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**➔ TODAY'S VERSE**  
Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with thy might.

**➔ FACES OF MONTGOMERY**  
People who call our community their own.



Cub Scout Tucker Riddell and Mayor Todd Barton offer a smile while Tucker was being recognized for being the number one popcorn seller for Cub Scout Pack 909.

**➔ THREE THINGS You Should Know:**

**1** Want to go to the massive Christmas Gift + Hobby Show at the Indiana State Fairgrounds - for free! Well, simply send us a photo with you and the front page of The Paper (online or print) and if we use that as our Faces of Montgomery County, you win tickets! It's that simple and easy! Just e-mail your photo to [news@thepaper24-7.com](mailto:news@thepaper24-7.com) and be sure to include your name and contact info. And hey, if you want to say something nice about The Paper, well, we always appreciate that! One more thing - supplies are limited and this is first come, first serve!

**2** If you are an artist, an art enthusiast, an appreciator of art, thinking of volunteering, someone wanting to join our board, become a member or guest artist, or simply not sure about Athens Arts, please come and see what we are all about! Athens Arts is scheduled to host their annual meeting on Thursday, at the Crawdordsville District Public Library from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. There is a meet and mingle from 5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. beforehand. Learn about how your contributions have made Athens Arts grow! Learn about the wonderful organizations that partner with Athens Arts! Learn about committees and how you can #bepARTofit! Learn the needs of the gallery moving forward and how your continued support can assist Athens Arts in our mission and vision! Share your thoughts with us! We want to grow th arts with you!

**3** Boys will be boys, as the saying goes. And so can grown-up men be boys. The proof is in the Florida Man Games, an event scheduled to kick off on February 24 in St. Augustine, FL. The organizers of this first of its kind macho competition say: "From wrestling in the mud to running from actual sheriff's deputies, The Florida Man Games™ is where the bizarre meets brawn and sanity is optional! This isn't just a competition; it's a one-of-a-kind Floridian spectacle!" Events include the Beer Belly Florida Sumo contest, an evading Arrest Obstacle Course and much more.

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## "Butch, What's My Old Gun Worth?"



**BUTCH DALE**  
COLUMNIST

Yes, I have been asked that question many times. And no, I am not a hunter. I don't collect guns either. I own three...a Smith & Wesson revolver with my name engraved on it which I carried when I was Sheriff, an old .22 rifle, and a single shot 410 ga shotgun. I also do not carry a gun for self-protection. I just don't think I need to here in Montgomery County; however, if I were to live in Indy or some other crime-ridden city, I might change my mind. But as many of you may know, I have had an FFL (Federal Firearms License) since 2006, which allows me to buy, sell, and transfer firearms.

I have always had an interest in older firearms that are referred to as "curios and relics," which means they are fifty years old or older. This is likely because of all the west-

erns I watched as a youngster and also because I taught U.S. History. Most older guns were made one at a time by skilled machinists and craftsmen, and these older guns, if kept in good condition, maintain their value, keep up with inflation, and often increase in value. New guns, many of which are made of synthetic materials, do not. I consider myself to be very knowledgeable when it comes to older firearms.

Sometimes people inherit guns from an estate, and they have no desire to keep them. Or they may just want to sell one or two guns to have a little extra money to meet an expense or to finance another hobby. That's when they call me. When I first started out, a fellow called and wanted to sell an old double barrel shotgun which he had inherited. I asked him how much he wanted, and he stated that he would like to get \$200. A pawn shop in Lafayette had offered him \$100. You should have seen the look on his face when I informed him that the gun was worth \$800! Of course, I have



Photo courtesy of Butch Dale

also had people bring me guns which they thought were very valuable, but were soon disappointed to discover they were not. A gun's value depends on several factors, including condition, rarity, workmanship, and desirability.

Several years ago, a retired police officer called to tell me that another retired officer who he knew had passed away. The deceased officer had collected guns for 50+ years, and his widow, who was in her 80's, wanted to sell all of the guns. We drove to her house to take a look. In the basement were

➔ See BUTCH Page A5

## National Animal Shelter Appreciation Week, Spotlight On Nickee

By Gwynn Wills  
Animal Welfare League

The Humane Society of the United States founded National Animal Shelter Appreciation Week in 1996 to acknowledge and appreciate the role of animal shelters in communities all over the country. This holiday encourages the public to understand the level of work involved in caring for animals and to volunteer to help at their local animal shelter. The annual event acknowledges the hard-working people who support the shelters and help in keeping the pets healthy.

According to reports, there are about 70 million stray animals in the United State, with up to eight million ending up in shelters. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals reports that each year, only three million of these animals get adopted from the 3,500 animal shelters around the country. (<https://nationaltoday.com/national-animal-shelter-appreciation-week/>)

Each day this week, The Paper will be featuring a different member of the Montgomery County Animal Welfare



Photo courtesy of Gwynn Wills

### Nickee Kniskern Sillery

League's staff as a way to honor them and show appreciation for the hard work they do. Their commitment to serving the community through their dedication to the well-being of animals is exemplary as you will soon discover.

**Nickee Kniskern Sillery**  
What could an Opera and Theatre major from DePauw University possibly be doing working at the Animal Wel-

➔ See SHELTER Page A5

## Salvation Army Of MoCo Gearing Up For Christmas Red Kettle Campaign

The Salvation Army of Montgomery is gearing up for the 2023 Christmas Red Kettle Campaign and is looking for dedicated people to assist with the campaign.

Money collected during the

➔ See KETTLE Page A5

## Municipal Election Day Is Today!

The 2023 Municipal Elections are open today. Two voting locations are to be open to the public at the Montgomery County 4-H Building and Rock Point Church from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The candidates on the ballot are:  
• Crawfordsville City Mayor, Todd D. Barton  
• Crawfordsville City Clerk-Treasurer, Karyn D Douglas  
• Crawfordsville County Ward 1, Jeffrey Lucas

➔ See TODAY Page A5

## The Daily Almanac

**Sunrise/Sunset**  
RISE: 7:22 a.m.  
SET: 5:40 p.m.



**High/Low Temperatures**  
High: 68 °F  
Low: 52 °F



**Today is...**

- Election Day
- International Merlot Day
- Hug a Bear Day



**What Happened On This Day**

- **1947** Coup in Thailand. The military staged a coup against Thawan Thamrong Nawasawat and installed Khuang Aphaiwong as Prime Minister.
- **1917** October Revolution. The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, took over the winter palace and ended the rule of the post-Tsarist provisional government and transferred all powers to the communists in Russia.
- **1916** First woman to be elected to US Congress. Jeannette Rankin from Montana became the first woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.



**Births On This Day**

- **1913** Albert Camus French author, journalist, philosopher, Nobel Prize laureate
- **1867** Marie Curie Polish chemist, physicist, Nobel Prize laureate

**Deaths On This Day**

- **2011** Joe Frazier American boxer
- **1980** Steve McQueen American actor

**➔ HONEST HOOSIER**

On this date in 1811, the Battle of Tippecanoe, near Lafayette, is fought by U.S. troops led by William Henry Harrison and Native American warriors of the Shawnee Nation.



**➔ INSIDE TODAY'S EDITION**

- Service Directory...A3
- Classifieds.....A4
- Slim Randles.....A5
- Earth Talk.....A5

**➔ TODAY'S HEALTH TIP**

Keep snack foods out of reach when you're stressed or anticipate stress. 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](http://www.thepaper24-7.com).



**➔ THE MONTGOMERY MINUTE**

**Municipal Elections TODAY:**

Be sure to get out and vote today at either the Montgomery County 4-H Fairgrounds or Rock Point Church for the Municipal Elections! Send in a photo of yourself with an "I Voted" sticker to [news@thepaper24-7.com](mailto:news@thepaper24-7.com) to get your smile in The Paper.

**➔ TODAY'S QUOTE**

In celebration of our beginning our 20th year as a media company, we're sharing some famous quotations about newspapers this month. "Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy."  
-Walter Cronkite

**➔ TODAY'S JOKE**

The headline read: Dead body found by trash bins in alley. Those trash bins must be pretty doggone observant!

**➔ OBITUARIES**  
None

The Paper appreciates all our customers. Today, we'd like to personally thank **Diane Thompson** for subscribing!



**13 WTHR 7 DAY FORECAST**

<b>45</b> CLEARING, BLUSTERY	<b>25/42</b> COLD, WINDY POSSIBLE	<b>26/44</b> SUNNY BUT CHILLY	<b>29/52</b> MOSTLY SUNNY, NOT AS COLD	<b>36/58</b> MOSTLY SUNNY, SEASONAL	<b>44/61</b> WINDY, P.M. SHOWER	<b>45/62</b> A.M. SHOWER, SEASONAL
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN



## Meeting Notes

### Montgomery County Drainage Board Agenda

Wednesday, November 8th at 9:30 a.m. Montgomery County Government Center, Community Meeting Room  
 1580 Constitution Row, Crawfordsville  
 I. CALL TO ORDER  
 II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & PRAYER  
 III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
 • October 25th, 2023 – Regular meeting  
 IV. PETITIONS  
 • HARRISON DOYLE #617 – Petition for Variance; INDOT  
 V. OLD BUSINESS  
 CHARLES McFARLAND #545 – Reconstruction

• Contract change order – Jack & bore under SR 25  
 • Final schedule of reconstruction assessments  
 RICHARD VIRT'S #560 – Reconstruction  
 • Contract change order – Jack & bore under SR 32  
 • Final schedule of reconstruction assessments  
 VI. NEW BUSINESS  
 VII. OTHER BUSINESS  
 VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT  
 IX. ADJOURNMENT  
 Next regular meeting: Wednesday, December 13th, 2023, @ 9:30 am; Montgomery County Government Center

### Gov. Holcomb, INDOT Declare Winter Weather Preparedness Week

Much of Indiana experienced an arctic blast last week, and some saw measurable snow. Although temperatures are leveling out for early November, the Indiana Department of Transportation urges Hoosiers to be prepared as winter approaches.

Gov. Eric Holcomb proclaimed Nov. 5 - 11 Winter Weather Preparedness Week in Indiana. Along with the National Weather Service and other agencies, INDOT is encouraging the traveling public to use this week as a reminder to take steps to prepare for potential hazards that come with winter weather.

For safe travel, INDOT offers the following tips:

- Slow down and adjust travel to conditions, especially on snow covered roads.
- Never tailgate or drive beside a snowplow, as the driver's visibility may be limited. If you must pass, do so carefully.
- Be prepared in case of a crash and becoming stranded; always carry an emergency kit in your vehicle with food, water, a phone charger, sand or cat litter, flares or bright LED alternatives, a flashlight, and blankets.
- Keep your vehicle full of gas and check your battery, fluids and spare tire.

Throughout winter, snow, ice, freezing rain, and fog all present travel challenges. Roads can become slick, even after

pre-treatment and regular treatment during and after a storm.

Winter Operations crews monitor forecasts several weeks out and prepare for winter storms based on the type of precipitation, conditions leading up to an event, and extended forecast following a storm. If conditions allow, roads are pre-treated with salt brine and are regularly treated with rock salt. In colder temperatures, salt and brine alone take longer to activate. Environmentally-friendly chemicals may be used if necessary to boost effectiveness.

Snowplow drivers typically work 12-hour shifts during a storm and on average, take two-to-three hours to complete a full route. INDOT has prepared for winter operations by hiring seasonal snowplow drivers, completing training with current staff, inspecting equipment, and securing materials, like salt.

For information about road conditions during a winter storm, visit 511.in. org to view INDOT's TrafficWise map, or download the app on your Apple or Android device. Other ways to stay connected include subscribing to INDOT News via GoVDelivery and following INDOT on social media for regional information and additional resources. Roadway concerns may be reported to INDOT Customer Service at indot4u.com.

### Buchanan Welcomes Thorntown Elementary Students To The Statehouse



Photo courtesy of the office of Brian Buchanan

State Sen. Brian Buchanan meets fourth grade students from Thorntown Elementary School at the Statehouse Monday, Nov. 6. The students stopped in the Senate Chamber to ask Buchanan questions and learn about the legislative process.

### Reattaching To Nature



Slim Randles  
Home Country

Old Jasper Blankenship went out to hunt deer the other day, the same way he's done for

decades now. He's slower than he used to be, of course. Deer season has changed a lot for Jasper over the many years he's been at it. As a kid, he couldn't wait until he was old enough to get a license, because he wanted to bring a buck home to show his family. Not just any buck, either, but a big one.

As a young man, he wanted to see how many hunting seasons he could have in one year: duck, goose, quail, pheasant, deer, about anything that moved.

As a middle-aged man, he turned to the technology of hunting and wanted to learn about the newest gizmo that would make you quiet, make you invisible, make you irresistible to deer.

But things are different these days. Oh, Jasper

still enjoys going through all the outdoor magazines and orders catalogs, and each year he orders some new gizmo that guarantees to bring home the meat. But he just chuckles at them, even as he orders them. Hunting, to him, means a reattachment to nature, a return to his roots. It is a time to see if his personal skills are still adequate. It is also a time to sit on a ridge and look around and appreciate what is there. And if what isn't there happens to be a deer, well, that's all right, too.

Venison isn't getting any easier to pack back to camp after all these many seasons, either. But there is something in the hunt, something in being allowed to silently stalk the nameless essence of fall, something in moving in near invisibility. There is something.

Sometimes it's just nice to go out there and see what happens.

*-Brought to you by John McAdams, who teaches good, safe ways of being a successful and responsible hunter. john@thebiggamehuntingblog.com.*

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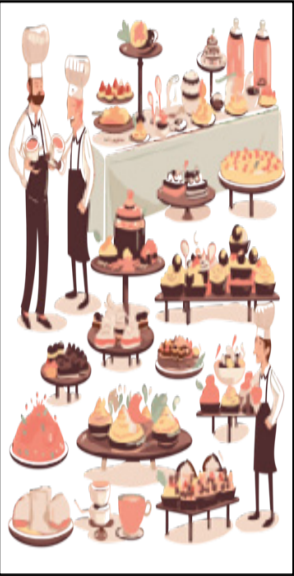
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# Exercise Is Not Just For The Young



**JOHN R. ROBERTS, M.D.**  
Montgomery Medicine

*"All parts of the body if used in moderation and exercised in labors to which each is accustomed, become thereby healthy and well developed, and age slowly; but if unused and left idle, they become liable to disease, defective in growth, and age quickly."* -Hippocrates

Few things benefit the body more than maintaining physical fitness (anyone remember Jack LaLanne)? While doctors routinely recommend exercise for younger patients, we're realizing how critical it is for our older patients as well. Regular exercise, even in one's senior years, can still reduce your risk of a number of health conditions, particularly heart attacks, strokes, and falls. It also may be one of the few things that helps slow the onset of dementia.

Most communities are blessed to have many options available to seniors for exercise, especially programs that are supervised. I prefer supervised activities because a trained professional typically leads the individual or a group. This person can make recommendations to get the most out of a program in the safest way possible.

Why is regular exercise so important for seniors? You may have noticed that as our bodies age a number of physiologic changes occur. We lose muscle mass and tone that leads to weakness and difficulty with balance. Flexibility becomes an issue (the most common cause of

leg cramps at night). Our bones become weaker from reduced weight-bearing activity. Balance problems along with poor flexibility and weak muscles often lead to falls and fractures. Our hearts and lungs can also get out of condition resulting in reduced stamina and difficulty breathing with activity. This can lead to a reduced level of confidence and independence.

Regular exercise can go a long way to delay or even reverse some of these effects of aging. Exercise is a critical component in the treatment and prevention of conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, elevated cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, dementia, depression, and anxiety.

Exercising in the water is one of the best and safest ways for seniors to work on their fitness. Aquatic programs are excellent for people with painful arthritic joints, particularly the knees, hips and back. Water buoys up the body, reducing stress on the joints. The natural resistance of the water helps build and tone muscles and also improves balance. I had one patient a few years ago who faithfully attended his aquatics classes and was able to graduate from his wheelchair to using a walker.

Exercising on dry land is certainly acceptable. Again, I usually recommend supervised programs like Silver Sneakers®. This is a program that is available to all seniors. Many Medicare Advantage plans even pay for memberships at a partnered exercise facility because they know that regular exercise greatly reduces hospitalizations and medical expenses. More information on the program can be found at [www.silversneakers.com](http://www.silversneakers.com).

Simple things like gardening, yard work, or walking are certainly better than sitting all day. Walking should always be done in a safe area that is flat and well lit.

Another benefit of regular exercise that most seniors don't consider is socialization. Seniors often become socially isolated either through the death of a spouse and/or loss of friends. This was certainly been exacerbated by COVID-19. Organized exercise programs provide a way for seniors to get out and interact with people. Most seniors who have joined one of these programs can't wait to get back for the next session. Regular exercise is also very good for improving mental health and keeping the mind sharp.

Many seniors simply don't want to be bothered with a formal exercise program. Any exercise is better than no exercise, but seniors need to be careful not to do too much too fast. Certain medical conditions may preclude doing certain types of activities.

If you are considering starting an exercise program, it's always a good idea to discuss it with your health care provider. This is true especially if you suffer from obesity, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, lung disease, have had a stroke or smoke. Your doctor may even provide you with an "exercise prescription" that outlines what he or she wants you to do or avoid. "A great set of basic exercises for seniors can be found at [bit.ly/3zmEhtJ](http://bit.ly/3zmEhtJ). "Just Do It" - it's not just for the young!

*- Dr. John Roberts is a retired member of the Franciscan Physician Network specializing in Family Medicine.*

# Greener & Cleaner: Next Gen Laundry Soap Eschews Harmful Chemicals



**Dear EarthTalk: Do mainstream laundry soaps contain chemicals that are bad for human health and/or the environment? Are any brands safer than others in this regard?**

For centuries, soaps made from natural substances were used to cleanse our skin and clothes. Synthetic detergents were developed in the early 20th century to create products that cleaned our laundry better and more conveniently. These days we may buy them based on a nice smell or how bright our clothes look, and take for granted that they are safe for us and for the environment.

Sadly, that doesn't seem to be the case. Consumer Reports recently looked for potentially dangerous chemicals in several laundry detergents and found quite the selection of "nasties." One of the worst is 1,4-dioxane, an industrial solvent that's readily absorbed through the skin, lungs and gastrointestinal tract and is considered a probable human carcinogen. In 2022, New York State banned laundry detergents containing unsafe levels of 1,4-dioxane. Arm & Hammer Clean Burst, Tide Original and Gain Original + Aroma Boost are among those detergents no longer available in New York as a result.

Other common yet

dangerous detergent ingredients to watch out for include: neurotoxic heavy metals such as arsenic, cadmium and lead; phthalates that make fragrances last longer but disrupt the body's hormonal systems; phosphorus that helps separate dirt from fabric but has links to negative human health effects including the aggravation of cardiovascular problems and osteoporosis; and sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) and sodium laureate sulfate (SLES), scrubbing agents that can irritate the skin, eyes and lungs. Many common detergents contain synthetic dyes, fragrances and so-called "synthetic optical brighteners" that don't actually clean but can cause allergic reactions and skin irritation and harm downstream wildlife.

Beyond the immediate health and environmental threats many of these synthetic chemicals pose, they also are not easily broken down over time and as such accumulate in the environment over decades. They can accumulate in water to toxic levels, affecting wildlife that is exposed, be carried by waterways or by water extraction for irrigation and can then get into food crops and animals. Like the pesticide DDT, the chemicals may accumulate in the body tissues of organisms living in polluted areas, but more crucially for us, in the body tissues of the top predators in food chains, which are in many cases...us.

New York's decision to ban these hazardous detergents is a significant step toward establishing a safer and healthier environment, and emphasizes the importance of selecting eco-friendly products. Cheri Peele of Toxic-Free Future, a nonprofit that aims to reduce the use of dangerous ingredients in consumer products, urges consumers to "choose detergents with the U.S. EPA Safer Choice label."

Boosting consumer awareness of this problem has become more mainstream recently. The Good Housekeeping Institute trialed some of the more eco-friendly brands. Its researchers gave high marks to Ecover, Smol, Splish, Method and Bio D. Ecology Works produces a 100 percent biodegradable anti-allergen laundry detergent. Seventh Generation is also highly regarded as eco-friendly. Happy washing!

*-CONTACTS: How to Find an Eco-Friendly Laundry Detergent, <https://www.consumerreports.org/appliances/laundry-detergents/how-to-find-an-eco-friendly-laundry-detergent-a8349611828/>; Toxic-Free Future, <https://toxicfreefuture.org/>; EPA Safer Choice, <https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice>.*

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## ➤ BUTCH From Page A1

hundreds of guns, all high quality collectibles...rifles, shotguns, pistols...many unfired in their original boxes. We were flabbergasted! To make a long story short, I sold all of the guns for her on consignment. It took a year and a half! As it turned out, there were over 750 guns...that's correct... SEVEN HUNDRED FIFTY, and the sweet lady ended up with over \$220,000. She just could not believe it. She had no idea they were worth that much. I believe that if a dishonest person or unscrupulous gun dealer had offered her \$10,000 or less, she probably would have accepted the offer. All of the guns were transferred to buyers who could legally own a gun and passed a government ATF background check. The vast majority ended up with collectors who will never even fire the guns, which they consider an investment.

I estimated that her husband had spent around

\$50,000 when he had first purchased these guns new. He definitely knew quality and which firearms would increase in value over time. The lady had collected turtles during her married life... all kinds...glass, marble, wicker, wood, etc. She lamented that she should have bought more. "Well, you can buy all you want now!" I told her.

So, what is your old gun worth? Call me at 765-404-1354...or another person you could contact is Eric Small, a retired fireman who owns Tactical Weapons on Indianapolis Road...765-361-1242. Don't sell that old gun until you find out it's value. Yes, it may not be worth much...or you might be pleasantly surprised!

- John "Butch" Dale is a retired teacher and County Sheriff. He has also been the librarian at Darlington the past 32 years, and is a well-known artist and author of local history.

## ➤ SHELTER From Page A1

Theatre major from DePauw University possibly be doing working at the Animal Welfare League? Just ask Nickee and she'll tell you this is her heart space. Little did Nickee know when she applied for a summer job in 2015, it would lead to permanent employment as the Medical Director of the Montgomery County Animal Welfare League. She had just finished her tenth year working as a high school Public Speaker and saw the ad for help at AWL. Within fifteen-seconds of her interview, she was offered the position as an Animal Control Officer and the rest is history. A week later, she knew this was not just a summer gig.

She called her boss at the high school to let her know she wouldn't be coming back.

Her day-to-day job consists of giving vaccines, taking blood draws, parasite control, ordering meds, animal intakes and outtakes, organizing the spay and neuter clinics and maintaining relationships with other rescue and medical organizations throughout the state and country. One of the downsides of her job is to perform euthanasia on animals who are too sick to recover or those who pose a danger to the community. Beginning in 2017, one of the goals of the shelter staff was to reach a "no-kill" status. Nick-

ee can happily say that the rate of euthanasia for animals in our community has gone from nearly 80% to a save rate of 90% or better most months.

She admits her job is more about people. "The suffering through homelessness and mental health issues has been a real eye opener," Nickee says. Not wanting to add to people's trauma, she sates a goal of the shelter is to assist those people in keeping their pets when feasible.

When asked what she would like to see for the shelter going forward, Nickee replied, "To reimagine our space to effectively house the animals." Nickee also says she would like for the community to fund a more rigorous Trap-Neuter-Spay Program for cats. The recent addition of Cats Limited has helped improve the TNR rate, but there are still many cats roaming free and reproducing at alarming rates. Anyone stopping by the AWL can see that five rooms full of cats is evidence of an ongoing problem with overpopulation in our community. With that in mind, Nickee adds she would like to see it "raining cat litter and dog food."

If you are out and about and want to grant Nickee one of her wishes, drop off some litter or dog chow. Then ask her to sing a tune. She might just grant you your wish back!

## ➤ KETTLE From Page A1

Red Kettle Campaign is used to assist people in Montgomery County with emergency needs including food, utilities and rent throughout the year. The Salvation Army also offers assistance during times of disaster. This year the Salvation Army has assisted 90 individuals and families thus far.

In order to offer these and other services, The Salvation Army of Montgomery County relies on volunteers. Bell ringers can sign up to ring the bell at [www.registertoring.com](http://www.registertoring.com). You may also sign up by contacting local Kettle coordinator Clay Adams via text or telephone at 765-376-7194. Ringing will take place at Walmart and Kroger between November 18th-December 23rd. Shifts are two hours, but hour shifts will also be accepted.

If you have a heart for service join The Salvation Army of Montgomery in the work of serving your community. For more information contact Clay Adams at [clayadams47933@gmail.com](mailto:clayadams47933@gmail.com). The Salvation Army of Montgomery County will thank you but more importantly, your community will thank you.

## ➤ TODAY From Page A1

- Crawfordsville County Ward 2, Ethan Hollander
- Crawfordsville County Ward 3, Kent S. Priebe
- Crawfordsville County Ward 4, Jennifer Lynne Lowe
- Crawfordsville County Ward 5, Stanley Haamilton
- Crawfordsville City At Large, Andy Biddle
- Crawfordsville City At Large, Scott Molin
- Crawfordsville City At Large, Mike Reidy

# Secretary Of State Morales Doles Out \$308K+ In Spot Bonuses

By Whitney Downard and Casey Smith  
Indiana Capital Chronicle

Indiana Secretary of State Diego Morales has given a spot bonus to nearly every employee in his office this year — including a family member and his former campaign manager — for a total of more than \$308,000.

New data obtained by the Indiana Capital Chronicle showed that just four of six offices led by elected officials awarded spot bonuses in 2023. But Morales' spending far outpaces his peers and includes five \$10,000 bonuses and two \$12,000 bonuses.

Secretary of State Spokeswoman Lindsey Eaton said in a written statement to the Capital Chronicle that the office does not have a formal or written bonus salary payment policy.

Instead, Morales' employee compensation policy is that any employee "who exemplifies the office's stated purposes and values" — "Serve Hoosiers by being Welcoming, Responsive, Efficient, and Innovative" — will receive "fair, competitive, rewarding compensation, recognition, and opportunity for advancement."

Eaton said the "constraints of the state's finance, accounting, budget, and employee classification system" make bonus payments necessary, and that the agency's ability to adjust salaries "is not always available or advisable."

"There are cases where extraordinary employee performance merits 'extraordinary' compensation," she continued. "Because salary setting for state employees is a somewhat bureaucratic and collaborative process between government agencies, there are instances where issuing a bonus is the most practical approach for interim employee compensation."

Where did the \$308,000 go?

Eighty bonuses have been doled out this year to 68 staffers in the Secretary of State's office — an office with roughly 75 employees — ranging from \$500 to \$12,000, for an average of \$4,540 per employee. Nearly a dozen employees received two bonuses from Morales within the 10 months scanned by the Capital Chronicle, and one got two in one month.

Excluding the \$500 bonus, which was awarded before Morales was sworn into office on Jan. 10, the next-lowest bonus of \$719 went to a part-time employee. The lowest bonus from Morales to a full-time employee was \$2,500 — more than two times the maximum outlined in a non-binding state personnel guidance for agency bonuses.

The Attorney General's Office, by comparison, has hundreds more employees at a total staff of 373, but has only issued \$48,000

in bonuses this year. For that office, bonuses ranged from \$500 to \$3,000 and averaged \$1,333 per bonus across 36 employees.

Attorney General Todd Rokita didn't respond to a request for comment on the office's spot bonus policy.

"It's really shocking to me (and) it's hard for me to get shocked by anything in government circles sometimes," said Paul Helmke, the former mayor of Fort Wayne and a professor at Indiana University's O'Neil School of Public and Environmental Affairs. "It raises questions: are you just rewarding your friends? Is this just some sort of slush fund that they've created? It just doesn't make sense to me ... This smacks of favoritism."

\*\*\*  
Bonuses offset low compensation, office says

The majority of the bonuses from the Secretary of State's office came during June, accounting for \$238,500 or 77% of all awards. The state's fiscal year ends on June 30th, which Eaton cited in her statement.

According to the office, the previous Secretary of State Holli Sullivan learned that the department's salaries were "underpaid compared to those in comparable private sector employment."

Without naming Sullivan, Eaton said Morales' predecessor advised staff that "salaries would be reviewed and action taken."

"The former Secretary of State raised the hopes and expectations of agency employees but did not act on the matter before leaving office ... and did not request an appropriation increase for employee compensation," Eaton said.

In January, Morales amended the budget submitted to legislators to include a 12.5% increase in employee salaries — but that meant employees wouldn't see an increase until July at the earliest, according to the statement.

"It was in consideration of the October 2022 (State Personnel Department) State Employee compensation study, our employee's raised, but unmet expectations for salary increases, and the (generally) high level of understanding and patience shown by employees of the new administration, that the Secretary approved the agency-wide of spot-bonus awards (\$2,500 and \$4,500)," Eaton said. "The agency viewed the June '23 bonus payments that stemmed from the (SPD) Compensation study basically as making good on promised, long-overdue compensation overlooked by a previous administration."

The office declined to elaborate on awards to specific employees, though several high-ranking staffers have received more than \$12,000 in bonuses so far this year — including

\$42,000 to four employees in the last two weeks.

"The office cites employee privacy concerns as the basis for not commenting on individual employee compensation," Eaton noted.

Eaton was one of 11 employees to get two bonuses under Morales. Others included his brother-in-law Shawn Grady, auto dealer services co-director Kyle Bonick, Chief Legal Counsel Jerry Bonnet and Morales' former campaign manager Kegan Prentice.

Bonick and Bonnet both received combined bonuses of \$16,500 — the two highest individual awardees — while Grady and two other employees received a combined \$12,500. Four of these five employees have salaries over \$110,000, according to the state's transparency portal.

Eaton and Prentice were on the lower end of awards with \$5,500 each in two separate bonuses.

\*\*\*  
General guidance to agencies

State agencies under the executive branch adhere to guidance from the State Personnel Department when it comes to spot bonuses, which dictates that such awards range from \$100 to \$1,000 to "recognize outstanding performance 'on the spot.'"

Some of the state elected officials indicated they followed SPD guidelines for bonuses, including the Comptroller's Office, which houses the state's payroll data.

That office, led by Tera Klutz, was one of four agencies to award spot bonuses in 2023, spending \$23,500 in awards to 24 employees. The office said the majority of bonuses — all of which were awarded in the first pay period of January — were related to the statewide implementation of a new payroll and human resources system that launched in May and December of 2022.

The only other statewide office holder to use spot bonuses in 2023 was Gov. Eric Holcomb, who spent \$3,250 on four separate bonuses ranging from \$500 to \$1,000.

The maximum spot bonus for the Attorney General's office was \$3,000, which six employees received.

"The Secretary of State's office is an autonomous Constitutional Office, authorized to function independently of other state offices or agencies and policies under the direction and control of the Governor of the state," Morales' office said in its statement. "While the office typically cooperates with the administration of other state offices, it is free to establish and follow whatever policies it believes will best serve its Constitutional and statutory responsibilities."

"It's at the whim of the boss"

To qualify for such bo-

nuses, SPD says employees must be employed for a minimum of six months and be engaged in "exceptional performance which produced a measurable outcome," though agencies have the ultimate discretion.

Examples of exceptional performance include: completing a significant project ahead of schedule with results which exceeded expectations, creating a solution to a problem and/or providing exceptional customer service, according to the employee handbook.

Helmke noted that no such program — which was reformed in 2022 — existed when he was mayor, but he said he recognized the value of it, considering the low pay of the public sector and competitiveness with the private sector.

The SPD guidelines indicated that a small award every few years would be appropriate, Helmke said, when someone went "above and beyond." But using it too often or multiple times in one year diminished the 'on-the-spot' aspect.

"I don't understand how you should get multiple — you shouldn't be getting it multiple times in a year. If you're doing that, maybe you're in the wrong job category and need a promotion," Helmke said. "It's great to get these bonuses every year but why not just build it into their pay at the start?"

Without an explicit process for rewarding bonuses, Helmke said it seemed to boil down to making the boss happy. When nearly all of the bonuses are clustered together — 68 awards in June, five in August and four in October — it's no longer "exceptional performance."

"Which makes it sound like it's at the whim of the boss not — in any sense, really — earned for justified," Helmke said. "I don't mind an extra bonus (from) my taxpayer dollars to go to exceptional work. But it does bother me when it's ... a state elected official who throws around these taxpayer dollars whenever he or she feels like (they) want to reward somebody."

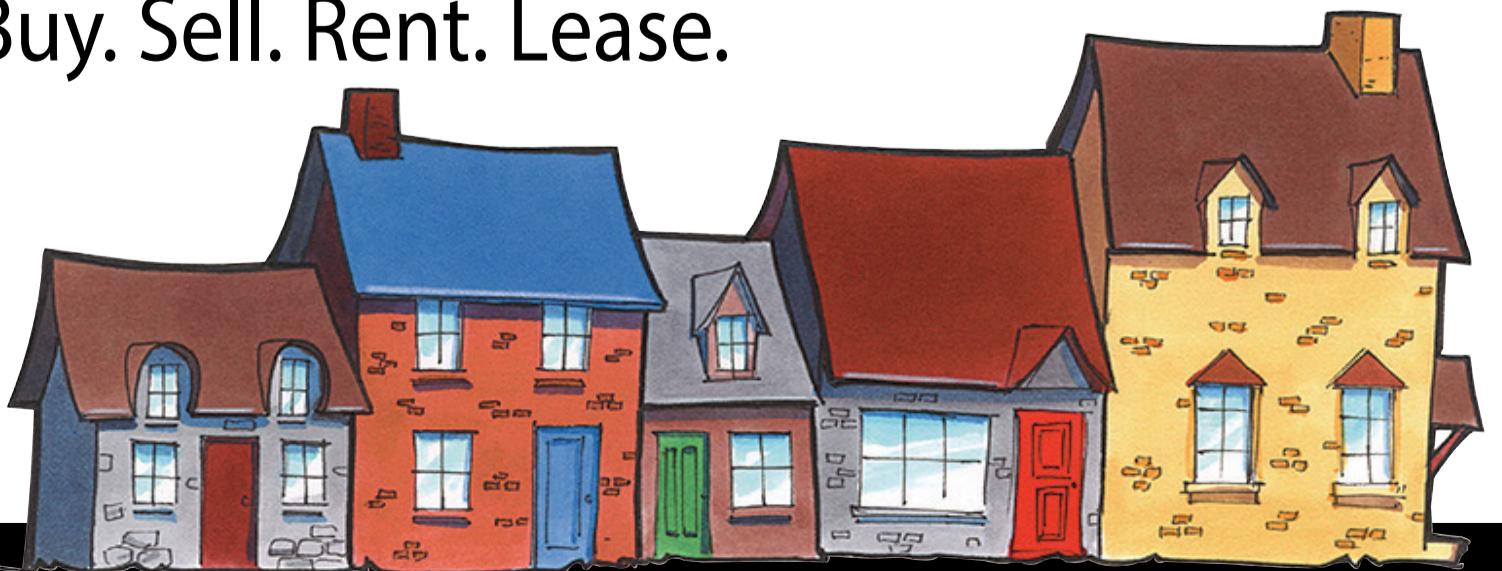
For a government agency that might seek to punish bad actors in the future, it could feel hypocritical, Helmke said.

"Next time I see that they're cracking down on businesses that are using funds improperly, it sort of raises the issue: are you using your funds properly?"

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