

Greater LAFAYETTE

SPRING 2024 | MAGAZINE

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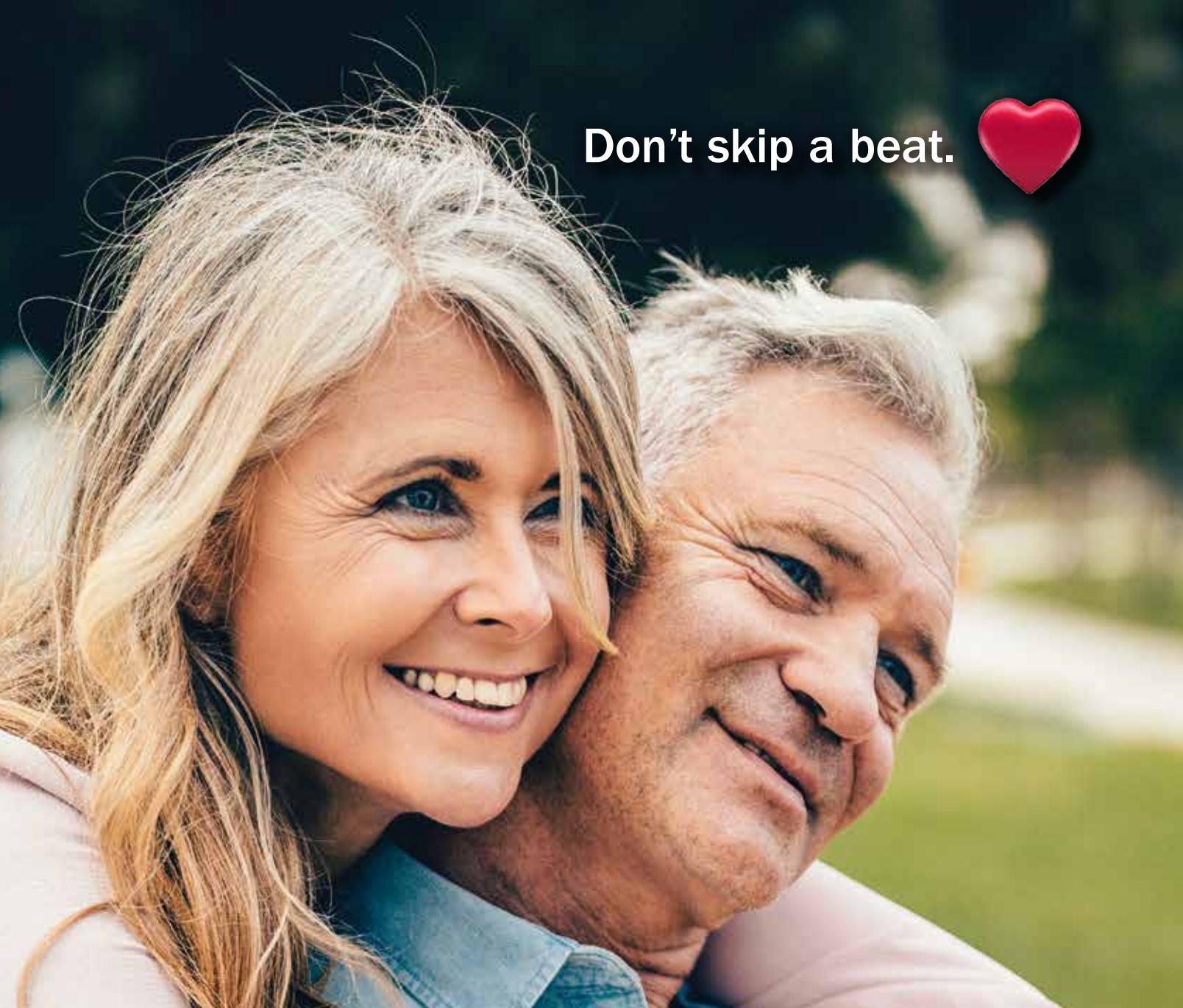
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GREATER LAFAYETTE MAGAZINE

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MISSION
Greater Lafayette Magazine captures the spirit and vitality of the people who call Greater Lafayette home and what it means to live, work and thrive here. It tells the region's success stories, from business expansions, entrepreneurship, leadership and philanthropy to quality of life, arts and cultural events. Our hope is that readers of Greater Lafayette Magazine will become active participants in the world around them and join in our mission to make Greater Lafayette the place where progress, creativity and community come together.

AUDIENCE
Greater Lafayette Magazine serves as the leading quality-of-life and business trade publication for the area. Leveraging our award-winning team of writers and designers, Greater Lafayette Magazine attracts a diverse group of readers who are engaged in the community as consumers, visitors, business leaders, volunteers, residents and future residents of Tippecanoe County. This publication is for anyone that appreciates a good story that not only reveals something new about our community but offers insight and pride for the place we call home.

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On track for spring adventures



Around here, spring ushers in sunshine and blue skies, migrating birds (hello, rose-breasted grosbeaks!), the return of area farmers markets and the first, tentative garden blooms. During a four-year stint at our house, spring also meant high school track meets. Our daughter ran cross country in the fall and track in the spring, which kept my husband and me crisscrossing a good chunk of Indiana for meets. In the spring we sat through frigid temperatures in winter coats, through steady rain, and in one thunderstorm that ended a meet before it even started. But one of my favorite meets was – and still is – the West Lafayette Relays, held each April.

Lane Custer, who racked up more than 40 years coaching boys and girls track at West Side before retiring in 2022, says, “The event has been a great early season meet.” It started in the late 1990s, and Custer adds, “Former athletes involved from various schools include two Olympic medal winners — David Neville from Merrillville High School (Beijing 2008, gold and bronze in the 400m and 4x400m relay) and Ashley Spencer from Lawrence North (Rio de Janeiro, 2016, bronze in the 400m hurdles).”

The event is well run, and the teamwork between West Lafayette track, the athletes and parents is apparent. The relays are competitive, a lot of fun and a great chance to see some truly talented athletes from across the state.

The first year our daughter ran at the West Lafayette Relays was the first year that area Unified teams joined in the event as well. Lafayette Jeff’s Unified team was getting organized under the bleachers when one of the student partners shouted, “Oh, no! We forgot our baton!” Without missing a beat, one of the Unified student athletes responded, “Don’t worry! I brought a banana!” The team erupted in cheers. Problem solved! I’m not sure if the team resorted to the banana-as-baton strategy, but I applaud the ingenuity, and the joy underneath that bleacher was infectious.

Sports are special, and Unified sports take teamwork to a whole new level. If you’re not familiar with Unified, learn more about efforts at Greater Lafayette high schools to create a more inclusive sports environment on Page 62.

In this spring issue of Greater Lafayette Magazine we showcase both familiar and new ways to explore and enjoy Greater Lafayette, from new businesses to visit to new menus to savor. Here’s to finding joy in the adventure!

Carol

Editor, Greater Lafayette Magazine

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Photo by Christine Petkov

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What you got, Scott?

READI 2.0 funding will support area's long-term goals

After the recent announcement of SK hynix, a Korean semiconductor company, selecting West Lafayette to build a \$4 billion facility to make high bandwidth memory, our region turned its attention to the READI 2.0 announcement.

The Greater Lafayette Region secured \$35 million from the State of Indiana to invest in projects over the next five years. Six of the eight counties bordering Tippecanoe banded together to compete with 14 other regions around the state for a part of the \$500 million pool of funds administered by the Indiana Economic Development Corp. (IEDC).

In READI 1.0, we allocated \$30 million to regional projects that will leverage an additional \$175 million. Those projects are underway and already are bearing fruit. For READI 2.0, our regional vision aligns with the goals of the IEDC and the broader objectives of the State of Indiana.

As outlined in the plan:

- We will grow our regional population in both rural and urban areas, at a rate 150 percent faster than the previous decade, which requires an additional 1,931 people per year by 2034.
- We will increase personal per capita income to a level higher than the state's average of \$53,323, which amounts to an increase of \$9,442 over 10 years.
- We will increase labor force participation by 8,000 workers by 2034 and increase labor force participation rates to 64 percent.
- We will invest in the creation of new housing stock in both rural and urban areas by 10 percent over the next decade, which requires adding 13,230 units in the region over the next decade, or 1,323 units per year.
- And we will expand access to state-licensed childcare by 20 percent by 2034 by building new childcare facilities, supporting staff training programs and balancing costs to centers and families.

These are all ambitious goals for our region, and you can learn more about them at greaterlafayetteregion.com.

The greatest success of all of this work may not be the investments, though. When we convened in the spring of 2021, we gathered county commissioners, mayors, local economic development officials and Purdue University and Ivy Tech representatives to talk about the future of our region. That was the first time that had ever happened, and I am proud to say our group is still meeting, having discussions about where we are heading and how we get there. This collaboration is historic!

And collaboration like this isn't easy. It takes work. It takes a willingness to build relationships, push boundaries and sometimes have hard conversations. This is especially rare in this age of political divide we are experiencing in our nation.

When you get a chance, thank your elected officials for their foresight in jumping in when we started and their fortitude to continue to work together. We should be proud they represent us! ★

WE ARE *Greater* TOGETHER

Scott Walker is the president and CEO of Greater Lafayette Commerce. He can be reached at 765.742.4044

Classroom to work force

First-in-the-
state program
positions Greater
Lafayette for
economic success



From the high school classroom to the manufacturing clean room, area students have new pathways to jobs in local industry and healthcare.

In January the State Board of Education approved a process designed specifically for the Greater Lafayette area to equip and encourage students to graduate, stay in the community and fill positions with local companies needing a skilled workforce.

Lafayette School Corp., Greater Lafayette Commerce and Ivy Tech Community College took the lead in crafting a Career+ Locally Created Pathway (LCP), which helps meet student graduation requirements and gives graduates a leg up as they enter the workforce or prepare for college, says Laurie Rinehart, LSC’s assistant superintendent for secondary curriculum and instruction.

“The idea is to guide our high school students seamlessly from graduation to local, in-demand entry-level jobs, apprenticeships and college internships in areas of greatest need in our community,” Rinehart says. “The companies we are working with right now are primarily in health care, manufacturing and supply-chain/logistics.”

In order to graduate, students are required by Indiana Department of Education policies to meet several competencies that go beyond test scores and grades. The Greater Lafayette Career+ program is one of the tracks students can pursue to fulfill graduation requirements, while developing the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce, says Kara Webb, workforce development director at Greater Lafayette Commerce.

In 2022 with grant funding from the IDOE, GLC worked with Ivy Tech and Skypack, a West Lafayette company that designs online, interactive educational tools, to create the Greater Lafayette Career+ program. Career+ serves students in 11 area school corporations, and the newly approved LCP is the next layer of program refinement that will help students find and pursue a career, Webb says.

The new LCP was developed in concert with area industry and school districts and contains specific pathways students can take to develop employability skills, learn about career options, get hands-on work experience, and perhaps receive training and certifi-





cations funded by participating companies, says Rinehart.

Material and experiences designed to help students meet those requirements are embedded in existing classes. The difficult, detailed curriculum development work was accomplished by a team of teachers from several school districts working with industry representatives and includes such tools as guest speakers, job shadowing, on-site company tours, job fairs and apprenticeships along with classroom work.

The collaboration with Ivy Tech and area businesses means students may graduate with college credits and hands-on experience with local companies that need a skilled work force. Some of those experiences may be funded by participating companies.

“More kids are interested in work-based learning and are craving a different kind of learning experience,” says Rinehart. “We are helping develop debt-free pathways to help students advance their education.”

Both college-bound students and those eager to graduate and immediately enter the work force will benefit from the Career+ program. At a recent high school job fair sponsored by Career+ supporters, students nearing graduation completed job applications and explored career options.

Samuel Wilkinson, an Attica High School senior, came prepared with a list of companies that he’d heard about or seemed appealing. But he also talked with representatives from companies he knew nothing about, and he came prepared with questions.

He currently works part time at a fast-food restaurant and has other food service experience. While he enjoys the work, he would like to find a job that offers a more stable future.

“My priority is full-time employment when I graduate,” Wilkinson said. “I’m working toward a job that provides benefits and a way to save toward retirement.”

Seth Miller II, another Attica senior, is interested in the trades, either with a landscaping or HVAC company, or becoming an electrician. He came dressed for success in a suit and tie and walked away from the job fair very encouraged.

“I was really nervous coming in because I haven’t had a job interview before,” Miller said. “I was feeling kind of lost about what to do after graduation, but this makes me feel more confident and excited.”

At least one company invited Miller to apply for a position while there and told him they would be in touch soon.

These kinds of experiences are invaluable, particularly for students who may not immediately pursue a college degree, says Attica High School career and tech ed instructor Sarah Mattern, who accompanied a busload of students to the job fair.

“A lot of the students were apprehensive about coming, but their interviews have been great, and it’s helped them figure out how to look forward,” Mattern said. “They had to prepare a resume and talk about their life experience. One student has solidified post-graduation plans by interviewing here.”

Part of the beauty of the Career+ LCP is the exposure students have to what kinds of careers are available in their own communities, Rinehart says. And the broad-based approach allows companies to introduce the range of positions they need to fill.

“Not all of the information offered is specific to one kind of job,” she says, when discussing the Career+ program. “Kids have the chance to see that there are many jobs available at different companies when they tour or talk with company representatives.”

For example, someone interested in health-care who does not want to become a clinician may be interested in accounting or human resources and might find an internship that allows them to explore that kind of position within the healthcare field.

Chloe Watson, a Harrison High School senior, is interested in a health care career and has participated in the Early College Program at Harrison, acquiring some college credits. She was at the job fair looking for internships.

“If I can get on at a local hospital, I see that as a pathway to a career with IU Health,” Watson said. “This is my second year at the job fair, and it’s been a helpful experience.”

Her friend Abby Titlow, also a Harrison





senior, has ambitious career plans, hoping to pursue nursing with an emphasis on psychology and neuroscience. Her plans include undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies.

“In looking at the way things are (in the world), I see how people have to do all kinds of mental gymnastics to be healthy. I want to understand brain disease and be part of something bigger,” she said.

Both students talked with Matt DeGolyer, who works in team acquisition for Indiana University Health in the Lafayette area. He encourages people pursuing degrees in medicine to apply for part time patient support positions at local hospitals and clinics.

“Being in those settings provides great networking experience and gives students hands-on training,” DeGolyer says. “When they interview with us, we put them in our talent network system, and they get notified when a local position becomes available. Local talent attraction is a priority for Indiana University Health. Intentional partnerships with schools help expose students to in-demand health care careers.”

Most of the area’s major manufacturing companies were represented at the job fair, many looking to fill entry level positions on a production line, or finding young people interested in starting a career.

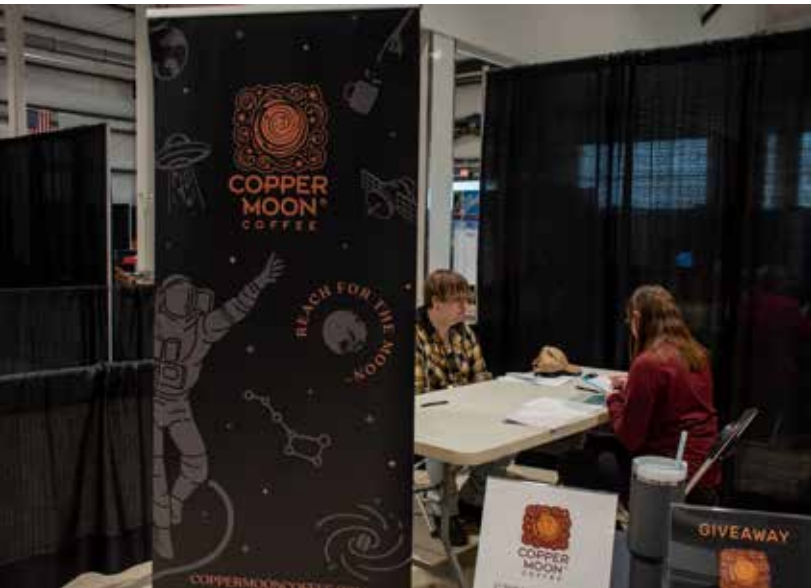
“Locally, there is a very competitive work-

force,” says Stacey Nelson, regional human resources manager for the global German company Evonik, which has a pharmaceutical active ingredient manufacturing plant in Tippecanoe County. “We are growing and using these kinds of events to get people in the door and start a dialogue about how they can have a successful career with us.”

Evonik landed a government contract in 2022 to build a lipid production facility near Lafayette tied to mRNA-based therapies. That growth means the company is hiring at almost every level, Nelson says. Talking with students establishes name recognition and helps young people understand what Evonik does.

Students interested in chemistry and engineering have the most curiosity about the company, but Evonik also has open positions in its warehouse and on dispensing lines, and needs production operators as well as chemists, Nelson says. Because of the specialized nature of its work, applicants for any position must be 18 and will go through extensive training if hired.

GLC research shows that by 2030, the area’s advanced manufacturing and healthcare industries alone are projected to create more than 7,000 new jobs. Cooperative efforts such as the Career+ program are poised to help ensure Greater Lafayette’s continued economic success by preparing local talent to meet the growing workforce needs. ★



Area schools participating in the Greater Lafayette Career+ Locally Created Pathway are:

- ▶ Attica Consolidated School Corp.
- ▶ Faith Christian School
- ▶ Frontier School Corp.
- ▶ Lafayette Catholic School System
- ▶ Lafayette School Corp.
- ▶ Metropolitan School District of Warren County
- ▶ Tippecanoe School Corp.
- ▶ Tri-County School Corp.
- ▶ West Lafayette Community School Corp.

Area companies partnering with the Greater Lafayette Career+ Locally Created Pathway are:

- ▶ Advanced Auto Parts
- ▶ Antique Candle Company
- ▶ Caterpillar Incorporated
- ▶ Cook Biotech Incorporated
- ▶ Copper Moon
- ▶ Cryogenic Industrial Solutions
- ▶ Dana Incorporated
- ▶ Evonik Industries
- ▶ Franciscan Alliance, Incorporated
- ▶ Ice Cream Specialties Incorporated
- ▶ Indiana University Health
- ▶ Kirby Risk
- ▶ Lakeside Book Company
- ▶ Nucor Corporation
- ▶ Oscar Winski Company
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- ▶ Rea Magnet Wire
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The Courtyards at Belle Terra

New West Lafayette development features luxurious homes with low-maintenance living





Looking for low-maintenance living in a close-knit community? The Courtyards at Belle Terra, a new West Lafayette development by Essential Homes, offers luxury ranch homes starting in the mid \$300,000s. Located just off of 600 North, across from Coyote Crossing Golf Club and minutes from I-65, Belle Terra is a private retreat surrounded by modern conveniences.

As a low-maintenance community, the neighborhood's homeowners association eases the burden of home ownership by handling outdoor seasonal chores such as lawn mowing, landscaping, snow removal and sanitation services.

"These are truly lock and leave homes," says Adrienne Albregts, marketing consultant for Essential Homes. "Homeowners who like to travel or perhaps winter in another location can leave knowing their property will be taken care of while they are gone."

The neighborhood clubhouse boasts a fitness center, entertainment areas and workspaces. An outdoor pickleball court and community pool are also being constructed. Homeowners can choose from six customizable floorplans that allow personalized additions such as a sitting room adjacent to the primary bedroom, a four seasons room, a

covered porch or a walk-in spa shower.

"Every home includes its own private courtyard as a focal point to the home," Albregts says. "The way the homes are designed and situated, you're never looking in on someone else's courtyard. Each home is designed to view the courtyard from just about any room, letting in light and providing a view to nature."

As the first homes have been constructed, interest in the neighborhood has been picking up. As of January, about half of the home sites were sold. Although Belle Terra is not an age-restricted community, the appeal of low-stress one-story

living has drawn lots of empty-nesters to the boutique community of 79 homes.

"We call it right-sizing," Albregts says. "These are people still living active lives and pursuing personal interests and hobbies who no longer want to be saddled with the responsibilities of maintaining a larger, aging home. They're ready to start their next chapter. The neighbors who've already moved in have really connected and formed a kinship with one another. It's a very supportive community."

It's the first neighborhood development for Essential Homes, owned by Bob and Amy Hockema. The

couple has extensive experience in real estate, home building, renovating and remodeling throughout the Greater Lafayette area. At Belle Terra, Amy Hockema and her sales and selections team consult with home buyers to finalize floorplans and select features and finishes including paint colors, cabinetry, countertops, fixtures, lighting and other customizable elements.

"Our motto is Live Well Every Day," Albregts says. "With our thoughtfully designed floorplans, luxurious open spaces and low-stress, low-maintenance living, The Courtyards at Belle Terra allows our residents to do just that." ★

To learn more about the Courtyards at Belle Terra, visit the furnished model home at 6100 Gilwell Drive, West Lafayette. Open Wednesday-Sunday, noon to 5:00 p.m. For an appointment, call 765-766-004 or visit epconwestlafayette.com



GE Aviation apprenticeship program trains next generation workforce as company plans expansion



After opening its doors nearly a decade ago, Lafayette's GE Aviation Advanced Manufacturing Plant continues to make a positive impact on the community.

The state-of-the-art, 300,000-square-foot facility, located along Sagamore Parkway on Lafayette's south side, supports new jet engine assembly for the LEAP (Leading Edge Aviation Propulsion) and Passport engines as well as overhaul for the LEAP engine.

Recently, the company announced plans for a \$24 million investment in the facility, slated to help GE meet customer demand, which con-

tinues to grow as part of the aviation industry's post-pandemic recovery. The multi-million dollar investment will help expand the facility's production lines within the site's existing footprint, creating in-demand, high-paying jobs.

In December, the Lafayette City Council unanimously approved a 10-year tax abatement slated to help support the expansion. Site leader Jordan Wysong addressed the council, saying, "With the current growth in the aviation industry post the COVID-19 pandemic, we've continued to see increased growth in air travel for the commercial engines we make here in Lafayette." Wysong said the investment would result in a minimum of 41 additional jobs at a starting wage of \$36 an hour.

City councilmember Jerry Reynolds says giving the tax abatement the green light is a

big, welcomed move. "Most of these companies that do these tax abatements probably return as much or more than they get in tax breaks back to our community," Reynolds says. "We're very fortunate in Lafayette to have these kind of partners that return those dollars."

Fellow city councilmember Kevin Klinker says tying tax abatements to an increase in jobs is important. "Everybody who has come to us with a good story, with folks to employ, and that pay a living wage, we've been very supportive," he says.

At the December meeting, Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski also emphasized the significance of the expansion, noting that landing the plant in Lafayette was some of the most intense competition he had ever remembered going through. He also commended GE, stating that the company has proven to be a tremendous community partner.

"This continued investment in job creation is another big win for the community and our partnerships," Roswarski said.

Additionally, in March, GE Aerospace announced plans to allocate more than \$650 million into its facilities and supply chain in 2024. The Lafayette plant is earmarked to receive \$5.9 million of that investment.

As the company invests in expanding its facility, it also is dedicating resources to train the next generation of aviation professionals through an apprenticeship program.

Initially launched in mid-2022, the GE Aerospace Lafayette Apprenticeship is an 18-36 month program that incorporates both on-the-job and classroom training to equip candidates with the skills and knowledge needed to obtain their powerplant license from the Federal Avia-

tion Administration.

The innovative, first-of-its-kind program provides apprentices with a hands-on aviation experience, learning alongside skilled technicians and engine maintenance, repair and overhaul professionals while working multiple job scopes, software, and computer programs, equipping them with skills for success in manufacturing and technical fields.

Participants must complete 18 months of hands-on training to obtain the on-the-job hours needed to become eligible to test for their powerplant license. Apprentices are then given an additional 18 months to obtain their license.

GE's Wysong expressed the program, which has already produced its first graduate, is a win-win situation for both the participants and GE.

"The program provides GE Aerospace with a pipeline of talent to support the future growth of the site," Wysong says. "We look for individuals with mechanical aptitude who have the right skills to work successfully as part of a team in a self-directed environment."

To qualify for the apprenticeship, candidates are required to have a high school diploma or GED and at least three years of manufacturing or mechanical experience.

"This program gives individuals, who wouldn't typically qualify, the opportunity to build a career in the aerospace industry through hands-on experience as they work toward their licenses," Wysong says.

According to Wysong, there currently are five people enrolled in the program, including Lafayette native Tyler Kirts, who started the apprenticeship in April 2023. After spending





more than seven years at his previous job, he felt as though he wasn't able to continue growing professionally. That's when he decided that it was time for a career change.

"I started looking for something with more time off and a better work schedule," Kirts says. "That's when I was told about the apprenticeship program at GE and decided to try it out."

Kirts is currently training full-time to become a powerplant technician, putting in at least 40 hours a week. For him, the program has proven to be life-changing.

"I felt stuck at my previous job, and this opportunity allowed me to take that leap without taking a huge pay cut," he says.

Kirts says at the end of the first 18 months, he and other apprentices will attend a one-week class at Purdue University to prepare for

the oral and practical portion of the powerplant test. The exam itself is also proctored at Purdue.

Since its launch, Wysong says the community has been very supportive in spreading the word about the program once openings come available.

"This program provides excellent upskilling opportunities for employees in Greater Lafayette," he says. "We provide an excellent environment to learn and develop our employees with a skillset that they will be able to utilize throughout their entire career."

Kirts is already mapping out his future career plans after he finishes the program, and those plans include building on his newfound skill set.

"Once I complete my apprenticeship my goal

is to grow with the company, start my tech progressions, and learn as much as possible," he says.

To have an opportunity like this, he considers it a blessing.

"I have nothing but good things to say about the apprenticeship here at GE," Kirts says.

"I have a lot of flexibility here that allows me time with my family, as well as being able to get my powerplant license for free while being paid."

He encourages anyone looking for a career change to look into the apprenticeship and consider applying.

"If you are looking for a job with flexibility, free education, competitive pay, and a chance to be self-motivated, this is definitely a great opportunity," he adds.

Though applications aren't currently being accepted, Wysong says the plant is actively in the process of hiring another small group of apprentices. Future openings for the program will be posted on the GE Aerospace Lafayette Careers page: jobs.gecareers.com ★

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BY RADONNA FIORINI
PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE PETKOV



A Pinch of Pepper Tea & Spicery



Collaboration and a culinary coup

Lafayette's Main Street is bustling, but taking a two-block detour south reveals a new arrival on the retail scene that embodies the spirit of cooperation that's helping to transform downtown.

When you walk in the door of A Pinch of Pepper Tea & Spicery at 619 Columbia St., you know you've found something special. It's not just the colorful containers of olive oil, hot sauce, spices, tea leaves and dried beans that catch the eye. Many of the products for sale are unique to Lafayette, but the space itself also is special and represents an unusual collaboration between the city, historic preservationists and local business owners.

The 306-square-foot store is part of a bump-out attached to the new Public Safety Center between Sixth and Seventh streets on Columbia and is a micro-retail incubator space with an historic connection. The brick face of this little retail rectangle is the façade saved from the historic 1924 Horner Building that was demolished for the construction of the Public Safety Center.





"We ...came up with the idea of a micro-retail space as a way for people who have a product or service to test out the market and see if it would be viable."

"(The Horner Building) was a very nice, historic building, and we wanted to save it, as much as we could," says Dennis Carson, Lafayette's economic development director. "So when we demolished the building, we took down the front façade and stored it, then rebuilt it on the side of the Public Safety Center parking garage."

The city manages the space, renting it to small businesses for three to 12 months at an affordable rate that includes internet service and utilities. The light-filled space is divided into two areas connected by a restroom and can be occupied by one or two businesses. Concrete floors and white walls provide a blank palette for almost any kind of retail except food service.

"We toyed with a lot of ideas about how to use it but then came up with the idea of a micro-retail space as a way for people who have a product or service to test out the market and see if it would be viable," Carson says.

A Pinch of Pepper owner Emily Colombo is the first to lease the space, opening shop November 18, 2023. She began curating and selling spices and tea online in the spring of '23, with a desire to grow slowly and eventually open a brick-and-mortar shop.

Colombo learned about the space from another downtown business owner, Nolan Willhite, who co-owns Flora Candle Company with Troy Webber. Willhite also chairs the Downtown Lafayette Business Owners Association.

"Emily had a booth at Summer on the Square, one of the events we host for local small business owners, many that sell online and at festivals," Willhite says. "I just mentioned (the space) to her without knowing a lot of details because it seemed like a good fit. Main Street is almost full, and it's exciting to see businesses expanding out from that center."

After meeting with Carson and obtaining the support of family and trusted friends, Colombo decided to go for it.

"When I found out about it, the wheels immediately started turning," Colombo says. "It's big enough to do what I wanted and is not too big or too small. After looking at the specifics, I knew I would be silly to not try this."

Although the timeline was accelerated, she quickly pivoted from online sales and festivals to stocking the storefront. Local muralist Melissa Horrocks painted a black, graphic design on the shop walls that complements the spare aesthetic of the space. Colombo opens the shop three evenings a week after working her fulltime job as a lawncare company dispatcher, and on Saturdays.

She signed a year lease knowing the space would be temporary, but believing a year would be long enough to get her business established with hopes of moving to a larger, more permanent spot this winter. Owning this small business is a first for Colombo, a West La-





fayette high school graduate who has a degree in organizational leadership from Purdue and spent many years in the food and beverage industry. She completed two internships with Walt Disney World in Florida and hoped to have a career there, but life circumstances brought her back home.

Her efforts and experience are paying off as the initial response to the shop has been very encouraging. Holiday sales exceeded expectations and met the goals Colombo set for A Pinch of Pepper. That early success confirmed her belief that Lafayette is ready for the kinds of products she's offering, even though price points are higher than found in big grocery stores.

"People begin to recognize that you're getting more in the packages here, and it's very fresh, which means you often don't have to use as much," Colombo says. "The price reflects products that are fresh and potent. If you're excited about the products you're using, you'll cook more often and try new things."

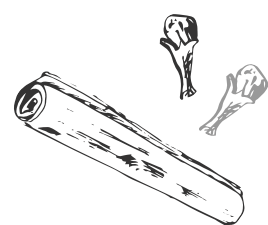
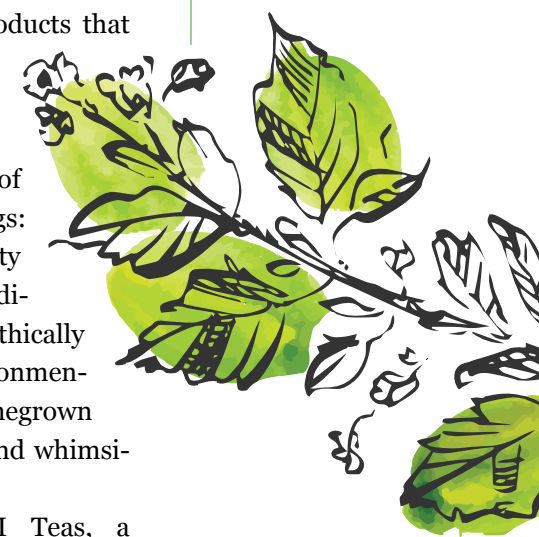
A Pinch of Pepper synthesizes many of Colombo's priorities and favorite things: interesting, small batch, high-quality spices and rubs; teas, beans, salts, condiments, and infused olive oils that are ethically sourced from around the world; environmentally conscious companies with homegrown products in eco-friendly packaging; and whimsical tea mugs, gift items and stickers.

For example, she carries NEMI Teas, a London-based company that employs refugees, teaching them job skills and helping them assimilate into life in the United Kingdom. Colombo also reuses packing material when shipping products ordered online and includes very little plastic, which lines up with her dedication to environmentally friendly business practices.

She also enjoys helping customers put together gift sets, combining different products from the store in a basket or cute container. Her online store is still open and she offers in-store pick up.

On her website, Colombo captures her philosophy around cooking and sharing a meal, "I believe some of the best parts of life are had sitting around a table and sharing a meal or a drink with others," she writes. "I found some of my own healing and discovered a lot about myself when I started really cooking and being curious. I believe in the power of ritual (such as your daily cup of tea!) to help calm and soothe what ails us and fill our sails for the direction we want to go."

"I believe in the power of ritual (such as your daily cup of tea!) to help calm and soothe what ails us and fill our sails for the direction we want to go."



Local foodies are taking note of Colombo's philosophy and unique products. Sara Mummey, executive director of the Lafayette Symphony, has an Instagram and Facebook account called Booze & Noodles where she explores two of her passions, food and wine. Sara has featured products from Colombo's shop more than once on her social media feeds.

"As someone who spends a lot of time in the kitchen, I especially love that I can visit A Pinch of Pepper to pick up ingredients by some high-quality and unique culinary brands that other stores in our area don't usually carry," Mummey says. "But you don't have to be a chef or an Instagrammer to enjoy the shop. There's a great selection of interesting products and tasty bits to make it easier for anyone to have fun cooking and eating – whether you're a foodie or a kitchen newbie."

Colombo comes from a family of cooks, and her grandparents, Nicky and Francis De Francesco, owned an Italian restaurant in Elkhart for 40 years. It was a place of connection for the entire community, something she aspires to create.

"My grandma's love language was cooking and when she died, I learned how important that restaurant was in the neighborhood," Colombo says. "Going forward I want to create a community hub and have a space for classes, collaborations and community events."

Mummey sees that collaborative spirit as a real asset, not just to Colombo's business, but to downtown Lafayette as a whole.

"Emily's approach to business is so collaborative and community minded," Mummey says. "She's not just looking for ways to grow her own brand, but also to lift up other businesses, purveyors and creators in a really inspiring way. She's always cooking up ideas for her next local partnership!"

Though business slowed in January, Colombo is confident traffic will pick back up as the weather warms and she collaborates with other businesses in the coming months.

And increased foot traffic is a reality as downtown Lafayette currently has more retail space than has been present in decades, Carson says. He attributes that growth to several factors, including increased housing options and younger people looking for local, handcrafted shopping. The city hopes to encourage more downtown growth with continued collaborative efforts such as the micro-incubator space.

As of this writing, Carson is looking for another innovative small business to lease the second half of the building. Contact him for more information, lafayette.in.gov/Economic-Development, 765-807-1090. ★



A Pinch of Pepper Tea & Spicery: 619 Columbia St., Lafayette • apinchofpepper.shop
Find Colombo on Instagram at [tryapinchofpepper](https://www.instagram.com/tryapinchofpepper)

Open: Wednesday through Friday, 5 – 8 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.





Dr. Allison Gabriel
(Photo provided by Purdue University)

Thriving on the job and off

Dr. Allison Gabriel
studies that balance
at Purdue’s Center for
Working Well

A broad, engaging smile defines Allison Gabriel’s face, and it’s not about to disappear anytime soon.

Her dream of creating a center that would help workers, especially women, navigate the bumps that too often make the workplace an uneasy place, came true in a wholly unexpected “pinch me” moment at Purdue University.

And she’s in charge.

It all happened a little over a year ago while she interviewed for a faculty position in the organizational behavior and human resources area of the Mitch E. Daniels, Jr. School of Business. Asked about her dreams, she enthusiastically advanced an idea that had been kicking around in her head: a center that would help employees and supervisors deal with the non-work, messy, life issues that keep both groups from giving their best to the workplace.

Gabriel had to pinch herself when she was offered the faculty post and was given the chance to create such a center that puts Purdue on the cutting edge of what’s happening in human resources training. The Center for Working Well opened in 2023 with Gabriel at its helm.

Holding a BA in psychology from Penn State University and a Ph.D. in industrial-organizational psychology from the University of Akron, Gabriel has won numerous awards for her research and was tabbed as a Top 50 Undergraduate Business School Professor by Poets & Quants in 2018. Her research has received popular press attention from outlets such as CNBC, CNN, *Forbes*, *Psychology Today*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, in addition to being featured by *Harvard Business Review*.



Despite the lip service given to issues such as burnout, gender-based harassment, and helping women successfully re-enter the workplace after giving birth, Gabriel says not enough is being done to resolve them.

The center uses a three-pronged approach that includes research, teaching tomorrow's business leaders and offering real-life assistance to organizations and businesses that recognize they need to change and want help.

"I want to understand how we can create workspaces, structures and supports that let people thrive, not only at work but also when they go home.

"There's this positivity bias about Center for Working Well that makes you think it's just going to be happiness," she says. But no. "To talk about the thriving part we also need to be doing research on the parts that are tricky and complicated and messy and don't go so well."

Beside input from Purdue faculty, there are "15 or so people that are non-Purdue faculty, and other institutions, that are joining in to share their research and be part of the conversation," she says.

Conversations about issues such as burnout don't have easy or predictable answers. But Gabriel believes that getting people to recognize burnout, for example, as a problem, then doing research and discussing possible solutions can achieve change.

"It's such a fun opportunity to teach a class where I'm not there to teach you (students) the right answers. I'm here to teach you these *are* issues. And how do we co-create solutions we can all feel good about."

At the core of Center's work is the idea of "bringing humanity back to the workplace and acknowledging that people have really complicated lives at work and really complicated lives outside work. How do we hold space for those two truths when we haven't been doing it for decades?" says Gabriel.

In so many places — from hospitals to academia — burnout runs rampant because you can literally work all the time. Sometimes it seems as if burned out employees are held up as good employees, which is not right, she asserts. Burnout exacts stiff emotional and physical prices, and then there's the nagging guilt. "It needs to be

OK to watch Netflix instead of answering emails, because employees need recovery time from their jobs.

"It's people on the supervisor level that need to change, rather than the individuals. Supervisors set the tone for what work is going to look like and how people should feel and can feel when they're taking time for themselves."

Issues such as burnout and gender-based harassment (research shows that women are negatively affected even when the harassment is not aimed at them) are topics she's often asked to talk about in public. The topic no corporation or business has ever asked her to talk about is one really personal to her — the challenges new mothers face re-entering the workplace, and post-partum depression.

Gabriel's interest in this particular issue started in 2018 as she worked toward tenure and wanted to add another area of research. "I started getting really fascinated with the hidden challenges women were having returning to work after having kids. Right around the time we were publishing that research I got pregnant with my daughter."

Her work gave her confidence that she'd be OK with all these challenges. But others chopped away at that confidence. "I remember the day, Eleanor's due date, when I found out I won an early career award from a large professional organization, and somebody said to me, 'What great timing, because you got all your productivity out since it's really going to tank after you have this baby' ... like have a kid and it's over."

Eleanor was born the day the great COVID shutdown commenced, and several weeks later Gabriel realized that she was experiencing post-partum depression. "I found myself completely overwhelmed every day. I would wake up and be like, 'I can't wait for the day to be done and I can go back to bed.'"

"The thought of coming back to work," she pauses with her thoughts. "How am I supposed to put on this face like I'm fine and I'm functioning when, just as you say it, you feel tears starting?" Looking back she feels lucky she had

an understanding, supportive husband and a pediatrician who helped talk her through rough times.

The whole experience galvanized her desire to do more research, collect and analyze more stories from mothers re-entering the workplace, to amass information that could hopefully lead to supportive workplace changes for returning mothers.

"The project became my therapy," she says, "now it's a privilege to talk about it." Her talks on that research receive enthusiastic support in academia, but the topic is so sensitive in the general workplace that people are scared to touch it.

Gabriel, however, sees a brighter future for women and the issues they are facing in the workplace. Centers like the one she created at Purdue are part of it. But it's more than that. "This generation of kids graduating (college), they're aware of these issues and they're going to push back," she says.

"At the end of the day what the center does, what our research does, is help people figure out a language to bring humanity back into the workplace." ★



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(Photo this page provided by Purdue University Airport)

The sky's the limit

Purdue Airport has big plans to connect
Greater Lafayette to the world



Purdue University's

rich aviation tradition, which dates back to the 1930s and Amelia Earhart, takes a giant leap forward this spring.

Commercial air service returns to Purdue Airport for the first time since 2004, thanks to an agreement with Surf Air Mobility Inc. and its subsidiary Southern Airways Express. Southern will schedule daily commuter flights between Purdue and Chicago's O'Hare International Airport beginning May 15.

But that's just the beginning, says Rob Wynkoop, Purdue vice president for auxiliary services.

"They're a commuter airline but they also have – and what is so important about them – interline agreements with American, United and also Alaska Airways," Wynkoop says. "So that essentially gives us connections, access to their log

of flights on a daily basis out of O'Hare Airport.

"For instance, if I was to go on AmericanAirlines.com and search for a flight from Lafayette to San Francisco, this flight would come up as an American flight because of the interline agreement between Southern and American. I would fly Southern directly from Lafayette to O'Hare. I'd transfer to an American Airlines plane flying to San Francisco, and I'd be on my way."

Southern Airways has service to 46 different cities, which makes it even more attractive to Purdue and Greater Lafayette in its efforts to attract businesses.

"It's that interline agreement that's critical here," Wynkoop says. "It makes Southern such a great partner for us. They're growing. It's an airplane that will allow a good test for this community because

it's a nine-passenger airplane. If we can fill that we probably can do just as well in larger airplanes with more seats."

If the commercial agreement with Southern Airways is successful, it will be the first step toward expanding airline service into Greater Lafayette.

"This is a great way to prove there is demand in our community and that it can handle, quite frankly, a larger service and more options," Wynkoop says.

Those options could possibly include low-cost carriers such as Allegiant or Spirit, which would allow Purdue Airport access to vacation points such as Florida, Arizona or Las Vegas.

"I think we have the opportunity to handle those and then some," Wynkoop says. "When you look at the number of tickets that are sold

in this area over a 25-mile radius of Lafayette and West Lafayette, there's a lot of travel on Allegiant and carriers like that. That is primarily folks getting away for a quick vacation in the winter or spring break. I think it would be a great addition to our community."

The return of commercial service coincides with major improvements to the airport. Purdue and



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the Indiana Economic Development Corp. will provide funding to support the air service's establishment and ongoing operations.

The \$7 million provided by Indiana's READI (Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative) program will allow construction to begin on a new airport terminal. Wynkoop credits the efforts of Greater Lafayette Commerce and its READI administrative group in making Purdue more attractive to Surf Air Mobility.

"I think we've looked at this all along as not necessarily a Purdue project, but it is absolutely a regional project that is important to Greater Lafayette," Wynkoop says. "READI was critical. It helps our message going into talking to

airlines that we were indeed going to have a brand new terminal that will be able to manage both small airplanes like Southern has, and narrow body, 160-passenger airplanes you might see like a 737 from one of the larger carriers that can fly in and out of here."

Construction is scheduled to begin on the Amelia Earhart Terminal in June, with a completion date of summer 2025. The approximately 10,000-square-foot facility will be located west of the existing terminal. It will include a waiting area, baggage claim, restrooms and ticketing and passenger screening. To make room for new short-term parking, airport hangar T-1 will be demolished.

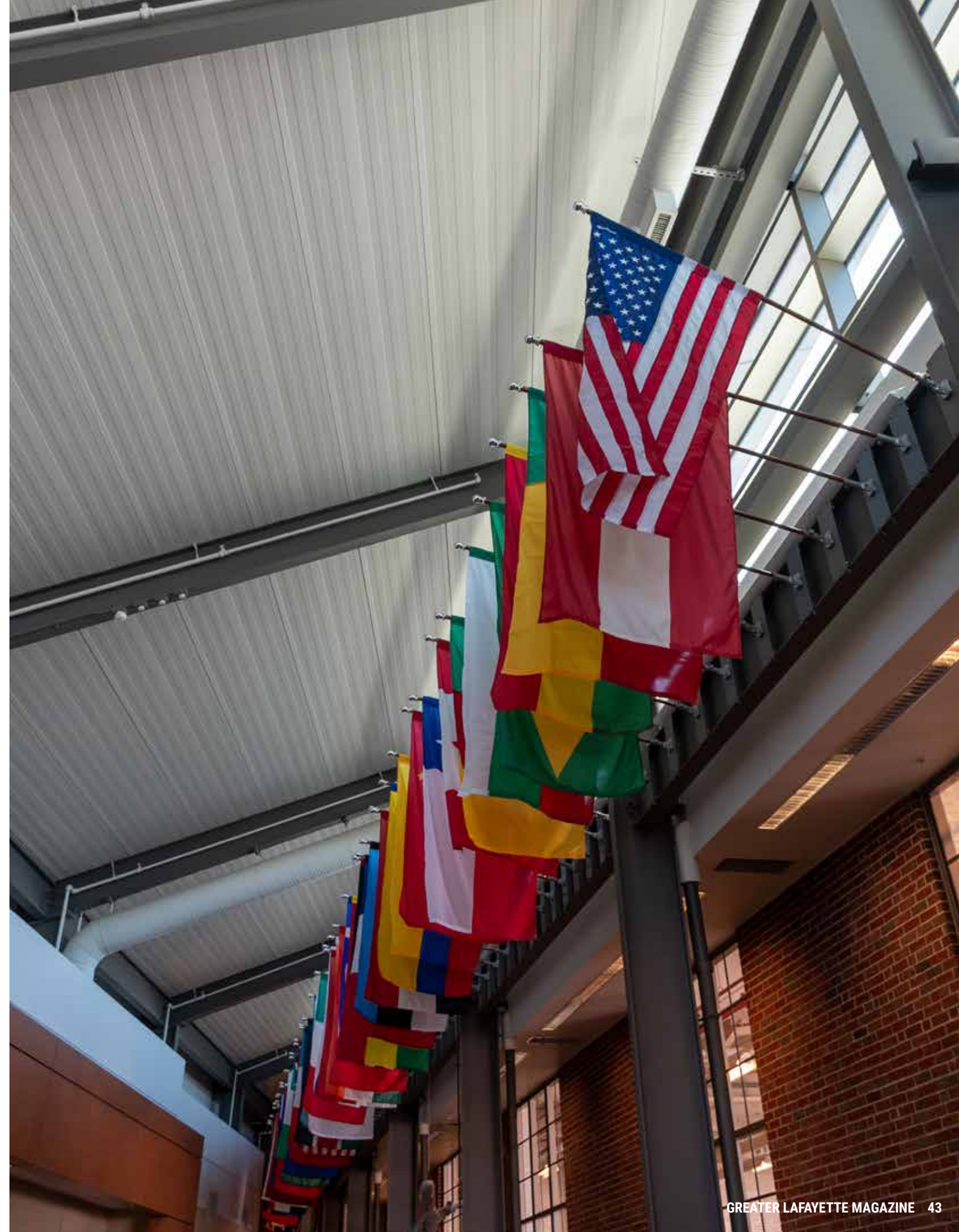
During her rise to fame, Earhart

flew out of Purdue Airport in the 1930s. She was an instructor and advisor in careers for women at Purdue from 1935-37 before disappearing during an attempt to fly around the world in July 1937.

Obtaining the rights to name the terminal in Earhart's honor was far easier than the efforts to bring back commercial air service.

"You can thank President (Mung) Chiang for that," Wynkoop says. "It was his idea. He worked directly with the Earhart family to seek permission for that. It was a pretty easy process. They were more than happy and honored to use her name here to further add to her legacy at Purdue."

Purdue senior Annika Knott, an executive board member for Purdue



Aviation Day, is pleased that the university’s connection to Earhart will live on with the new terminal.

“I’m an aviation ambassador, and we always mention Amelia Earhart’s name on our tours,” Knott says. “It’s cool to hear about the connection Purdue has with her legacy. The fact her name is going to be carried on even further and more people are going to learn her story is an incredible aspect as well.”

Purdue’s longstanding history in aviation is one reason why reestablishing commercial air service is such a high priority not just for the university but Greater Lafayette as well.

“It’s important that we have a commercial service and access to not only other parts of the country but really the world,” Wynkoop says. “There’s been a great amount of economic development that has occurred in this community in the last 10 years, whether it’s Saab or GE Aviation, just to name a few.

“The demand for travel has increased in this area, and we believe it can sustain commercial service again here in our community. The research that we’ve done says you can support commercial service in and out of Purdue Airport, so we want to give it a go.” ★

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About Purdue Airport

Established in 1934, it was the first university-owned airport in the United States.

Four years earlier, Purdue was the first university to offer college credit for flight training. It currently serves as the “largest classroom on campus” for more than 1,000 students in the School of Aviation and Transportation Technology.

In terms of total annual aircraft operations, Purdue is Indiana’s second busiest airport.

Comments from Purdue President Mung Chiang

“Purdue and the neighboring community are pleased to welcome Southern Airways Express to the Purdue University Airport. We could not do this without the outstanding support of Gov. Eric Holcomb, IEDC, the mayors of both Lafayette and West Lafayette, GLC, the FAA and countless others. With the economic growth momentum here, I know that Purdue faculty, staff, students and alumni will be thrilled for the university and local communities to once again have direct access to the global aviation network after 20 years without scheduled commercial airline service.

“Additionally, as home to one of the top aviation technology and aerospace engineering programs in the country, we look forward to exploring innovation, educational and career opportunities for our students. ‘Purdue Flies’ delivers our ABCD strategy to serve the state and country, further accelerating job creation and prosperity in Greater Lafayette. And the opportunity to honor Amelia Earhart makes it even more special.”



BY KEN THOMPSON
PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE PETKOV



Purdue Aviation Day

has long history of sharing love of flight

Manned flight was in its infancy when the first Purdue Aviation Day took place in 1911. Years before Purdue established the first university-owned airport, two biplanes took to the sky above a grass landing strip where Elliott Hall of Music is now located. Nearly 17,000 people gathered to watch.

This year’s Purdue Aviation Day took place April 13, the culmination of a year-long effort organized by student leaders within the School of Aviation and Transportation Technology. The annual event, free to the public, features aircraft on display, educational programs, guest speakers and youth activities.

Annika Knott, a senior, was vice president of public relations and guest experience for this year’s Purdue Aviation Day. After volunteering in 2022, when the event returned following a two-year hiatus, Knott joined the executive board in the fall of 2023.

Knott inherited her passion for aviation through her mother, a flight attendant for United Airlines.

“I grew up traveling,” Knott says. “I kind of fell in love with the industry that way. I’ve since fallen in love with it more, majoring in professional flight and aviation management here at Purdue. My ultimate goal is to be a captain for a major airline flying internationally one day.

“Purdue Aviation Day has reinstilled that love for aviation and the community that comes with it. It’s a lot more than just airplanes, which is kind of how I viewed this school before coming here. It’s a super great community to be a part of.”

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faith
COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

Knott and the executive board hope this year's Purdue Aviation Day will perhaps birth a love for flying for others in Greater Lafayette.

"Our main goals are to connect our community of aviation enthusiasts," Knott says. "We don't only tailor our events to enthusiasts. We also are interested in sparking that curiosity in people who might not have had exposure yet to the field of aviation. And also educating and inspiring the Greater Lafayette community, bringing people together for a fun day whether you have prior interest and experience in the industry or not. We hope to see people come in with a smile on their face and leave with one as well."

Knott says planning for the 2025 Purdue Aviation Day began the day after this year's event. The executive board will examine its guest experience survey responses to determine if any changes are needed.

"That really influences the direction we take the event in the future," Knott says. "Whether that's parking or new guest speakers or aircraft that people want to see."

The 2024 Purdue Aviation Day was highlighted by the A-10 Thunderbolt II Demonstration Team. Based at Davis-Monthan Air Force base in Arizona, the Air Combat Command A-10 Thunderbolt II Demonstration Team performs precision aerial maneuvers of the A-10 "Warthog" at air shows nationwide.

"That was a whole new ballgame we stepped into, adding an aerial component," Knott says.

Getting the A-10 Thunderbolt II Demonstration Team required coordination with Purdue Airport safety and operations managers, as well as air traffic control. A temporary flight restriction was granted during the event.

Guests at this year's Purdue Aviation Day included Shannetta Griffin, the Federal Aviation Administration's associate administrator of airports. Also present was Erik Amend, the FAA regional airport administrator for the Great Lakes, and other members of the FAA team.

"Their vast industry experience and passion for educating the next generation of aviation professionals will offer new opportunities for members of the Greater Lafayette and Purdue communities to learn more about overlooked roles within the industry and to also explore career opportunities within the FAA," the Purdue Aviation Day executive board said in a statement. ★



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Ashley D. Russell

Ashley D. Russell is a financial advisor with Investment Services located at Purdue Federal Credit Union. Russell, a graduate of Purdue University, has spent more than 14 years in the industry providing understanding and guidance to thousands of individuals on a wide array of complex and confusing financial topics and strategies. She has been recognized as a member of Women of Distinction. Russell, her husband, and two children enjoy spending time outdoors and in the community. If you need help navigating confusing financial decisions, reach out to Russell at Ashley.russell@lpl.com or call 765.497.7411.

QUESTION: Can you still build wealth while raising a family?

Building a career and raising a family require management skills. Juggling your time, priorities and money now while planning for the future can be daunting. Saving now to send your kids to college, take care of your parents as they age, and pursuing a comfortable retirement can be challenging.

Savings alone may not be enough. Saving part of your monthly income is the first step toward building wealth, but with current interest and inflation rates, saving may not be able to do the job on its own. After putting aside enough cash for an emergency fund, you may want to consider investing in a diversified set of investments such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, real estate and more. I can show you how to match your investment portfolio to your tolerance for risk, your age, your goals and your income to help you build your wealth.

Start with building your retirement nest egg. Most often, parents put their children's future first by building a college fund. While this is certainly important, preparing for retirement should take precedence. Your children have options that you don't. Your kids can use a combination of savings, loans and scholarships to attend college. You must live on Social Security and the wealth you've accumulated. The last thing you want is to depend on your children's financial support when they begin working and you stop.

Ask The Experts: Do you have questions regarding business challenges you are facing?

The Greater Lafayette Commerce Ask the Experts program is perfect for you. Greater Lafayette Commerce is teaming with experienced professionals who have the skills you're looking for to help you overcome challenges and provide you with perspective and direction.

Ask the Experts provides small business owners with the information they need while also facilitating the development of lasting professional relationships.

Use the tax code to help build wealth. If you're covered by a qualified employer retirement plan, not only should you consider making the largest contributions you can afford, you should make sure the money is invested in assets with the potential to provide long-term growth. If you are self-employed or not covered at work, consider an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) and/or Self-Employed 401(k), preferably self-directed ones, to hold your investment portfolio. Not only are contributions tax-deductible each year (subject to income and contribution limits), but all your earnings are tax-deferred until you start making withdrawals.

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Members of Women of Distinction 2021-2023 were recognized by CBSI, the representative's former broker-dealer, for networking and mentorship opportunities. Based on experience, GDC, performance with their investment program, and contributions to the industry.

Members of Women of Distinction 2023-2024 were recognized by TruStage, for networking and mentorship opportunities. Based on experience, GDC, performance with their investment program, and contributions to the industry.

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BY AMY LONG
PHOTOS PROVIDED

Unwind at Wildcat Creek Winery



Friday events a great way to welcome the weekend

It's fair to say that there is no "off" season at Wildcat Creek Winery.

Throughout the year, the winery, located on County Road 200 North on Lafayette's northeast side, sees a steady stream of customers – from drop-in guests sampling flights in the tasting room, to holiday shoppers perusing the gift shop for locally made treasures, to Founders Wine Club members picking up their quarterly consignments. And through every season, wine production continues, turning out local favorites like Prophet's Rock Red, Bicentennial Blueberry and an award-winning Traminette.

But the activity at Wildcat Creek Winery really ramps up through the spring and summer, when the winery hosts its popular Wine After Work series. This year, the winery plans 22 weekly Wine After Work events, every Friday from May through September.





"There's a lot of positive, joyful energy."

Each free event will feature one food truck and a live musical act. Special, seasonal cocktails made from Wildcat Creek Winery's featured wines will be available for purchase. The events are open to all ages, though only adults age 21 and up are allowed at the tasting room bar. Usually, guests bring lawn chairs and picnic blankets and spread out across the winery's two acres, says Kathy Black, who opened the winery with her husband, Rick, in 2008.

"There's a lot of positive, joyful energy," Black says of the Wine After Work atmosphere.

The popular summer series kicks off its fourth season on May 3 with the Peter Ivanovich Trio performing classic tunes from the '50s, '60s and '70s. Food will be available for purchase from Wildfire 348 Pizza Truck.

Other popular performers on this year's roster include the Lafayette duo Travelin' Light; the Molter Brothers, performing Americana music and folk-rock; and Olga Berezhnaya, a violin virtuoso originally from Russia, who performs a wide range of genres, from classical to jazz to pop.

"She plays like the violin is on fire," Black says. "It's just absolutely amazing to watch that lady play the violin."

Brent Laidler, a local jazz clinician, composer and performer, has performed at many different events at Wildcat Creek Winery over the last decade. This year, he will perform at five different Wine After Work gatherings. Each time, he will assemble a different trio of musicians and perform a unique set – his repertoire includes Broadway showtunes, swing, jazz standards and gypsy jazz. "We want to give them a different show every time we come out," he says.

He keeps coming back, he says, because it's an opportunity for him to grow and to learn as an entertainer in a laid-back atmosphere.

"It's always been kind of like good people enjoying good music, good food, good



"... good people enjoying good music, good food, good wine and good company."



wine and good company," he says.

With nine food trucks rotating through the season, there's bound to be something for everyone. Fan favorites include local trucks such as EMT Food Truck, L Cora and Guac Box. In addition, trucks like Chef Dan's Southern Comfort Food Truck and J's Lobster Truck will roll in from Indianapolis.

"It's now becoming our job to add more variety instead of the same old things, so that people keep coming back," Black says.

The series launched in 2021 as a post-pandemic solution to the problem of large crowds. For years, Wildcat Creek Winery had hosted an annual Barbecue, Bluegrass and Blueberry Wine Festival that drew hundreds of people and required lots of logistical planning and crowd control. After they canceled the event in 2020, organizers took the opportunity to switch gears.

"They were really big and busy events, so there were a lot of extra logistical issues, like parking or restrooms," says winemaker Nyssa Craton. "After COVID, people didn't want to come here and be in the middle of a really crowded situation, so we said, 'Well what if we took [the blueberry wine festival] and the things people like about it and just kind of spread it out over several different events?' The whole summer is going to be Blueberry Fest every Friday, just really spread out."

Black estimates that a couple dozen guests came to the first Wine after Work event in 2021. Last year, Black guesses, some of the events maxed out at 100 people. "For the size of our winery, these Wine After Works seem to be perfect," she says.

This year, Black expects at least 100 guests at the kick-off event May 3.

"We're expecting a crowd, and that's a good thing," she says. "And we'll be ready for them." ★



Summer happenings at Wildcat Creek Winery

Wildcat Creek Winery, 3233 E 200 N, will host Wine After Work from 4 to 8 p.m. every Friday from May 3 to Sept. 27, weather dependent. Learn more at wildcatcreekwinery.com.

2024 Summer Wine After Work Schedule

Bring lawn chairs & come to enjoy a great evening! ♦ Music 6 – 7:30 p.m. ♦ Food – 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

May 3 – Peter Ivanovich Trio
Wildfire 348 Pizza Truck

May 10 – Brent Laidler
Black Dog Barbeque

May 17 – Travelin' Light
L Kora Food Truck

May 24 – Olga Berezhnaya
EMT Food Truck

May 31 – Molter Brothers
EMT Food Truck

June 7 – Peter Ivanovich Trio
Rollin in Dough Wood
Pizza Truck

June 14 – Brent Laidler
L Kora Food Truck

June 21 – Molter Brothers
Black Dog Barbeque
Food Truck

June 28 – Travelin' Light
EMT Food Truck

July 5 – Peter Ivanovich Trio
Puritan Coney Island
Express Food Truck

July 12 – Brent Laidler
J's Lobster Truck

July 19 – Molter Brothers
Chef Dan's Southern
Comfort Food Truck

July 26 – Dale Bitner
L Kora Food Truck

August 2 – Peter & Co.
Guac Box Food Truck

August 9 – Brent Laidler
Rollin in Dough
Pizza Truck

August 16 – Molter Brothers
Puritan Coney Island
Express Food Truck

August 23 – Dale Bitner
EMT Food Truck

August 30 – Travelin' Light
Black Dog Barbecue
Food Truck

September 6 – Peter Ivanovich Trio
J's Lobster Truck

September 13 – Brent Laidler
Chef Dan's Southern
Comfort Food Truck

September 20 – Molter Brothers
Guac Box

September 27 – Olga Berezhnaya
EMT Food Truck



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BY GREG LINDBERG
PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE PETKOV AND PROVIDED

The positive power of Unified sports

Casey Davenport, assistant principal at Lafayette Jefferson High School, enjoys discussing the Unified sports programs at her school for good reason: The school is applying to be a banner school for the Special Olympics, based on the hard work she and fellow volunteers have put in the last few years to bring funding, events and new sports for students with disabilities.

Davenport recognizes the partnership with Special Olympics is a current motivator. “There’s certain criteria that you have to do as a school to be able to achieve that status,” she says. “We have been working all year long that hopefully here in April we will be able to apply and qualify to be a banner school for the first time ever at Jeff High.”

She adds, “It just recognizes the fact that we prioritize, we’re inclusive and we’re giving our students tons of opportunities. So, it is just a recognition that, hey, our school’s doing a lot for this population and it’s a priority for us.”

Unified sports is the term for activities that team people with disabilities with other students wanting to provide help and support in a rewarding environment celebrating athletic achievements. Students who qualify to be an athlete in Unified sports have a severe cognitive disability and are partnered with a non-disabled peer.

Davenport says that at the start of the school year, Jeff had 386 student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which doesn’t necessarily mean they have severe cognitive disabilities but does make them excellent candidates to participate as partners in Unified sports.





In addition to IEP partners there is also the Best Buddies program that couples special education students with non-disabled peers. This program finds ways to involve the community, such as visits from the Columbian Park Zoo and designing and racing derby cars with the Boy Scouts. One of the popular representations of the success of the Best Buddies program and Unified sports at Jeff is the Unified track team organized by Assistant Coach Angelique Johns.

"I was asked if I wanted to volunteer in 2018, and I didn't really know about Unified sports at all," Johns says. "After the first practice, I was hooked. I love the interaction of the athletes and partners."

McCutcheon High School has offered Unified track and field since spring 2016 and Unified flag football since fall 2018. Gina Bunch, head coach for both Unified sports teams at McCutcheon, states the biggest current challenge is "finding individual

gym and track time," since so many different sports are going on at once.

"I would love to get back to state!" Bunch says, explaining that McCutcheon Unified teams have gone twice for football and once in track.

Johns says that one early challenge working with Unified track was explaining the IHSAA sanctioned sport qualifiers, such as teams comprised of approximately equal number of athletes with intellectual disabilities (Unified student athletes) and athletes without intellectual disabilities (Unified student partners).

"We had over 65 kids participate last year, and I expect to only go up from there," she says. Johns also is elated to share the team's successes, including state champions in 2015, regional champs and state runners-up in 2022, and sectional champs in 2023.

Additionally, Harrison High School has various





Unified sports programs that were started by Athletics Administrative Assistant Denise Newton and Athletics Director Jerry Galema in fall 2013. Newton also coaches Unified bocce with Amanda Rowe and the Unified basketball team with Galema.

Newton acknowledges some of the biggest challenges since starting Unified sports at Harrison have been communication and finding the best space for practicing when resources become limited. “It really takes paying attention to their body language in addition to their verbal language to understand what they are trying to communicate,” she says.

Both Davenport and Johns see Unified sports growing more in the future, with new opportunities coming out every year and the numbers increasing. However, they also have another key player and Unified activity that many may not even consider when thinking of “sports” in general – eSports.

eSports teams play video games against other schools across the state and the nation. Jeff launched its eSports team three years ago. eSports started at Attica and Frankfort three years ago as well. A year later, Kristen Van Laere, workplace specialist at Jeff, was approached about starting a Unified eSports team. Jeff is currently the only Greater Lafayette school with a Unified eSports team, but Harrison has just received a grant to get one started.

Unified eSports is made up of two players and a partner who all play normal video games. “Being an IT teacher, I don’t really get to spend a lot of time with our special education students as I like,” Van Laere says. “Having that Unified program in my backyard, so to speak, in my office, I’ve really gotten to know the kids, and I just love them and I would do anything for them.

“We won a national championship last year playing Rocket League through the PlayVS eSports platform, and they are the only league currently offering any fight eSports. And then we also were State champions last year with Rocket League as well.”

eSports players can earn letters and letter jackets. Hitting certain levels within the programs can earn them these letters, and their grades also play a factor in these rewards. “I have had moms send me pictures after they buy the letter jackets, saying, ‘I never thought my son would do this,’ ” Van Laere says.

David Joest is the head coach of the Unified track and field team at West Lafayette High School, which started in 2014. “West Lafayette was one of the original 13 schools in Indiana to field a team for the IHSAA tournament during the inaugural season, and we won the sectional championship in 2014,” he says.

Joest says it’s been difficult to maintain the numbers they need for Unified track and field since the COVID pandemic, which affected participation. One way the school has boosted the program is converting its Best Buddies initiative to a “West Side Unified” club.

“West Lafayette special education teacher Beth Scherrer and I sponsor the club that meets once a month during school, and we have one out-of-school activity each month as well. Like Unified sports, the goal is to promote friendships among students of all abilities in the school,” Joest says.

Davenport at Lafayette Jeff adds, “It is an expectation really when you come into Jeff High School that we take care of each other, and we embrace each other. And that to me is the most rewarding part of watching or being a part of Unified sports — the interaction between our partners and athletes.

“Our partners understand it’s really not about them. We’re doing this for our athletes who don’t have as many opportunities, unfortunately. And we’re giving them an opportunity to be in the spotlight. And they embrace that. They do that.”

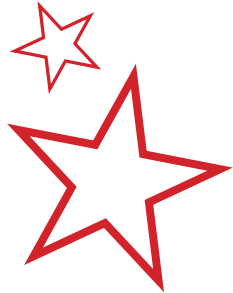
These champions of Unified sports at Greater Lafayette high schools are encouraging other schools to get involved and to offer time to help see these achievements continue to grow throughout the state. ★



(Photo provided by the Journal & Courier)



- Lafayette Jefferson High School Unified track schedule: bronchoathletics.com
- West Lafayette High School Unified track schedule: westlafayetteathletics.com
- Harrison High School Unified track schedule: harrisonathletics.com
- McCutcheon High School Unified sports schedule: mccutcheonathletics.com



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CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

BY KAT BRAZ
PHOTOS PROVIDED

The Plant Pub

Battle Ground shop serves up beer, wine and houseplants in a relaxing atmosphere



Green thumbs eager to add to their houseplant collection will find an abundance of options at the Plant Pub, a woman-owned shop in Battle Ground. Mother-daughter duo Alice and Katie Peterson opened their doors in 2022.



“My sister and I were raised just north of Battle Ground,” Katie Peterson says. “We really love our historic small town. The idea of opening a family business here where we could provide a place for people to come and spend time together was an exciting opportunity. I love working with my mom and sharing this passion that we’ve been able to explore together. It really means a lot to run this business with her.”

In addition to offering an array of houseplants, the Plant Pub creates planters and dish gardens for gifts, centerpieces or memorials. It also serves hot beverages, beer and wine to shoppers. The event space is available to rent for private parties, and the business has been ramping up its workshops. The idea of a multipurpose venue for houseplant lovers sprung from Alice’s own passion for plants.

“My mom has always loved houseplants,” Peterson says. “I didn’t really understand it when I was a kid. She had a big plant collection, but then she got busy raising us and let it go by the wayside for a while. Then, during the pandemic, she started to acquire more houseplants again. She brought me along to outdoor nurseries and I started buying plants, too. We joked that we were buying so many plants, we’d have to open up a plant store. We realized we’ve always wanted to work together, so we just went for it.”



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Alice left her job as a pre-K teacher to focus on the business full time. Katie still works part time in marketing while concurrently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing at Butler University. She manages the Plant Pub's social media presence and returns to Battle Ground on weekends to help at the store.

"We wanted an outdoor patio space, so even if people aren't specifically looking for a plant they still feel welcome to enjoy a drink and hang out," Peterson says. "Combining a venue with a plant store allows us to provide another reason for people to spend more time in Battle Ground."

The intimate indoor space has been rented for birthday parties, showers and other private events. The Petersons have partnered with crafters and fellow plant aficionados to offer workshops, such as paint a pot and pick a plant, macrame plant hangers and terrarium building. There's also a potting station for shoppers who have current houseplants that need a little TLC.

"We'll help people repot their plants or divide their plants if they've gotten too big," Peterson says. "If you want to play around in the dirt, you can bring in the plant and purchase a pot to repot it yourself. You can also drop your plants off and we'll repot them for you. That's another service we provide."

And for shoppers worried they have a black thumb? Peterson can relate.

"I really felt that way when I started growing plants," she says. "But now I've familiarized myself with the bombproof plants, the ones that are easy to care for even for those of us who are still learning. For customers new to houseplants, I steer them toward sturdy plants that don't mind being neglected. There are plants that can survive black thumbs, I promise." ★

THREE BOMBPROOF PLANTS

Worried about your inability to keep a houseplant alive? Fear not. Katie Peterson swears by these bomb-proof plants.

POTHOS

"I'd recommend a classic pothos plant, such as a golden pothos or a marble pothos. They have beautiful variation on the leaves and are very tolerant if you forget about them. They like bright indirect light but can tolerate a little less light."

ZZ PLANT

"ZZ plants are super easy. They can tolerate lower light. They also have rhizomes that collect water so you don't need to water them very often. It's actually worse if you overwater them."

SANSEVIERIA

"They are probably the most durable and forgiving plant you can find. My favorite variety is the boncel, which is called the starfish plant. It's just adorable. I've had quite a few customers come in and get so excited about it because it just looks like this happy little starfish. It is so easy to take care of."

Visit the Plant Pub

The Plant Pub, located at 100 N. Railroad St. in Battle Ground, is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Shop online: shoptheplantpub.com

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Improving our community and inspiring their peers

Greater Lafayette Young Professionals formally recognizes and celebrates the contributions young professionals make each year within Tippecanoe County. Dating to 2007, the Top 10 Under 40 award winners demonstrate leadership and professional growth while making Greater Lafayette a better place.

The selection process, dating back to 2007, begins each fall with an open invitation to the community to submit nominations of young professionals under 40 deserving of the honor. Each nominee must submit an application, résumé and professional headshot.

A selection committee, comprised of individuals representing Greater Lafayette Commerce, Greater Lafayette Young Professionals, the business community and past winners, then reviews the nominees and assigns scores for the following areas: servant leadership, community involvement and excellence in professional development.

According to Shelby White, content marketing specialist for Greater Lafayette Commerce and co-chair of the selection committee, the winners were chosen through a competitive nomination and application process by a selection committee comprised of:

- Sana Booker, City Clerk, City of West Lafayette
- Cindy Murray, City Clerk, City of Lafayette
- Amy O'Shea, Director of Community Impact, United Way of Greater Lafayette
- Andrew Muffett, Director of Strategic Operations, Ivy Tech

"It's an honor for us at Greater Lafayette Young Professionals to shine a spotlight on such an exemplary group of people working to make our community a better place," White says. "The selection committee was blown away by the strikingly personal motivations each winner has for the work they do each day – and the goals they hope to achieve on behalf of their neighbors."

Once selected, the winners are notified and invited to attend the Greater Lafayette Commerce Annual Celebration. The 2023 winners were recognized at the event hosted at the Tippecanoe County Fairgrounds in November.

"This year's honorees underscore the immense potential within our community and set a remarkable standard for their peers," says White.

Here's a brief introduction to the winners, including their responses to a few questions.

Juliana Casavan

Director of Operations, MatchBOX Coworking Studio

Casavan is a program designer and facilitator and teaches others how to build and implement strategies for success. In her role at MatchBOX Coworking Studio, the leading coworking space in Greater Lafayette, she coaches local startups and entrepreneurs through strategic planning and product development.

She also owns Casavan Consulting, providing sustainability consulting for academic research teams in software.

What would you say to young professionals just starting out?

The possibilities of what you can do and accomplish are endless, keep your eyes open to them, and don't be afraid to step outside your original plan.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Retired, in the mountains. Haha! I am always open to new possibilities, and I intend to be in Greater Lafayette serving our entrepreneurial community.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

There are so many wonderful things about this community, and it continues to get better every year. We have great amenities, the people are friendly and the growth potential is endless.





Ja'Niah Downing

Associate Director of Admissions, Diversity & Inclusion, Purdue University

In Downing's role at Purdue University, he frames the recruitment efforts around undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds. He has had the opportunity to serve the Indiana Association for College Admissions Counselors as president and chair of the Inclusion, Access and Success Committee. He also has served on the board of a local church, various educational events and provided academic counseling to those interested in higher education.

Prior to Purdue, Downing spent two years at Ivy Tech Community College and four years at his alma mater, Illinois State University.

What would you say to young professionals starting out?

Understand "Your Why." Why are you in this role? How can you take steps to your ultimate goal each day? How do you hold yourself accountable to Your Why? This understanding will help you stay passionate and focused on your work. Without it, you may become distracted or discontent.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

In 10 years, I hope to still work in higher education. I love this work, but I may be serving students in a different capacity. My "Why" is helping students gain the ability to make the choices for their future no matter where it may lead. I hope to still fulfill this "Why" even if it is outside enrollment management.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

This is a great town to learn, raise a family and build a career. The city is constantly growing and evolving to new industries, educational advancement and a growing population. Since moving here in 2011, I have been very impressed with Purdue University, companies, hospitals, restaurants and mostly the people. My family and I have learned to love this town.

Gicelle Garcia

Program Manager & Research Associate, Purdue University Center for Health Equity & Innovation

As a proud Latina with Mexican roots and a first-generation student, Garcia strives to bring a unique perspective to her work, combining passion and expertise to address disparities and promote equitable access to resources.

Garcia started her health equity career at the Tippecanoe County Health Department as a disease intervention specialist. After graduating with her master's in public health from the IU Fairbanks School of Public Health, she joined the Purdue University - Center for Health Equity and Innovation (CHEqI). Through CHEqI, she works in the community health workforce space and organizes health access events throughout Central Indiana homeless shelters and food pantries to provide resources and health services to under-resourced community members.

Outside of work, Garcia volunteers on non-profit boards, including the Latino Center for Wellness and Education (LCWE) and Transformed by Birth Services (TBS).

What would you say to young professionals starting out?

I would emphasize the importance of embracing learning and staying curious. Be open to new experiences, challenges and opportunities for growth. Build a strong network and seek mentorship from people you could consider friends. To other first gen young professionals — remember that your unique background brings valuable perspectives to the table; don't hesitate to leverage your experiences!

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

While I do not know if I'll continue to be in the Greater Lafayette community, I do hope to continue my personal and professional development wherever I go. In 10 years, I envision myself continuing to advocate for health equity, both in Indiana and on a broader scale. I aim to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of health equity initiatives, whether it's through research, policy work or community outreach.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

The best part about living in Greater Lafayette is the incredible organizations and wholehearted community members dedicated to bettering the area. I've loved meeting so many other people who carry a passion for educating and advocating on so many different topics.





Ebony Gilbert

School Counselor, McCutcheon High School

Gilbert has worked as a school counselor with Tippecanoe School Corp. for 11 years. Her passion is working with young people to help them overcome challenges and help them to realize their full potential, and Gilbert seeks to do this through all aspects of her work as a school counselor.

She serves as an advisor for student groups at the high school that focus on service to the community, developing leadership skills, building confidence and creating a culture of belonging. Gilbert also is actively involved with the state and national associations for school counselors, including participating in committees and mentoring new counselors.

What would you say to young professionals just starting out?

I would say to them to be sure to find and seek out mentors in the profession who you can trust. We all encounter challenges starting in any field, and we need people who will encourage us to keep pushing when things are hard, but also people who can give us feedback and ideas.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I am not sure. I know that I will primarily be working with young people still, either in the schools or in a larger capacity. I love the direct access I get.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

The best part is the interconnectedness within the community. It is large enough for there to be variety and many people to meet and connect with, but also small enough that people still are willing to collaborate and support one another professionally and personally.

Emily Jones

*Communication Manager,
Purdue University*

Jones currently works at Purdue University as a communication manager with Student Success Programs and as a limited term lecturer with the Brian Lamb School of Communication. When Jones isn't in the office or in the classroom, she is working toward her Master of Business Administration with a concentration in marketing.

Jones is proud to serve on the board of directors for Tippecanoe Senior Services and regularly volunteers with their Meals on Wheels program. She also is a graduate of Leadership Lafayette — a program aimed at getting young professionals involved in local nonprofits.

What would you say to young professionals just starting out?

I have the privilege of supervising and mentoring four interns through my job, and each year, I teach over 70 college students. My biggest piece of advice to each of them is simple: Be yourself. If being yourself means you don't get the job or promotion, it wasn't going to serve you well anyway. Gravitate toward people and places that celebrate your authenticity.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

In the next 10 years, I hope to expand my freelance business — ERJ Communications. In the last year, I have enjoyed working with a variety of businesses across the country and helping them improve their marketing efforts. I hope to dedicate more time to this passion project and find new ways to grow as a communicator.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

Greater Lafayette is home. It's where people remember your name, root for your successes and rally around you in hard times. I'm so grateful to have grown up here and had the chance to stick around.



Michelle Korf

Production Planning Manager, Evonik

Korf moved to Lafayette in 2018 after getting her bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. She has since been working for Evonik in Lafayette, currently in the supply chain department.

Korf also recently completed her MBA through the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. Michelle enjoys volunteering at Lafayette Urban Ministry and serving as a greeter at Connection Point Church.

What would you say to young professionals just starting out?

Don’t underestimate the power of networking! Even something as simple as a conversation at the lunch table or water cooler could open the door to your next big opportunity. And don’t be afraid to take on new opportunities that feel outside of your comfort zone.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I’d love to be doing work that brings me fulfillment and helps bring more good into this world. I see myself being a leader and a mentor for young professionals.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

As someone who grew up in Chicagoland, I wasn’t sure how much I would like moving away from a big city. But I was genuinely surprised at how much there is going on in Greater Lafayette! In my free time, I love going to the farmers market, grabbing coffee at the Lobby, or finding my next read at the Tippecanoe County Public Library.



Allison Maldonado-Ruiz

Associate Director of Retention and Diversity, Purdue Polytechnic Institute

Maldonado-Ruiz holds a Master of Education in higher education and student affairs from the University of South Carolina and a Bachelor of Arts in sociology and psychology from

Florida State University. She began her professional career with Purdue University in July 2018 and now oversees initiatives and programming related to retention, with a focus on diversity.

Since 2020, Maldonado-Ruiz has served on the board of the Latino Center for Wellness and Education, a 501(c)(3) organization. The center hosts free community events, partners with local resource providers and awards scholarships to high school, college and adult students.

Maldonado-Ruiz is a proud Peruana, immigrant, first-generation student and community leader.

What would you say to young professionals just starting out?

Take the opportunity and take care of yourself. Some of my best experiences have come from saying “yes” to new opportunities. It is how I got to Lafayette, how I got involved with the LCWE and how I met some of the most influential people in my circle.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

While I don’t know where I’ll be living, I know that I will be involved in that community. I hope to be an active contributor to the overall well being, inclusivity and viability of whichever community I am a part of. I hope to be a leader in my workplace and a mentor to young professionals.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

This community welcomed me with open arms, and the support network I developed over the years allowed me to confidently lay down roots here. I personally love all the small local businesses, the farmers markets and all the ways to get involved with the community. There is always something to do!

Working at Purdue has also provided me with a great community of colleagues and friends and growth as a professional. This community invests in its young professionals and provides chances to develop your skills and knowledge.

Yadira Santiago

Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) and Purdue University FNP Program Director

Santiago currently works as a family nurse practitioner in a nurse practitioner-run rural federally qualified health center and serves as a clinical assistant professor and the family nurse practitioner graduate program director at Purdue University School of Nursing. She has a passion for working with underserved populations and Indiana mothers. Santiago currently holds her certified lactation counselor certificate and is in the process of finalizing her perinatal mental health certificate.

She also serves on the Indiana Maternal Health Task Force (MHTF), where she is a committee member as well as a co-chair for their MHTF Equal Access to High Quality Care subcommittee and the provider liaison for the Postpartum Support International Indiana Chapter.

Santiago’s research interests and goals include helping address and improve Indiana’s maternal morbidity and mortality rates. Recent awards include Excellence in Nursing Practice from Sigma Theta Tau (National Honors Society of Nursing) as well as Indiana’s 2023 Top Nurse of Influence from the Indiana Nurses Foundation.

What would you say to young professionals starting out?

Just start! Go for it! Do the new stuff, do the scary stuff and do the things you don’t feel prepared to do. Don’t wait until you feel like you’re ready, or you may miss out on wonderful opportunities along the way. After all, there is no such thing as failures, only learning opportunities!

Find a mentor, network and be open to opportunities to engage. You’d be surprised by all the amazing people you can meet and all the new things you can learn!

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I currently love my job! I hope in 10 years to still be doing what I love while also branching out more into political advocacy to topics that are important to me, including maternal health, mental health and nurse advocacy. I also envision myself participating or coordinating events to mentor young high school students — and traveling more!

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

Serving and giving back to our community!

Growing up in Lafayette as a child, I remember all the influential people that I met (many of whom were teachers and nurses) and remember thinking, “I want to be like them when I grow up!” And now I get to combine the best of both worlds in my current role as clinical assistant professor at Purdue along with my FNP position! Working as a nurse practitioner with underserved and underprivileged communities, although difficult at times, is extremely rewarding and humbling.

Serving as a mentor in my community has always been a goal for me. I strongly believe that mentorship and education are some of the most empowering tools we can provide others! Although I am far from an expert, I am always more than happy to share what knowledge I do know.

Currently, I serve as a mentor in different programs across Purdue’s campus. My hope is to be able to serve as an inspiration and mentor for others. As a Latina, teen mom and first-generation college graduate, I want others to think, “If she can do it, I can too!” And if I can help mentor and guide them along the way, even better!





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Steve Schlenk

Assistant Vice President of Marketing & Communications, Purdue for Life Foundation

In his role at the Purdue for Life Foundation, Schlenk helps people who love Purdue University stay connected, get involved and give back. He leads a team of 25 professionals while overseeing editorial, design and multimedia efforts.

Schlenk earned his bachelor's degree from Purdue's Brian Lamb School of Communication, where he has volunteered as a mentor through the Lamb School Mentor Program, and he earned an MBA from Purdue's Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr. School of Business.

Outside of the office, Schlenk has served on the Purdue Convocations Friends Advisory Board, the Lafayette Symphony Foundation Board of Directors and as president of the board for the Indianapolis Men's Chorus.

He has received more than 50 awards from the American Advertising Federation and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

What would you say to young professionals starting out?

Say yes to taking on every project you can work on and develop a reputation for being someone who gets things done. And if you can figure out what your boss doesn't like to do, get good at it, and offer to take it off their plate. You'll be invaluable.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I hope to still be serving Purdue, where I've been working since I earned my degree. I'm ever grateful for the countless opportunities I've had at the university to learn and grow as a marketing and communications professional.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

Greater Lafayette really is a great place to live, work and play! I bought a home in West Lafayette in 2009, and I've loved watching the community grow — especially the restaurant offerings — over the last 15 years.

Casey Spencer

Vice President of Treasury Management, State Bank

Spencer currently works as Vice President, Treasury Management at State Bank. She has more than 13 years of banking experience primarily focusing on commercial and business banking solutions. Her expertise offers cash flow guidance and solutions to corporations, municipalities and not-for-profits of all sizes.

In addition to her banking career, Spencer has a passion for the Greater Lafayette community. She currently is a member of the Community Foundation of Greater Lafayette Board of Directors, as well as finance and grants committee member. She is also past board treasurer at the YWCA of Greater Lafayette.

Additionally, Spencer volunteers her time with programs such as She Leads at James Cole Elementary, Junior Achievement and much more.

What would you say to young professionals just starting out?

Find your passion and strive for growth. Be committed to taking risks and never stop learning.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

In 10 years, I hope to find myself still learning, growing and serving.

What is the best part about working and living in Greater Lafayette?

What isn't great about working and living in Greater Lafayette? We have the best of both worlds, strength in size and value in people and offerings. It's a community I'm confident to raise a family in, work in and grow in. I'm excited for the future opportunities this great community will offer not only for myself, but for my children and generations to come. ★





Franciscan Health Cancer Center consolidates all aspects of cancer care

BY CINDY GERLACH PHOTOS PROVIDED

Lafayette cancer patients are getting a major upgrade in their cancer care, thanks to the brand-new Cancer Center that opened at Franciscan Health in March.

The 68,000-square-foot, \$43 million facility at 1701 S. Creasy Lane houses all aspects of cancer under one roof, giving patients the ease, comfort and convenience of one-stop care.

“We built the Franciscan Health Cancer Center Lafayette for our neighbors in Tippecanoe County and surrounding areas to have convenient access to a wide range of resources all under one roof and close to home,” says Terry Wilson, Franciscan Health Western Indiana president and CEO. “The cancer

center exemplifies our commitment to being at the forefront of health-care innovation. Our outstanding team of doctors, nurses and staff will lead the way in providing a healthier future for our entire community.”

Among the advanced technologies offered by Franciscan: a new PET/CT machine, which can scan a patient in as little as 15 minutes; a new linear accelerator; and robotic bronchoscopy available for lung biopsy, providing earlier diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer.

Offering patients comprehensive care and guidance during their cancer journey was the impetus for this new center, says Kathryn Cockerill, marketing specialist with Franciscan Health.

The new center includes:

- An infusion center with 14 semi-private infusion bays with recliners featuring heat and massage, a television and room for a guest; there also are four private infusion rooms
- Radiation therapy with the Elekta Versa HD Linear Accelerator
- Breast Center with 3D mammography for the most accurate screening and diagnostic mammography
- Medical oncology with Franciscan Physician Network and hematology specialists
- An in-house pharmacy and labs
- Community room for classes and events
- Reflection room for meditation and prayer
- Convenient parking and patient drop-off
- An ambulance bay with a dedicated patient elevator for patients who need transport





The new Cancer Center offers the very latest in technology, Cockerill says. The radiation and PET/CT scans are state of the art; they offer fewer side effects and are faster and more accurate; diagnostic testing also is more accurate.

The goal of the center was to centralize all care, and to ease communication by having all services under one roof.

Patient comfort and convenience were primary concerns when designing the facility, Cockerill says. In the infusion center, they know that many patients will need to be there for several hours. Thus the bays are semi-private, with room for a guest. There is a desk area with WiFi and outlets, along with a television, making the stay as comfortable as possible for both patient and guest.

The private bays are available for those who are immunocompromised and need more privacy.

There is easy access to seating areas and the cafeteria, as well.

And all physicians are in the same building, making it easier for patients to see all their physicians easily; rather than having to rely on email or phone calls, they can easily speak to their team in person.

"They will have everything under one roof so they don't have to go all over the place to get their care," Cockerill says.

The community room offers a place for education, which, Cockerill says, is important. Franciscan offers a considerable amount of outreach to patients and families.

There is a designated area for clinical research. Some patients may

qualify for clinical trials or be candidates for new drugs; these options, too, can be offered in the center.

Nurse navigators have a designated area as well. Serving as liaisons between patients and the care team, they can help patients find education, support groups, help with insurance and any additional services they may need. They are now integrated into the building – one more service that is easily accessible.

The bright, new, high-tech medical facility makes patients feel cared for and that their well-being is the highest priority, says Cockerill.

"All this newness gives a good first impression," she says. "You feel more confident in the care you're going to receive." ★



Serving up ambience and elegance

BY AMY LONG
PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE PETKOV

Farm at Prophetstown tweaks popular farm-to-table dinner series

The Farm at Prophetstown, a 1920s-era living-history farm located inside Prophetstown State Park at 3534 Prophetstown Road in Battle Ground, offers a wide range of classes and events covering topics from baking and canning to gardening and raising chickens. Activity-packed Family Days draw crowds of visitors eager to engage with historic demonstrations, live music performances, barnyard games and more. But for nearly a decade, some of the most popular events at The Farm at Prophetstown also have included intimate and elegant farm-to-table dinners served in the Gibson Farmhouse Museum.

Each event features a five-course feast for about 35 guests who dine amongst the antiques and collectibles on display inside the farmhouse, a replica of a Sears & Roebuck catalog kit-home. Many of the ingredients come straight from the farm, including Berkshire pork and Hereford beef, as well as eggs, herbs and seasonal produce.





Personal chef Rusty Hetsko prepared five-course meals at the Farm on April 13 and 26.

The dinner series, which launched in 2016, capitalized on the talents of Lauren Reed, who worked as the events and education manager at the time. With a background in food service and experience as a chef, Reed planned and prepared all the meals – which became so popular that reservations filled almost as soon as the dinner dates were announced, and often spilled over into lengthy waiting lists months ahead of the events.

In 2022, Chef Reed left the farm for a new position. But her farm-to-table dinners continue, in a way.

“[Reed] had grown it to a really good point, and so even though it was kind of her baby, there was such a response from the community that we wanted to make sure we carried it on in some capacity,” says Hannah Smith, Team Lead at The Farm at Prophetstown.

But without a chef on staff for the last two years, Smith has had to get creative. “That’s where we came up with this idea to bring in other chefs,” she says.

Last year – the first without Reed – Smith scaled back from the usual season of 10 or 12

dinner to just six. The slower schedule gave her a chance to find her footing. “Last year was the year to try new things – to see what worked and see what didn’t,” Smith says. “It was definitely a transition year.”

She invited chefs from the Greater Lafayette area to the farm to prepare the meals. Understanding that the appeal of dinner on the farm is the sublime setting, Smith recruited chefs who shared her vision of a simple, unfussy, authentically farm-to-table meal.

“Some people come in and they think, ‘Oh, I want to do the weirdest, wackiest thing that I saw on Chopped,’ and it’s like, ‘No, you can go on Chopped and do that,’” Smith says. “Good food doesn’t have to be transformed that much. I feel like some of the best chefs know when to show restraint. They know when to let good, fresh food speak for itself.”

In 2023, two area chefs – Tim Williamson from North End Café in Lafayette, and Danielle Gilbert, a West Lafayette-based personal chef – wowed guests with dishes such as braised short rib with sweet stewed tomatoes, pork confit with blackberry barbecue, watermelon sorbet and lavender crème brûlée. Each chef prepared three different dinners through the summer.

“We want to take basic food and just take it up a little bit. I would say that we’re not reinventing the wheel here. We’re not infusing Jell-O with hay flavoring,” she laughs.

This summer, Smith plans to host 12 dinners planned and prepared by local guest chefs. While the dates and menus – and even the roster of chefs – have not yet been finalized, Smith knows for certain that the menus will continue to showcase farm-fresh ingredients. What doesn’t come straight from The Farm at Prophetstown will be sourced locally as much as possible.

“We have this meat that was literally raised in the sunshine out there, and it’s just better,” Smith says. “I’m just going to say it: It’s the best.”

While Reed’s contributions to The Farm at Prophetstown were significant and her innovative menus were celebrated, Smith has turned Reed’s departure into an opportunity to pivot.

Beef broth consommé with fresh julienne vegetables



Waldorf salad with a fresh blend of apples and walnuts in a creamy sweet dressing



Pimento cheese spread with homemade crackers



"We have this meat that was literally raised in the sunshine out there, and it's just better.... It's the best."

"We don't really have precedents for what this looks like without Lauren's [input]," Smith says. "In a way, that's terrifying. But in a way, it's kind of freeing, because it doesn't necessarily have to look the same. Let's make sure our guests are happy. And if that ends up being something a little different, but it works for us, then that works, too."

For example: Reed always served her farm-to-table dinners on Fridays and Saturdays. But Smith found that very few local chefs can ditch their full-time restaurant jobs on the busiest nights of the week to serve up a special weekend meal at the farm. So, Smith might schedule a few dinners on weeknights.

"Something we realized last year is we need to be more flexible," Smith says. "I bet [guests] would come out on a Sunday. So, we might even experiment a little more with some different dates like that."

In addition, historically the five-course meals have cost around \$70 per person, but Smith is now considering planning some three-course meals for around \$50. "Everything's on the table," she says. "It's very possible that we'll do some different things at different price points, just to make sure there's something for everybody."

Despite her increased flexibility, Smith says she's still in search of chefs to fill some slots. As a result, the slate of dinner dates will be announced on a rolling basis. "When we had one chef, it was a lot easier to announce [the dates] all at once, and that's what people got used to," Smith says. During the farm-to-table dinner season, typically April through November, Smith hopes to announce up to three dinner dates at a time.

"I feel like by definition, if you're a chef, you're an overextended person," Smith says. Still, she hopes to be able to connect with a few different chefs who have some extra time to devote to a single dinner at the farm. "It was a little tricky last year, but it's just finding those people that have that passion and that have that time to do something a little different."

While the details of the upcoming season are still being nailed down, Smith is certain about one thing: Guests will keep coming back. They come for the food, but also for the authentic atmosphere – for a meal in an old-timey farmhouse, while just outside the barnyard buzzes with its own routines and rhythms.

"For our dinners, it's not just about the food," Smith says. "It's about good food in this really cool place. It's the china we serve it on. It's the fact that, especially in the summer, if you look

outside, the chickens are still out." And the cows are in the pasture. And the sun is setting over the orchard.

Lee Goudy, executive director of The Farm at Prophetstown, says diners get to experience life as it was in the 1920s on the farm. "That is the specialness of our dinners," he says. "It's real. It's on the farm. And it's in the farmhouse. And you get to see the chickens and all that happens on the farm." ★



Farm-to-table dinner dates at The Farm at Prophetstown will be announced on a rolling basis from April through November on social media, as well as at prophetstown.org. Members of The Farm at Prophetstown receive advance notice in their member newsletters. Reservations are required. Five-course meals generally cost around \$70 per person. Alcohol is not served, but guests are welcome to bring their own bottles of wine to accompany the meal.

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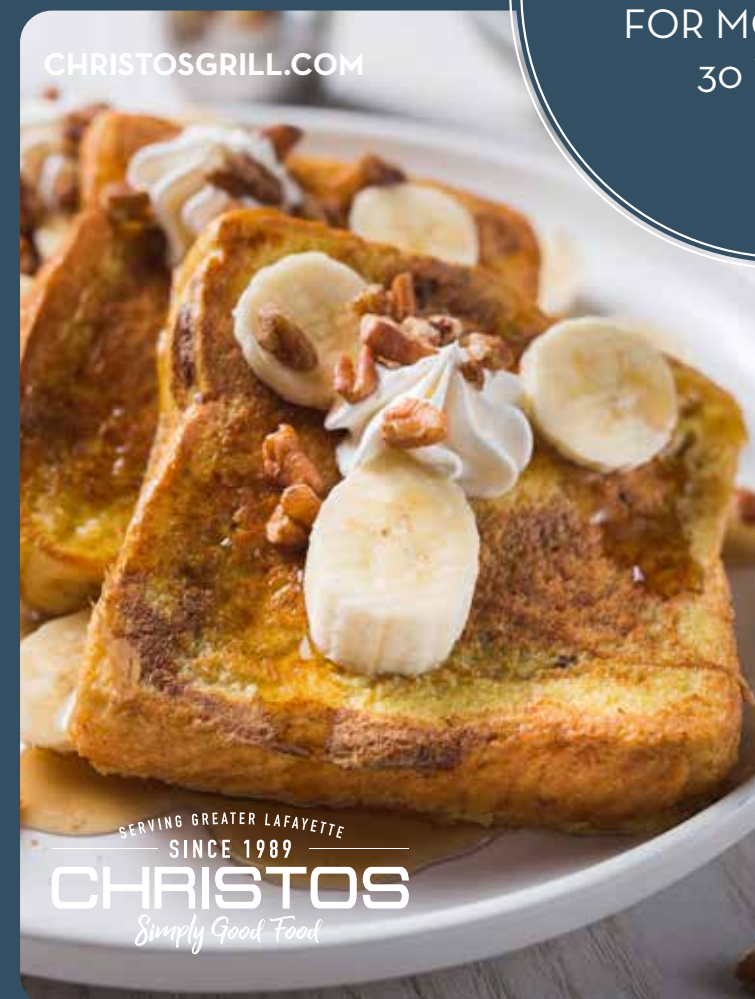


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