



Mansfield's Irene Coon shares life lessons at 106

Photo and Article By Traci Little

MANSFIELD — When Irene Coon laughs, it's easy to forget she is 106 years old. Her eyes are bright and tender, and her voice, soft and kind.

"I don't do anything special," she said with a grin when asked about the secret to her youthful glow. "Soap and water. That's it."

Did she ever in her wildest dreams imagine she would live to be 106? "I never thought I'd live to be 106. My goodness, no. I was 85 when my husband died, and I thought I'd be gone before long after he went. Here I am. Everybody's been so good to me. That makes a difference," reflected Irene.

At 106, Coon is believed to be one of the oldest living residents of Richland County. During a recent conversation this week, she graciously shared her life story, offering reflections on faith, family, and the importance of slowing down.

What a gift to be able to celebrate her 106th birthday on Nov. 10. She has lived through more than a century of change — from the early days of automobiles to smartphones and FaceTime — yet remains grounded in simple values: faith, family, kindness, and taking life as it comes.

"I can't say I ever rode in a horse and buggy," Irene said. "We had a black Ford with side curtains."

Born in 1919 in North Robinson, Coon grew up in Crawford County as the only girl among four brothers. Her family lived in a converted one-room schoolhouse on what locals called the "back street," a home filled with faith, visitors, picnics, and strong parental guidance.

"We had wonderful parents," she said. "Church was important, and so was family."

A Simpler Childhood

Coon attended a small local grade school before graduating from North Robinson High School in 1937, one of just 19 students in her class.

"We didn't have all the gadgets kids have now," she said. "We played ball, old-fashioned games, and we played outside a lot. At Christmas, maybe you got a doll — and that was enough."

She recalls watching modern day children open gifts and how much has changed.

"They open one, then another, then another," she said. "I wonder if they appreciate it all."

A Love Story That Began With a Dollar

Irene met her husband, Maynard "Cooney" Coon, while working at a grocery store after high school. He was a young math and science teacher who stopped in regularly to buy sandwich supplies — and one day, borrowed a dollar.

"He paid me back," she laughed. "Then he asked me if I wanted to go roller skating or to the movies."

They married on June 30, 1940, and went on to share 64 years of marriage — a partnership built on faith, teamwork, and genuine affection.

"We went everywhere together," Irene said. "He always wanted me to ride along."

Maynard served as an officer in the U.S. Navy during World War II, and Irene vividly recalls traveling alone by train from Crestline to California — and even to Oregon — to reunite with him during the war, guided only by letters and word-of-mouth instructions.

"It was an adventure for sure," she said. "It certainly brought us closer."



Irene believes the foundation of her 64-year marriage to her husband, Maynard, was simple but deeply rooted. "It had to be love," she said, noting that love meant more than romance or convenience. "I think people have the wrong meaning of love anymore." For the Coons, faith played a central role. Attending church together, raising their children in faith, and sharing common values helped anchor their relationship through seasons of change, sacrifice, and separation during World War II. "Going to church together — that mattered," Irene said. "Love the Lord. Love your family."

Just as important was their partnership in everyday life. "We went so many places together," she recalled. Whether traveling, attending meetings, or simply running errands, Maynard wanted her by his side. "He always wanted me to ride along," Irene said their marriage thrived because they worked as a team, supporting one another in both small routines and major life moments. "You have to work together not against one another — that's another thing that made it special," she said. Even hobbies became shared experiences. "I learned to enjoy fishing, not because I especially liked it, but because I could spend time with him." In a world that often rushes past commitment, Irene's marriage

stands as a quiet reminder that lasting love is built through faith, togetherness, and choosing each other — day after day.

Faith, Family and Service

After the war, the couple settled into family life, raising three children — two daughters and a son — while Maynard built a career in education, eventually serving as a superintendent at Madison. Irene stayed home, raising the children, keeping the household running, and ensuring dinner was on the table every evening at 5 p.m.

"She was always there," her daughters said. "You never came home to an empty house. The table was always set — knife, fork, and spoon for every meal. She would look at the plate and say, 'I don't have the right amount of color in my meal.' She always made sure there was a variety of color, taste and texture," remembers daughter Jo Ann Maxey.

(Continued on Page 9)

Winter reading program begins at all MRCPL locations

The Mansfield/Richland County Public Library (MRCPL) invites the community to take part in its annual Winter Reading Program, running Jan. 5–31. Community members are encouraged to cozy up indoors this winter and be rewarded for reading books, eBooks or audiobooks.

The Winter Reading Program is open to readers of all ages, with prizes available for children, teens, and adults. Participants simply read a book and submit a completed ticket, either in person or online, to be entered into weekly prize drawings.

Tickets are available at all nine MRCPL locations, at any Bookmobile stop, or through an online submission option on the Library's website. Adults can also follow MRCPL on Facebook during the program for additional chances to win.

For added convenience, the MRCPL Ontario Branch offers 24/7 hold lockers for after-hours pickup. When placing an item on hold, select "Ontario Pickup Locker" as the pickup location.

For access to 24/7 digital resources, library hours, and complete details about the Winter Reading Program, visit mrcpl.org.

LOST IN A BOOK



A Book Review
By Mandy Belczak Gurney

Some of my top five books of 2025 really have taken the place of my top five of all time.

Theo of Golden and *My Friends* will be stand out books for life. *We All Live Here* found me at a time when I really needed to laugh through pain. *The River is Waiting* and *The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell* were both so original with beautiful characters that leave a mark on your heart. Happy reading friends and happy new year.



THE ENTERTAINMENT EXAMINER

— By Ian Stumbo —



Avatar: Fire and Ash is the latest in James Cameron's world of the Na'vi. In this installment, Jake (Sam Worthington) and Neytiri (Zoe Saldana) are still mourning the loss of their son while deciding what to be done about their son Spider, who is human. Soon, a vicious tribe called the Ash people come to threaten them while still contending with the military presence.

There are few movies I will actually see in 3D and *Avatar* is definitely one of those. The way the movies are shot with the 3D put the audience right in the center of this world. There are times where the characters are moving through the water and it feels like the audience is in the water with them.

The acting and action sequences are top notch as always along with a supporting cast including Sigourney Weaver, Edie Falco, Giovanni Ribisi and Stephen Lang.

The thing that makes this my least favorite of the three is the repetition of the plot. Many of the scenes and dialogue seemed to be used from the other two films and the characters motivations of running from danger seemed to be been there done that in terms of the plot. If Cameron does do a fourth film, it would be nice to start the film with a central crisis and then have that over the length of the film. This movie just did not justify its three hour run time.

I am recommending *Avatar: Fire and Ash* for its great performances, direction and world immersion. It just feels like these movies need a different direction to go in and while the Ash people are fine villains it needed something more to elevate it above my favorite entry, which is the second one.



Film available for parents of children who stutter

The Stuttering Foundation's film entitled *Help! My Child is Stuttering* is available at <https://www.stutteringhelp.org/content/help-my-child-stuttering>.

In this 16-minute film, parents and speech-language experts talk about how to promote easier talking as they interact with their children. The professionals offer simple tips that parents can follow easily.

The film features some of the world's leading therapists with children who stutter including Lisa A Scott, Ph.D. of the Florida State University's School of Communication Science and Disorders; Ellen Kelly, Ph.D., of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine; speech-language consultants Frances Cook, MBE, MSc, Willie Botterill, MSc, and Elaine Kelman, MSc., from the Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children in London.

"This is an important tool for families and teachers of children who stutter," added Jane Fraser, president of the nonprofit Stuttering Foundation.

"This film is designed to give parents and teachers the tools they need to play a vital role in the process of helping children who stutter."

For more information about stuttering write the nonprofit Stuttering Foundation, PO Box 11749, Memphis, TN 38111-0749, call 800-992-9392 or visit www.stutteringhelp.org.

Since 1947, the nonprofit Foundation has provided free materials to public libraries nationwide. A library that will shelve the current offer can download a request form at <http://www.stutteringhelp.org/libraries-information> or e-mail info@stutteringhelp.org.

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Vol. 65
No. 13

Tribune-Courier



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News Briefs

The Mansfield/Richland County Public Library (MRCPL) Evergreen Bookshop will be open for the monthly Friends' Used Book Sale on Friday, Jan. 9, from noon to 4 pm and Saturday, Jan. 10, from 10 am to 3 pm.

A preview sale will be held for Friends of the Library members only on Thursday, Jan. 8, from noon to 4 pm. Memberships may be purchased at the preview sale (\$3 per year for individuals).

The sale is sponsored by the Friends of the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library. Materials are library discards and donations offered for sale at low prices. The bookshop is stocked with "new to the store" items each month. All proceeds sponsor MRCPL activities.

The bookshop is staffed exclusively by volunteers in downtown Mansfield at 37 N. Walnut St., next to the main library.

For more information call 419-526-4652 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/EvergreenBookshopFOL>.

★

A recycling trailer will be in the parking lot at Ontario United Methodist Church, 3540 Park Avenue West, Jan. 24 and 25. Acceptable items include steel and aluminum cans, crushed milk jugs, detergent bottles, plastic bottles with number 1 or 2 on the bottom, broken down cardboard, all papers included with the newspaper but no other magazines or paper. Please remove caps from bottles and rinse all containers well.

★

All Souls Unitarian Universalist of Bellville, 25 Church St., Bellville, will welcome Irv Oslin on Sunday, Jan. 11, at 10:30 am. The subject will be "War Stories: Confessions of a Hillbilly Pacifist." For information visit www.allsoulsuuhio.org.

★

Kingwood Center Gardens is now closed to the public as volunteers pack away Christmas and prepare for the upcoming season. The Garden & Gift Shop and Gateway Café will also be closed with the café reopening under new management in 2026. Kingwood will be open on select dates for private rentals during this time.



A TEAM OF VOLUNTEERS from Ohio Maple Producers came to Malabar Farm State Park to set lines to tap 150–200 sugar maple trees. The volunteers' goal was to aid Malabar Farm in recovering from the storm damage it suffered in 2022. Galen Smith, the Ohio Maple Producers Association President of the Board, shared that his interest in maple syrup production began over 20 years ago when he attended Malabar's Maple Syrup festival and heard the presentation in the sugar shack. This year's festival will be held the first two weekends of March.

Kingwood reopens on Saturday, Jan. 31 for Winter's Interlude – an Orchid Experience. Winter's Interlude is on display Saturday, Jan. 31 through March 6 and is included with general garden admission: \$10 for non-members, \$5 for 7–18 years, and free for children six and under, and free for Kingwood members. Kingwood Center Gardens also offers educational programs about orchids for children and adults. Learn more at Kingwoodcenter.org or call 419-522-0211.

★

The Lexington Area Senior Citizens Inc., invites those 55 and older to attend meetings the third Wednesday of every month at 11:30 am at Der Dutchman, Rt. 96, Bellville. Cost is \$17 for the meal, with an additional \$2 for pie.

The next meal will Jan. 21, and will include pork. Jan Maddy, world traveler, will speak to the group.

For information visit www.lexasc.org. Dues are \$10 per year.

★

A special meeting of the Richland County Republican Party Ontario Central Committee will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 6, at 4:30 pm, at PR Machine Works, 1825 Nussbaum Pkwy., Ontario to appoint a council member for the 4th Ward in the City of Ontario.



**Mansfield/Richland County
Public Library**

WINTER

Reading Program

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Jan. 5-31, 2026



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ALL AGES!

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mrcpl.org

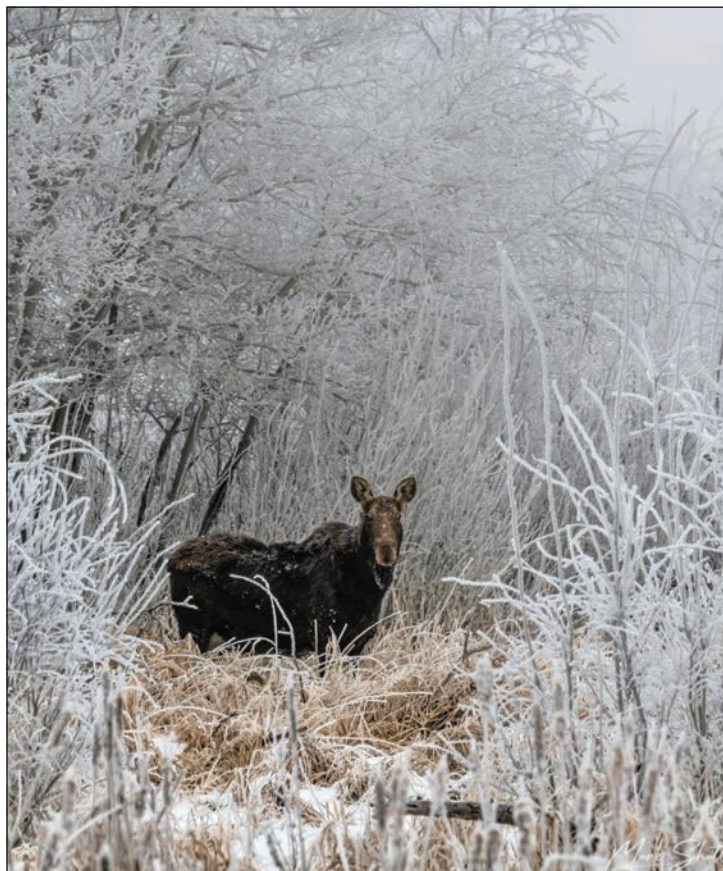
Roseland Neighborhood Family Fest planned for Saturday, Jan. 10

Richland County Children Services (RCCS), in collaboration with Roseland Area Neighborhood Watch President Robert Beatty and Maddox Memorial Church of God in Christ, are coming together for the “Roseland Neighborhood Family Fest — Celebrating Community in the New Year “ for children and families.

The celebration will be held at Maddox Memorial Church, 1148 Walker Lake Rd., Mansfield, on Saturday, Jan. 10, from 11 am to 1 pm.

The event will feature music, food, giveaways, and so much more! Bring your family, bring your friends, and bring your festive spirit — this is one celebration you won’t want to miss!

For more information or to be part of the celebration contact Robert Beatty, Roseland Neighborhood Watch President, at 419-610-9469 or Brigitte Coles, Richland County Children Services Community Engagement Supervisor, at 419-774-4168 or brigitte.coles@jfs.ohio.gov.



Canada • Photo By Mark Shutt

Church Directory

Lexington Church of the Cross

236 Otterbein Dr., Lexington
419-884-2150 • Churchofthecrosslex.com

Pastor-Rev. Dr. Edna Stahl

Sunday Worship 9:30 am

Junior Church for 10 and under • Wesley Class 10:45

5th Sunday of the month-Do Something Sunday AA, Girl Scouts,

Yoga, Knotty Ladies

and Bible Study.

Ontario United Methodist Church

3540 Park Avenue West., Ontario

419-529-4345 • ontarioumc.com

Rev. J.P. Snyder

9:30 am Grace & Eggs

11 am Sunday Worship and Kingdom Kids

St. John's United Church of Christ

2010 Park Avenue West, Mansfield

(At Hope Lutheran Next to Drug Mart)

419-522-2813 • www.stjohnsmansfield.org

contact@stjohnsmansfield.org

Pastor Faith Proietti • 11 am Sunday Worship

Office hours: Mon-Fri 9 am to 1 pm

AA Meetings M & F 10 am & noon;

Wed. noon Brown Bag and Sat. 6 pm

Trinity Grace Fellowship

1592 Grace St., Mansfield

419-589-5890 • trinitygracefellowship.org

Pastor Larry Carnes

9:30 am Sunday Worship • 11 am Sunday School

Bible Study Mondays 2 pm

G & M Body & Paint Shop

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State Farm Fire and Casualty Company, State Farm General Insurance Company, Bloomington, IL

State Farm Florida Insurance Company, Winter Haven, FL

State Farm Lloyds, Richardson, TX

Downtown Mansfield construction quiets for winter months

Main Street Mansfield has underwent major upgrades over the past year and the city has released an update about the project.

The project has now entered its planned winter break. Main Street is now reopened for the season with the newly improved streetscape from 3rd to 6th.

In 2025 30 construction workers put in nearly 16,000 hours with 4,173 feet of water main installed from 5th to 1st. Thirty-eight service connections were installed. The oldest section of water main replaced was 104 years old with the estimated life-expectancy of the new water main to be 100 years or more.

During 2025, 23 light pole foundations were installed with about 180 truckloads of concrete — roughly 3,600 tons — poured. Over 20,000 brick pavers were also installed.

Underground Infrastructure includes a new 12" water main installed from 1st Street to 6th, including new hydrants and service tie-ins. Storm sewers have been upgraded along the entire corridor and conduit installation has been completed for traffic signals, pedestrian signals and lighting.

Irrigation, planter foundations and other infrastructure was installed to support landscaping and utility relocations were performed with Ohio Edison, Brightspeed and other partners.

Basement spaces that extended under the sidewalk were closed and filled to support the new sidewalks.

Completed streetscape improvements include new sidewalks, curbs and ADA ramps installed from 3rd to 6th Street. Brick crosswalks were installed at Temple Ct. and Dickson Ave. and decorative brickwork was installed in sidewalks from 3rd to 5th.

Intersections at 3rd and 4th Street were rebuilt with new drainage, concrete, crosswalks and signal foundations. 3rd St. crosswalks were temporarily filled with asphalt for the winter, until the temperature permits permanent brick installation.

Piers, retaining walls and foundation structures were installed throughout the corridor to prepare for final architectural features.

Preparing for the next construction season, light pole foundations and traffic and pedestrian signal foundations were installed from 1st through 6th. The North and South Plazas have been excavated and foundations were begun for hardscape features. Old features including the gazebo at 4th and Main, planters and several trees were

removed.

Temporary lighting has been installed to maintain safety until permanent lighting is ready.

Main Street is open again for traffic. Nearly all work north of 3rd Street is now complete, offering a sneak preview of the project. Resurfacing, final hardscape/landscape features and lighting still remain to be completed north of 3rd.

Construction will mostly pause for the season, as planned. Permanent lighting will be installed over the winter but will not require closures.

Full construction will resume in spring as temperatures and weather allows, continuing through 2026 to the completion of the project.

In the spring and summer of 2026, streetscape work will resume from 3rd to 1st Street, and Park Avenue, between Main and Diamond. This work will include new sidewalks and curbs, brick crossings, landscaping, signal poles and lighting.

Summer work will see an upgrade of the plazas at Park and Main with new hardscape, fountain rebuild, furnishings and landscaping.

In the fall, final resurfacing will be completed throughout the corridor and Main Street will be converted to two-way traffic.

This project is a \$19.3 million investment in the heart of Downtown Mansfield with 82 percent non-local funding. It is one of the largest infrastructure and streetscape projects in Mansfield history.

The project aims to provide improved access to local businesses, better opportunities for new business development, a safer and more walkable, pedestrian friendly environment and a beautified downtown. These improvements are designed to enhance quality of life, support local businesses, strengthen tourism and events, and set the stage for a vibrant, walkable, welcoming downtown experience for decades to come.

For more information visit MainStreetMansfield.com or text "Mainstreet" to 419-443-6519 for real-time alerts. Submit ideas or feedback through the website or by texting.



Obituary Listings for Wappner Funeral Directors

Ila Mae Barnett, December 26
Eileen Guider Fallon, December 26
Eileen Christus, December 27
Hazel Jean Hirtz, December 27
Charles Edward Adams, January 1

View Full Obituaries at www.dignitymemorial.com

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www.wappner.com



SHIRLEY WRIGHT had a visit from Santa Claus at the Ontario Lions Club Christmas party.

Tips provided for staying safe and warm during cold winter months

As winter continues, Columbia Gas wants to ensure customers are prepared for the cold temperatures and adverse weather ahead. Here are some tips to help customers stay safe and warm this season.

Inside your home

- Space heaters can provide comfort but should be used with caution. When using one, ensure it is placed on a hard, non-flammable surface away from furniture and flammable materials/products.
- Ensure appliances and heating equipment, such as a furnace, water heater and stove, are inspected and operating properly. All equipment should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Never use a stove or oven as a heat source in your home; ovens are designed to heat food and should only be operated with the door closed.
- Don't burn charcoal or run a generator indoors or in enclosed spaces.
- Clean your chimney and check for blockages at least once a year before using your fireplace.

Outside your home

- Remember to clear snow and ice from your intake and exhaust vents. This can help you avoid carbon monoxide buildup and operational issues with your appliances.
- Keep your meter visible at all times so it is accessible for maintenance or in an emergency.
- Don't use a shovel or hammer to break up snow or ice on your meter. Use a broom instead.
- Be careful using a snow blower or plow near your meter.

If there is a "rotten egg" odor or you think there may be a gas leak, STOP what you are doing, LEAVE the area immediately and CALL 911 and Columbia Gas at 800-344-4077.

If you're concerned there may be CO build-up, or if you are experiencing CO poisoning symptoms (including headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, irregular breathing, or feeling ill or tired at home but fine when you're away), get outside IMMEDIATELY and call 911.

Remember, CO is an odorless, tasteless, non-corrosive gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, natural gas, propane or oil) burn incompletely.

For more winter weather and gas safety tips, visit <https://www.columbiagasohio.com/safety/weather-safety/winter-weather-safety>.

Festival celebrates new voices and bold stories at the Renaissance

The Renaissance Theatre proudly announces the return of the Emerging Artists Festival, an annual celebration of creativity, innovation, and the next generation of theatrical storytellers. Under the guidance of Artistic Director Michael Thomas, this year's festival will once again spotlight groundbreaking new works that challenge, inspire, and entertain.

Taking place in Theatre 166, 166 Park Avenue West, Mansfield, the 2026 Emerging Artists Festival will feature a lineup of original plays, screenplays and a musical, each developed and presented through the Renaissance's workshop process. The festival gives audiences a rare opportunity to experience new works in progress — and to play a role in shaping their evolution. All performances begin at 7:30 pm. Tickets are pay-what-you-want per event. Productions include:

Beulah-Joyce by Scott Carter Cooper, Friday, Jan. 9. A lunch lady aspires to a better life, and receives extra motivation from a college student who has her whole life ahead of her.

Flowers on the Moon by R.L. Bowersox, Friday, Jan. 16. A mysterious young man shows up at the home of an elderly woman, claiming he is her long-dead husband who died many years ago in the war.

Scouts by Catherine Epstein, Wednesday, Jan. 21. Three teenagers undertake a misguided tree-planting project in a forest preserve, hoping to be made Eagle Scouts

Three Septembers by Aaron James Nicolas and Michael Thomas—Friday, Jan. 30. A musical about the impact of loneliness, longing and isolation, it tells the story of three different women in three different decades, who have one thing in common - their voices have echoed within the same walls of the same house.

Each selected piece will be developed over an intensive one-week residency, culminating in a public reading where audience feedback becomes an essential part of the creative process.

The Emerging Artists Festival serves as a launchpad for new voices in theatre and film. Each year, artists from around the country submit original works that have never before been produced or workshopped. Selected pieces are paired with directors, actors, and dramaturgs who collaborate to refine and strengthen the material in preparation for its first public presentation.

Every season 300-400 submissions are received from all over the world, and from them, finalists are narrowed down to the top 50, then the top 10 and finally, the final 5.

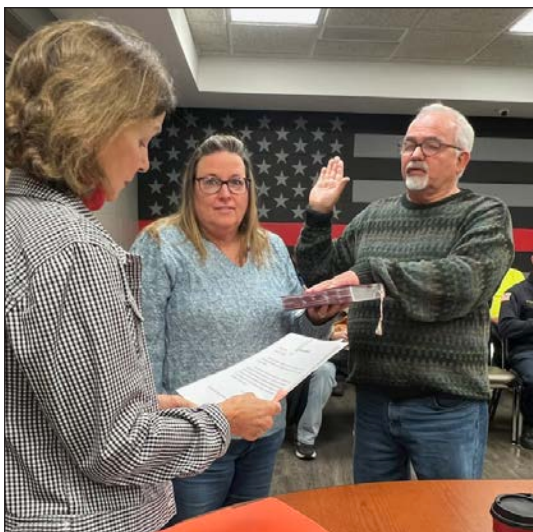
For tickets or more information visit www.rentickets.org, visit boxoffice@mansfieldtickets.com or call 419-522-2726.

Mansfield Club to host Talkin' Cleveland Baseball event

The Kiwanis Club of Mansfield will host a "Talkin' Cleveland Baseball" luncheon featuring a live auction of baseball items. Keynote speakers are Bob DiBiasio, Cleveland Guardians Senior Vice-President of Public Affairs, radio broadcaster Jim Rosenhaus and television broadcaster Matt Underwood. The event takes place on Thursday, Feb. 12, at Der Dutchman Restaurant, 720 St. Rt. 97 W., Bellville.

Doors open at 10:45 am and the program begins at 11:30 am. Tickets are \$25 and include lunch buffet. Tickets are available at the Park National Bank Ontario office on Lexington-Springmill Rd. and from any Kiwanis Club of Mansfield member. Tickets may also be purchased online at <https://thekiwanisclubofmansfield.org/>. Click on the "event" tab to purchase. Net proceeds from the event will benefit The Friendly House Afterschool Program. Sponsorship is provided by Richland County Agricultural Society, Park National Bank, Ritter's Office Outfitters, Mechanics Bank and Warren-Rupp.

The Kiwanis Club of Mansfield was chartered in June 1920. It's partnership with the Friendly House dates to 1924. Founded in 1915, Kiwanis International is a global organization of clubs and members dedicated to serving the children of the world. Kiwanis and its family of clubs, including Circle K International for university students, Key Club for students ages 14-18, Builders Club for students ages 11-14, Kiwanis Kids for students ages 6-12 and Aktion Club for adults living with disabilities, dedicate annually more than 18 million service hours to strengthen communities and serve children.



A SWEARING-IN CEREMONY was held at Springfield Township Fire Station #1, 3700 Park Avenue West, Ontario, on Wednesday, Dec. 31, for Springfield Township Trustee Anita Kochheiser, trustee Paul Gleisinger and fiscal officer Amanda Hike. Pictured during the ceremony are (top left) Anita Kochheiser and husband Kris, (top right) Paul Gleisinger and wife Connie and (Bottom left) Amanda Hike and husband Jim. Information about the township can be found at <https://springfieldtwprc.org>.

Donors have a chance to win Super Bowl trip

The American Red Cross is teetering on a blood shortage this winter, which could lead to a disruption in lifesaving care. Donors are urged to make an appointment to give blood or platelets now.

Make an appointment to give blood or platelets by visiting RedCrossBlood.org, downloading the Red Cross Blood Donor App or calling 1-800-RED CROSS.

For the seventh year, the Red Cross and the National Football League (NFL) are partnering in January for National Blood Donor Month to urge individuals to kick off 2026 with a blood donation.

As a thank-you to donors, those who come to give through Jan. 25, will be automatically entered for a chance to win a Super Bowl LX giveaway. The winner and guest will get to enjoy Super Bowl LX in Santa Clara, California, access to day-of in-stadium pregame activities, tickets to the official Super Bowl Experience, round-trip airfare, three-night hotel accommodations (Feb. 6-9, 2026), plus a \$1,000 gift card for expenses.

Friday, Jan. 9, 12-5 pm, The Ontario Center, Richland Mall

Monday, Jan. 12, 12-5 pm, The Ontario Center

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 12-6 pm, The Ontario Center; and 8 am to 1:30 pm, Clear Fork High School, 987 State Route 97, Bellville

Thursday, Jan. 15, 12-5 pm, Heartland Church, 2505 Lexington Springmill Rd. S., Lexington

Friday, Jan. 16, noon to 5 pm, The Ontario Center

Monday, Jan. 19, 12-5 pm, The Ontario Center

Wednesday, Jan. 21, 12-6 pm, The Ontario Center

Thursday, Jan. 22, 1-6 pm, Community Building, 21555 Pealer Mill Rd., Butler

Friday, Jan. 23, 12-5 pm, The Ontario Center

Monday, Jan. 26, 12-5 pm, The Ontario Center

Wednesday, Jan. 28, 12-6 pm, The Ontario Center

Thursday, Jan. 29, 1-6 pm, Madison Adult Career Center, 600 Esley Ln., Mansfield

Friday, Jan. 30, 12-5 pm, The Ontario Center; and 12-5 pm, Resurrection Parish, 2600 Lexington Ave., Lexington



Photo by Damon Callis

Day Trippin' With Damon – The Guernsey County Courthouse Light Show in Cambridge comes alive nightly during the holidays with tens of thousands of colorful lights computer synchronized to both traditional and contemporary holiday music beginning. Typically running November 1-January 1, the historical 1881 building contains more than 85,000 lights, a twenty-foot Christmas tree and 60 animated displays.

OSUCCC – James BRIDGE Program tackles care, research gap for young adult and early-onset cancers

More people under age 50 are developing cancer, and with that comes a shift in the model of care needed to serve this unique cancer patient population – including early access to fertility counseling, universal genomic testing to identify underlying genetic drivers, support resources to address long-term survivorship considerations, and community education regarding early detection and screening.

Responding to this health trend, The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC – James) has launched the BRIDGE Program, a new initiative designed to address the rising issue of early-onset cancer by providing coordinated support across disease types, setting a new standard of care tailored to the specific needs of this patient population.

“Unlike traditional programs that address clinical excellence, advocacy, and research according to cancer type, our program integrates these components into a single, cohesive framework to give our patients the best possible care throughout their cancer journey, not just isolated treatment encounters,” said Sara Myers, MD, PhD, an OSUCCC – James surgeon-scientist who serves as co-leader of the BRIDGE Program alongside fellow surgeon-scientist John Alexander, MD.

The program will be launched as a signature initiative of the administration of W. Kimryn Rathmell, MD, who was named chief executive officer of the OSUCCC – James in May 2025. Rathmell championed initiatives addressing early onset cancers in her prior role as director of the National Cancer Institute and notes that Myers and Alexander are creating a unique program with the potential to transform cancer care and outcomes for young people across the country.

Rathmell estimates that a \$20 million investment over five years is needed to build the program, which will include new clinical services and staff as well as a new competitive grants program to stimulate scientific discovery in young adult and early-onset cancers.

The care part of the BRIDGE Program will align support around the specific needs of people in the 18-to-50-year age group, regardless of where they begin their care. Currently, services are provided on a case-by-case basis, directed by the patient’s disease-specific treatment team. In this new model, all patients between the ages of 18 and 50 will be offered enrollment in the BRIDGE Program to ensure services like fertility counseling and genomic testing are offered early in the care journey.

Rathmell says this multi-pronged, programmatic “umbrella” approach will tie together existing efforts to support younger patients at the OSUCCC – James like the existing Adolescent and Young Adult Program, Immunotherapy Management Clinic and JamesCare for Life supportive care programs to treat and support the whole patient.

Care coordinators will serve as early contact points of central coordination of referrals for age-appropriate resources. These navigators will be an extra layer of connection for follow-up between the patient and their treatment team.

“Many of these patients are navigating cancer at the same time they are building careers or raising young children. Cancer comes with emotional, financial and physical stress. The BRIDGE Program will provide meaningful, thorough services and support to make the journey more streamlined, with the goal of improving outcomes,” said Rathmell. “There is no question that timely cancer screening saves lives, and we also need to learn how to identify and intercept these cancers early, as well as coordinating around science to uncover the cause for the rise in cancer in young adults so that we can develop strategies to reduce risk. We must start to tackle this growing clinical problem and scientific mystery, and the way to do that is through research.”

The BRIDGE Program will also offer a competitive pilot research grant program, administered through the OSUCCC – James Intramural Research Program and funded by Pelotonia, to encourage cross-disease research into tumor biology, genetics and outcomes for younger patients affected by cancer. These two-year pilot research grants will be awarded twice annually to scientists at the OSUCCC – James through a competitive submission and peer review process. Up to three early-onset cancer research projects will be funded through the BRIDGE Program in its first year.

“Advancing truly innovative, out-of-the box research ideas is a chicken or the egg problem: you have to have funding to gather data, but it is challenging to get funding from traditional sources without data,” said Rathmell. “Pilot research grants give scientists with high-risk, high reward ideas the start-up funds to gather data to pressure-test the idea and, if it holds, apply for more funding to advance the work. We are creating the catalyst to drive these ideas forward.”

The National Cancer Institute notes that rates of colon, breast, uterine and kidney cancer are rising among people under age 50, with the most stark increase among people age 20-29. In Ohio, cancer incidence rates for older adults (over 50) have been steady or even declining. However, rates of cancer for Ohio residents under age 50 have increased as much as 20% in recent years.

“This is a trend that we can’t ignore or manage with the same old approaches,” said Rathmell. “Drs. Myers and Alexander were inspired to do this work by patients they cared for in their practices and brought this innovative concept forward. Our goal is that individuals affected by these cancers are a part of creating this program, and that it will engage interest across the OSUCCC – James, across the university, and across our community. That is how we can make a change that impacts younger adult cancers for good.”

To learn more about clinical services offered through the BRIDGE Program visit cancer.osu.edu/bridge-program or call 1-800-293-5066. Information about pilot research funding opportunities through the BRIDGE Program is available at cancer.osu.edu/irp. Applications are due in January 2026 with awarded grants starting in July 2026.

HEAP assistance now available

The Ohio Department of Development and the Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging, Inc. has announced that assistance is available to help with home energy bills.

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps Ohioans at or below 175% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of up to eight members and 60% of State Median Income for a household of nine or more members to pay their heating bills.

The benefit is applied directly to the customer’s utility or bulk fuel bill. Older Ohioans may go to their local Area Agency on Aging office for help with assembling the required documents and completing the application or visit www.energyhelp.ohio.gov to apply online or to download a copy of the application.

Applications must be received by May 31, 2026. For information call 419-524-4144. When applying, individuals need to have copies of most recent utility bills, a list of all household members (including birth dates and Social Security numbers, proof of income for the past 30 days for all household members (12 months for certain income types), proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency for all household members and proof of disability (if applicable).

To be connected to a local energy assistance provider, call 800-282-0880 (hearing impaired clients may dial 711 for assistance) or visit www.energyhelp.ohio.gov.

Blessing closet and food pantry open

The Taylortown Community Church Blessing Closet & Food Pantry recently opened and is offering free clothing and food for those in need. Open Mondays, 9 am to 2 pm, as well as every third Saturday from 9 am to 3 pm, the closet is located at the church, 2656 Taylortown Rd., Shelby. Church volunteers also serve a free hot meal every third Thursday from 5:30–6:30 pm with the next being Jan. 15.

There are no income or residency requirements. All are welcome. Those wishing to donate can drop-off items during open hours or call or text Lyndi Oakley 419-814-0372 or Tonja Barnett 419-571-3846 to set up a time outside of normal hours.

The biggest needs are non perishable food, coats, hats, gloves and kids clothing. Food is distributed quickly and will probably always be the greatest need. 100% of all donations go to filling the closet and pantry. Follow on Facebook at Taylortown Community Church Blessing Closet.

•Mansfield's Irene Coon shares life lessons at 106

(Continued from Front Page)

Her service extended well beyond their home. Irene was deeply involved in her church, where she found her greatest ministry: writing cards.

Over the years, she wrote and mailed an estimated 3,000 encouragement cards to people who were sick, hospitalized, or in need of a kind word.

"I didn't always write a lot," she said. "Just a few words. But encouragement matters."

She also sang alto in the church choir — joining after years of gentle nudging from her husband — made hard cinnamon candy for decades, baked pies, helped cane and recover chairs, and supported countless church activities.

A Life Well Traveled — and Well Loved

Despite modest means, Irene and Maynard traveled extensively, visiting Alaska, Europe, Lake Tahoe, Hawaii and their local favorite, Lake Erie. That's where they kept an RV and made lasting family memories. Irene learned to enjoy a life of adventure and even went white-water rafting in her 60s in Lake Tahoe.

"I wasn't a young chicken," she said, laughing. "But it was fun."

Today, Irene lives in the Apostolic Christian Church Rest Home — a Christian, Independent Living, Senior Retirement Community in Mansfield. She has lived there since 2010. Though she no longer drives and her eyesight has faded, her memory, wit, and gratitude remain sharp and sincere.

She is surrounded by family — three children, ten grandchildren, more than 20 great-grandchildren, and even great-great-grandchildren — and receives regular visits, phone calls, and cards.

"I've had a wonderful life," she said simply.

Words for the Next Generation

When asked what advice she would give to younger generations, Irene didn't hesitate.

"Slow down," she said. "The world is going too fast. Don't get upset over things that don't really matter."

She paused, then added, "Go to church. Take your family to church. Love the Lord. Love your family."

Her favorite saying, one her family knows well, sums up her outlook on life:

"I guess we'll take what comes."

Her eldest daughter Janis Buzard reflected through tears, "You just have no idea, Mom, how much you've taught us — just in patience and perseverance, and taking what comes."

Over her 106 years, Irene has witnessed extraordinary change — from a childhood without televisions or telephones to a world where family members can appear instantly on a cell phone screen. She lived through the Great Depression, World War II, the rise of modern education, and sweeping advances in technology. While the pace of the world has accelerated, Irene has remained grounded in values that don't change — faith, family, and kindness. Irene Coon has done just that — with grace, faith, and a quiet joy that continues to inspire everyone fortunate enough to sit and listen.



MAYNARD J. COON AND IRENE were married on June 30, 1940. They were married 64 years before Maynard's passing in 2004. Maynard began his educational career as a teacher at North Robinson and was commissioned an officer in the U.S.N. reserve in 1943. He served aboard the USS Zeal, a fleet minesweeper in the Pacific, making invasions of Pelelieu, Leyte, Okinawa, and the occupation of Japan. He was promoted to Lt. jg. In 1945 he was appointed superintendent of Whetstone Schools. In 1952 he went to Plymouth as superintendent, and in 1962 went to Madison as assistant superintendent, retiring in 1976 as superintendent. For the next ten years he directed the Richland County School's Media Center. He is a fifty-year member of the Masonic Lodge and a member of the USS Zeal Association. He faithfully served the Lord through his membership at the First United Methodist Church, by teaching Sunday school for more than 30 years and singing in the choir. He also holds memberships in the Mansfield Garden Club and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators.



IRENE COON with her three children (left to right, youngest to oldest) Jo Ann Maxey, James Coon and Janis Buzard.



Irene in her 20s and at her 106th birthday party this past November

Tribune-Courier Sports Highlights

Arlin Field – The House That Harold Built

By Kris Leiter

Part 2: The Naming of Arlin Field

Last week, we saw that Harold W. Arlin had made a worldwide name for himself. His voice had earned him many accolades, and after five years of high-profile-world-wide announcing, he wanted to return to his first love of engineering.

In 1925, he asked Westinghouse to transfer him to the Mansfield plant as personnel manager. His family soon settled into the Mansfield community.

Arlin had a passion for being involved and didn't shy away as he became one of Mansfield's civic leaders. He became president of Mansfield's school board where he held that position for 16 years.

Around the 1940s, the Tygers had one of the biggest rivalries in football, the perennial-powerhouse Massillon Tygers. This annual game between the Tygers and the Tygers had become such a major event it would draw more spectators every year.

The game became such a huge event that by the late 40s the game was drawing crowds of 10,000 people.

At this time, before Arlin Field existed, Stadium Field was located on the same property as the current Mansfield Senior High School.

The field actually had a good amount of seating for a high school football field, holding approximately 6,000 fans. There are only a handful of stadiums here in Ohio that would be comparable.

As a matter of fact, the field's capacity would fall within the top four stadiums in Ohio, even today.

The top three major Ohio stadiums currently are Tom Benson's Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton with 23,000 seats, Massillon's Tiger stadium with over 16,000 seats and Arlin Field with 12,500 seats.



Harold Arlin in 1923 on the air with KDKA in Pittsburgh.

So as this game grew to the 10,000 it was beyond the stadium's ability to handle the crowd and a larger stadium quickly became a priority.

Harold Arlin, being involved within the fabric of Mansfield as one of the civic leaders, became an integral part in leading the fundraising committee for the construction of a new football stadium.

In 1947, the brand new Arlin Field was birthed with a capacity of 12,500 seats. It

was no surprise that the first home game attracted a crowd of an incredible 13,000 fans!

Arlin received accolades from the powers-to-be in the community for his efforts of launching this behemoth of a stadium and hence, they named this new football venue after him, becoming known as "Arlin Field."

Ironically, during the meeting, Arlin actually argued for over an hour not to have his name on the stadium. He was overruled as others wanted to honor Arlin for his efforts.

If you drive by the venue you can still see "Arlin Field" painted on the West Fourth Street side of the stadium. The iconic stadium was and still is a focal point for the community of Mansfield.

In 1949, The Tygers would finally defeat the mighty Massillon Tygers 16-12 in a historic victory marking the first victory over the Tygers in 14 years.

It was such a monumental victory, that the *Mansfield News Journal* newspaper printed the article in red headlines! This was a rare thing, only happening two times in the papers' history, used only for special occasions.

Tying into the famous rivalry, Massillon takes their football traditions seriously and a unique tradition is still ongoing to this day.

As far back as the 19050s, the main hospital would place a miniature football in every newborn baby boy's hospital crib. Over the years, the tradition has changed a bit.

Ben Liebermann, the 2018 Massillon Booster Club President and former Tiger teammate, was a recipient of his own mini-football at his birth.

"The booster club continues the tradition, but logistics have changed over the years. We have a couple medical facilities in town now. We have a gentleman who drops off a supply of footballs about every three months."

"The staff will then hand these out to the families of the newborn baby boys."

"We have a local place here in Massillon that has been making the footballs for us for a number of years."

Today, Arlin Field remains a beloved local landmark and an active venue for high school sports and community events.

Over the years, the field has been used for other major events. In 1960, U.S. Vice-President Richard Nixon delivered a speech.

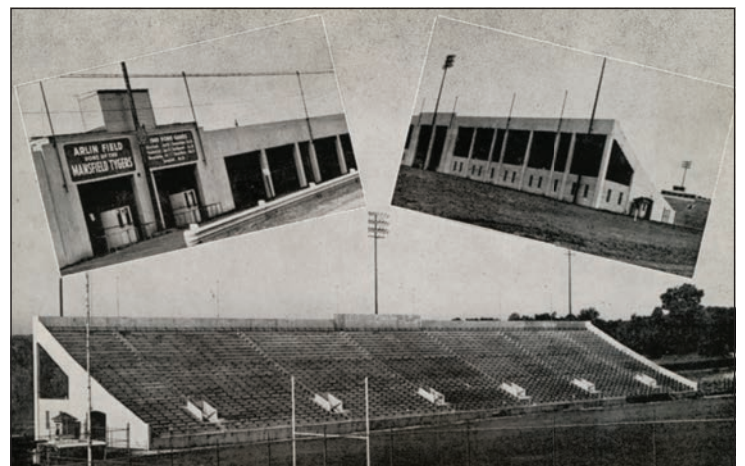
In 1989, the field had a re-dedication after a restoration project. In 2011, the field received a face-lift with new artificial turf. In keeping up with the times, in 2025 it had another turf replacement and received new lighting.

Arlin Field has played host to area football teams such as Shelby, and Galion, and even other schools from multiple counties away.

(Continued on Page 11)



Mansfield's Stadium Field



Arlin Field at opening in 1947

Tribune-Courier Sports Highlights

•Arlin Field – The House That Harold Built

(Continued from Page 10)

Steve Brown and his family from Lucas attended one of the post-season games when Galion was playing.

"We had been to the field a number of times. Our son Owen, who plays football for the Lucas minor-league program, had us cheering for Galion. We got to the game, and considering there was a large crowd, we were fortunate to find seats on Galion's 40-yard line."

Tom Cline, a 1978 graduate of Mansfield Senior, has a unique role within the field itself. He has been a part of the "chain-gang" for all the Tyger home games. This includes post-season games.

The group works directly with the officiating crew, and more specifically, the head linesman official, who keeps track of the downs as the team moves down the field.

One-guy handles the down-marker, indicating first down through fourth down and the two remaining people handle either end of the chain or "line-to-gain" equipment, indicating the distance for the first-downs.

"This is my 10th season of doing this and I love it," said Tom Cline. "I got on the crew through an invite from my brother Mike Cline. It's a rush every time being right there listening in to coach and player interactions."

"My brother and his best friend Mike Lehman have been doing it for close to 30-years. They came on the crew as the last long-time crew retired — Jack Lehman and Bob Guthrie."

"My invitation came because one member was having heart surgery. I was thrilled to do it, but I figured I would be "one-and-done" when Chuck came back. But to everyone's surprise the youngest member decided to move on just before the next season so now it's mine as long as I like."

Tom worked a game when Ashland was playing during the regular season. He received a black eye as a reward for his work, but he chuckles about it in good humor.

Arlin Field is unique by not having a track on the inside. This puts the spectators up close and personal to the action. As a spectator, it's an awesome view, but as a worker it doesn't typically end well if you have to get out of the way.

"Arlin is very tight on the sidelines. Not much room to go anywhere even if you really need to. When I received my black eye, it was a sweep. I got out of the way during the first wave of linemen, but a linebacker coming from my blindside got me."

With tongue-and-cheek humor Tom continued, "He is an All-Ohio player and led Ashland in tackles this season."

As you drive by Arlin Field you now know how a radio announcer became the namesake for a football stadium. As radio personality Paul Harvey used to say, "Now you know the rest of the story."

Historic Photos Sourced From: <https://richlandcountyhistory.com>

Ontario Planning Commission reviews Chick-Fil-A plans

When the Ontario Planning Commission met in regular session on Nov. 12, a top discussion was the proposed Chick-Fil-A location construction.

The proposed location will be near Aldi and Pet Supplies Plus. A variance request for the dumpster setback was submitted by the business with Sara Kramer representing. The north side was determined to be the best location, abutting the existing main drive between Aldi and Pet Supplies and not a property line.

Ontario Service-Safety Director Adam Gongwer said all other setbacks and height requirements have been met.

Kramer explained the only area that made sense to maximize parking and keep the drive-thru traffic flowing would be to put the dumpster in the proposed area.

Gongwer advised that there is no neighboring property that would be affected with the 6-foot tall enclosure. She also said the site plan would not affect the sightline.

There was a discussion on expanding the building for dine-in if needed. Knight asked about the stacking in the drive-thru and it was determined there will be room for someone to come out of line if need be. There will also be additional workers in the drive-thru during peak times to expedite the wait time.

The build will take six to eight months from start to finish. Construction should begin in the spring.

With all plans reviewed, the variance request was granted.

A rezone request from an R-2 (Medium Density Residential) to a PUD (Planned Unit Development) was submitted by Redwood USA with Radd Schneider representing, for 18.8 acres at the corner of Walker Lake Road and Spring Village Drive.

This would be a multi-jurisdiction build between Ontario and Mansfield. Redwood USA develops and manages single story apartments. They have on-site management and maintenance.

Schneider provided a presentation on growth of the company and gave information on median age of renters for their facilities, which is 55 years of age. The company typically goes above the local standard requirements and offers more premium finishings in each unit. The average rent on the units is \$1,900 per month. There will be two entrances, with an additional entrance on the east side for emergency vehicles.

There will be an on-site leasing office and maintenance garage attached. Ontario will have more units than the Mansfield side.

Mayor Knapp explained that the water and sewer lines will be privately owned by the developer and they are only putting a tap in at Walker Lake Road. The business will be responsible for repairs in the development. Engineer Rufener advised that there will need to be studies done to make sure that the water and sewer lines can handle the increased load. A traffic study will also be done to see if turn lanes are needed off Walker Lake Rd. The company leases as they do the construction, which takes an average of three years to complete, hopefully beginning this fall.



Tom Cline and an Ashland player after being hit in the eye

CLASSIFIEDS

LEGAL NOTICE

The following is a succinct summary of the legislation adopted by the Council of the City of Ontario, at their regular meeting held on December 17, 2025.

The complete text of this Ordinance may be viewed and copies obtained at the Office of the Clerk of Council, Ontario Municipal Building, 555 Stumbo Road, Ontario, Ohio, during regular business hours.

ORDINANCE NO. 25-27 – AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING TEMPORARY APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF ONTARIO, OHIO FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026 AND EXPIRING DECEMBER 31, 2026.

ORDINANCE NO. 25-28 – AN ORDINANCE REZONING SIX (6) PARCELS ON SOUTH LEXINGTON-SPRINGMILL ROAD FROM R1- LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT TO OS- OFFICE SERVICE DISTRICT, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

RESOLUTION NO. 25-13 – A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR OR HIS DESIGNEE TO PREPARE AND SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE OHIO PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION STATE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND/OR LOCAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM(S) AND TO EXECUTE CONTRACTS AS REQUIRED, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 25-29 – AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE CITY'S CYBER SECURITY POLICY, ALLOWING THE CITY TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENTS SETTING UP THAT POLICY, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 25-30 – AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 25-04 KNOWN AS THE PERMANENT APPROPRIATIONS ORDINANCE FOR 2025 BY MAKING ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS IN THE GENERAL FUND, SPECIAL REVENUE FUND, AND THE ENTERPRISE FUND.

ORDINANCE NO. 25-31 – AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR NON-COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UNIT CITY EMPLOYEES, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026, REPEALING ORDINANCE 24-15, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 25-32 – AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING WAGES AND SALARIES FOR NON-COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UNIT EMPLOYEES OF THIS CITY, REPEALING ORDINANCE NO. 25-17, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. 25-33 – AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE EDITION AND INCLUSION OF CERTAIN ORDINANCES AS PARTS OF THE VARIOUS COMPONENT CODES OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF

ONTARIO, OHIO, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Cathy VanAuker
Clerk of Council
City of Ontario, OH
(T-C 1-1, 8, 2026) 81L

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing on a rezone request will be held before the Council of the City of Ontario, at a regular meeting on Wednesday, January 21, 2026, 7:00 p.m., at the Ontario Municipal Building, 555 North Stumbo Road, Ontario, Ohio, upon an application submitted by Redwood USA to rezone property located on Walker Lake Road, parcel #038-60-500-61-000, from R-2 Medium Density Residential to PUD (Planned Unit Development).

The City Planning Commission has recommended in favor of this rezone.

Cathy VanAuker
Clerk of Council
City of Ontario, OH
(T-C 1-1, 8, 2026) 18L

LEGAL NOTICE

Springfield Township meetings are to be held every other Monday beginning January 5, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. with the following exceptions: January 19th, February 16th, May 25th, and October 12th. These meetings will be held the following Tuesday at 6:00 pm due to those Mondays being Holidays. The final meeting of the year will be December 21, 2026. The Organizational meeting for 2027 will be held on December 28, 2026 at 9:30am with the Fire Dependent's Board preceding said meeting at 9:00 a.m. The Records Retention Meeting will be held April 27, 2026, at 5:45 p.m. All meetings will be held in the Township Hall, 3700 Park Avenue West, Ontario, Ohio.

Amanda Hike
Springfield Township Fiscal Officer
Ontario, OH
(T-C 1-8, 2026) 23L

Meeting is January 21

The Pioneer Career and Technology Center Board of Education will hold its organizational and regular meeting at 6 pm, Wednesday, Jan. 21 in the Pioneer Board of Education Conference Room.

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Ohio State researchers find increasing a type of protein helps slow down heart failure

More than 64 million people worldwide live with heart failure, including 6.7 million Americans. Current treatment primarily consists of managing symptoms rather than addressing the underlying causes of heart failure progression.

Now, researchers at The Ohio State University College of Medicine have discovered a new way to help hearts recover from damage and stress. They found that when the heart is stressed, it naturally increases levels of carnitine palmitoyl transferase 1a (CPT1a), a protein that helps protect heart cells. They discovered that increasing CPT1a with gene therapy helps slow down heart failure even after the heart starts having problems. The research was published this month in the American Heart Association's Circulation Research.

"Given the mounting diagnoses of cardiomyopathy and heart failure – more than 500,000 every three years – a dire need exists for new treatments that suppress adverse remodeling in diseased hearts to improve function and outcomes. This novel gene therapy approach shows promise," said E. Douglas Lewandowski, PhD, senior author and director of translational research at Ohio State's Dorothy M. Davis Heart and Lung Research Institute.

Researchers studied human heart samples from the University of Pennsylvania and University of Utah to learn more about the protein CPT1. They compared two groups: unused healthy donor hearts and hearts from people with nonischemic cardiomyopathy (NICM), a type of heart disease. They found that in people with NICM, the amount of CPT1a was higher in both men and women. Another form, CPT1b, didn't change.

Scientists used animal models to determine if having more CPT1a in diseased hearts was helpful or harmful. They found mice that couldn't make enough CPT1a got sicker faster and had worse heart function. Using gene therapy to increase CPT1a in the heart helped mice recover even after heart failure had begun. Researchers also discovered that CPT1a not only helps the heart use energy but also turns off harmful genes that cause scarring and cell death.

Lewandowski and his team plan to continue testing CPT1a gene therapy in animal models and hope to move toward clinical trials in humans. They also aim to better understand how CPT1a controls genes that help the heart heal. Lewandowski and Andrew Carley, PhD, an Ohio State internal medicine research assistant professor, have applied for a patent for their gene therapy approach.

"This gene therapy has the potential to be a one-time therapy instead of chronic drug dosing," said Lewandowski.

Research funding came from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health, the American Heart Association and the Nora Eccles Treadwell Foundation.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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Lisa Anderson
NMLS 618735