room to mess things up. That’s a good struggle.”

To the right of his computer sits a horse with the body of a piano. (The piano came first, he said. He then thought, “What if you put legs on it?”)

He still hasn't quite found the look he wants for it.

Maybe one day.

And his favorite piece?

“Hopefully, the next project,” he grinned. “That’s what you’re supposed to say.”



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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Artist Sandy Hall

# Artfully done

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Sandy Hall continues to share her love for painting



# D GREENFIELD

Driving along a country road, you usually don't expect to see painters and canvases, but if you do, odds are you might have just seen Sandy Hall painting a plein air painting of the old house you just saw.

Hall, an artist and retired teacher based out of Greenfield, jumps across mediums and styles in her paintings, but is always drawn back to the outdoors to capture the landscapes around her, often returning to sites multiple times to portray them in different ways.

Her plein air pieces are scattered

all around her workshop, but looking from piece to piece you see drastic differences in style, color and material, from bright and abstract to toned-down and realistic, from oil to watercolor and beyond.

There's one building that Hall says she returns to time and time again, a house in Shelby County that she says brings her back to when her grandparents had a farm in the area. Her cousins live just around the corner, and Hall recalls an encounter with one of those cousins who didn't recognize her initially.

By Cori Jobman

DAILY REPORTER

[cjobman@greenfieldreporter.com](mailto:cjobman@greenfieldreporter.com)

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Local artist Sandy Hall works with Lincoln Simmons, 11, during a recent art lesson in her studio at Bradley Hall in Greenfield.

“It’s private property, I was in the lawn [painting], and a truck pulled around, parked right in front of me, slammed the door and said, ‘You know this is private property, right?’ and I said ‘Mike?’” Hall said through a laugh. “It was my cousin, it wasn’t his property it was his neighbor’s, but he didn’t know what I was doing there. Of course, that broke the ice.”

Returning to that same place several times, she’s captured the building in oil paints, acrylic paints, and most recently in the form of a collage. The inspiration to redo the site in collage came from two places; first, wanting to do something with the building that she hadn’t before, and second a piece that she did in Florida in February. The Florida piece, a collage which she then went over with oil paints, went on to win People’s Choice Award at a competition in St. Petersburg.

Hall used to teach art at Greenfield-Central Junior High School before retiring in 2014, but she still teaches a small number of private students, taking on around four a month. Despite her long career in the arts, both as a teacher and as an artist, though, Hall went into college studying in a quite different field: math.

She studied mathematics at Purdue and, after struggling with a chemistry class, decided to take a drawing class following encouragement from her mother and college counselor.



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“My professor said, ‘Where have you been?’” Hall recalls from that first art class. “I asked, ‘What do you mean?’ and he said ‘You’re good, you’ve got a natural talent, you just have to hone it.’”

The rest, as the saying goes, is history. Hall went on to get a double teaching licensure in teaching and mathematics, taking her first job out of college as a math teacher, but after starting a family, she got the job as an art teacher in Greenfield and never looked back. Hall says she prefers to create her art in groups, going all the way back to a 1980s group which met and made art at the now-closed Presbyterian church in Greenfield, a group which she initially joined as a stress-reliever when raising her children.

Hall also has a competitive streak, competing in competitions around both Indiana and the United States, some of which are in her preferred



plein air style. She says that she traces that fire for competition back to her family. Growing up in 4-H, she’s been in competitions since a young age, and the Riley Festival Art Show became a chance to channel that competitive spirit through her art. Since then, she’s been able to travel the country and win awards for her art. She notes that her dad was more competitive in the realm of sports, passionate for basketball and

baseball, but that he encouraged her competitive outlet through the arts, while Sandy’s mom encouraged her art through asking Sandy to create cards for her to send.

The next time you’re driving through the roads of rural Indiana, keep your eye peeled for a canvas. It just might be Sandy Hall capturing another landscape for her next award-winning piece.



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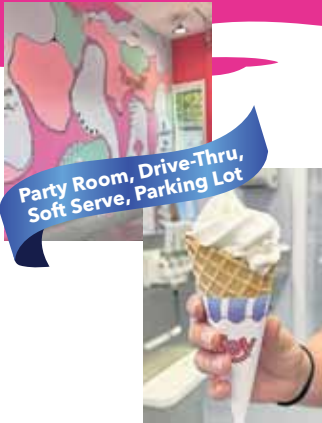
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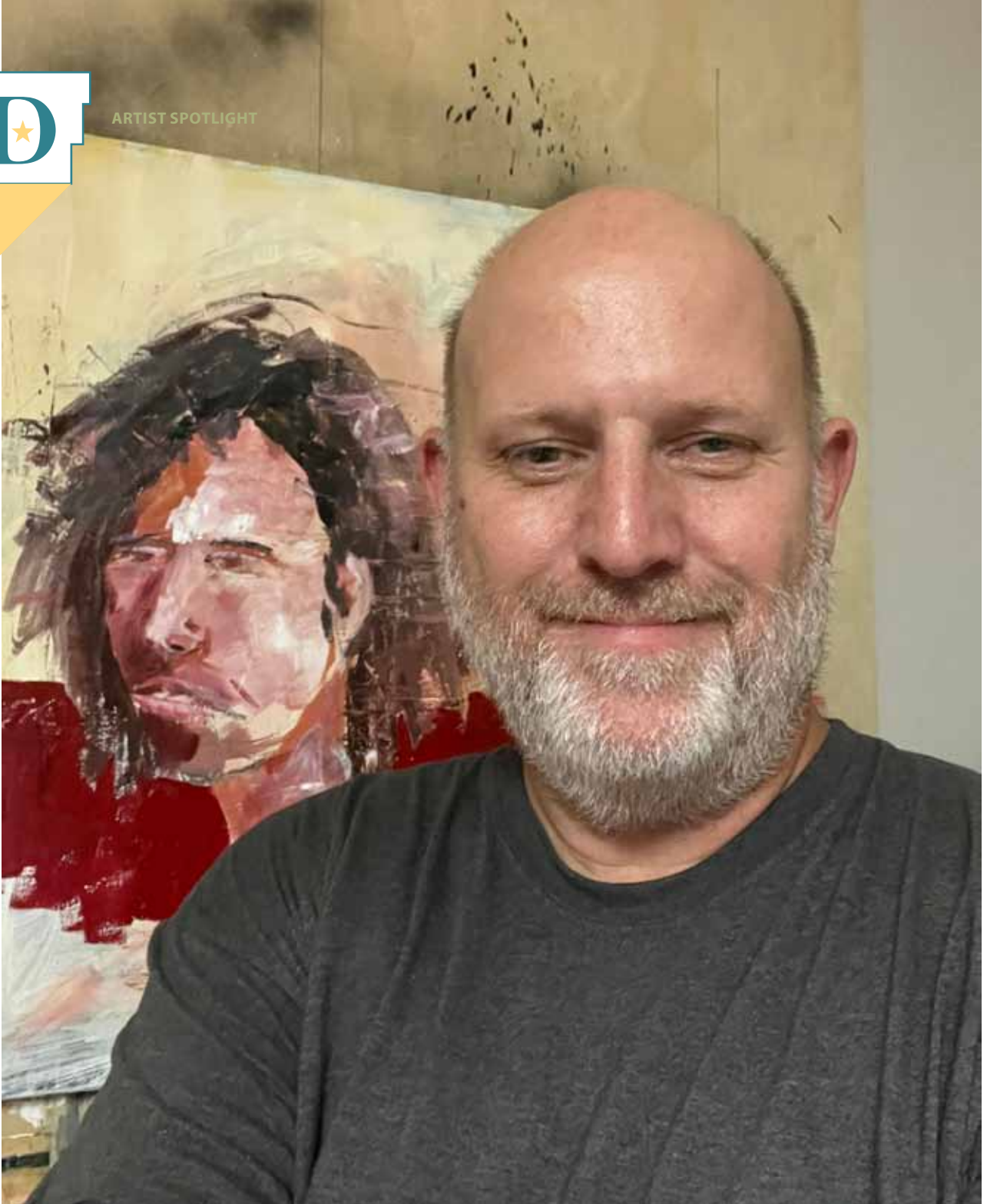


**OFFSITE EVENTS**





ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



# Greg Gearlds' process and story are uniquely his own



# M

GREENFIELD

Many people have an idealized vision of an artist in their heads, whether it's a great Renaissance sculptor or their high school art teacher, but according to local artist Greg Gearlds, there's no one way to create art. In fact, being unique may be a requirement.

Gearlds grew up in Indianapolis and never received any formal art training and didn't have many artists around him growing up, but through what he describes as his "master's degree in YouTube," he taught himself.

"I've always been drawn to creating in some way, in the arts, painting photography, I've done

writing, written screenplays, things like that," Gearlds said. "It's just something that was put in me when I was born and has been there, and it's been the struggle to get it out, to wrestle with that."

A strength of being self-taught, Gearlds says, is that he doesn't feel the pressure of outside influences that some artists do. He doesn't have to worry about copying an instructor since he doesn't have one. He went on to say that, for that exact reason, he is careful about watching too much of any YouTubers to ensure he doesn't begin to copy their work.

By Cori Jobman

DAILY REPORTER

[cjobman@greenfieldreporter.com](mailto:cjobman@greenfieldreporter.com)

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His faith was an inspiration to him in deciding to put the time in to become an artist in 2012, as he says that he is created by God, who is the ultimate creator. Gearlds's style, though, doesn't mimic the world around us. Rather, he creates pieces in a style he refers to as abstract expressionism. Sometimes, he does use models in the real world, giving the example of a vase of flowers, but often his artwork isn't designed to mimic anything. Even when he does base his art on a real-world object, though, he doesn't keep it entirely lifelike.

Gearlds describes the feeling of freedom he gets from his style.

"I'm not a 'slow-down detail' kind of person," he said of his abstract style. "It's quick, it's fast, at least it can be. It doesn't have to be, but it can be quick and fast and free."

Also a photographer, Gearlds contrasts his painting style with his photography, referring to them as opposites, with the photos capturing an image of life, while his paintings capture things that don't exist within the real world.

With his abstractions, he says it is often difficult to tell when a work is "complete," as without a reference within our day-to-day lives, he has total control over when a piece is finished, looking for a combination of aesthetics and a feeling of

completeness to know when he's done with a piece.

Gearlds has begun teaching art classes of his own. Despite never having a teacher himself, he says that he's found the adjustment to teaching others to be an easy one. A former soccer coach for his sons, who he homeschooled, he compares the teaching of basic skills between sports and the arts.

"In both scenarios, what you're ultimately trying to do is inspire them to go be themselves," Gearlds said. "On a soccer field, they may have a specific position they're playing, but they can't be looking to the coach to tell them every move to make, right? It's the same with art, you have to be 100% yourself when you're creating art. If you're trying to create it the same way that that other person is or create it for someone else, it's just not going to be the best stuff you can make. It has to be uniquely you first."

Gearlds says that, while there's a lot of judgment in the world, both for people generally and for artists specifically, good art is ultimately up to the artists themselves.

"People will look at a piece of art and go, 'Well, that's no good,' but they can't tell you exactly why it's no good, right? What makes good art is totally subjective, so as an artist or someone who's interested in art, you have to make it for yourself, you have to be able to create your own way of creating art."







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Sculptor Cheryl Lorange at her home in Irvington working on a project of limestone benches with James Whitcomb Riley poems themes.

# RILEY ARTS TRAIL

New trail set to showcase  
Greenfield's cultural heritage

By Shelley Swift

DAILY REPORTER

[sswift@greenfieldreporter.com](mailto:sswift@greenfieldreporter.com)



# B GREENFIELD

By the end of Summer 2025, a mile-long trail in downtown Greenfield will tell the story of the city's arts, culture and heritage.

The Riley Arts Trail will take visitors on a story-telling journey, with multiple stops along the way.

Named for Greenfield's most famous native son – famed poet James Whitcomb Riley – the trail shines a light on Riley's poems as well as other art and cultural elements throughout the historic downtown.

"It will really tell a story of the city's heart and heritage," said Joanie Fitzwater, Greenfield's

planning director, who has largely been overseeing the project.

According to the Hancock County Tourism website, "The Riley Arts Trail depicts the poetry and history of James Whitcomb Riley and celebrates all of the artists, poets, songwriters, authors, and creative souls in our community, past, present, and most importantly – the future."

The multi-use trail will be 10 feet wide, replacing the existing 5-foot-wide sidewalks. In some areas, the widened walkways will provide extended space for restaurants to provide outdoor seating.



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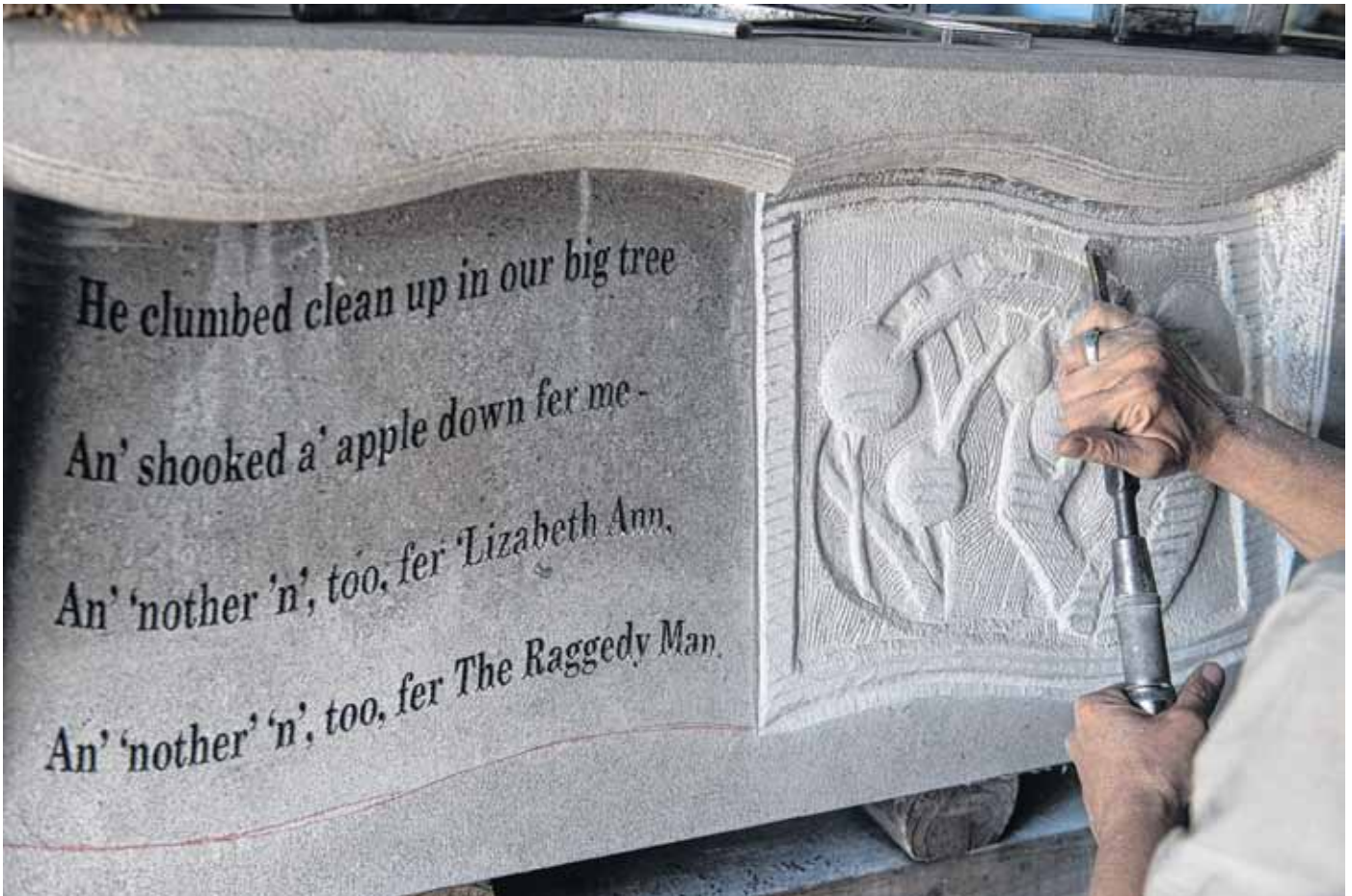
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Poetry of James Whitcomb Riley will be etched into the concrete of the trail to be read as the user walks along in either direction. Seven interpretive panels placed along the trail will depict Greenfield's cultural story.

The trail will also feature 10 hand-sculpted limestone benches made by renowned sculptor Cheryl Anne Lorange of Indianapolis. Each bench depicts excerpts from Riley's poetry, with illustrations hand-carved into each one.

"She's ridiculously talented. Her artwork is phenomenal," Fitzwater said.

As the Arts trail winds through the historic downtown, it will take

visitors past a wide variety of local art including bronze sculptures, murals and the Rotary Arts Park near the Pennsy Trail.

More than 40 new trees will be planted to provide some shade on the trail, which will link together a number of new historical markers that tell the story of how Greenfield came to be.

Decorative light posts are planned as a future addition.

Fitzwater said a big component of the arts trail is its connection to Greenfield's portion of the Pennsy Trail, a former railroad-turned-paved path which will eventually connect Greenfield to Indianapolis.

The Pennsy Trail will feature

signage encouraging users to follow the Riley Arts Trail to explore all and all the shops, restaurants and other stops the downtown area has to offer.

"We have some amazing shops and eateries and architecture and historical sites we want to showcase, and this trail helps us accomplish that," said Ellen Kuker, director of the Greenfield Parks Department, a major partner in the creation of the trail.

The Riley Arts Trail has been a prominent goal for the city since 2011, when city officials and downtown merchants started work on a downtown revitalization plan, which also featured input from the community.



The proposed arts trail was at the top of the wish list, designed as a way to create a sense of connection throughout the downtown area while sharing the city's heritage and celebrating the local arts.

The \$3.5 million trail project is being funded largely through a grant from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO), central Indiana's federally-designated regional planning organization. The grant dollars were matched through a state Stellar Communities grant the city won with regional partners in 2018.



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Hancock County Tourism has also contributed substantial funding, and the city has contributed funding from its park impact fees.

While progress on the trail has been delayed due to some unforeseen underground infrastructure challenges, Fitzwater is looking forward to unveiling the trail next summer.

“It’s been a long work in the making,” she said.

The Riley Arts Trail will run from the Pennsy Trail north on Riley Avenue to the James Whitcomb Riley Boyhood Home and Museum,

which takes guests back to life in the pioneer era to learn all about our famed “Hoosier Poet” and the trail’s namesake.

Next, the trail will go along the alley to North Street, passing several historic homes and local businesses along the way. It will then run along American Legion Place past the Hancock County Courthouse and connect back to the Pennsy Trail.

Fitzwater said pedestrian safety is a huge component of the trail, which will feature flashing crosswalk beacons as well as concrete bump-outs – or extensions

of the sidewalk – which slow traffic by narrowing the roadway.

Downtown travelers will see a number of orange barrels and barricades going up throughout town as the project progresses.

“It’s a difficult construction job because of the 125 years of underground utilities and infrastructure,” said Fitzwater. “We thank everybody for their patience as they work through these unexpected challenges.”

Click here for more information on the trail as it continues to develop.





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# Stroll past colorful works in Greenfield's vibrant art scene

**V** GREENFIELD

Viewing art in Greenfield is as simple as taking a stroll.

More than a dozen public murals, sculptures and interactive exhibits are on display in the downtown district.

One local website makes a self-guided tour of Greenfield's local art simple, with a map and description of each piece on display.

Greenfield-community.com is a collaboration between the city of Greenfield, Greenfield-Central schools, Hancock Health and NineStar Connect to provide a concise place for "all things Greenfield." The website recently released a blog with graphic maps depicting all the art there is to see in the heart of the community.

By Maribeth Vaughn  
DAILY REPORTER  
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1</b> "A Barefoot Boy"<br/>Mural by Andrew Hien</li> <li><b>2</b> "Tall Tales"<br/>Mural by Pam Bliss</li> <li><b>3</b> James Whitcomb Riley Mural<br/>by Pam Bliss</li> <li><b>4</b> Living Alley Interactive Instruments<br/>by local artists</li> <li><b>5</b> Indiana Bison-tennial Statue<br/>Painted by Deborah Smith &amp; Friends</li> <li><b>6</b> Clark Ketchum Walking Man Statue<br/>by The Walking Man Project</li> <li><b>7</b> Community Mural<br/>by Lisa Sears &amp; Community Volunteers</li> <li><b>8</b> "Over, Under &amp; Beyond"<br/>*Located in the Hancock County<br/>Public Library, children's section<br/>by Chris Sicksels</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>9</b> Family Bike Chain Bicycle</li> <li><b>10</b> "Imagination Library Comes to Life"<br/>by Susie Chisolm</li> <li><b>11</b> "Reading With Riley"<br/>Statue by Bill Wolfe</li> <li><b>12</b> "John William 'Will' Vawter"<br/>Statue by Bill Wolfe</li> <li><b>13</b> Ponny Trail Art Park</li> <li><b>14</b> Ricochet Wall<br/>Painted by Rachel Holmes<br/>*Located at Brandywine Park</li> <li><b>15</b> "Four Seasons in Hancock County"<br/>Utility Boxes<br/>by Rachel Holmes</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

This map, on Greenfield-Community.com, depicts places to stop and view public art in the city of Greenfield.

Rose Campbell, who writes for the website, said fall is a perfect time of year to check out what the city has to offer. All people need to do is use their mobile device to pull up the blog at <https://bit.ly/4eu4Vnh> and dive into the beauty of the community's local art scene.

One of the newest pieces, for example, is "Community Mural" on Pennsylvania and Main streets. Lisa Sears, a local high school art teacher, spearheaded the project for Greenfield Main Street, creating and outlining the design on the exterior of a building and asking the community to swing by in 2023 to add bold colors.

"Greenfield is invested in the arts and wants to make its community a vibrant place to be," Sears said. "I think Greenfield is doing a great job of promoting the arts. Several people have been working for decades to promote them. I hope that the arts programs only continue to grow!"

Other places on the map include two works of art in the Living Alley at North and Main streets. "A Barefoot Boy" mural inspired by the poem by James Whitcomb Riley; and metal instruments for visitors to interact with are nearby, designed and installed by local artists.

Indianapolis-area regional artist Pam Bliss recently painted two murals in downtown Greenfield. One is of poet Riley; the other, "Tall Tales" captures the farming roots of Hancock County. The mural depicts an older farmer telling an exciting story to two younger people, representing the past, present and future of agriculture.





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Statues on the map include an “Indiana Bison-ennial” statue of a bison decorated with a Hancock County theme. Statues of Riley and artist Will Vawter are also listed.

While not in the downtown district, be sure to head to the Hancock County Public Library to see the newest exhibit by Chris Sickles. The mixed media piece was installed in 2024, depicting woodland creatures in various states of recreation.

Greenfield’s Depot Street Park is home to plenty of free musical concerts during the summer and fall months, but look for visual arts on display as well. Every year the Greenfield Parks Department hosts a contest to display images relating to a certain theme. In 2024, solar eclipse-themed art is depicted in a banner style behind the stage.

Utility boxes at the park also recently got a makeover.

Local artist Rachel Holmes works for the parks department and created the pieces. She said since there are four boxes, dedicating one to each season in Hancock County was a perfect solution to bring extra color to the railroad-themed venue.

“For each one, I worked over the course of a week or two, spending a few hours at a time as weather permitted,” Holmes said. “I completed Summer and Fall in the summer of 2022, and Winter and Spring in 2023.”

Holmes said public art is something the parks department has really helped grow, and there is always room for more art and creativity.

“It supports local artists fosters community pride and connection, and just makes things more beautiful.”



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# Lasting legacy

Artist makes his mark  
with county murals



# M

## HANCOCK COUNTY

Mike McEvers has always been an artist who likes to create logos, signs, designs and paintings. He enjoys sharing his talent, including the ability to paint larger-than-life, lasting images for towns highlighting their past.

“It’s all about the historical story,” McEvers said.

McEvers, now in his late 70s, lives in Fortville and has made many massive and mini murals all over the world, including some in Hancock County. He has one on display on Main Street in Fortville made in 2016 and one on display on Main Street in New Palestine created in 2021.

“The one in Fortville is pretty popular,” McEvers said. “It explains a

lot about the area and the people who helped make it.”

Measuring 14 feet tall and 24 feet wide, and featuring Fortville founder Cephas Fort and a locomotive that pays homage to the town’s rail heritage, a mural gradually took shape on the north side of the building on Main Street in Fortville several years ago.

“I was given carte blanche to design that thing,” McEvers said of the creation he made several years ago.

McEvers noted officials with Vernon Township contracted him to put a smaller mural next to the new fire department celebrating the gardens at Vernon Township, so he did.

By Kristy Deer

DAILY REPORTER

kdeer@aimmediaindiana.com


Mike McEvers, owner of Sign Art Studio & Mural, paints a large mural on the side of a business in New Palestine in 2021.



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“I came up with a really fun design everyone went crazy for, and I finished that about a year ago,” he said.

Officials with New Palestine Main Street, an organization that promotes the town, hired McEvers to create an eye-catching piece of art near the northeast corner of U.S. 52 and Gem Road in the fall of 2021.

The idea was to capture some of the historical highlights of the town as officials closed out a year of celebrating the town’s sesquicentennial.

New Palestine Main Street received a \$4,000 grant from the Hancock County Community Foundation’s Public Art Fund to go toward the \$8,200 cost, said Julie Lucas, who leads New Palestine Main Street.

The idea was to add a mural somewhere in town and officials noted it took them many years to find the right person — McEvers — and have the design come together.

“We wanted to do something that honored our agriculture heritage and our historical landmarks that we

know and love, and we’ve done that,” Lucas said.

The mural is on the west side of the new Elite Beverages building, 120 W. Main St., and showcases local landmarks and the town’s history, including the Bittner Road bridge, the Mary M. Nichols Building on Main Street and the area’s rich farming tradition.

“I’ve heard a lot of positive feedback on the county murals and that’s nice,” McEvers said.

McEvers then picked from the landmarks and created the design for the mural, which is 19 by 13 feet.

“I added some of the things I thought were important, some of the main attractions in town,” McEvers said.

The artist laughed when asked about the historical location of some of the buildings on the mural and a few of the other highlights he focused on. There is a train going under the town’s bridge and a trolley rolling through town next to a man sitting on a wagon being pulled by a horse.

“We even had him add something on the Interurban (a type of electric railway) which is something a lot of people didn’t even know that we had here,” Lucas said.

McEvers noted while everything isn’t located exactly where it is or was in town, the highlights are all there, and the final vision is an artistic account.

McEvers, who worked on the project daily for weeks, heard nothing but positive feedback, especially from customers who stopped at the liquor store and were curious about his creation.

“The feedback has been 100% positive,” he said.

McEvers loves making murals, lasting art, watching pieces of the past come to life, he said. McEvers admitted he has often changed things during the creation of the murals, but in the end he and the customers are always pleased with the outcome.

“I’ve been doing this long enough that I know what works and what doesn’t,” he said.



McEvers, who has had his work published throughout the years said, it's always rewarding for an artist to leave a little of themselves behind in their work.

"The best part of this is when you find people like you who like to do what you do," he said.

McEvers has artist friends all over the world who do the same type of work, and they often collaborate together like last year when he traveled to Australia where he helped make a mural that also happens to have a train, something he loves adding to many of his murals.

"Marketing myself to a municipality, however, is my favorite interest," he said.

McEvers says his most popular mural in the state is in Union City on the Indiana side on the back of a museum and includes a train, the same that runs through Fortville.



"It's a big giant iron horse kind of a train blowing through," McEvers said. "I loved doing it."

McEvers says art is the heart of a county, state and nation and he feels fortunate to still be able to share his

abilities with communities who hire him to showcase their hometowns.

"I keep doing it because it's a passion," McEvers said. "If I can make a little money on the side, well then that's nice too."

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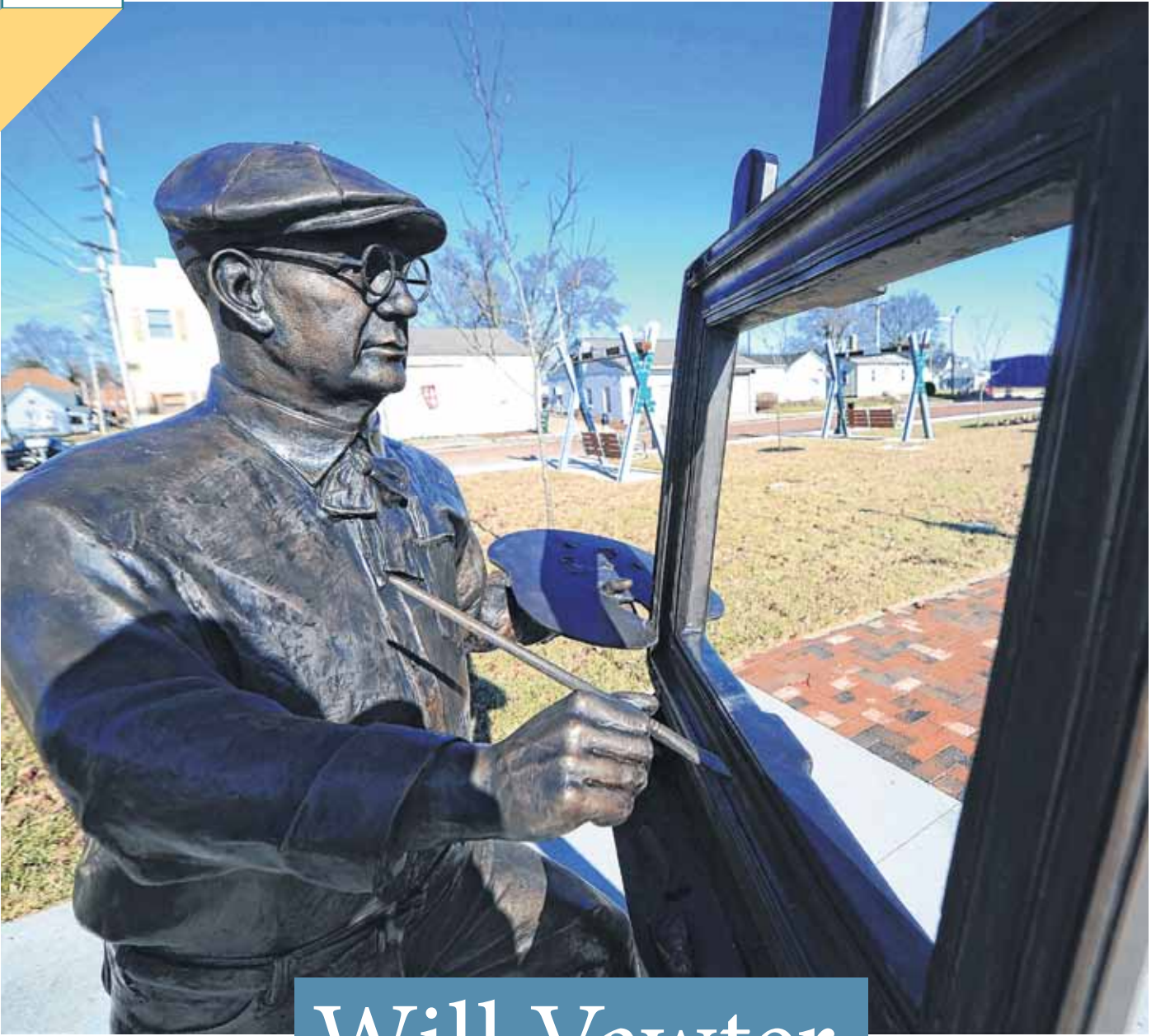
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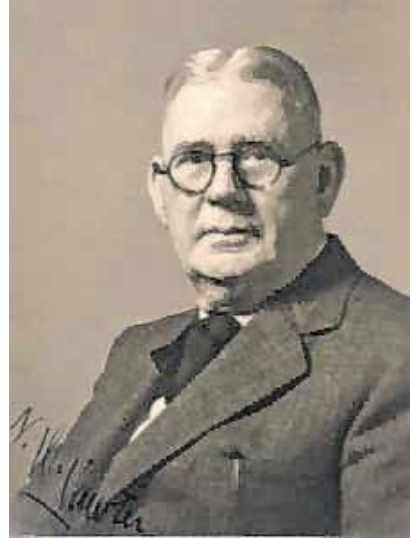
Will Vawter

helped create art culture  
in Hancock County



**HANCOCK COUNTY**

Those who have spent countless hours building and sustaining the vibrant art community in Hancock County say much of the credit for the thriving art community goes back to the late 1800s and a man named Will Vawter. Some say he was the “gateway” for all the other art growth in Hancock County.



By Kristy Deer

DAILY REPORTER

kdeer@aimmediaindiana.com

A statue of artist Will Vawter occupies its permanent home in Depot Street Park in downtown Greenfield. Will Vawter lived from 1871 to 1941 and was vital to the creation of the art community in Hancock County.

A self-taught artist, Vawter (1871-1941) and his family moved to the Greenfield area when he was six years old.

Vawter started doing illustrations for the Indianapolis Sentinel in 1891. Soon his work appeared in newspapers and magazines throughout the state. Around the same time, another Greenfield native was also making a name for himself as a poet.



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Will Vawter's painting, Barnes Cabin on Owl Creek, Brown County, 1920.

James Whitcomb Riley, known as the “Hoosier Poet,” was a national bestseller with poems such as “Little Orphant Annie” and “The Raggedy Man.”

In 1893, Riley hired Vawter as his illustrator. Over the next 30 years, Vawter’s work appeared in many of Riley’s books and then in 1908, Vawter moved from Greenfield to Nashville, Indiana where he helped develop the voracious art scene there.

Alice Hedden is the president of the Hancock County Arts. She and

others associated with the local art scene hosted a Regional Portrait Society of America Show in August where dozens of budding artist got to showcase their work.

“That type of show is result of dear Will Vawter,” Hedden said. “We’ve been growing since really about 1999 and I think it’s the Will Vawter exhibit that has been able to sustain us because we found him and he was such an artist and illustrator who had great connections with people like James Whitcomb Riley and he became very prominent in this area.”

Hancock County Arts, established in 1996 initially in partnership with Greenfield Parks to develop the county’s arts community, inaugurated the annual Will Vawter Art Show, a juried art exhibition, in 1999. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of his birth, a bronze statue that depicts Vawter while painting, was unveiled at the James Whitcomb Riley birthplace in Greenfield in September 2021 and was later moved to Depot Street Park.

Each year in the City of Greenfield



and the Hancock County Arts and Cultural Council holds the Will Vawter Art Exhibition. The juried art show attracts many artist from around Indiana each year.

“We’ve roamed around having his exhibit over at Riley Park and then at Bradley Hall and a lot of different places, but 10 years ago we were able to get the gallery so we now have a place to host the exhibit which has attracted as many as 135 pieces of art work from 50 different artist at once,” Hedden said.

Vawter was the type of artist who inspired people Hedden said and that continues to this date as people find out more about Vawter.

“He was the type of artist we can showcase and teach people what he did in his work,” Hedden said. “When he eventually left here, he helped start the art colony down in Brown County that is so thriving today.”

While many people don’t know much about the artist Will Vawter, Hedden and those on the Hancock County Arts board do and they show a great deal of respect for his work and the legacy he left in Hancock County.

“Over these past couple of years, we’ve worked hard to dig up as much history on him as we could,” Hedden said. “In doing that we found a relative of his, a great, great, great nephew contacted us because he found out he was related to Vawter and he paints and is the only one in his family who does so.”

The man, Robert Vawter lives in Chicago and said his sister happened to see a Vawter painting at a funeral home and did some research and found out about the connection.

“He told us after finding out he was related to Will Vawter his life made more sense because he had always painted and drawn and he never knew where the

inspiration came from,” Hedden said.

Hedden and other members of the Hancock County Arts say from individual artist to local shows they get even more thrilled when they see the countywide school art shows on display. That’s because county officials are giving young artist a chance to test their skills and showcase their work like Vawter used to do in the county.

“It’s been a wonderful outlet for artist,” Hedden said. “It’s so great to see people express themselves.”

Hedden noted having an art community based on the likes of a Will Vawter is inspiring for all artist.

“It kind of inspires an artist to do their own creation, and it’s helped us put together groups who get together every Tuesday morning and share ideas and talk about art and that’s so important to our art community,” Hedden said. “We thank Will Vawter for much of it.”

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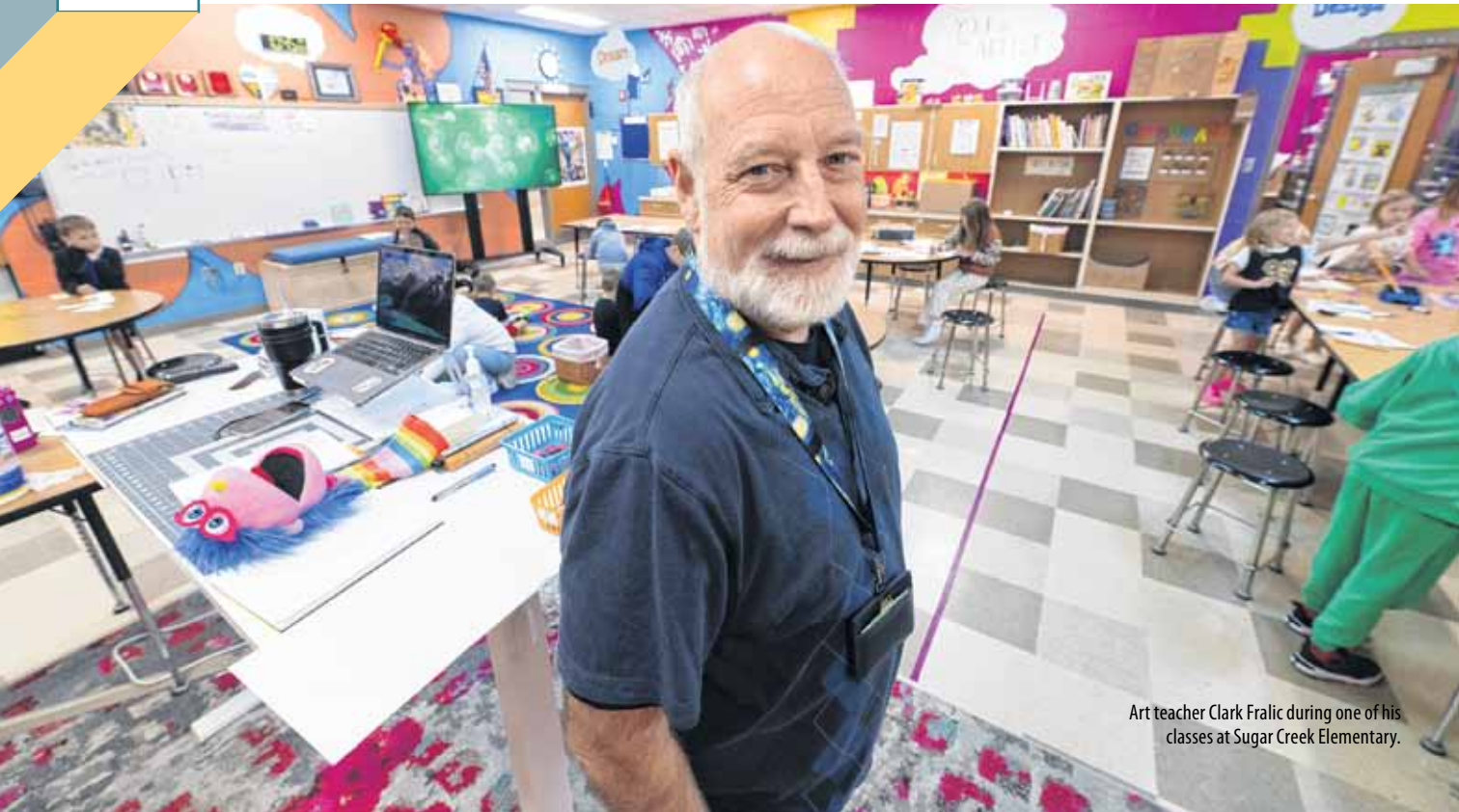
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Art teacher Clark Fralic during one of his classes at Sugar Creek Elementary.

# Local art educators remain optimistic for art growth

## NEW PALESTINE

For decades New Palestine art teachers Clark Fralic and Clyde Gaw have been inspiring students young and old alike to delve into their inner talent and explore the arts.

The two long time art county educators say while much in education has changed over the years one thing hasn't and that's how much students enjoy taking

part in art classes and art shows.

Gaw, who has been a member of the Advocacy for the Art Education Association of Indiana since 2005 has been an art teacher for 40 years and said this school year is his final year teaching.

Gaw notes he'll be living on a high note as he feels the state of art education is alive and well locally.

By Kristy Deer

DAILY REPORTER

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Art teacher Clark Fralic during one of his classes at Sugar Creek Elementary.

“It’s strong here in Hancock County,” Gaw said. “The art room has always been a hot ticket, and the kids are as eager as ever to be a part of the art classroom.”

Gaw, who teaches at New Palestine High School, has taught at all grade levels including holding summer camps along with Fralic, who is a teacher at Sugar Creek Elementary School. For Gaw the only rules in his art class — there are no rules.

Fralic who has also taught art for decades in the district also noted appreciation for the arts is still good locally however he has concerns for in the future.

“Here in Southern Hancock, we’re

fortunate because the support for the arts is pretty good but in other parts of the state the arts is being more marginalized,” Fralic said.

Fralic sighs the new proposes to Indiana High School diplomas which right now call for no arts requirement where as there is currently at least one year of art required for an academic honors diploma.

“Having the arts as a requirement at least provided an opportunity for the children who may not of had access to a regular art program so yes, there is some concern for the arts going forwards,” Fralic said.

Still, Fralic who plans to teach for at least five more years before

retirement, remains hopeful because he knows how important the arts are to a child’s development.

“In our county, I remain pretty optimistic because it really does appear all the county schools support their art programs very well,” Fralic said.

As an example Fralic noted the Hancock County Art Show which has supported youth art for over 30 years.

“That show has been going on since I’ve been teaching and we get so much support from the community when they come out,” Fralic said.

“Plus, we’ve got the Hancock County Arts who host many events to try and keep art in the forefront.”



Clyde Law, art teacher, New Palestine High School.



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Fralic noted there are many local artist who promote and showcase art to keep the love of art alive locally.

“That’s one of the good things about Hancock County is that they’ve looked at the arts not as just some extra thing but people have embraced it,” Fralic said.

Fralic is having just as much fun teaching young elementary aged students about art now as he did when he first started some three decades ago, but he said kids have changed over the years.

“They have so much access to devices so their interests have changed and as a teacher I have to change along with those cultural changes and give them the freedom they need to become artist,” Fralic said. “Both Clyde and I teach the same way.”

Gaw, who is always working on his own projects outside the classroom recently worked on a painting, one he brought into the classroom to share with his students to try and inspire the kids.

“The art is a symbolic infinity design jazzed up with all kinds of geometry inside of it and there is lots of movement and energy being released,” Gaw said. “Right now I have a similar piece that is on the cover a book.”

The book is called *Enacting Praxis, How Educators Embody Curriculum Studies*. Gaw was also asked to write one of the chapters in the book as well as use his art for cover.

Getting the chance to continue working on their own art careers while also sharing their love of art with students and other art educators has been a blessing for both men they say. Each summer Gaw and Fralic take part in a week long professional art development conference in Boston where they inspire other art educators.

“Teachers come from all around the



world to spend time with Clark and I and learn from us,” Gaw said. “We’ve been doing it for 10 years and I’ll continue on with doing that.”

One of the things the art teachers like which has developed in classrooms is for educators to offer ideas for art projects to students but to also let students come up with their own art ideas.

“That I think has been the switch, the key to the change in art education 20 years ago,” Gaw said. “It allows the kids to be true artists.”

Both men say while the state of

art education is solid in Hancock County, they’d really like to see state officials promote art more throughout Indiana.

“Now it’s being left up to district officials and parents who care about the fine arts to make sure they are available in the schools,” Gaw said. “Visual arts in school are critical to a well-rounded curriculum and provide an import to a child’s experience that kids just can’t get in other subject areas because the arts, they are a total body experience which is critical for intellectual development.”



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# EMBRACE THE ARTS

Hancock County Arts celebrates 25 years of supporting the local art scene

## HANCOCK COUNTY

The arts scene is alive and well in Hancock County.

Hancock County Arts, which promotes all forms of art throughout the county, just celebrated its 25th anniversary this year, and looks forward to an even more vibrant artistic landscape in the future.

As part of the commemoration, the arts council debuted a new documentary highlighting 25 different artists throughout the county. The premier screening took place at the H.J. Ricks Centre for the

Arts in downtown Greenfield.

The hour-long film features – which can be viewed on YouTube – highlights a wide variety of arts that can be found in Hancock County.

“We found 25 groups and individuals – singers, dancers, potters, painters, all kinds of artists – that have classes here in Hancock County,” said Alice Hedden, board president for Hancock County Arts. “It just turned out so great.”

Promoting local artists is what Hancock County Arts is all about, said Hedden.

By Shelley Swift

DAILY REPORTER

[sswift@greenfieldreporter.com](mailto:sswift@greenfieldreporter.com)

Members of the Hancock County Arts Council hosted a Second Friday event in January featuring the work of four local artists.



The arts council plans to feature a different local artist each month at its Twenty North art gallery at 20 N. State St. in downtown Greenfield.

The gallery is home to a variety of rotating exhibits throughout the year, including the widely celebrated Vawter Art Show, which draws artists throughout the state, as well as the annual fine arts show during the Riley Festival each October.

While the gallery is located in Greenfield – the Hancock County seat – Hedden said the arts council is dedicated to celebrating the arts in all parts of the county.

“From McCordsville to Fortville and New Palestine and

Wilkerson, we try to get everyone involved,” said Hedden, who lives in McCordsville.

A longtime portrait artist, Hedden has been part of the arts council since 2005.

The nonprofit board has featured a wide variety of local artists and art enthusiasts over the years, she said, adding “we’re always looking for volunteers.”

Hedden said there’s more to celebrate on the local art scene today than ever before, as evidenced by the creation of the new Riley Arts Trail that will soon wind through downtown Greenfield.

“We’re looking forward to 2025 so we can have more exhibits and more classes,” she said.

## Coming Up at Twenty North Gallery

**October** - Members Only Exhibit and Riley Festival Fine Arts Exhibit

**November/December** - Artisan Shoppe and Festival of Trees, plus Open Winter Exhibit

**January** - TBA

**February** - Hancock County Junior/Senior High School Exhibit

**March** - Hancock Hoosier Hysteria (basketball-themed art)

**April** - April Showers Open Exhibit (water-themed art)

**May** - Fiber Exhibit

**June/mid-July** - Will Vawter Art Show

**Mid-July /August** - Portrait Exhibit and Painting Event

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# Creative canvas

Artist teaches throughout county,  
spreads passion for paint



## GREENFIELD

Have art, will travel. Michelle Kimberlin will go just about anywhere to share her passion for painting.

From bars to wineries, private homes to libraries, Kimberlin's Hancock County Creations Art Studio has been in just about every corner of the county since it started about six years ago.

By Maribeth Vaughn

DAILY REPORTER

[mvaughn@greenfieldreporter.com](mailto:mvaughn@greenfieldreporter.com)

Michelle Kimberlin, left, works with student Jaclyn Roethler with her watercolor project.

And now, Kimberlin is happy to report, she will have a regular space as well in downtown Greenfield at Bradley Hall. Suite 106, a studio space with plenty of room for supplies and a sink, will be the site of weekly watercolor classes and more.

"Anybody can do it- you just have to believe in yourself and know you can do it," she said. "Just give it a try."

Kimberlin has loved art for years

and studied in high school under Greenfield artist Sandy Hall – now a mentor and colleague, but she still fondly calls "Mrs. Hall."

In her years as a young mother, Kimberlin returned to art as a way to get some "me time."

"I just realized how much I enjoyed it and how much I loved it, and it just kind of took off from there," she said.

Now, she wants others in the community to have that therapeutic time – a time where they can get away for an hour or two to pursue something they're passionate about. She's hosted children's classes, wine-and-canvas style acrylic events at local business and watercolor courses– a trickier medium that takes patience and skill-building.



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Michelle Kimberlin has been re-inventing the Hancock County Creations Art Studio. Instead of one site in downtown Greenfield, she travels to several venues to host wine-and-canvas-type events, bars, wineries, libraries, etc.



A student uses a steady hand to paint in watercolors.

“Watercolor is what I’m known for– that’s my jam,” she said. “My favorite medium, my favorite one to teach ... It takes time to understand it, but once you do, you’ll be like, ‘Wow, this is amazing.’”

At a recent watercolor class in Greenfield, about six women gathered to paint a sunset scene featuring two giraffes.

Jaclyn Roethler attended with her niece and said she enjoys Kimberlin’s teaching style.

Roethler has joined Kimberlin in her acrylic classes at pubs as well, and

says watercolor has been surprisingly easier than she thought it would be.

“You know how some teachers can be, ‘Oh no no no, that’s not right,’” Roethler said. “She’s more of, ‘You get to do it the way you want to do it.’ So if you start to question something in how you did it and you’re just not sure, she always puts the question back to you. ‘Do you like what you’ve done?’ If you don’t like something about it, she has you ponder what you don’t like about it before she puts in her opinion.”

Julie Davis was also at the class, with her daughter and



mother. Baylie got started with Kimberlin years ago in her children's class, and the family has sort of grown with Kimberlin and followed her business.

"She's very open," Davis said. "It's not necessarily her way; she'll teach the techniques but we'll always look around and notice – we're working on one painting but every one of our paintings looks different."

Bradley Hall's Suite 106 will be Kimberlin's space for her weekly watercolor classes indefinitely, and she's starting another class at Studio 309 in Fortville as well. Her Bradley Hall space will have art supplies for sale occasionally as well, and will be used during Riley Festival this fall.

She's given art classes at local nonprofits, and coming up are several paint parties at area businesses. Kimberlin's "Traveling Art Show"



A student selects a brush during one of Michelle Kimberlin's watercolor classes.

and news of upcoming classes can be followed on facebook.com/KimberlinArts. She hopes people give themselves time in their busy schedules to breathe and take advantage of the

therapeutic opportunities art provides.

"I really think it can help people if you just give it a chance," she said. "Everyone needs that time once in a while."



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### 4-H & Youth Development, CED

Amber Barks is the 4-H Youth Development Educator in Hancock County. Amber enjoys implementing hands-on workshops for youth and working with the 4-H Jr. Leaders to do community service projects. She also works with adult volunteers to implement a community-based 4-H program that teaches youth life skills.



### Agriculture & Natural Resources

Lais McCartney is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator in Hancock County and the Indiana SARE Coordinator. Lais enjoys working with local farmers in technology and license recertification classes. Home horticulturalists, backyard gardeners, and Beekeeping are a large portion of Lais's work and time, especially in the summer.

### Health and Human Sciences

Mandy Gray is the Health and Human Sciences (HHS) Educator in Hancock County and provides research-based education in the community in the areas of finance, human development, food and nutrition, and health and wellness. Some of her classes include Be Heart Smart, I CAN Workshop Series, K101, ServSafe and many more!



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# Deck the halls

---

Local bead artist has two ornaments on display  
at Indiana State Museum



# A GREENFIELD

A Hancock County native who never thought of herself as creative is now a celebrated bead artist in Indiana and has two intricate ornaments on display at the Indiana State Museum's 92-County Tree.

Lisa Bowling has gotten into bead embroidery the last decade and has won several awards at the Indiana State Fair. Her creations caught the attention of the curator for the Indiana State Museum, who asked her to design ornaments for Porter and Hancock counties to represent the culture of both communities.

Bowling was living in Porter County at the time but recently moved back to Hancock with her husband Tim to be closer to their combined five children and 10 grandchildren.

Bead embroidery creates intricate designs with tiny colored beads through sewing. Bowling happened upon the craft in 2010 when she endured an injury and had to stay home from work for eight weeks.

"I never thought of myself as an artist. I was never creative in school," she said. "Until I started doing this; people started calling it art and I thought, 'I guess it is.'"

She was approached two years ago by the Indiana State Museum to create an ornament design for Porter County because she was living there at the time. When the curator found out that she is originally from Hancock County, he asked if she could make another.

By Maribeth Vaughn

DAILY REPORTER

mvaughn@greenfieldreporter.com

Lisa Bowling of Greenfield has been doing bead embroidery for more than 10 years.

# POTTER



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Lisa Bowling sews tiny beads onto materials for necklaces, bracelets, cuffs and more.

Installed last year for the first time but still on display this holiday season, the two ornaments join 90 others on a large tree at the museum's Washington Street entrance in downtown Indianapolis.

The Hancock County ornament is an open book, paying tribute to poet James Whitcomb Riley with nods to artist Will Vawter, Olympic gold-medal gymnast Jaycie Phelps and local sites like the Octagon House,

Frank Littleton Round Barn and the Old Swimmin' Hole immortalized by Riley. The ornament also includes logos of the four local high schools and celebrates economic growth from Walmart and Amazon.

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A book of Hancock County's landmarks and famous people adorns the 92-County Tree at the Indiana State Museum. One side features James Whitcomb Riley and his downtown statue adorned with flowers.



The inside of Lisa Bowling's ornament representing Hancock County depicts economic development and the logos of local schools.



A round barn and octagon house are well-known buildings on Lisa Bowling's Hancock County ornament.




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The 92-County Tree at the Indiana State Museum features hand-crafted ornaments from Hoosier artists.



The Porter County ornament designed by Lisa Bowling includes depictions of the area's popcorn history and Indiana Dunes.

The Porter County ornament includes depictions of the Indiana Dunes, popcorn, agriculture and more.

The ornaments took Bowling eight to 10 hours a day to create for over a month.

The 25-foot, 92-County Tree has been a focal point at the museum's Washington Street entrance since 2008, however it has recently undergone a complete refresh, according to a press release from the museum. This year's tree features 37 new ornaments, adding to the remainder that were unveiled last year. Each piece was hand-crafted by Indiana artisans to represent significant natural and cultural features of their county.

A digital kiosk has also been added for visitors to learn more about each county's ornament and the artist who created it. The museum is open daily through Dec. 31 (closed Dec. 25) with extended hours on Thursdays.

Bowling said she is humbled that her work is alongside the beautiful pieces of so many Indiana artists, and enjoys viewing the ornaments.

Since moving back to Greenfield, Bowling and her husband have enjoyed settling into their home. A room specifically for her artform was a must, and Bowling can spend hours in there.



Bowling creates necklaces, bracelets, cuffs and more. She enjoys going to trade shows and was inspired by Sherry Serafini, a world-renowned bead artist who challenged her with a kit.

These days, Bowling not only wears her own jewelry and gives her creations as gifts, but also sells them on Etsy and at the artisan shop at the Twenty North Gallery in downtown Greenfield.

"I found that I really enjoyed putting the colors together and I had a knack for it; people liked what I was putting together, they liked what they were seeing," she said of when she first got hooked on bead embroidery. "If I wore a necklace I'd made, people would say, 'Where did you get that?' 'Well, I made it.' 'Oh, can you make me one?'"

She enjoys listening to audio books while doing her embroidery.

"A lot of people look and say, 'That looks tedious,' but it's not to me. It's relaxing to



Necklaces designed by Bowling are sold on Etsy.

me," she said. "I don't often sit down with a pattern in mind. I start with a focal bead and I work outward from there."

Bowling also recently taught a class at the Twenty North Gallery, and wouldn't mind if the beadwork interest spreads in the local community.

"I'd like to teach them about the art of beadwork; it's not just a hobby, it is art and it's a talent and it's a creative expression and anybody can do it," she said. "If you know how to pick up a needle and thread, you can do what I do."



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jvoelz@newpal.k12.in.us

## New Palestine Junior High School

2279 S. County Road 600W  
New Palestine, IN 46163 317-861-4487  
Jessica Neill, principal  
jneill@newpal.k12.in.us

## New Palestine Intermediate School

5613 W. County Road 2005  
New Palestine, IN 46163 317-861-3267  
Vincent Meo, principal  
vmeo@newpal.k12.in.us

## Brandywine Elementary

413 E. County Road 4005  
Greenfield, IN 46140  
317-462-7396  
Austin Theobald, principal  
atheobald@newpal.k12.in.us

## New Palestine Elementary

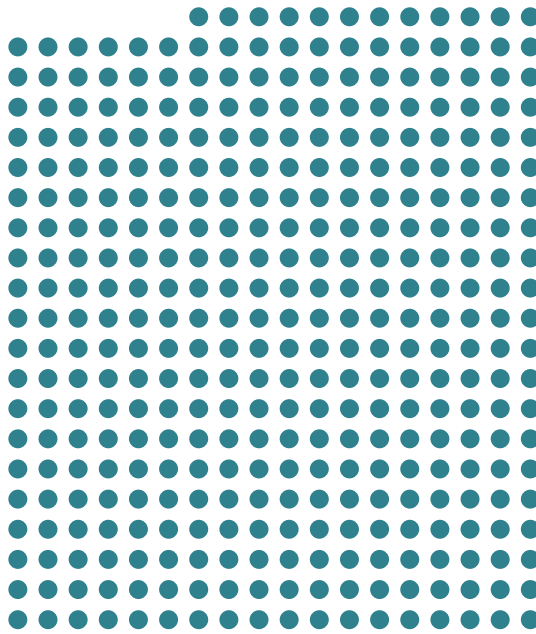
4801 S. County Road 500W  
New Palestine, IN 46163 317-861-5287  
Kayleigh Fosnow, principal  
kfosnow@newpal.k12.in.us

## Sugar Creek Elementary

2337 S. County Road 600W  
New Palestine, IN 46163  
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Jan Kehrt, principal  
jkehrt@newpal.k12.in.us

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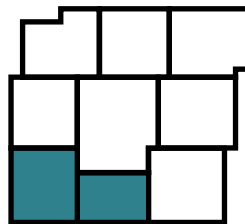
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2022-2023  
GRADUATION  
RATE

3,721  
2024-2025  
ENROLLMENT

● Represents 10 students



## SCHOOL BOARD

Matt Ackerman, Brian McKinney, Laura Haeberle, Jon Hooker, Dan Walker

## THE DISTRICT

Children in Sugar Creek and Brandywine townships attend Southern Hancock schools.

## ADMINISTRATION

**SUPERINTENDENT: Dr. Gina Pleak**  
llantrip@newpal.k12.in.us | 317-861-4463, ext. 117

**ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT: Robert Yoder**  
byoder@newpal.k12.in.us | 317-861-4463, ext. 111

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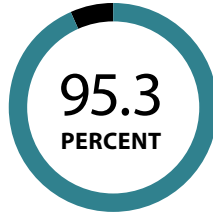
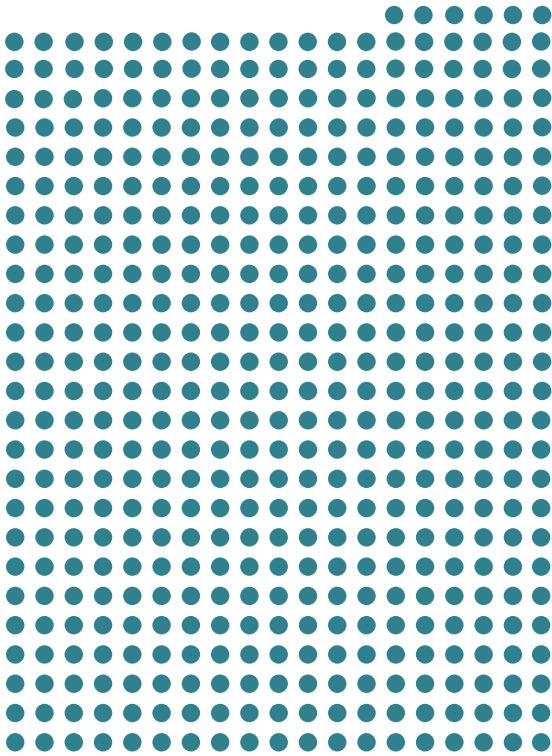
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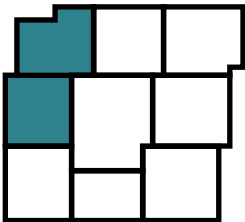
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2022-2023  
GRADUATION  
RATE

4,818  
2023-2024  
ENROLLMENT

● Represents 10 students



## THE DISTRICT

Children in Buck Creek and Vernon townships attend Mt. Vernon schools.

### ADMINISTRATION

**SUPERINTENDENT: Jack Parker**  
jack.parker@mvsc.k12.in.us | 317-485-3100

**ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT: Chris Smedley**  
chris.smedley@mvsc.k12.in.us | 317-485-3100 ext. 5104

**DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM: Scott Shipley**  
scott.shipley@mvsc.k12.in.us | 317-485-3100 ext. 2158

### SCHOOL BOARD

Chad Gray, Phil Edwards,  
Shannon Walls, Kellie  
Freeman, Meghan Britt

## SCHOOLS

### Mt. Vernon High School

8112 N. County Road 200 W. Fortville, IN 46040  
317-485-3131  
Brooke Tharp, principal  
brooke.tharp@mvsc.k12.in.us

### Mt. Vernon Middle School

1862 W. State Road 234 Fortville, IN 46040  
317-485-3160  
Lori Katz, principal  
lori.katz@mvsc.k12.in.us

### Fortville Elementary

8414 N. County Road 200W  
Fortville, IN 46040  
317-485-3180  
Vince Edwards  
vince.edwards@mvsc.k12.in.us

### McCordsville Elementary

7177 N. County Road 600W  
McCordsville, IN 46055  
317-336-7760  
Stephanie Miller, principal  
stephanie.miller@mvsc.k12.in.us

### Mt. Comfort Elementary

5694 W. County Road 300 N  
Greenfield, IN 46140  
317-894-7667  
Donald Turner, principal  
donnie.turner@mvsc.k12.in.us

### Mini-Marauder Preschool

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Assistant principals: Nathan Bruck,  
Nick Ragan, Steve Wherry  
jcary@gcsc.k12.in.us

### Greenfield Central Junior High School

1440 N. Franklin St.  
Greenfield, IN 46140 317-477-4616  
Jim Bever, principal  
jbever@gcsc.k12.in.us

### Greenfield Intermediate

204 W. Park Ave.  
Greenfield, IN 46140 317-462-6827  
Devon Marine, principal  
dmarine@gcsc.k12.in.us

### Maxwell Intermediate

102 N. Main St., Maxwell, IN 46140 317-326-3121  
Jobie Whitaker, principal  
jwhitaker@gcsc.k12.in.us

### Eden Elementary

8185 N. State Road 9  
Greenfield, IN 46140 317-326-3117  
Melia Hammons, principal  
mhammons@gcsc.k12.in.us

### Harris Elementary

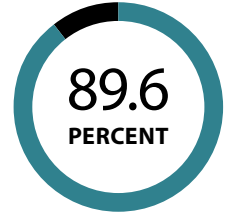
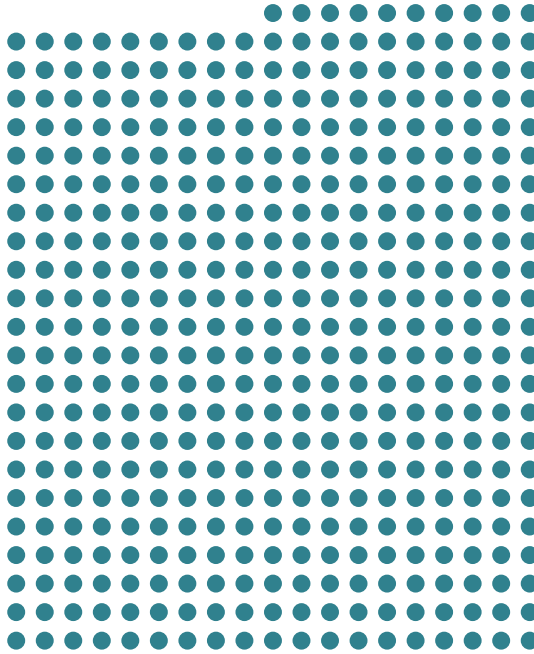
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Sarah Greulich, principal  
sgreulich@gcsc.k12.in.us

### J.B. Stephens Elementary

1331 N. Blue Road  
Greenfield, IN 46140 317-462-4491  
Shane Bryant, principal  
shbryant@gcsc.k12.in.us

### Weston Elementary

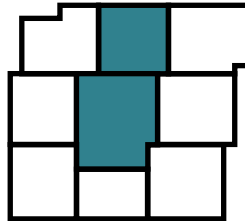
140 Polk St., Greenfield, IN 46140  
317-462-1492  
Meg Welch, principal  
mwelch@gcsc.k12.in.us



2022-2023  
GRADUATION  
RATE

4,282  
2022-2023  
ENROLLMENT

● Represents 10 students



## THE DISTRICT

Children in Center and Green townships attend Greenfield-Central schools.

## ADMINISTRATION

**SUPERINTENDENT:** Harold Olin  
holin@gcsc.k12.in.us | 317-462-4434

**ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT:** Jason Cary

**DIRECTOR OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:**  
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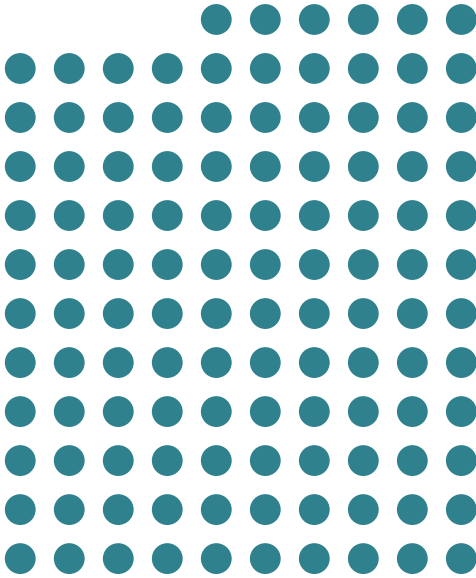
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GRADUATION  
RATE

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ENROLLMENT

● Represents 10 students

## SCHOOLS

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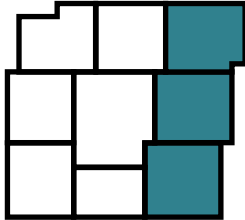
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Charlottesville, IN 46117  
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or 317-467-0095  
Adam Barton, principal  
abarton@easternhancock.org

### Eastern Hancock Middle School

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Charlottesville,  
IN 46117  
317-936-5324  
Adam Barton, principal  
abarton@easternhancock.org

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# Drawing near to God

Workshop explores artistic expressions of faith

By Anne Durham Smith

DAILY REPORTER

[annesmith@greenfieldreporter.com](mailto:annesmith@greenfieldreporter.com)

Participants in the “Nearer to God Through Art” workshop show their artwork.

## GREENFIELD

As they prayed, they doodled. In doing so, some found that the distractions sometimes invading one’s thoughts during prayer were reduced.

“They said it really kept them focused ... they weren’t as distracted,” said Judy Wells.

Wells presented an art workshop, “Nearer to God Through Art,” Aug. 24 at

Greenfield Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

After the prayer and doodling activity, stations in the church’s annex offered opportunities to explore different mediums for creating art: acrylic paintings on canvas, watercolor/greeting cards, mini banners/paper collage, and oil pastels.



“It was drawing into that bit of inspiration — thinking about a Scripture, or a prayer, or a situation they felt God’s presence in,” said Sandy Hall, a local artist, retired art teacher and member of the congregation.

“A lot of creative juices were flowing, because there were a lot of avenues,” said Ellen Mitchell, church member and coordinator of a Faith Formation Grant that funded the workshop.

A display of art examples and nature photos helped offer ideas. Yet Wells was pleased to also see two women each bring a photograph with them, such as of a treasured lake site visited for rejuvenation, to spur on their creating.

She saw a boy choose a challenging concept for his acrylic painting — and succeed. She saw people who perhaps hadn’t made any art since their school days tackle a creative project. She saw people from fifth grade to their nineties making art.

“It’s fun to share and see the excitement in people’s faces when they create something,” Wells said.

It’s a welcome sight to Wells, a retired art teacher and owner of Art Beyond Crayons. She said art has long been a meaningful part of her spirituality. The congregation at her home church in Franklin has made Christmas ornaments featuring names of Jesus, or added pieces during Lent to a puzzle that eventually depicted a cross.

“I really appreciate when I can inject art into the sanctuary or into the service,” she said. “I’m very visual. It helps me to see myself, I guess, and my faith.”

Pieces from the workshop, with artists’ consent, formed a post-concert art display Sept. 8. “Jazz for Jesus” (and gospel too) was a concert Sept. 8 at the church, 23 N. East St.

Kenny Phelps of Kenny Phelps Productions and other accomplished musicians played a free concert in the church’s sanctuary. Afterward, concertgoers could nibble refreshments in the annex as they viewed the art.

The art workshop was part of a Faith Formation Grant, a two-year grant to Greenfield Christian from the Christian Church in Indiana (Disciples of Christ). The grant has funded elder training, a grief workshop and a history workshop on the Disciples of Christ earlier this year. More events are anticipated in 2025, the second year of the grant.

The workshop “was a mix of people that art and faith were pulling together,” Mitchell said. “She (Wells) was just was really adamant that art is an expression, and it definitely can be an expression of your faith.”



One participant depicted an angel.

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# Seasonal ap-peal

## Handbell choirs share sacred carols as they prepare for Christmas

### NEW PALESTINE

It's one part tuneup but most parts concert.

Early in the Christmas season, Cross of Grace Lutheran Church includes several area handbell choirs in an invitational, where each of the choirs plays music it has prepared for upcoming performances. The ensembles get that much more opportunity to play for an audience, and listeners enjoy a festive program of carols.

Though the entire program features handbell music, particularly Christmas tunes, there's variety in how the music is made. Along with ringing the bells, some songs at Sunday's concert called

for other techniques, such as striking a bell with a mallet or lifting and lowering the bell on the table for a more staccato sound. Some ringers rang multiple bells with the same hand. Other times they used handchimes, and/or played with accompaniment from percussion or piano.

Seven groups performed in this 18th annual event.

"It is just music that we love to make and we love to share, and we love to have an audience," Cross of Grace handbells director Susan Oxley said to those gathered. "So thank you so much for being here."

By Anne Durham  
Smith

DAILY REPORTER  
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A handbell choir from Zion Lutheran School performs. Choir members are generally in sixth through eighth grades.





Susan Oxley directs Cross of Grace Lutheran Church's Alleluia Ringers in a full sanctuary of people listening to a multi-choir handbell concert. Susan Oxley directs Cross of Grace Lutheran Church's Alleluia Ringers in a full sanctuary of people listening to a multi-choir handbell concert.



Oxley directs Cross of Grace Lutheran Church's Alleluia Ringers during a multi-choir handbell concert.



Bells of Grace plays "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella."

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Reenactors exhibit an array of expressions as Jesus is led to his crucifixion during one of the live action scenes presented in 2023.

# An 'immersive' view

Journey to Easter portrays  
Jesus' death, resurrection

By Anne Durham Smith

DAILY REPORTER

[annesmith@greenfieldreporter.com](mailto:annesmith@greenfieldreporter.com)





Visitors watch as one of the scenes plays out.



Some of the actors pause for a photo after the 2023 event.

# M

## GREENFIELD

Michelle Brown saw Jesus being beaten and heard the loud thunder at his crucifixion, followed by stunned silence broken only by a Roman soldier saying, “Surely this was the son of God.”

As she and her children toured the Journey to Easter walkthrough a year ago, “I was taken aback by how immersive it was,” she said. “It left me in complete awe.”

Last year, Bethel Baptist Church launched the walkthrough on the two days leading up to Easter. All the reservation time slots filled rapidly; the

800 free tickets were all reserved more than a week before the 2023 event. Other people just showed up, hoping to see the live dramatic portrayals of Jesus’ last days on earth, his death by crucifixion, and his resurrection. According to the church, during the two days of the walkthrough 58 people made personal commitments to follow Jesus.

So this year, Brown will be at Journey to Easter again, but this time she’ll be part of the cast. She’ll be among the crowd of first-century onlookers seeing events unfold.

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Cast members gather for a photo at the 2023 Journey to Easter at Bethel Baptist Church. “I can’t believe the amount and variety of people who get involved,” coordinator Tia Wise said, from people who hunt for props, or apply stage makeup, or “are excited and say, ‘I’m praying for it.’”

“I knew it was definitely something I wanted to be part of ... just being part of that impact on people who come through,” she said.

The church organized last year’s event after Bethel pastor Tommy Hensley saw a Christmas walkthrough at a friend’s church and talked with people of the congregation about developing a similar event for Easter.

They did — they wrote a script, sewed costumes, built sets and staged a series of scenes, separated by black curtains, in the church’s activity building. The scenes were brought to life by a cast of more than 70, including five Jesuses and several Mary Magdalenes. The latter were tour guides leading groups through the scenes.



A reenactor plays Jesus at his crucifixion during the 2023 Journey to Easter at Bethel Baptist Church.





Cast members react during the 2023 Journey to Easter.

“It was far beyond our expectations,” coordinator Tia Wise said. “It went great. Even to this day, we still get comments from people that came through it or were in it, just talking about how impactful it was...”

“At the end of it we said, ‘We have to do this next year.’”

This year’s event will bring back the scene walkthrough, with a few modifications. More time slots have been added, allowing up to 900 people to tour the series of scenes. A group of up to 16 is scheduled to start the tour

every 20 minutes. Time slots should be reserved at [bethelbcg.org](http://bethelbcg.org). (There’s also a place on the site to reserve a spot in tours conducted in American Sign Language or Spanish.)

Easter comes earlier in the calendar this year, in March instead of April. Last year the final scene was outdoors; this year they will all be inside. The Welcome Tent, the starting point of the tour, will be heated and offer warm beverages and light refreshments. A heated restroom trailer with multiple stalls will also be available this year.

While last year’s series of scenes jumped from Jesus’ death to the resurrected Jesus seated around the fire outside with his disciples, this year’s event includes an empty tomb scene.

Brown said her older children, who ranged from 5 to 11 when they toured the walkthrough last year, still talk about what they saw and relate it to the accounts in the Bible.

“They have so many questions: ‘I didn’t realize Jesus actually felt pain,’” she said. “They were able to take in so much more of it.”

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# Winter whites

Exhibit at Greenfield Christian gallery celebrates the season

## GREENFIELD

Light-infused trees flanking a frozen stream. A whimsical snowman paired with lyrics from a well-known carol. Dark buildings that dot white-blanketed landscapes.

Artists showing works in the current exhibit at 23 East Gallery have each tried to capture something about this season.

“God’s Gift of Winter” is viewable through March 3 at the gallery inside Greenfield Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 23 N. East St.

One of the artists with work on display is Tim Lewis, who won Best of Show in the 2023 Will Vawter Art Exhibition. The annual juried competition is named for Vawter, an artist who grew up in Greenfield,

exhibited at the Hoosier Salon, and illustrated many of James Whitcomb Riley’s poems.

Lewis has two watercolor paintings in the exhibit: “Snowed In,” depicting a farm in northern Indiana; and “Lonely Corner,” set in the Zionsville area.

Lewis began watercolor painting 10 years ago, when his children gave him a watercolor set as a retirement gift. It’s no small feat to paint the season’s often monochromatic scenes using that medium. While an artist painting with acrylics might dab on white paint, a watercolor artist has to think through the sequence of steps carefully. What one doesn’t paint may become the bright and striking part of the finished work.

By Anne Durham  
Smith

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The 23 East gallery is inside  
Greenfield Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ).





"Snowed In," a watercolor by Tim Lewis, is among the art works highlighting winter.

"... You've got to preserve all of that white while you paint everything else," Lewis said.

The develop-your-strategy approach to capturing a winter scene suits him, for several reasons. He studied engineering at Purdue University before turning to technical illustration, such as depictions for manuals. Those experiences gave him the precision that helps him create a photograph-like crispness when he chooses to in his paintings, defying stereotypes of watercolor art as flowy, impressionist works. Plus, as a former tournament chess player, he's used to planning his next move.

His experiences have not only influenced his technique, but also deepened his appreciation for winter. During his career managing plastics plants, he moved around and experienced the season in several northern places.

They lived in Elkhart, where his wife is from, and where lake-effect snowfalls come from Lake Michigan. At another point they lived in Wisconsin, in a small town with no dual-lane roads, no fast-food restaurants and no stop lights. Cross-country skiing was a way to stay entertained through the winter.

"You either bundle up and go out, or you sit inside and go crazy," he said.

"You go out and learn how to live with it. There's just kind of a quiet loneliness about winter. There's nothing quieter than a morning after a snowfall. It's just cool."



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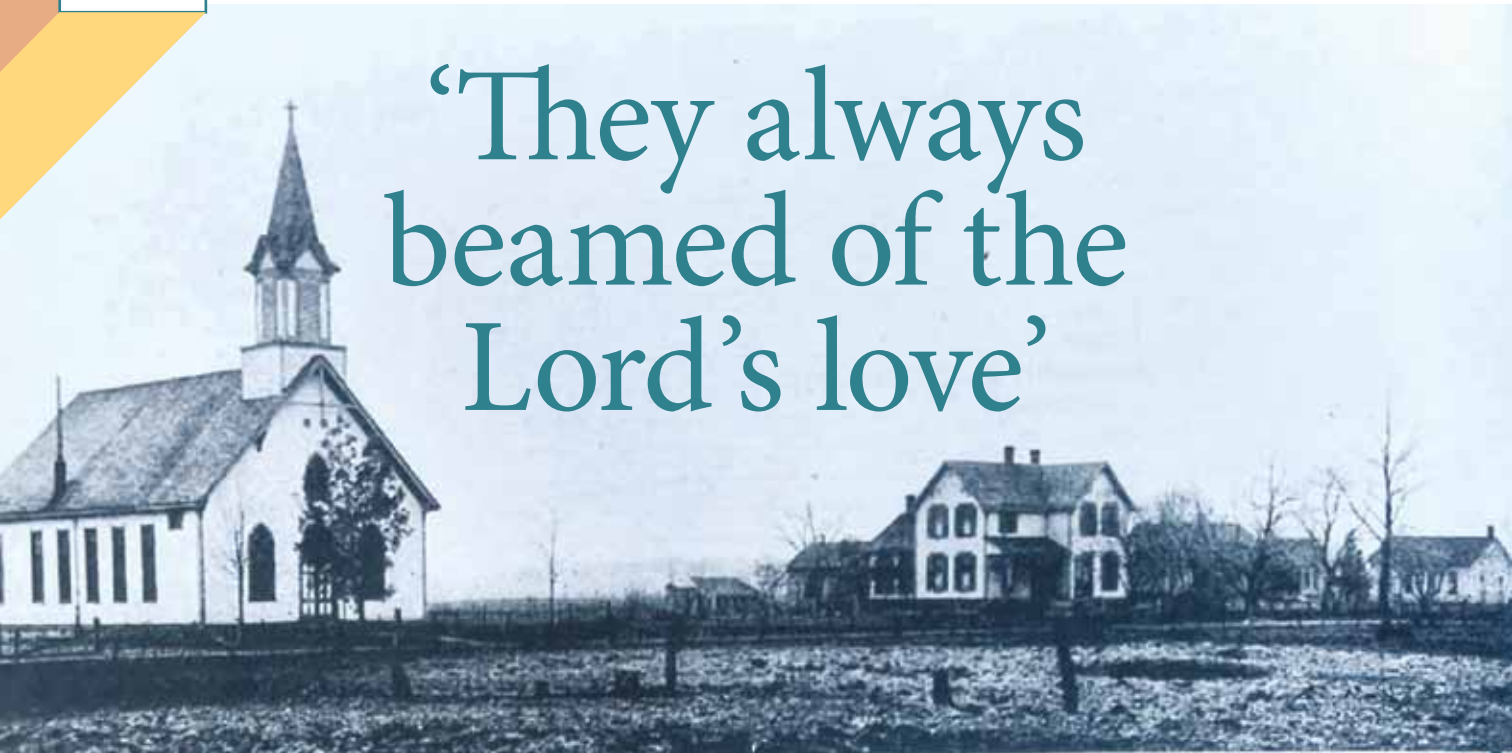
Former Greenfield resident Shelle Wright, a kindergarten teacher at Park Tudor, has work in the exhibit.

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# ‘They always beamed of the Lord’s love’

## Service celebrates Zion Lutheran’s 170 years

### NEW PALESTINE

It’s a story generations in the making.

It begins with people who bid goodbye to their families in Germany, traveling by boat to the United States’ East Coast, and then west by train to settle farmland.

It continues with a new Lutheran congregation that built a one-room school and later a church.

It stretches all the way to 2023, to middle schoolers reciting the Lord’s Prayer in German in honor of those early settlers, and to families making photo displays of a long heritage of a faith passed down.

Zion Lutheran Church celebrated 170 years of ministry in its services Sunday, with schoolchildren singing

and playing handbells, with reflections on the congregation’s beginning and long history, and with socializing over Café Heidelberg cakes and cider afterward.

A number of present-day parishioners are descendants of the church’s early families. Myra (Roesener) Vaughn’s family traces back to Wilhelm Roesener, who came here from Germany in 1837. She said seven generations of her family have seen family members baptized, confirmed, and or wed at Zion Lutheran. Her great-grandfather, the Rev. Frederick Markworth, was pastor of the church from 1903-1940. Now she has great-grandchildren attending Zion Lutheran School.

By Anne Durham  
Smith

DAILY REPORTER  
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Zion Lutheran Church met in this building (left) on CR 300 West from 1859 to 1960. Both the church and the school have expanded over the years.





Several longtime members of the church have memories in common: Being part of the Walther League youth group, attending school in buildings that predate the current school structure at 6513 W. CR 300S, and being close-knit with other families in the “German settlement” area of the community while enjoying the life of the congregation.

Maryellen (Folkening) Carter and her sister, Joan Wheeler, remember living close to the church and riding their bikes to school on warmer days. They remember their first Sunday School teacher, Anita Roesener, who would later marry and with her husband travel to India as missionaries. She was one of many people who stand out to Carter as she considers faithful examples throughout the years.

“They always beamed of the Lord’s love,” Carter said. “And that’s my goal, too. I hope I can, and hope I do.”

Carter remembers relationships people built and special times they shared. One school teacher played Burl Ives music for some students at his home, in a time when few people had a phonograph for playing records.



Zion Lutheran Church in New Palestine celebrated 170 years of ministry this month. Stained glass windows adorn the front and back of Zion Lutheran Church.



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This display board shares the heritage of the Roesener family. Spreads such as this were part of the 170th anniversary celebration.

Each year on the teacher’s birthday, “Everybody would bring things from home,” such as canned goods, she said. They would tip off his wife to keep him home at lunch nearby a few minutes longer, while they stashed the goodies.

“We would hide things all over the school, and that was his birthday gift every year,” she said.

Hunting for gifts would have been simpler in those days, in the one-room school Carter attended. A pot-bellied stove heated it, students

carried a cold lunch to school with them, and the restroom was outside.

She remembers those days fondly. Older students helped younger students pull on their boots during the winter. Jumping rope or playing Red Rover at recess involved just about every child at school.

Desks were grouped by grade level, and everyone heard all the other grades recite their lessons for the teacher.

“Really, you learned everyone’s lesson that way,” Wheeler said, of

the years before she attended the expanded school built in 1950. “We thought that was an advantage.”

Paula Schramm remembers being an eighth-grader when her confirmation class of seven was confirmed. There were gowns, robes to wear during the service, and each confirmand had chosen a Bible verse to be read.

She too had a display board sharing family history. Jacob Schramm is the ancestor who came to the area from Germany in the mid 1930s.





Joan Wheeler remembers this Sunday School class from the 1940s.

Sunday's service considered the journeys of those early settlers — of leaving the familiar, of learning a new language, and of children not seeing their grandparents again.

In his sermon Sunday, the Rev. Jason Taylor spoke of how Abraham in the Bible also left the familiar.

"He went out and away from his family," Taylor said. "Abraham went because God called him... It still happens today, doesn't it, that God calls people out of their comfortable zones, out of where they are located, to follow after him. ..."

"We're just like those people that came over 170 years ago. We have the same mission. We have the same purpose, the same Jesus, the same Lord. And we're all going home."



Zion Lutheran Church in New Palestine celebrated 170 years of ministry. This quilt at the church is from the 150th anniversary celebration.

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- 1884-1892 William Frederick Kaiser
- 1892-1903 Heinrich Henkel
- 1903-1940 Frederick John Markworth
- 1940-1945 Robert Godfrey Michael Trautmann
- 1945-1946 Chalmer Westhoff
- 1946-1966 Werner Philip Adam Krug
- 1966-1967 Cecil Skibbe
- 1967-1979 Paul W. Schwan
- 1979-1981 Lee Butz
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Jeremy Hadley and Jake Carter face off in a Wrestling Theology Fellowship match in October 2021 at Mercy Road Church Northeast in Fortville.

# Fellowship of the ring

Wrestling Theology bringing matches to Fortville church

**A**

By Anne Durham  
Smith

DAILY REPORTER  
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## FORTVILLE

A local church is making room for a wrestling ring as Wrestling Theology Fellowship returns to Fortville.

Dynamic Duels is a pro-wrestling-style event set for April 27 at Mercy Road Church Northeast, 611 Vitality Drive. Doors open at 5 p.m. with bell at 6.

One of the featured competitors will be Space Cowboy, the reigning WTF Belt of Truth holder — in other words, the Wrestling Theology heavyweight champion. He's been wrestling in these faith-meets-pro-wrestling events for about three years now and says it's a fascinating atmosphere.



Space Cowboy appeals to the crowd during a Wrestling Theology Fellowship match in October 2021 at Mercy Road Church Northeast in Fortville. He's the reigning WTF Belt of Truth holder and was featured in Dynamic Duels on April 27 at the church.



Richard Abbott (pictured) organizes faith-friendly pro wrestling events and says they're a labor of love.

"Kids are the absolute best audience because this matters to them as much as a movie," said Stacey Alexander, the man behind the David Lee Roth-ish persona that is Space Cowboy. "... It being in a church is nice because I think it keeps the wrestlers honest."

The family-friendly shows are the brainchild of Richard Abbott, a wrestling fan who was encouraged by a church friend to bring together his faith with his love of wrestling. At first that looked like getting people together to watch wrestling, or organizing a meet-and-greet and autographs with wrestlers who were Christians, but eventually it grew into the multi-match events that take place several times a year at different churches. Abbott said

the upcoming event in Fortville is one of three shows planned for that site this year.

Space Cowboy won the Belt of Truth in February during Ring Riot at Mercy Road Church in Anderson, and he defended it earlier this month during Ring of Redemption at Life Church in Huntington.

WTF events feature a lineup of about seven matches. There's a brief devotional talk during intermission, and volunteers are available after the event if any fans want someone to pray with them. Some of the wrestlers profess to be Christians; those who don't agree to keeping their performance family-friendly.

Find ticket and other information at [wrestlingtheology.com](http://wrestlingtheology.com).

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Mercy Road Church Northeast wants to construct an added building for its children's ministry and, through the week, a childcare center.

# Added Mercy Road building would house childcare

**A**

## FORTVILLE

A local church plans to house a childcare in a building it plans to add to its campus.

Mercy Road Church Northeast recently conducted a capital campaign among the congregation with the aim of raising \$2.5 million toward the project, a 15,500-square-foot building that would expand space for Mercy Kids children's programming on Sundays and house a childcare through the week.

Church leaders anticipate construction will take about a year and cost around \$4 million total. When that work will start depends on when the first \$1.25 million comes in.

Lead pastor Ken Primeau recalls a 9:30 a.m. service a few weeks ago when there were 103 children. He said recent numbers suggest the need for additional space beyond the more than 18,000-square-foot church building at 611 Vitality Drive.

By Anne Durham  
Smith

DAILY REPORTER  
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“This will give us the opportunity, space wise, to at least double that amount of kids in a service,” Primeau said.

Meanwhile, Primeau said the church had been considering how it might use more of its campus to meet community needs. He said he talked to area leaders in government and economic development about biggest needs of the future.

“I just kept hearing child care ... wait list for child care ... parents not having enough affordable child care in the area,” Primeau said. So it seemed like a win-win, he said, to add a children’s space that would expand capacity on Sunday mornings and, Monday through Friday, house a full-time daycare and after-school care.

Vernon Township Trustee Florence May was one of the leaders the church consulted. She said while there are programs in the area — including Gateway Community Church of Fortville, Outlook Christian Church in McCordsville and the Kids City USA location that opened in July in McCordsville — the demand for child care is large enough that need remains.

“In McCordsville and Fortville, we are welcoming a large number of young families and expect that this trend will continue for many years,” May wrote in an email. “The need for affordable childcare and after school

options is evident. Young parents search for options by calling schools, local officials, and other community organizations. The sheer volume of childcare requests on social media groups is staggering. Openings at home care programs are rare and fill very quickly.

“We are fortunate that the leadership of Fortville’s Mercy Road Church, our neighbor on Vitality Drive, is committed to providing young families childcare options.”

Church leaders also talked to Hancock Economic Development Council, who also cited child care as a significant need in Hancock County.

“It’s top of mind for us and our partners as we focus on community development efforts,” wrote Mitchell Kirk, HEDC’s communications director. “Mercy Road’s intentions to have child care as a focus of this building is an excellent step toward improving these circumstances. We’re grateful for their mindfulness of community needs as well as their desire and efforts to help.”

The facility is expected to accommodate 156 children between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Another 30 slots would be available for after-school care. Primeau said the church will partner with Lionheart Children’s Academy, which will operate the childcare and hire staff. “They help churches to run affordable, high-

quality ... centers across the country,” he said. “They’re a well-respected organization in this industry.”

The plans for the building at Mercy Road include a large children’s worship space, 10 classrooms, preschool offices, a lobby/check-in area, restrooms for children and adults, two fenced outdoor playgrounds and an indoor playground. Primeau said the hope is to also offer some public playground hours.

Ground has not been broken on a building, but dirt was pushed from here to there recently as the church expanded its parking area. Primeau said church leaders asked the civil engineer working on the parking lot to draft a site plan that includes an added building. Dirt moved for the parking lot work, completed in September, was added to the building site.

Some members of the congregation have committed to give toward the project over the next three years. At last report, \$1.8 million has been committed so far.

“It’s a win win for everyone that our building wouldn’t sit empty,” said associate pastor Corinne Gunter. “What we’re attempting to do is inspire generosity within our congregation.”

“God’s given us this 18 acres,” Primeau said. “... I feel strongly it’s not just for us.”



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