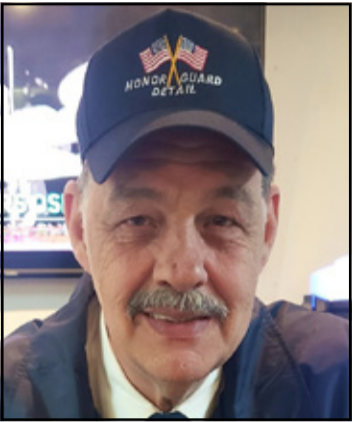


➔ TODAY'S VERSE

Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." (NIV)

➔ FACES OF MONTGOMERY

People who call our community their own.



Tex Kersey offered one of our roving photographers a polite smile. Many thanks, Tex!

➔ THREE THINGS You Should Know:

1 Athens Arts Gallery and The Art League of Montgomery County have scheduled an art exhibit featuring 2D artwork by artists that have a tie to the county, on the evening of Feb. 24 at Fusion 54 on the third floor from 6 to 8 p.m. The art will be displayed at the Government Center.

2 Ever since the inception of our Sunday edition, The Paper has gone with a 365-day publishing cycle. Beginning in 2022, The Paper will not publish on holidays. We are doing this for three reasons - our advertisers say the days leading up to the holiday are more important than the holiday itself; readers have busy schedules on holidays and those editions are the least clicked of any we do; and to give our hard-working staff a break. Thank you for your understanding!

3 Most Indiana tax forms for the 2022 Individual Income Tax season are now available online. However, the Indiana Department of Revenue is reminding Hoosiers to wait until they receive their official tax documents and statements before filing their 2021 tax return. All employers are required to provide Form W-2's to employees by Jan. 31, 2022. Other forms may be needed to file an accurate tax return, including documents on freelance or gig income, business income, investments, interest, or prize winnings. Employers may continue to adjust annual wage and deduction amounts before sending the official Form W-2 to employees and related wage information to the IRS and DOR. Customers who use the information on their last paycheck of the year or other unofficial sources of information for tax purposes risk having to file an amended tax return with adjusted numbers. For more info or to download forms, go to dor.in.gov.

The Paper

OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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BTN By The Numbers, a look at what's in the news . . . by the numbers. These are just numbers, not suggestions that they mean more or less than what they are. We do not suggest that one number is connected to another. These are simply facts with no extraneous details, bias or slanted reporting. To borrow (and perhaps mangle a bit) a quote from legendary fictional detective Joe Friday, it's just the numbers, ma'am!



Closure Systems International announced that the global leader in designing and manufacturing innovative closures is expanding its Crawfordsville facility. This expansion represents an additional 50 jobs and investments totaling approximately \$25 million in the construction of an additional 200,000-square-foot facility and new manufacturing equipment in the Crawfordsville Commerce Park.

50



6,500 Since the Red Cross issued its first-ever blood crisis alert, severe winter weather has further complicated efforts to rebuild the blood supply. Hundreds of blood drives have been canceled across the country due to winter storms in January, forcing about 6,500 blood donations to go uncollected.

\$15,769.07



Crawfordsville High School and Tri Kappa Sorority Sunshine Society Cheer Campaign has completed its campaign. This community outreach program raised more than \$20,000 a year ago and has set a goal of \$15,000 this year.

There was \$15,769.07 raised.

25% In continuing its mission to provide access to quality education for all, Purdue University Global is teaming with the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) to offer access to its myriad online degrees and certificate programs. IDOC employees and their immediate family members who live in Indiana can now take advantage of a 25% tuition reduction on undergraduate degrees and certificates, and a 10% tuition reduction on graduate or doctoral degrees or certificates. Furthermore, they can take a three-week class trial with no financial obligation.

475 In February, American Heart Month, 475 schools representing more than 190,000 students in Indiana will spotlight the importance of students' mental and physical health through the American Heart Association's school-based programs Kids Heart Challenge and American Heart Challenge.



1,604,072 According to the Indiana State Department of Health on Friday, that's how many Hoosiers have been diagnosed with the virus.

9,997 Number of COVID-19 cases found so far in Montgomery County, according to the State Health Department.

74,037,216 According to the CDC, that's how many Americans have been diagnosed with the virus.

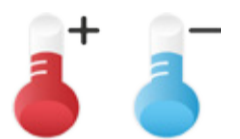
20,508 How many Hoosiers have died because of this pandemic.

148 How many people in Montgomery County who have lost their lives to the pandemic.

879,971 How many Americans have lost their lives to the pandemic

The Daily Almanac

Sunrise/Sunset
RISE: 7:57 a.m.
SET: 6:06 p.m.



High/Low Temperatures
High: 39 °F
Low: 19 °F



Wacky Holiday Today

- National Hot Chocolate Day
- Backwards Day



What Happened On This Day

- 1961 Ham the Chimp travels into outer space
- 1865 The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is passed



Births On This Day

- 1919 Jackie Robinson American baseball player
- 1937 Philip Glass American composer

Deaths On This Day

- 1954 Edwin Armstrong American engineer, invented FM radio
- 1606 Guy Fawkes English soldier, planned the Gunpowder Plot

➔ HONEST HOOSIER

I hate to sound mean, but ta-ta January! NEVER sorry to see you go.



➔ TODAY'S HEALTH TIP

The Institute of Medicine recommends 600 IU of vitamin D daily to age 70 and 800 IU after that. Today's health tip was brought to you by Dr. John Roberts. Be sure to catch his column each week in The Paper and online at www.thepaper24-7.com.



➔ OBITUARIES

Gary Lane

The Paper appreciates all our customers. Today, we'd like to personally thank Lynnette Czizek of Crawfordsville for subscribing!



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➔ INSIDE TODAY'S EDITION

Public Notices.....A4
Classifieds.....A3
Belton.....A2

➔ THE MONTGOMERY MINUTE

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➔ TODAY'S QUOTE

"It's never too late to become who you want to be. I hope you live a life that you're proud of, and if you find that you're not, I hope you have the strength to start over."
From the movie, The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

➔ TODAY'S JOKE

Want to know my favorite time of day? It's 6:30 . . . hands down!

7 DAY FORECAST

34 PARTLY CLOUDY SUN	19/39 NOT AS COLD MON	29/50 PARTLY CLOUDY TUE	39/39 RAIN, WIND, AND SNOW WED	24/24 MIX TO SNOW THU	2/18 BITTERLY COLD FRI	0/24 SUNNY BUT COLD SAT
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OBITUARIES

Gary Lane

Feb. 13, 1956 - Jan. 28, 2022

Gary Robert Lane, Crawfordsville, passed away Friday morning at Franciscan Health Lafayette at the age of 65.

Born Feb. 13, 1956 in Crawfordsville, he was the son of Robert Lane and Ruth Spencer Lane.

He graduated from North Putnam in 1975.

Mr. Lane made the most of his dash. He lived his life helping people and was truly one of a kind. He worked at Prowler and R. R. Donnelley before becoming self-employed in the scrap business. He also worked at Walden Recycling, assisting people and giving them a smile or a wave from his truck.

Survivors include his brother, Greg Lane (Dawn) of Crawfordsville; long-time friend, Kathy Haltom; uncle, Larry Spencer (Jill) of Crawfordsville; along with several aunts, nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother, Kim Miller.

Visitation is scheduled from 4 to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022 at Burkhart Funeral Home, 201 W. Wabash Avenue, Crawfordsville. He will be laid to rest at the Russellville Cemetery at a later date.

Online condolences may be made at www.BurkhartFH.com.



Indiana students to get free FAFSA filing help at College Goal Sunday

Financial aid professionals from across Indiana will be volunteering at 40 sites to help college-bound students and their families open the door to financial aid during College Goal Sunday. The event is set for 2 PM (local time), February 27th, 2022.

The free program assists Indiana students in filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA form is required for students to be considered for federal and state grants, scholarships, and Federal student loans at most colleges, universities, and vocational/technical schools nationwide. The FAFSA MUST be filed by April 15 to be eligible for Indiana financial aid. One of many reasons College Goal Sunday is so important is because many families perceive the form to be too complicated and time consuming to complete. In less than one afternoon during College Goal Sunday, students and their families can get free help and file the form.

"Filing the FAFSA can seem daunting to Hoosier students and families," said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers. "However, it's an important step for anyone interested in education beyond high school. College Goal Sunday provides an opportunity for individuals to receive one-on-one assistance from financial aid experts to insure their FAFSA is completed accurately before the deadline."

Now in its 33rd year, College Goal Sunday has helped more than 94,000 Indiana students and families complete the FAFSA properly and on time. College Goal Sunday is a charitable program of the



Indiana Student Financial Aid Association (ISFAA).

College Goal Sunday Doubles the Help Offered

"The event on February 27th will be the second of two College Goal Sunday events ISFAA is offering this FAFSA filing season," said Bill Wozniak, co-chair of College Goal Sunday. "We hope all Hoosiers who have not filed already, take advantage of College Goal Sunday, file the FAFSA, and get one step closer to fulfilling their educational goals."

According to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, programs like College Goal Sunday are reaching first-generation college students. In recent years, according to CHE statistics, more single-parent Hoosier families have filed for financial aid, indicating programs like College Goal Sunday are reaching high-risk students and their families.

"Students who don't complete their financial aid paperwork properly and on time are often very disappointed when they find out how much financial aid they lost," said Wozniak. "This is why the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association not only continues to provide College Goal Sunday, but offers two events during the year. If our assistance gives students a better chance at education beyond high school and

less debt, we're fulfilling our mission."

What students should bring

Students should attend College Goal Sunday with their parent(s) or guardian(s), and parent(s) should bring completed 2020 IRS 1040 tax returns, W-2 Forms and other 2020 income and benefits information. Students who worked should also bring their income information. Students 24 years of age or older may attend alone and bring their completed 2020 IRS 1040 tax return, W-2 Form or other 2020 income and benefits information. Students and parent(s) are encouraged to apply for their U.S. Department of Education FSA IDs at studentaid.gov before logging in to the event.

Volunteers will walk through the online form line-by-line and answer families' individual questions as needed. All sites offer FAFSA online capabilities and many have Spanish interpreters. A complete list of sites is available at CollegeGoalSunday.org.

Attendees may win a scholarship from College Goal Sunday

Students may also win one of five \$1,000 scholarships. Students who attend College Goal Sunday and submit a completed evaluation form will automatically be entered in a drawing for a \$1,000

scholarship. The winners will be notified in spring and scholarships will be sent directly to the higher education institution selected by the winning students.

21st Century Scholars benefit

21st Century Scholars are income-eligible students who sign a contract in the seventh or eighth grade promising they will graduate from high school, meet grade point requirements, fulfill a pledge of good citizenship, and apply for college financial aid. Upon high school completion, Scholars who have fulfilled the commitment and demonstrate financial need receive state funds to help cover their college tuition and fees for up to eight semesters at eligible Indiana public colleges or an equal dollar amount at eligible Indiana private colleges. To fulfill their pledge scholars must submit a completed FAFSA form on time, College Goal Sunday can help.

Program is a national model. College Goal Sunday originated right here in Indiana and is now a national model. Following Indiana's example, College Goal Sunday events organized by more than 34 states have opened doors to higher education for hundreds of thousands of students all over the country.

For more information about College Goal Sunday visit CollegeGoalSunday.org.

College Goal Sunday is a cooperative, charitable effort of the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association (ISFAA). It is provided in cooperation with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, and is funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc. and INvestEd.

Finding A Better Way



Carrie Classon
Columnist

Want MORE?

Carrie Classon's memoir, "Blue Yarn: A Memoir About Loss, Letting Go, & What Happens Next" is available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and other fine stores. Learn more at CarrieClasson.com.

"You'll never guess what I did!" my husband, Peter, announced.

"You're right. I won't." "I microwaved the masking tape!"

I can't tell you how pleased he was with himself.

My husband has a hack for everything. When I buy a roll of masking tape that is good for nothing but causing intense frustration, I am willing to give it up, toss the tape, and call it a lesson learned.

"Next time, I'm buying the expensive kind!" I said to Peter, after the tape shredded into itty-bitty bits just trying to get a few inches out to secure a box.

I was packing away the last of the holiday stuff—rather late—as I am supposed to be packing for Mexico. We are leaving next week and, so far, the packing has all occurred in my head. I know what I am bringing, more or less. Meantime, Peter has all the items he plans to pack laid out in a line that fills most of his office (aka "the brooding room") and new unidentified items are arriving in the mail daily.

"What is that?" I ask, concerning the latest mysterious package.

"It's a battery phone charger."

"For when there's no electricity?"

"Yup!"

"When will there not be electricity?"

Peter has some sort of plan in mind, and I will not be at all surprised when his battery phone charger saves the day. Peter is always thinking of a better way to do things, which brings me back to the masking tape.

"You microwaved the masking tape?" I said, not quite sure I'd heard correctly.

"I did!"

"And?"

"And now it works perfectly! It was just old. I microwaved it for 15 seconds and now look!" Peter grabbed the roll of tape and effortlessly pulled off several inches—just for fun.

"Wow." It was impres-

sive.

"I think you should go back to the hardware store and tell them," Peter said. "A lot of customers could be spared frustration if they just put their tape in the microwave!"

I considered doing this for exactly two seconds, and rejected the idea. I think the guys at the hardware store might think I'm a little odd already. This would seal the deal, so to speak.

But it's nice to have a husband who is always thinking of everything. We have every imaginable form saved to the cloud. We bring our own knives and kitchen odds and ends so we can cook wherever we are. Peter uses our departure on an extended trip as an opportunity to update his end-of-life instructions, should we both suddenly die or disappear in Mexico.

"I don't plan on dying this trip," I informed him.

"You should have seen how out of date the document was!" he marveled, ignoring me.

I used to think of myself as someone who was reasonably well-prepared for whatever life threw at me, but it would never have occurred to me to raise a roll of masking tape from the dead.

Today, I need to start packing. So far, my focus has been on whether I am bringing enough warm clothes to wear inside as we will start out in the mountains, there will be no central heating—and it can get chilly at night. Peter is not concerned about keeping warm.

"I'll wear my raincoat!" he tells me. And I know he will.

Peter will keep warm and he will make sure we have what we need. After a life of mostly taking care of myself, it's nice to rely on Peter to figure out a better way to do everything.

Till next time, Carrie

Carrie Classon's memoir is called "Blue Yarn." Learn more at CarrieClasson.com.



Beltone I CAN HEAR, BUT I CAN'T UNDERSTAND

Did you know that the earliest sign of hearing difficulty is often the complaint that "I can hear, but I can't understand." While this type of comment may seem contradictory, it makes a lot of sense to the hearing care professionals at Beltone. In an industry that is often confusing to consumers – our goal is to make patients comfortable in a no pressure environment. At Beltone, our hearing screenings and evaluations are always complimentary. We take the time to get to know you and your medical history and explain the results of your evaluation in an easy-to-understand way.

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P.S. We know there are hundreds of hearing aid advertisements out there promising different things. We see the news stories that talk about over-the-counter hearing aids. We can tell you the truth about "cheap" hearing aids—they don't work very well. At Beltone we are dedicated to finding a hearing solution that is right for both you and your budget!

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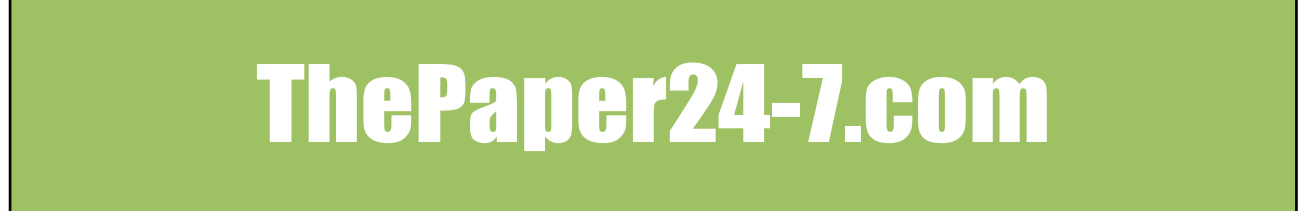
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Are you having trouble sleeping?

Insomnia is a huge problem in the United States. We spend over \$10 billion a year on sleep-related treatments and it's estimated we lose over \$40 billion in worker productivity due to sleeplessness.

Insomnia is a very complex subject that I can address only briefly in this column. I'll focus on some causes of insomnia this week. It's important to remember that insomnia is not a disease - it is a symptom of an underlying problem.

There are three types of insomnia. The first is transient insomnia that lasts a week or less and is usually due to some type of limited stress. It can also be the result of environmental factors such as sleeping in an unfamiliar bed or other location or having too much light or noise in a room. The second type of insomnia is short-term insomnia that lasts one to six months and is usually caused by persistent stress. Finally, chronic insomnia lasts greater than six months.

There are numerous causes of chronic insomnia, the most common of which is psychiatric illness, usually anxiety and/or depression. Trouble initiating asleep is the primary symptom of people suffering from anxiety.



JOHN R. ROBERTS, M.D.
Montgomery Medicine

These folks usually report that they can't turn their thoughts off at bedtime. I see this frequently in patients who are multi-taskers who feel as though they never get everything finished. Depression is also a common cause of chronic insomnia, though these folks usually present with "terminal insomnia," meaning they wake up very early in the morning.

Pain from arthritis or other conditions like fibromyalgia can lead to chronic insomnia. Lung disease such as COPD or heart disease, especially congestive heart failure, can lead to frequent episodes of waking at night. Chronic insomnia has also been identified as a long-term symptom of COVID-19.

Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) can cause trouble getting to sleep or staying

asleep. Sleep apnea may also cause frequent nighttime awakenings. Over-the-counter medication use can be a common cause of chronic insomnia, particularly stimulants such as caffeine as well as sedatives, especially alcohol.

Caffeine is a huge problem and one of the first habits I ask about when I see someone who has trouble sleeping. Some people drink too much soda, coffee or energy drinks. I often discover they're doing it to keep themselves awake during the day because they can't sleep at night! This is common in teens and college students so they don't miss any posts on social media. Caffeine can stay in your system for eight hours or longer.

Over-the-counter or prescription sleeping pills can also be habit-forming. People who take these often find themselves unable to stop taking them or they require larger doses to get the same effect. If they do stop them, they can develop "rebound insomnia." Sleeping pills can also be extremely dangerous when used by seniors. They often lead to problems with balance and coordination that can cause falls that often result in fractures or brain

injuries.

Many people subscribe to the incorrect notion that alcohol helps them sleep. While alcohol has depressant effects on the brain, it actually does not allow the brain to enter deep sleep phases. Deep sleep is critical for the brain to refresh itself. If the brain does not get enough deep sleep, the person constantly feels sleep deprived.

Shift work sleep disorder is another common cause of insomnia usually suffered by workers in manufacturing. This condition can develop when workers either change shifts or have a brain that is wired to only function properly if they sleep at night. More and more young people are suffering from "sleep phase delay" insomnia. This results from staying up late and sleeping in late. The problem arises when they want to go to bed earlier and can't get to sleep.

Next week I'll cover prevention and treatment of sleep disorders. Pleasant dreams!

Dr. John Roberts is a member of the Franciscan Physician Network specializing in Family Medicine as well as the Deputy County Health Officer in Montgomery County.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

THE 2022 MONTGOMERY COUNTY LEPC MEETING DATES WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:

Thursday, February 17, 2022	1201 Elmore St, Crawfordsville
Thursday, May 19, 2022	1201 Elmore St, Crawfordsville
Thursday, August 18, 2022	1201 Elmore St, Crawfordsville
Thursday, November 17, 2022	1605 N St Rd 63, Covington

All meetings will be held at the Montgomery County EMA office with the exception of the November meeting. It will be held in conjunction with the other county LEPC's in Covington, Indiana. The meeting times will all be 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM.

PL4257 1/31 1t hspaxlp

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS OF HEARING ON RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF CUMULATIVE BRIDGE FUND

Notice is hereby given to the taxpayers of Montgomery County, Indiana that the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners will consider at Room 103 of the Montgomery County Courthouse, 100 East Main Street, Crawfordsville, Indiana at 8 o'clock a.m. on February 14, 2022, the re-establishment of the Cumulative Bridge Fund under the provisions of Indiana Code §8-16-3 for the following purposes: the construction, repair, maintenance and inspection of bridges in Montgomery County.

If accommodations are required to attend this meeting, please contact Auditor Jennifer Andel at 765-364-6403.

The tax will be levied on all taxable real and personal property in Montgomery County and will not exceed \$0.075 per \$100 of assessed valuation. The proposed tax will be levied beginning with taxes due and payable in the year 2023. Taxpayers appearing at this public hearing will have the right to be heard on this issue. The proposal to re-establish the Cumulative Bridge Fund is subject to approval by the Department of Local Government Finance.

Within thirty (30) days of the adoption of the ordinance re-establishing the Cumulative Bridge Fund by the Board of Commissioners of Montgomery County, Montgomery County will publish a Notice of Adoption. Upon publication of the Notice of Adoption, ten (10) or more taxpayers in the taxing district (Montgomery County) may file a petition with the County Auditor not later than 12 noon thirty (30) days after the publication of the Notice of Adoption setting forth their objections to the proposed fund.

Dated this 24th day of January, 2022.
Board of Commissioners of Montgomery County, Indiana
PL4255 1/31 2/7 2t hspaxlp

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS OF HEARING ON RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF CUMULATIVE CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

Notice is hereby given to the taxpayers of Montgomery County, Indiana that the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners will consider at Room 103 of the Montgomery County Courthouse, 100 East Main Street, Crawfordsville, Indiana at 8 o'clock a.m. on February 14, 2022, the re-establishment of the Cumulative Capital Development Fund under the provisions of Indiana Code §36-9-14.5 for the following purposes: construction, remodeling and repair of the courthouse, construction, repair, remodeling, enlargement of and equipment for a county jail or juvenile detention facility, the purchase, lease or payment of all or part of the motor vehicles for the community corrections program, purchase, construction and maintenance of public buildings and equipment therefor, acquisition of land and improvements that are necessary for construction of public buildings, for the demolition of any improvements on land to be acquired to level grade and prepare land for construction of a public building, provide funds for a cumulative drainage fund, acquire land or rights-of-way to be used for public ways or sidewalks, construction and maintenance of public ways or sidewalks, acquire land or rights-of-way for the construction of sanitary sewers or storm sewers, or both, to construct or maintain sanitary sewers or storm sewers or both, to purchase, lease or pay for all or part of a utility, to acquire, by purchase or lease, land, buildings or rights-of-way for the use of any utility that is acquired or owned by the County, to purchase or acquire land, with or without buildings, for park or recreational purposes, to purchase, lease or pay all or part of the purchase price of motor vehicles for the use of any combination of the police, community corrections program or fire department, to retire in whole or part or in part any general obligation bonds of the County, to purchase or lease equipment and other non-consumable personal property needed for any public transportation use, to purchase or lease equipment to be used to illuminate a public way or sidewalk, to purchase, lease, upgrade, maintain or repair computer hardware, computer software, wiring and computer networks, communication access systems used to connect with computer networks or electronic gateways, to pay for the services of full-time or part-time computer maintenance employees, to conduct nonrecurring in-service technology training of employees, and to purchase body armor for active members of the County police department.

If accommodations are required to attend this meeting, please contact Auditor Jennifer Andel at 765-364-6403.

The tax will be levied on all taxable real and personal property in Montgomery County and will not exceed \$0.0333 per \$100 of assessed valuation. The proposed tax will be levied beginning with taxes for 2022 which are due and payable in the year 2023. Taxpayers appearing at this public hearing will have the right to be heard on this issue. The proposal to re-establish the Cumulative Capital Development Fund is subject to approval by the Department of Local Government Finance.

Within thirty (30) days of the adoption of the ordinance re-establishing the Cumulative Capital Development Fund by the Board of Commissioners of Montgomery County, Montgomery County will publish a Notice of Adoption. Upon publication of the Notice of Adoption, fifty (50) or more taxpayers in the taxing district (Montgomery County) may file a petition with the County Auditor not later than 12 noon thirty (30) days after the publication of the Notice of Adoption setting forth their objections to the proposed fund.

Dated this 24th day of January, 2022.
Board of Commissioners of Montgomery County, Indiana
PL4254 1/31 2/7 2t hspaxlp

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Photos courtesy of Ford



Photos courtesy of Ford

2022 Ford Bronco Is Like An All-Road Family-Friendly Mustang

I'd argue no automaker makes better use of its classic brands than Ford Motor Company. From the electric Mustang Mach-E crossover to the F-150 Lightning EV, Maverick hybrid pickup, and Escape-based Bronco Sport, Ford is bank. In fact the automaker will not even take orders for the Maverick until 2023. Right on its tailgate is the all-road, family-friendly, Mustang for everyday driving. It's called the 2022 Bronco.

Let's recall there are actually two Broncos and neither shares anything with Ford's full-size pickups as did the O. J. Simpson-era models. The Bronco Sport borrows architecture from the Escape and Maverick pickup, making it more of a hard-core crossover than all-trail beast. The more fortified Bronco we have is based on the Ranger pickup's rigid frame for more serious endeavors. They're both good, so pick your passion.

Styling recalls the original Bronco that debuted in 1966 with round headlamps, wide flat hood, and grille with BRONCO stamped across. Steel bumpers over tow hooks and tow loops on the fenders are serious. The brick-square body rides over black steel 17" wheels on our Black Diamond edition. It looks mean. Remove the entire hard top or just the front panels for some air.

You could hose out the original Bronco, and while the latest one is more sophisticated, it's nearly as robust. Sure, there's plenty of hard plastic on the dash

and doors, but it's rendered in contrasting colors and receives molded-in texture for an upscale feel. Rubber flooring accompanies an actual drain plug in the passenger side floor if you make a mess!

There's plenty of technology, too. Ford's touchscreens are very intuitive with icons for audio, phone, and apps along the bottom. There's no navigation, but you can connect with Apple CarPlay and 4G Wi-Fi. There's no automatic climate control either, but manual controls work well. Drivers get a flatscreen instrument cluster with digital speedometer and bar graph tachometer for a touch of flash. Safety is enhanced by automatic emergency braking and a rear seat child reminder.

Under the wide hood of our Bronco is the base 2.3-liter turbo-four delivering 270 horsepower and 310 lb.-ft. of torque to zip through traffic or charge up steep trails. Fuel economy, as expected for a wheeled brick, is just 17/19-MPG city/highway. For more power, choose the optional 2.7-liter turbocharged V6 that ups output to 310 horsepower and 400 lb.-ft. of torque.

It's rare to find a manual transmission in any vehicle today, but the Bronco is available with a seven-speed manual that includes six forward gears plus one crawl gear for hard-core off-roading. It's easy to shift, even in busy morning traffic. A knob in the console directs the truck's G.O.A.T. modes (Goes Over Almost any

Terrain) that configure the powertrain for all conditions.

Jeep Wrangler drivers will be in disbelief at the Bronco's composure over rough city streets, fast freeways, and rugged trails. Unlike the rugged Jeep, Bronco employs an independent front suspension for ride and handling that's more crossover than tractor. There's still a solid axle out back, but heavy-duty dampers squash the harsh stuff. I'd gladly load up my family and drive cross-country.

Nobody asked for a better Jeep Wrangler, but Ford delivered one anyway. Fuel economy is horrendous, but the rest of it is a delight whether you're dropping the kids at school or scrambling over trails. In fact, the hardest part about owning a Bronco may be getting one as they're in pretty short supply. Base two-door models start at \$28,500, but ours came to \$42,720.

Storm Forward!

Send comments to Casey at AutoCasey@aol.com; follow him on YouTube @AutoCasey.



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