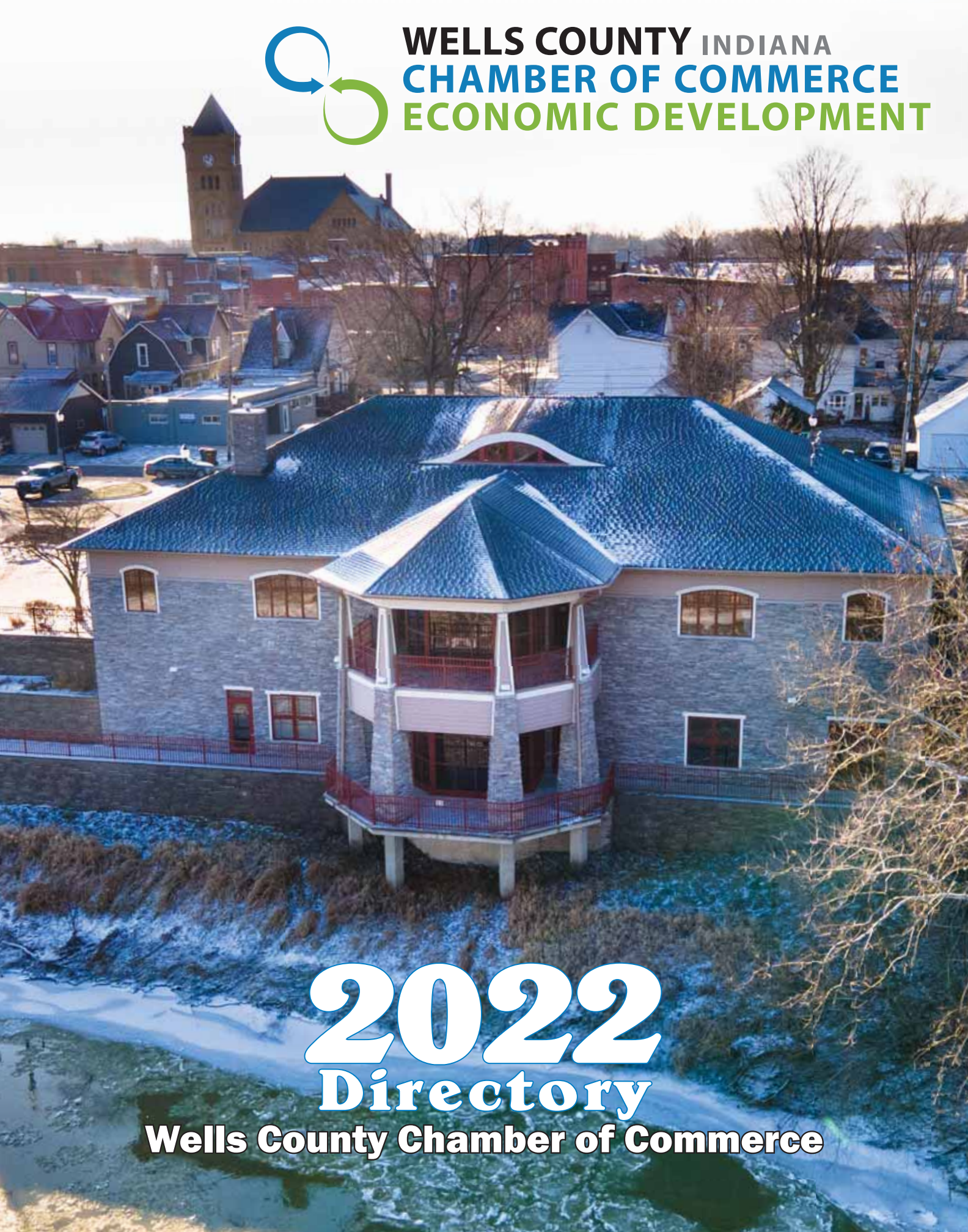


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Your Chamber has graciously welcomed over 400 local businesses as members of the Wells County Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development. Since 1914, the organization continues to connect businesses, provide opportunities for growth and development, and advocate for a business-friendly environment.

The Wells County Chamber of Commerce represents the community from small businesses to large businesses. We strive to serve our members through networking, education, leadership development, marketing, Economic Development support, and workforce retention.

By supporting the businesses in our directory, you are reinvesting in the community. These business owners are our neighbors, our friends, and are dedicated to making Wells County the best it can be. Whether you are a current member of the Chamber of Commerce, a resident, visitor, or a newcomer of Wells County, we welcome your partnership!

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Executive Director,
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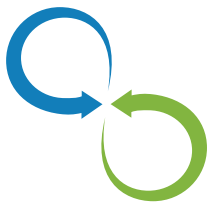
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The 2021 Wells County Chamber of Commerce board members: Seated, from left: Julie Quinn, 1st Source Bank; Bluffton Mayor John Whicker; Chad Kline, Economic Development Executive Director; Sarah MacNeill, Wells County Public Library; Rick Gentis, First Bank of Berne; Erin Prible, Chamber Executive Director; Mike Grant, Town of Markle; Tamra Boucher, 20/20 Custom Molded Plastics. Standing: Brian Sloan, Southern Wells Community Schools; Vicki Andrews, Wells County Council; Eric Gerber, Edge Manufacturing; Sam Haflich, BKM Real Estate; Jeremy Collins, Rethceif Packaging; Michael Lautzenheiser, Bluffton NOW!; Keith Muhlenkamp, First Merchants Bank; Rick Johnloz, Halderman Farm Management-Brickley Farms; Eventt Norris, Ossian Do-it-Best Hardware; Tim Babcock, Dale Huffman & Babcock; Kevin Sills, Farmers & Merchants Bank; and Brad Baumgartner, Four Star Services. Not present: Rob Lyons, Bluffton Regional Medical Center; Trent Bucher, Honegger, Ringger & Co.; Jim Brewer, Ossian Revitalization; Blake Gerber, Wells County Commissioners; Luann Martin, Town of Ossian; Lou Ann Reinhard, Town of Poneto; Steve Stuller, AT Ferrell; and Phil Swain, PNC Bank.

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Keeping the pedal to the metal

Full speed ahead! That was the motto for Economic Development in 2021 and will continue as we move in to 2022. With many projects getting underway and many still to come, investment in Wells County continues to shape our communities for the future.

Growth in housing was at the forefront in 2021 as numerous opportunities are beginning to become reality for those looking to locate or expand. Wells County saw numerous new housing developments approved for construction, an apartment development approved for construction and another apartment development, Premier Flats, opened for new tenants.

In early 2021, Crosswind Lakes housing development in Ossian opened the first phase of their 113-lot development, making it the first new housing development in the community in several years. Bluffton saw developments approved for a 154-lot addition, 174-lot subdivision, and 46 additional lots to Greenfield Farms. The Town of Markle produced the first new lots since 2005, with the second phase of the Forrest Cove Addition providing an additional 18 lots in December 2021.

Additionally, local manufacturers announced over \$45 million in investments and pledged to create over 132 new jobs. Several new small businesses also set up shop in areas around Wells County as seen by the number of ribbon cuttings hosted by the Wells County Chamber.

Throughout 2022, Wells County Economic Development looks to continue to be a leader in housing development, broadband development, marketing efforts to strengthen community investment opportunities, support business retention and attraction efforts, and develop programs that lead to population growth.

Tourism Coordinator and Project Manager Audry Dudley will focus efforts in 2022 to increase awareness of Wells County's tourism assets to increase visitors to the county. See the related article regarding these efforts. Wells County is rich on recreational activities and opportunities; through the website and social media efforts, we hope to expand opportunities in tourism.

The efforts of our businesses, schools, and community groups continue to make Wells County a place to Live Better!



Chad Kline
Executive Director,
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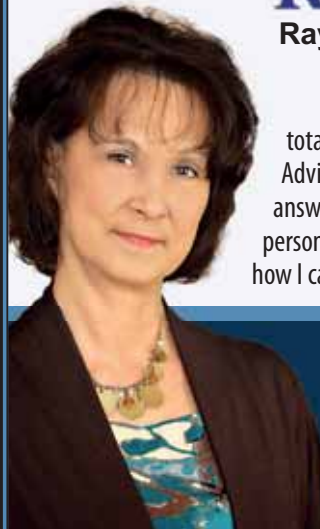
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Tourism efforts moving into high gear

After more than six years of discussion at various levels, the concept of having a Wells County Tourism Board is gaining traction.

“It’s been a process, and it remains a process,” says Wells County Economic Director Chad Kline. “But I think we’re getting there.”

What Wells County does have as 2022 begins is a loosely organized but active subcommittee of the Economic Development Council. The subcommittee includes 11 community members representing the key areas of tourism, such as lodging, the parks, restaurants and retail businesses.

“Tourism has always been a part of what I wanted to develop,” Kline said, but with all the other areas he needs to focus on, “it too often took a back seat.”

The EDC has utilized interns to attempt to move things along, but it didn’t make any significant progress until Audry Dudley’s internship during the summer of 2020. The 2012 Bluffton High School grad had just graduated from Ball State University with a degree in hospitality

and food management. That internship came about in large part because one of her professors had just completed a tourism study for Wells County in late 2019.

“We — the staff here and the EDC board — determined we wanted to find a way to keep her,” Kline said. It took a joint effort between the EDC, Bluffton NOW! and the county, but she became a full time employee in September 2020.

Their first order of business was to determine “if we create a tourism board, what it would look like” Dudley said. She lined up several visits with leaders of CVBs — Convention and Visitors Bureaus — around the state. She often heard that the way Wells County was getting organized is somewhat unique, but highly desirable.

“Almost all CVBs around the state are stand-alone groups,” she explained. “The positive aspects of being a part of the chamber and economic development is that we can co-mingle our resources; there are natural synergies.”

“And our goals are the same,” added Kline.

The coming year will see significant

progress. A branding effort, funded by the Wells County Commissioners, is being completed and vendors have been engaged to create a tourism guide, which is targeted to be published in March. A website is up and remains in development (www.visitwellscounty.com) along with “photography and video assets” that will be utilized on the website and in social-media marketing.

A key component of a continuing tourism effort is an innkeeper’s tax, something almost every other county in Indiana has. Kline hopes to see progress in that area during 2022 as well.

Committee members, in addition to Kline and Dudley, are: Brandy Fiechter, Bluffton Parks Department; Scott Elzey, Wells County Historical Society; Rod and Paris Fetters, Rods Rustics; Brit Bauman, East Uniondale Goods; Heidi and Jeff Reed, Crimson House Café; Cory Mann, Wells County Trails; Zane Herr, Dash 90 Wines; Justin Osborn, Comfort Inn; Jon Winne, Ouabache State Park; Laurie Baumgartner, Bluffton Parks Department; Chris Bryant, Parlor City Brewing; and Kathy Gardner, Washington Street Inn.



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ED Council putting the puzzle together

Economic development used to be a one-piece puzzle: attract new industry to your community.

"It's now about a 25-piece puzzle," says Wells County Economic Development director Chad Kline, "and the box just keeps getting bigger with more pieces."

"Business attraction is still important," Economic Development Council president Tamra Boucher says, "but what's even more important now is how do we get the community positioned to serve the needs of the businesses that are here?"

That piece of the puzzle leads to others, one of which is "Talent Attraction," a new catch-phrase in economic development that has been and remains one of the EDC's main items in its strategic plan. Those efforts include attracting people to live in Wells County, keeping as many of our local high school graduates here as possible and attracting people in adjacent counties to work here.

"With the unemployment rate under two percent (as it was at the end of 2021)," says Kline, "we have to work on ways to increase and bolster our workforce, and part of that is making sure we have places for people to live."

A major effort was made in 2021 towards that issue with some success. New housing developments in Ossian, Markle and Bluffton are in the works and a new 180-unit market-rate apartment complex

was opened.

"I've heard some comments asking what housing development has to do with economic development," Boucher says. "My goodness, it has everything to do with it."

Talent attraction will continue with "aggressive efforts," Kline says, to increase the population through what he calls a "Talent Attraction Branding Campaign." This will utilize the "Live Better. Live Wells" theme developed in 2020. A website is in the final stages of development and will hopefully be ready by March.

"We have the funds for a marketing campaign," Kline says. "We just need a landing page before we launch that."

Yet another piece of the talent attraction puzzle is keeping local high school graduates here. The main hurdle is making sure they know what careers are available in their home county and how well many of those careers pay. The EDC works closely with the schools, Area 18 CTE and the AdamsWells Manufacturing Alliance to get that word out.

"That effort has to start now at the middle school level," Boucher says. "We've found it's important they start understanding what's available here. Waiting until they get in high school can be too late."

Kline also works with the entrepreneurial class at Bluffton High School. "So many of our local companies have

been started by local young people," Boucher adds. "It is so important we find ways to encourage those efforts and these people."

Yet another new piece of the puzzle is infrastructure, which includes of course such things as adequate energy availability and good sewer and water service. Add to that the necessity of broadband service.

"We are blessed to have Bluffton being a 'Gigabyte City,'" Kline says, which means any home or business has access to an internet connection with a 1 GB service. "But we need to be a 'Gigabyte County,' with 100 percent broadband coverage everywhere."

Broadband coverage is a critical component for a variety of reasons, including e-learning and attracting talent who work remotely. Kline cited the positive efforts of Heartland REMC to upgrade their service area, Citizens Telephone in Warren which is working to service the southwest portion of the county, and "the spectacular job AdamsWells Internet has done in Bluffton and now working to expand that service to the Craigville and Vera Cruz areas," Kline says.

"Our No. 1 focus is making sure that business investment has the ability to take place, both current and new," Kline concludes. "And that all the puzzle pieces are in place for the growth of both existing and any new businesses that might come in."



The Wells County Economic Development Council: Front row, from left: Chad Kline, Executive Director; Blake Gerber, Commissioner; Steve Higgins, Non-Profit Representative; Tamra Boucher, Markle; John Whicker, Bluffton Mayor; Barb O'Connor, Zanesville; Diane Johnson, Project Manager. Standing: Jim Paxton, Manufacturing/Logistics Representative; Paul Lagemann, Business Representative; Steve Huggins, Wells County Council; Rick Elwell, Bluffton; Rob Lyons, Chamber Board President; Kody Kumfer, Wells County Revitalization; Josh Perry, Business Representative; and Gene Donaghy, Education Representative. Not pictured are Josh Barkley, Ossian; and Sam Haflich, Chamber Vice-President.

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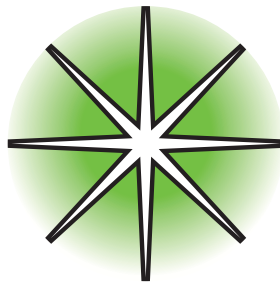
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Local NAPA store tabbed for '22 honor

One of the advertising slogans developed for the nationwide NAPA Auto Parts stores is “NAPA Know How.” That theme was utilized by Vicki Bell in her nomination letter which resulted in the locally-owned franchise, Wells County Automotive Supply, being named as the 2022 Business of the Year.

“‘Know How’ is more than a slogan for our local NAPA business,” Bell wrote. “Bruce and Kate Stinson ‘know how’ to make Wells County a stronger community through their continuous fundraising for community needs, to include Friends Who Care and the Wells Community Boys & Girls Club. They ‘know how’ to make everyone who walks into their NAPA doors feel important and respected. They ‘know how’ to increase your knowledge about more than parts and supplies. They make you feel like you belong to our community.”

“NAPA needs to ‘know how’ much Wells County appreciates their presence in our community,” she concluded.

And you might say the Stinson’s friends “know how” to make a nomination. They will admit that they “kind of ganged up” and submitted five different letters of nominations. While each letter had a bit of a different angle, there was, undoubtedly, a consistent theme.

“Year in and year out,” Jeff Adams wrote, “Bruce and Kate have unselfishly helped the community.” He primarily cited their events that have aided local and statewide charities.”

“They are not vocal about it,” wrote Jean Bordner, “but you will see them out and about supporting community events and local businesses at every turn. They talk the events up to others and support them with their own hard-earned dollars.”

“The company is always more than willing to sponsor local events and organizations,” wrote Brandon Wright. He noted that the couple hosts an annual golf outing, with 100 percent of the money going to the Boys & Girls Club and the Friends Who Care Cancer Relief Foundation. “The owners and employees are knowledgeable and go above and beyond to help customers and the community.”

“It’s not just about the numbers to them,” added Jena Wright, “it’s about ensuring they help any way they can.” Jena Wright also noted their generosity in donations and their work involved in the golf outings. “They love this community and will continue to support it in any way they can.”

“Well, we just like to help out,” Bruce Stinson said. “When you see a need, I think you’d better help out.”

Their annual golf outing began as a customer appreciation event, but then soon realized they could turn it into something that would benefit others. They’ve had to put a cap on the number of teams; this past summer’s event generated a \$5,000 donation to both the foundation and the Boys & Girls Club.

“They really do some special work out there,” Bruce said. Coincidentally, he credits his awareness of the club’s activities and needs to this year’s Citizen of the Year honoree, Todd Reimschisel.

It was not planned this way, but the announcement came as the Stinson’s were marking their 50th year in the store. They both began working there in 1971.

“I have six months seniority on him,” Katie Stinson will tell you with a smile.

The business itself dates to 1957 when B.J. Fegley and Bob Darrow opened the store on South Johnson Street in the building that currently houses the county Republican Party headquarters. They moved the business to its current loca-

tion on North Main Street in 1969.

“When I came to work here she was doing the bookkeeping, but I was just a farm boy,” Bruce said. He drove a truck for a couple years but Noel Fegley, B.J.’s son, and Bruce were good friends. “He’d been trying to get me to come here, but I didn’t want to give up the truck. He finally convinced me to come. I didn’t know a thing about the parts business, but I learned,” Bruce said.

“Everybody asks me how do I work with my wife and I tell them I worked with her 12 years before she was my wife,” he added.

They were married in 1982 and they bought the business in 1986.

“Bruce and Kate owns one of those businesses that could have been hit hard with the big box stores and chain stores, but you won’t hear them complaining,” Bordner wrote in her letter. “They make it work because they are service driven and all of their employees are eager to help you fix your problem.” She added that one of them once even installed a part in her car, “without me even asking.”

When they started working there, there was only one other auto parts store in town — Bluffton Supply. When they bought the business in 1986, Hires Auto Parts was across the street.

Today, the NAPA store competes with three chain stores, all located within a short stretch of Main Street.

“When those big stores came to town, there’s no question they hurt us for a little while, but they made us stronger,” Bruce said. “You can’t sit behind a counter and hope that business comes walking through your door, because it doesn’t.” The store has a good working relationship with the farmers and industry in the area as well as the auto mechanics, he added.

“We learned to search for new business,” he said. “Wells County has been very good to us,” Kate added.

They quickly point to their employees, whom Bruce called “knowledgeable and experienced.” The Stinsons purchased the NAPA store in Warren in 1999, which is managed today by Dan Stroud.

Bruce and Katie are both Wells County natives. She graduated from Chester Center and he from Bluffton High School. They have been active in the Friends Who Care Cancer Relief Foun-

Past winners of the Wells County Business of the Year:

- 1996 — Almco Steel Company
- 1997 — James S. Jackson Co.
- 1998 — Franklin Electric Company
- 1999 — Pretzels, Inc.
- 2000 — Honegger, Ringger & Co.
- 2001 — Ossian State Bank
- 2002 — Dale & Huffman
- 2003 — Thoma-Rich, Hewitt & Chaney Funeral Home
- 2004 — Christian Care Retirement Community and Ossian Health & Rehabilitation Center
- 2005 — Roembke Mfg. & Design
- 2006 — Bluffton News-Banner
- 2007 — Bluffton Reg. Medical Center
- 2008 — General Manufacturing
- 2009 — Hiday Automotive Group
- 2010 — Heyerly’s Meat Market
- 2011 — AdamsWells Internet Telecom TV
- 2012 — Troxel Equipment Co.
- 2013 — National Oil and Gas
- 2014 — Peyton’s Northern
- 2015 — Edge Manufacturing
- 2016 — United Way of Wells County
- 2017 — First Bank of Berne
- 2018 — Alexin LLC
- 2019 — Ossian Deli
- 2020 — Outdoor Concepts
- 2021 — Daniel’s Jewelers



The "NAPA Know How" team: from left, owners Kate and Bruce Stinson; employees Mark Shaffer, Ruie Penrod and Curt Corle.

dation almost since its inception. Bruce has served as president and continues to serve on the board; Kate no longer serves on the board but of course is involved in the fund raising events.

They are active members at Calvary Lutheran Church where Bruce

has served as president of the church council. He also presently serves on the Regional Sewer District board.

"People have been excellent to us over the years. We were born and raised here. I don't know if there is any other place I'd rather live," said Bruce.

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Todd Reimschisel ‘doesn’t get it’

Todd Reimschisel considers himself to be “still in the payback mode.” There’s just no way he thinks the community should be honoring him.

“This community has come to my family’s aid. This community has been so supportive,” he said.

It was 30 years ago this past Dec. 17 that Todd and Lori Reimschisel’s two sons were involved in a serious car accident. Not too many years prior to that, their daughter Regan was born with a rare syndrome that required quite a bit of medical attention.

“Those two experiences shocked my world,” he said, “but what the community did to rally around us, we will never forget.”

That community, however, will be honoring him as the 2022 Citizen of the Year.

“I don’t get it,” he said when he was surprised with the announcement in December at the Ford dealership he and his wife operate.

He joked that the announcement rendered a used car salesman speechless — a unique occasion.

“We thank you so much for everything you do in our community,” Wells County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Erin Prible said. “We really appreciate you.” Prible added that when it was time for the nominations to be considered, a comment was made questioning how Reimschisel hadn’t been nominated before.

“I still don’t get it,” he added later. “This is an honor. What a great community. I won’t argue with you because that’s not professional but my mind will go to several other (deserving) people so we’ll make sure you remember them in the future.”

Reimschisel has served on a number of community boards, including the Caylor Nickel Foundation, Family Centered Services, the Friends Who Care Cancer Relief Foundation, Grace and Mercy, the Wells County Foundation and the Wells Community Boys and Girls Club. He has taught Sunday School for many years and is currently serving professionally on the Indiana Auto Dealers Association board.

An unusual part of his career includes being an Emergency Medical Technician for 15 years, all while working full



Todd and Lori Reimschisel post thank you cards, pictures and other letters they receive from their customers and the community on a special bulletin board at their Ford dealership.

time at the family dealership.

“That came out of those family emergencies we had experienced,” he explained. After their children had recovered from their medical situations, “I began to wonder and ask, ‘How do I give back to people?’”

That led to getting to know the first responders and getting involved in their work. “When you hear a siren,” he reflects now, “that means someone’s life has changed.”

“At that time, you could do this part-time,” he said. So after his training, he often worked out of his own car, responding to emergencies from work. “I carried a pager with me at all times and I would sometimes pick up a shift to cover for someone.” He has also served on the Liberty Township Volunteer Fire Department.

“He likes to serve others in any capacity he can, asking nothing in return,” wrote his wife, Lori, in her nomination letter. “He is honest, caring and encouraging to everyone he meets.”

The car business has been a part of his life as long as he can remember. What is now Family Ford of Bluffton was then Reimschisel Ford, owned and operated by his parents, Dick and Elaine Reimschisel. As early as age 10, he was “emptying trash, weeding, painting and scrubbing white sidewalls,” he recalled, “which certainly dates me.”

He officially went on the payroll at age 13 or 14, and was able to work mornings during high school as part of the I.C.E. program.

“It was great,” he shared. “I would

pick up a teacher’s car at the high school, take it to work and they’d service it, I’d take it back to school and give the teacher a bill and then sit down

Past recipients of the Citizen of the Year Award:

- 1980 — Dr. Harold Caylor and Cecil Lockwood Sr.
- 1981 — Fred Park
- 1982 — Amos Gerber
- 1983 — Edward J. Schaefer
- 1984 — John T. Flaningam and Dr. William Gitlin
- 1985 — Frank Monroe
- 1986 — Charles W. Decker Jr.
- 1987 — James Stogdill and William Fitzpatrick
- 1988 — Dr. Truman Caylor
- 1989 — Don V. Harris
- 1990 — Harold Bowman
- 1991 — Howard Rich
- 1992 — Mr. and Mrs. Claude Decker and Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Moser
- 1993 — Edward Hanrahan and Alfred J. Norris
- 1994 — Dick Wilkey
- 1995 — Paul Bender
- 1996 — Jim Barbieri and Everett “Tuck” Faulkner
- 1997 — David Park
- 1998 — Loren Barkley
- 1999 — Connie Cupp
- 2000 — David Dale
- 2001 — Gene Meyer
- 2002 — Ted Smith
- 2003 — Keith Huffman
- 2004 — Dr. Michael Sailsbery
- 2005 — Ralph Nowak
- 2006 — Bette Erxleben
- 2007 — John Whicker
- 2008 — Diane Humphrey
- 2009 — Judi Merkel
- 2010 — Ed Goetz
- 2011 — Ken Honegger
- 2012 — Ted Ellis
- 2013 — Jeff Espich
- 2014 — Dr. George Babcock
- 2015 — Tony Garton
- 2016 — Paul and Lu Reiff
- 2017 — Dr. Jim VanWinkle
- 2018 — Steve Stauffer
- 2019 — Dr. Marcelo Gavilanez
- 2020 — John Reinhard
- 2021 — Mark Miller

in class.” Those mornings were his favorite part of the day, not so much the afternoons when he was in class.

“I was not as scholastic as my brothers,” he said. Only one of his brothers worked at the dealership after high school for a time, but then went on to other endeavors. Troy lives in Leo and delves in commercial real estate, Trent is an investment advisor in Indianapolis and Tyler is a doctor in Cleveland.

Todd Reimschisel began working full time in the service department after graduating from Bluffton High School in 1978, got into service management in 1980 and transitioned into sales as he began to buy into the business. He and Lori were married in 1980.

As his parents’ retirement approached, the couple began to explore “how best to honor them in their retirement,” he shared. “Too often, the parents don’t get what they really deserve.”

A long standing friendship with Mike and Judy Mangold, who have a Ford dealership in Eureka, Ill., provided the perfect solution for the Reimschisel family.

“A good partnership is a powerful thing,” Todd said. Hence, seven years



A good portion of the Reimschisel family was on hand when Todd Reimschisel was surprised with the announcement in December that he’d been selected as the Citizen of the Year. Standing in front are Ryder and Rigg Lindblom; standing in the back, from left are Reese, Rachele and Livia Lindblom; Todd and wife Lori; Harlow Reimschisel, Rodney Reimschisel and Jeremy Reimschisel. Rachele, Rodney and Jeremy are the Reimschisels’ children; another daughter, Regan Heckley, lives in Minnesota.

ago, Reimschisel Ford became Family Ford of Bluffton and his parents were able to enter full retirement. “I’ve often been asked why we did it this way,” he explained, “but it was 100 percent about taking care of my business and

properly honoring my parents.”

He adds that the community has continued to be supportive both of their business and their family.

“Have I told you how wonderful this community is?” he asked.



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Chamber recognizes three county teachers

Tara Cocanower Bluffton-Harrison M.S.D.

Tara Cocanower took a circuitous path to becoming a teacher. After graduating from Norwell High school in 2002, she enrolled in the University of Southern Indiana where she was encouraged to get a minor in education to go along with her major in history, “just in case,” she was told.

After earning her degree in 2007, she served in the Peace Corps, representing America in Romania, a task she said shaped her future.

“My Peace Corps service molded me into an eternal optimist that rejoices in the small victories instead of dwelling on the many defeats,” Cocanower said in her teacher blog — a message Bluffton High School Principal Steve Baker quoted in his nomination letter that led to her being selected as the school system’s educator of the year.

It also influenced her choice of teaching subject — social studies. “The more we learn about each other, the better off we



Tara Cocanower

all are,” she said.

Baker’s letter also cited Cocanower’s innovations in the classroom, such as her students’ chariot races or an escape room used as a chapter review.

“Mrs. Cocanower presents educational research to the faculty,” Baker’s letter said. “She mentors how to develop educational lessons so that all students experience while learning.”

Cocanower taught for four years at Bluffton Middle School before joining the high school faculty five years ago. In addition to social studies, she teaches world history in all four grade levels and is also the instructor for Bluffton High School’s advance placement world history class. Her students must pass the AP exam to receive college credit. Baker notes that 85 percent of her students earned a passing score which exceeded the state average of 48 percent. “The students’ success demonstrates her passion toward teaching and a commitment to learning,” he said.

Cocanower also coaches girls’ golf and

track and field at Bluffton, giving her additional interaction with students.

After returning from Romania in 2010, she taught at Imagine Master Academy in downtown Fort Wayne for two years and then taught at Southwood Junior-Senior High School before returning to Bluffton.

“I can tell you several of the people I work with should be the Educator of the Year,” she said during the surprise award ceremony held at the school in early December. “Teaching is at best a collaborative effort.”

In the aftermath of the ceremony, Cocanower added that her husband, Geoff, had shared a thought “that I really liked,” she continued, “... that I stand on the shoulders of those who’ve invested in me.

“I’m honored by this award, and if it were just me I wouldn’t feel comfortable accepting it. I accept it because I want the people who inspire me, the people who lift me up on hard days, the fantastic people at BHMSD that encourage one another, those who taught and coached me to know that they made a difference in my life and I strive to do that as an educator and a coach to pay it forward.”

Hollie Parker Northern Wells Community Schools

While her subject matter is mathematics, Norwell Middle School teacher Hollie Parker has obviously had a wider impact on her students. Her dedication was one of the reasons she was selected as the Wells County Chamber of Commerce Educator of the Year for Northern Wells Community Schools.

Middle school principal Tim Wilson, who nominated her for the honor, wrote that Parker uses every opportunity she has to interact with students. “Her love for students is reflected back to her in the way they surround and want to interact with her,” Wilson observed. Those opportunities include coaching the school’s academic super bowl team and the track and field team.

Parker has been teaching for 27 years — the last four at NMS. “I definitely want to make a difference in my students’



Hollie Parker

lives,” Parker said as to why she chose teaching as a profession. “I had Jesus in my heart and I wanted to share that with others.” She does that by smiling, caring, loving and demanding excellence, she said.

At a special convocation in early December at which the honor was announced, Parker thanked Team Valiant — the eighth grade students — for making teaching at NMS a pleasure and her fellow teachers for inspiring her.

She also thanked her family for their love and support and noted her husband, David, “is by far the most inspirational educational leader I have ever been lucky to be married to.” They are the parents of a daughter, Evin, 20, and a son, Jake, 16. They are also hosting a 17-year-old exchange student — Becky — this year.

A native of Columbia City, Parker earned her undergraduate degree at Taylor University and her masters at Indiana Wesleyan.

“My favorite part of teaching is my

students,” Parker said, “Ultimately I hope they have learned that they can work hard and that they can work through hard things.

“I teach math and there’s a lot of problem solving, but it’s way more than that. I want them to know if they fail or make a mistake, they can learn from those mistakes. If they succeed, then they need to turn around and help the person next to them.”

They’re not just learning about math in her classes, the students are learning about life, she said.

“It’s not always going to be easy but no matter what they do, they have enough skills to be able to push through it,” she said. “They’re going to fall flat on their faces, but they’re going to get back up and figure it out.”

“We celebrate wonderful things here. If a kid wins spell bowl we all get out into the hallway and cheer for the kids that won. If our team wins a volleyball match we get out and cheer for those people who were a part of that championship game. We celebrate people’s successes,” Parker said.

Mark Gates

Southern Wells Community Schools

Mark Gates' journey to become a teacher was far from ordinary.

"I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up until I was 30. I worked in different restaurants as a manager and there was a point where I realized this wasn't what I wanted to do for the rest of my life," he recalled.

"I was missing my kids growing up and working too many hours. I was chasing the wrong things. I decided that I wanted to work in schools and be a teacher," he added.

He had earned a degree from IPFW in Public and Environmental Affairs in 2003, which was the same year he and his wife Chelle were married.

"When I went back to school at age 33, there were two solid years where I was working third shift, sleeping, and then studying to earn that education degree.



Mark Gates

She held our family together," he said. That job was third shift custodian at Southern Wells. When he got his teaching license from Taylor University in 2016, he knew where he wanted to be.

"I married into (Southern Wells). My wife graduated from here and her parents graduated from here. My kids go here and I fell in love with the community. This is such a great place. There was not a question that this is where I wanted to teach," Gates said.

He and Chelle are the parents of four children: Perrin, 16; Caleb, 13; Rylen, 11; and Zane, 9.

Now an English teacher at Southern Wells Junior High School, he is this year's Educator of the Year for the Southern Wells system, Gates feels quite honored. "This school has so many great teachers. I'm surrounded by such a great group that me being selected does my heart good. I am truly blessed."

In addition to teaching English, Gates is in charge of the school spelling bee, coaches junior high cross country and

junior high boys basketball. He's also the track coach at the junior high school, serves as the sophomore class sponsor at the high school and is the football public address announcer.

"Mr. Gates' classroom management is amazing," school principal Kim Conner wrote in her letter of recommendation. Gates engages his students with props and by dressing up as characters. "He uses very unique project ideas to enhance learning," she wrote.

"I teach English because I can teach other subjects through English," Gates said. "I can also bring in some of my favorite stories like 'The Hobbit' and 'And Then There Were None', so it's a win-win."

Gates gives special recognition to Mr. Merle Moser, one of his teachers at Fort Wayne Christian School from which he graduated in 1998. "He was my mentor and teacher in both junior and senior high school, and I know that I wouldn't be the person I am today without his shepherding. I hope that when my students have been out of school for 25 years, they look back on me like I look back on him."

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Committee members are, from left: seated, Angie Topp, American Mortgage; Lori Brubaker, Wells County Land Title; Janiece Lipsey, Creative Arts Council. Standing: Erin Prible, Wells County Chamber of Commerce; Patty Randall, ProFed Credit Union; Hattie Wondercheck, Wells County Chamber of Commerce; Krista Himes; Julie Quinn, 1st Source Bank; Steve Higgins, Boy Scouts of America.

Not present for the photo were: Lannette Bickel, Metropolitan Title; Cory Mann, OneIndiana Financial Group; Pam Gregory, Pages & Stuff; Gina Hon, First Merchants Bank; and Doug Brown, News-Banner Publications.



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2021: a year of major progress

The two groups specifically focused on the revitalization of the county's two largest communities celebrated, in large part, a return to normalcy in 2021 after annual events took quite the pandemic hiatus in 2020.

"We feel very blessed in getting to do all of our events and activities that we wanted to do," said Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., leader of the Bluffton NOW! group that works under the umbrella of Wells County Revitalization.



Michael Lautzenheiser Jr.

The only lingering effect from the pandemic was a limited capacity for the annual BrrFest fundraiser. Normally held in February, it was postponed until early April in order to avoid most restrictions.

"We look forward to getting our normal crowd back this year," he said.

The Community Reinvestment Program was again fully subscribed. The steering committee for that project focused on a different scoring criteria for 2021 and has further refined that for 2022. Grants for building improvements will be targeted to those buildings that have not received prior grants, buildings that will bring "currently unused space ready for use, both residential and commercial," Lautzenheiser said, and to correct unsafe conditions in existing buildings.



One of the group's long term goals was realized in 2021: getting downtown Bluffton officially designated as an Historic District.

"This gives building owners who qualify more resources for state loans and grants to further improve their buildings," he explained.

As 2021 was wrapping up, the group's Master Streetscape Plan was finalizing the fund raising for the "Pathways" project, which will transform five downtown alleyways, creating pedestrian-friendly areas that assist in connecting public parking and the Market Street corridor.

The Wells County Foundation announced a \$125,000 grant to the project.

"This is something we have been working on for several years and we're really excited about getting it completed in 2022," Lautzenheiser said.

A "banner year" in Ossian

Between the return of events held either virtually or not at all in 2020, the completion of the group's signature project, and the addition of a summer concert series, the Ossian Revitalization Committee could not be happier with how things turned out in 2021.

The dedication of the amphitheater at Archbold-Wilson Park in May capped more than five years of work.

"That was one of the key items in a comprehensive plan we completed in 2014 and we began raising money for it in 2016," committee chair Kody Kumfer said. "And to add the playground there along with it, well, it's a pretty big deal."

The first Summer Concert Series, a joint effort with the Ossian Park Board and sponsored by Barkley Builders, highlighted the year.



Kody Kumfer

"And it was so good to get our other events re-started," Kumfer continued, "and every one of them was a resounding success."

Those events include the annual Pork Chop Dinner as part of Ossian Days, during which Helen Witte's pies were auctioned off to benefit the revitalization efforts. This year's

auction set another record: \$5,500.

The Casino Night and the Hometown Christmas also enjoyed enthusiastic community support.

So, after such a "banner year," what's next for the group?

"This coming year, I think, will be a year to refocus and determine what our next project will be, which is a very exciting thing to do," Kumfer said. "We're all looking forward to it very much."

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Developing leaders, one at a time

Since the inception of Leadership Academy in 2008, there are now 246 individuals that have graduated from the program. Each year a group of 20 individuals gather from September through May to experience a life-changing program created by Dr. Tim Elmore, founder of Growing Leaders. Elmore uses image-based learning to help instill important leadership habits to people. The program is based off Elmore's program called Habitudes.

"Leadership Academy has improved my confidence in myself and my work because each class has given me different insights to who I am and how to lead others. I have become a better listener and communicator. The value I see in the program gives me self-awareness, improvement, and how I can become a leader."

Elizabeth Morales, AquaBlast



Jessica Seago, left, and Beth Singleton were the facilitators for the Level 1 Habitude of the "Velvet Covered Brick," which teaches that leaders must be both tough and tender as they resolve conflict.

The Habitudes leadership curriculum uses image-based learning to help instill important leadership habits to people. Each image introduces adults to powerful leadership principles rooted in real life, sparking conversations with facilitators that lead to memorable experiences. These unique and transformative encounters are a part of an ongoing process that builds leadership habits and attitudes.

"Leadership academy has been very valuable to me in many ways. It has taught me how to communicate with my subcontractors and co-workers on a



Level 1 participants completed the Real Colors assessment with facilitators Roger Shearer and Rae Ann O'Neill. The exercise gives participants a better understanding of the variety of personalities — where they fit into the spectrum and how to identify the strengths and challenges of the core personality types.

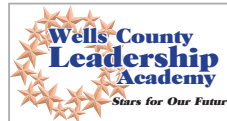
much better level. It also has helped me understand them a little better by being able to understand body language and personality traits. I really have enjoyed learning the Habitudes as they have all given me valuable information and tools to use in my everyday life at home and at work.

*Matthew Scott,
Ideal Builders*

Participants submit an application to participate and then the Wells County Leadership Academy Advisory Board reviews the applications and selects the individuals to participate. Approximately 20 individuals are selected to participate in the program from a variety of sectors in the community. "We really are looking for individuals that want to empower themselves and their team and understand the importance of why relationships are important in your growth," said Prible.

"Each year new and great friendships are formed and after the completion of the program they have created a sounding board for one another. It truly is an awesome sight to see each year."

A few of the Habitudes that are taught in the program allow participants to understand the importance of taking care of themselves such as Emotional Fuel, or the stresses of life can be overwhelming and so the discussion of Rivers and Floods is introduced, and being in leadership means having strong character and integrity such as the Iceberg. "Each has a very specific meaning and



For more information, call:
Erin Prible at 824-0510 or
eprible@wellscoc.com

Members of the Wells County Leadership Academy Advisory Board are: Jordan Arnold, Brandy Aschliman, Pamela Beckford, Chaz Carroll, Stacey Duncan, Becky Goshorn, Erin Prible, Kevin Pritchard, Beth Singleton, and Tammy Slater.

applies to every individual experiencing this journey," explained Prible.



More than a dozen community leaders donate their time to help teach the different "Habitude" lessons at the academy. Tim Drayer, left, and Mitch Harnish led the discussion on "Rivers and Floods," which teaches that leaders must act on a vision and keep their teams focused.

Leadership has taught me many things the last two years. I have learned to truly listen to others, And see the perspective of others point of view.

The tools I have gained, I will use to further my leadership skills. Learning how to network has been exciting also, and a game changer for me.

But the friendships I have gained from leadership academy has been the greatest gift of all.

Thank you, for letting me be apart of this wonderful program! It has been a blessing.

*Chastity McFarren,
Bi-County Services*

Each month, a four-hour session is facilitated by various community leaders bringing their experience and background to the group. "The Habitudes are led by over 20 volunteer community leaders, who have graduated from Leadership Academy, since 2008, or have gone through training to become a Facilitator," said Prible. "The time, energy and dedication of what each individual brings to the program is priceless."



Above: Leah Pursley of Heritage Pointe participates in a Level 2 class discussion. Below: Beth Fouch with Pretzels and Collin Roller with Ossian Furniture working together on a team building exercise.



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The Chamber Ambassadors, chaired by Casey Robbins in 2022, welcome new businesses with Ribbon Cuttings and mentor other Chamber Members. The group also recognizes one local business or organization as the Chamber Member of the Month. Chamber Ambassadors make sure each company or organization knows that their contributions to the local economy and the community are greatly appreciated.

Seated, from left: Hattie Wondercheck, Chamber; Erica Lehman, Coldwell Banker-Holloway; Alyssa Sponseller, Archbold & Lewis Insurance; Sandy Garcia; Erin Prible, Chamber. Standing: Casey Robbins, Farmers & Merchants State Bank; Nick Huffman, Steffen Group; Kevin Pritchard, Ruoff Mortgage; Keith Muhlenkamp, First Merchants Bank; Doug Fear, Edward Jones; Heather Morgan, National Oil; Doug Brown, News-Banner Publications. Not pictured: Jessica Beste, American Mortgage; Jean Bordner, News-Banner Publications; Erin Daugherty, State Farm Insurance; Stacey Duncan, WEG Commercial Motors; Cyndee Fiechter, North Eastern Group Realty; Stephanie Hiday, Magical Vacation Planner; Kody Kumfer, Forgotten Children Worldwide; Jamie Lemler, Thoma/Rich-Lemler Funeral Home.



January:
Karing for Kids



May:
Heartland REMC



September:
Corrective Chiropractic

2020 Ambassador of the Year



Jean Bordner

The 2021 Ambassador of the Year will be announced at the 2022 Annual Dinner

2021 Ambassadors of the Quarter

Each quarter, an ambassador is recognized for their level of participation and support of the program.

- First:** Alyssa Sponseller
Archbold & Lewis Insurance
- Second:** Nick Huffman
Steffen Group
- Third:** Casey Robbins
Farmers & Merchants State Bank
- Fourth:** Erica Lehman
Coldwell Banker Holloway



Alyssa Sponseller



Nick Huffman



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April:
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June:
Pena's Mechanical



July:
Jerry Flack's Inv. & Insur.



August:
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October:
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November:
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December:
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Above & Beyond
 Vehicle Reconditioning..... 525-1441
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Action Coach..... 450-9163
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 Internet-Telecom-TV..... 565-3131
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Allen Business Machines..... 744-4259
Almco Steel Products..... 824-1118
American Axle &
 Manufacturing..... 824-6800
American Legion Post 111..... 824-3815
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 Professionals..... (800) 347-2115
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 Therapy & Bodyworks..... 827-0541
Baller Signs..... 824-1987
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 Mary Kay Cosmetics..... 824-0187
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 MC Hair By Design
 Beauty Salon..... 273-1859
 McDonald's..... 824-0433
 Media Services Unlimited..... 273-2708
 Melching Machine..... 622-4315
 Mercy Seat Dentistry..... 823-3328
 Meridian Health Services..... 436-0932
 Metropolitan Title..... 824-0200
 Meyer Building..... 565-3274
 Meyer Renovation..... 414-7677

Mi Casa Mexican
 Restaurant..... 622-6555
 Midwest America
 Federal Credit Union..... 209-3440
 Mike Anderson Chevrolet
 of Ossian..... 622-4115
 Miller, Bruce & Terri..... (765) 404-1735
 Milli's Restaurant..... 827-0755
 Minnich's Antiques &
 General Store..... 227-6056
 Minnich's Lawn Care..... 760-4404
 Mitchel Enterprises..... 353-1050
 Montpelier Generating
 Station..... (765) 727-9125
 Monument Center..... 824-2832
 More Than Mail..... 824-7660
 Mr. B's Services..... 622-7070
 Mr. Kool Heating &
 Cooling Services..... 824-1126

N

National Oil & Gas..... 824-2220
 Neoti..... 494-1499
 News-Banner Publications..... 824-0224
 Nicholson Family Dental..... 824-2811
 NIPSCO..... 439-1330
 North American Title Co..... 248-5880
 North Eastern Group Realty..... 489-7095
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 Schools..... 622-4125
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Office 360 482-9674
 Old National Bank 310-6713
 OneIndiana Financial Group 273-9366
 Optimist Club of Bluffton 565-3486
 Ossian Hardware 622-4171
 Ossian Health Communities 622-7821
 Ottjes, Mr. Jim 417-2473
 Ouabache State Park 824-0926
 Outdoor Concepts 824-5189

P

Pages & Stuff 820-3120
 Pak-A-Sak 824-1566
 Park Center 824-1071
 Parlor City Cabinetry 824-8600
 Parlor City Trophy & Apparel 824-0216
 Paul Davis Restoration 436-7510
 Pena's Mechanical
 Contractors 622-1312
 PeopleLink Staffing
 Solutions 824-1797
 Perfect Pet Food Accessories,
 Training, Grooming 846-0276
 Perma-Column 622-7190
 Pet Esthetics 388-1651
 Peyton's Northern 824-0882
 Phil's One Stop 824-4848

Physicians Health Plan 432-6690
 Pierre's Party and
 Tent Rental 824-9434
 Pine Grove Apartments 565-4241
 Pitroad Collectibles (765) 713-1095
 Pizza Hut 824-5701
 PNC Bank 824-2510
 Posy Pot Florist 824-3330
 Potters Lawn Service 820-0437
 Power to the Meeple 273-1703
 Premier Flats 307-5505
 Premier Signs (888) 518-2498
 Pretzels, Inc. 824-4838
 Prible Ag Products (765) 728-2400
 Print Source 824-3911
 Pro Resources Staffing 356-6264
 ProFed Credit Union 824-5991
 Prough Design Builders 824-2089
 Prudential Billing and
 Consulting (888) 862-9377
 PTM Engraving 760-1986
 Purdue Cooperative
 Extension Service 824-6412

Q

Quality Car Care &
 Welding Supplies 824-5548

R

Radiance, LLC 273-8442

RAM Advertising 273-7456
 Raymond James
 Financial Services 824-8070
 RediMed 479-3523
 Redwood Living 240-0021
 Reed's Andy's Car Wash 824-3022
 Reed's Do It Best Hardware 824-9003
 Regional Chamber of
 Northeast Indiana 424-0863
 Reliance IO 245-2510
 Rem Johnston Printing 824-1528
 Renovate Counseling
 Services 307-5030
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 River Terrace Retirement
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 Riverstone Dental 824-4614
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 Group (585) 889-9090
 Rock Creek Stone Quarry 273-1851
 Rod's Rustics 557-8451
 Roembke Mfg. & Design 622-4135
 Run Hard, Run Well 414-1299
 Ruoff Mortgage 489-5595
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Senior MoneyLife 296-0437
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 Schools.....(765) 728-5537
 Southern Wells FFA.....(765) 728-5534
 Spherion Staffing..... 706-5050
 Sprunger & Sprunger,
 Attorneys at Law..... 846-6788
 Sprunger Title 589-2338
 SR Schaefer Trucking..... 694-6980
 Stag Bar and Grill 827-0756
 Star Engineering & Machine..... 824-4825
 Star Insurance Agency 724-3111
 State Farm Insurance:
 Ben Burman..... 824-1928
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 Erin Daugherty..... 827-0527
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 Steffen Financial Group..... 824-8175
 Steffen Group Inc. 824-3006
 Steffen Oil..... 824-3772
 Stewart, Brimmer, Peters & Cady
 dba Insurance Services..... 827-9990
 Strategence Capital 236-0385
 Stronghold Glass 824-4715
 Sturgeon Excavating 273-2048
 Sturgeon Mechanical..... 273-1878
 Sturgeon Seeding Services..... 273-5116
 Stylus Technologies..... 824-8953
 Subway..... 824-7821
 Sweet Obsessions-Bake
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 Temp-Masters..... 422-1730
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 The Bread Guy 210-6366
 The Center for Energy
 Education..... 224-0232
 The Corner Depot..... 824-4775
 The Dance Co. 356-5542
 The Garage 273-0600
 The Gathering Place..... 525-0134
 The Groomin' Shop 273-6169
 The Hagerman Group..... 424-1470
 The Hideaway..... 341-6749
 The Literacy Alliance 426-7323
 The Mattress & Furniture Store . 353-1099
 The Nutrition Loft..... 353-1554
 The Parlor City Brewing
 Company 307-3858
 The ROP Shop(844) 697-6774
 Thoma/Rich, Lemler
 Funeral Home..... 824-3850
 Three Rivers Federal
 Credit Union..... 824-0042
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Cheryl Buckland	Brandie Cotton
Stephen Esterhai	Cindy Gordon
Larry Peeper	Bruce Stinson

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Town of Markle 758-3193
Town of Ossian 622-4251
Treeboy Productions 273-6203
Trine University..... 665-4316
True Value Insurance Agency.... 452-0192
Trusted Solutions Group..... 622-6000
TTG Equipment 565-3659
24/7 Cars 327-3270
20/20 Custom Molded Plastics.. 565-2020
Two Brothers Generator
Sales & Services 638-4514

U

United Way of Wells County 824-5589
Utz Quality Foods 824-2800

V

VacMan Air Duct Cleaning 273-0313
Valero Renewable Fuels..... 846-0011
Velocity Motors 824-2165
Villa North Centre 827-8755

W

Waggin & Braggin
Pet Services 258-2606
Wal-Mart Supercenter 824-0296
WEG Commercial Motors..... 827-2200
Welches All Vehicle Repair..... 824-3811
Wells Business Development... 820-0113

Wells Community
Boys & Girls Club 824-5070
Wells County 4-H Association ... 824-6412
Wells County Automotive
Supply - NAPA..... 824-4460
Wells County EMS..... 827-0166
Wells County Foundation 824-8620
Wells County Historical Society
& Museum 824-9956
Wells County Land Title 824-5263
Wells County Lock-Up 824-4887
Wells County Public Library 824-1612
Wells County Republicans..... 273-1920
Wells County Voice..... 820-2576
Westland, LLC 273-6680
Wheeler's Bees 223-7354
WorkOne Northeast..... 824-0855
WZBD Radio..... 589-9300

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Ya Ya's Mid-Century & Modern.. 223-4984
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Calendar offers many opportunities for involvement

The Chamber of Commerce organizes a number of events during the year that benefits members, the community and the Chamber itself.

Business Before/After Hours

These events serve two purposes: an opportunity for a member company to showcase their business; and an opportunity for members to network and get better acquainted with their community colleagues.

Parlor City Market

The market offers fresh fruits, vegetables, baked goods, and hand-made artisan items for sale. The market is held at the Parlor City Plaza every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., starting June 4 and running through Sept. 17.

Small Business Assistance

The Chamber partners with the Small Business Development Center who comes on an as-needed basis to provide business assistance to not only new companies, but also companies already in business. This assistance is *free* and confidential.



Fund Raisers

In order to keep dues to a minimum, the Chamber has two major fund raising events each year.

During the annual 4-H Fair in July, a Chicken BBQ is held, and the popular annual golf outing is held each August.

Quarterly Membership Luncheons

Chamber members hear important speakers throughout the year. These include an economic forecast, “state of the city” address, turnaround awards and other important topics.

In addition, the Chamber hosts breakfast meetings and seminars throughout the year

Chamber 2022 Calendar

- Annual Dinner – Feb. 28
- Quarterly Membership Luncheons – Winter, Spring, Fall and Christmas
- Chicken BBQ Fundraiser – July 18
- Golf Expo – August 4

with helpful, timely topics and speakers.

Third House Meetings

Legislative representatives from the state and national levels have spoken at Third House Meetings throughout the years. Past speakers have recently included State Senator Travis Holdman and State Representatives Dan Leonard and Matt Lehman. These are traditional “town hall meetings” at which the public is invited.

There will be at least one Third House Meeting during the 2022 Indiana Legislative session. Watch for further announcements about specific dates.

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Local chamber part of regional partnership

The mission of the Regional Chamber is to promote an environment in Northeast Indiana in which individuals, businesses and communities thrive in a global economy. In pursuit of that mission, the Regional Chamber aligns our region's priorities into a legislative agenda, and presses for the passage of that agenda at the state and federal level.

The Regional Chamber serves as a complement to local and regional economic development organization's by creating a better environment, in which they can help attract, retain and grow businesses. The Regional Chamber serves as an added-value to local chambers of commerce and their members as well. Most local chambers lack the resources necessary to mount sustained advocacy efforts for their members at the state and federal



levels. The Regional Chamber will provide that service on behalf of local chambers when appropriate, and will defer to the more intimate relationship between local chambers, their members, and their legislators when appropriate. Far from seeking to compete with local chambers of commerce, the Regional Chamber seeks to bolster the cadre of services they are able to offer to their members.

"We have been very pleased being a part of the NEICC as they keep us up to date on legislative actions, workforce development initiatives, and provides the region with a voice at the State and National levels," Erin Prible said. "This partnership is a huge advantage for our region."



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Member Appreciation Day



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The 32nd Annual Chicken BBQ Event

... returned to the 4-H Park Pavilion with both dine-in and carry-out. Chamber members once again came together to help make this event one of our major fundraisers and one of the most popular draws at the fair.



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The 34th Annual Chamber Golf Expo

... was held on August 5 at Timber Ridge Golf Course and is the premier event of the season. Community members came together and formed a record number of 40 teams with 80 sponsors supporting the event, and over 50 volunteers making the day exceptional.

“The Chamber Golf Expo is not your typical golf outing. There is some type of activity on each hole, which makes the day fun and interactive for all participants,” said Erin Prible, Executive Director, Wells County Chamber of Commerce. “Tee Station Sponsors play games, hand out prizes, and add to the enjoyment of the day. Hiday Motors was the Hole-In-One Prize sponsor providing a 2021 Ram 1500 Big Horn 4x4 on the course.”

A new sponsorship was added this year to recognize Heartland REMC as the Mulligan sponsor and American Axle & Manufacturing of Bluffton (AAM) as a new Beverage Cart Sponsor. In addition, the Golf Cart Sponsors this year were Andrews & Crell, Edge Manufacturing, Forgiven Church, James S Jackson, Lowe’s, and Ruoff Mortgage.



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Business Before and After Hours

The Chamber's popular meet-and-greet events have been perhaps the most impacted by the pandemic, but began their return in mid-2021. Hosting an event gives a Chamber Member the opportunity to promote themselves and it gives members the chance to get to know each other. The Bluffton Optimist Club hosted a morning breakfast at the Arts, Commerce & Visitors Centre, while the new Premier Flats offered refreshments and tours of their new luxury apartments as part of their grand opening. To host a Business Before or After Hours, contact the Chamber office.



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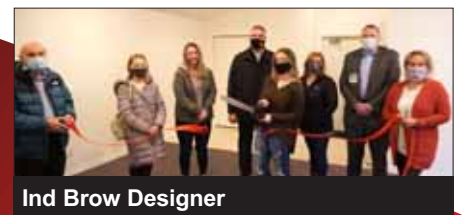
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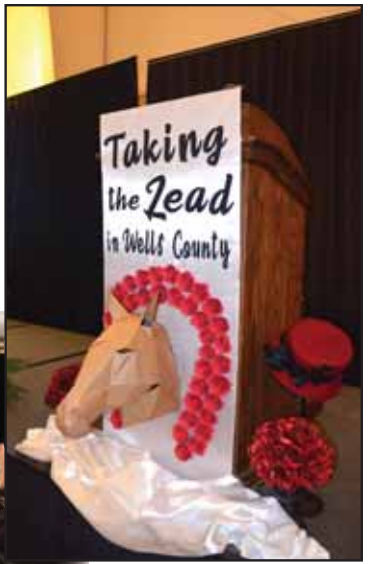
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Scenes from our 2021 Annual Dinner

Delayed to late April to avoid those pandemic restrictions, the 2021 theme connected to the upcoming Kentucky Derby: "Taking the Lead" in Wells County. A record crowd welcomed the return to gathering as Chamber Members to celebrate the educators, business and citizen of the year.






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The Wells County Chamber of Commerce once again partnered with First Bank of Berne to promote Shop Local in Wells County. First Bank of Berne sponsored billboard, newspaper, and radio ads to encourage our citizens to support our local businesses. The Chamber offered Shop Local Passport programs for the holidays encouraging community members to think of our small businesses first. Local businesses donated prizes and the Chamber sponsored Chamber Bucks as the Grand Prize drawing for the initiative.

Support Local, Shop Local with Chamber Bucks!

Click on the "Chamber Bucks" link on the Chamber's website for a current list of participating members!



Creativity, entrepreneurship, and passion are what the American economy is founded upon. Nurturing local business ensures a strong community and a better place to live. Buying local means more money stays in the community and those businesses often donate to local causes.

One very simple way to keep those dollars in our community and "Support Local" is to purchase *Chamber Bucks* ... Gift Certificates redeemable only at participating Chamber member businesses. The program is designed to promote our members and keep dollars in our community.

There are over 200 businesses that accept *Chamber Bucks*

in Wells County. *Chamber Bucks* are offered through the Wells County Chamber of Commerce in increments of \$5 and \$10.

Supporting our local businesses is embracing what makes our community unique. These local business owners live here, volunteer in programs, support causes, and serve in leadership roles. Local ownership of business means residents with roots in the community are involved in key development decisions that shape our local environment.

Chamber Bucks can be purchased for any reason because it is the perfect gift for anyone ... holiday gifts, anniversaries, birthdays, perfect attendance, or just to say thank you.

Chamber Bucks can be purchased at the **Wells County Chamber of Commerce**, 211 Water Street in Bluffton, call 824-0510.

They can also be purchased at the following:

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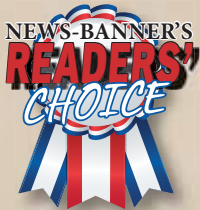


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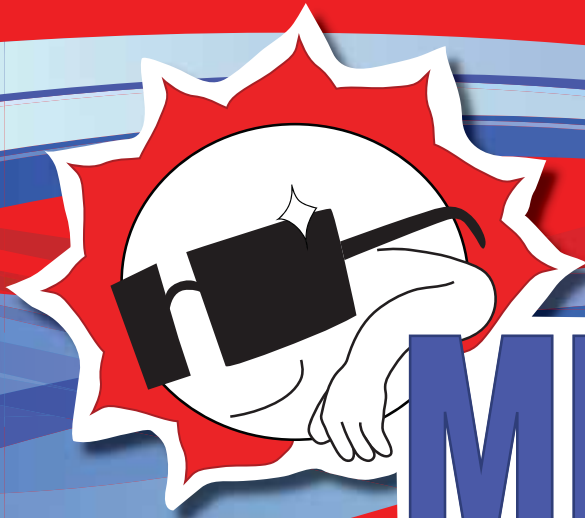
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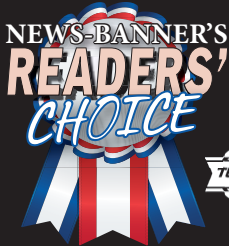
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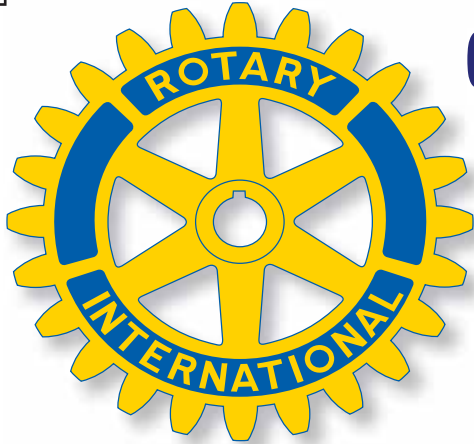
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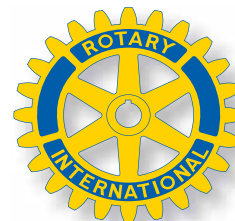
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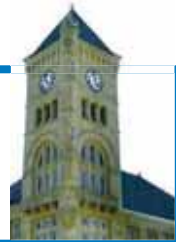
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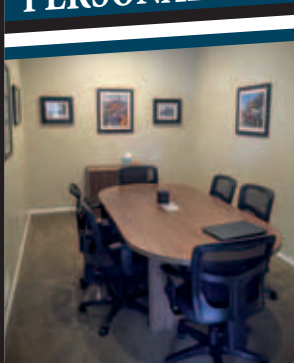
I'm a native Hoosier with a passion for assisting clients with their diverse personal and professional needs. I have been taught that no matter what you do, what matters most is your integrity and work ethic, and understand that no two individuals will have the same legal needs. *Bar Admissions:* Supreme Court of Indiana; *Education:* Ave Maria School of Law, Ann Arbor, Michigan, J.D. - 2007



David G. Crell

The most enjoyable part of being a lawyer is combining my genuine interest in others with my passion for helping people. I have successfully performed more jury trials in 10 years than most lawyers get to do in a lifetime. *Awards:* Selected as a Top Lawyer in Fort Wayne Monthly and as a Rising Star by Super Lawyers. Rated "Superb" by AVVO.

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