



A CHIEFTAIN SWEEP
BHS track and field teams place first at Logan County meet



FORECAST
▲ 72
▼ 50



Retired assistant fire chief's home destroyed in blaze

BY THE EXAMINER STAFF

The Lewistown home of a recently retired Bellefontaine Fire Department assistant fire chief was deemed a total loss in a structure fire that occurred Tuesday, April 16.

Indian Joint Fire District firefighters were dispatched to the home of Shannon Reames at 2059 Center St., Lewistown, at 1:03 p.m., IJFD Chief Mark Gibson said. Lakeview, Huntsville and Bellefontaine fire departments provided mutual aid. The home was already "fully

involved" when crews arrived on the scene, the fire chief said.

Reames and his family were not home at the time of the blaze. However, two cats and three dogs died in the fire, Chief Gibson said. A pet rabbit survived.

Two firefighters also were treated for heat-related illness as a result of the warmer temperatures Tuesday afternoon. They were transported by Indian Lake EMS to Mary Rutan Hospital, where they were treated and released.

Witnesses on the scene noted

first responders were consoling Reames on the loss of his home. The American Red Cross is also assisting the family.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation. Crews were on the scene until about 5:30 p.m.

Indian Joint Fire District firefighters, along with Lakeview, Huntsville and Bellefontaine fire departments, were dispatched to 2059 Center St., Lewistown, for a house fire Tuesday afternoon. (JACOB HOWELL PHOTO)



Local nurse serves in tornado's aftermath

BY THE EXAMINER STAFF

Toni Hurley, a registered nurse at the Mary Rutan Emergency Department and life-time resident of Logan County, was at her Lewistown home the night of the March 14 tornado, just about 5 miles from its path.

After she heard that the tornado had touched down mere miles from her, she immediately called her son, who she knew was near the tornado's path at the time. Once she confirmed that he was safe, Toni jumped into action.

Her selflessness was evident when she was first called to assist by staffing the triage command center with the Indian Lake EMS team.

While there, the Logan County Sheriff's Office made it evident that there was a pressing need for dispatchers to aid in rescue and recovery. When the question of dispatch experience arose, the MRH nurse, without hesitation, offered her help.

"I have a little experience at Mary Rutan Hospital with dispatch, more than a lot of people might, so I did what was most needed of me at the time.

Toni had used the radios at Mary Rutan Hospital before to receive reports from local EMS teams, so she selflessly stepped in and assisted with emergency dispatch until nearly 3 a.m. Friday morning.

Exhausted, she went home for a few hours of rest before she was back on the scene at 7 a.m. Much of her morning was spent



Toni Hurley, a Mary Rutan Emergency Department nurse, stepped up to help emergency crews the evening the tornado hit Indian Lake last month and as volunteer in the days that followed. (MARY RUTAN PHOTO)

at the Russells Point Command Center, where she took squad runs with BMRT's Chris Bair.

This squad run, which should've taken 2 minutes to reach a patient, took 12 minutes due to so many roads being closed or blocked. However, Toni's extensive knowledge of the area as a life-long resident lent itself to her and the team that day as she expertly guided the squad to emergency areas using little-known routes and by studying maps of the area.

After spending time in the emergency squad, Toni, a Logan County CISM (Crisis Incident Stress Management) team member, along with Chris Bair, another CISM team member, started to put together a plan to bring a team in to meet the mental

health needs of first responders.

Toni knew that counseling and mental health assessments would be necessary in this situation. They got two local counselors, Tammy Nicholl and Shannon Maier, to the Russells Point Command Center on Friday afternoon to speak with first responders who may have needed their help.

While they were present, Toni could direct them to the Lakeview Command Center and Indian Lake High School to talk to teachers and other staff that were staffing that location.

Later that same day, still running on a few hours of sleep, Toni's youngest daughter, Marah, came home from the

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UPDATE

Lakeview firefighters respond to resignations

Two firefighters and the fire chief of 40-plus years resigned Monday, April 15, during a meeting of the village of Lakeview council, and more resignations are expected, according to some individuals with knowledge of the situation.

Extensive background interviews with current and former firefighters paint an adversarial relationship between the Lakeview Fire Department and administration and village council.

The situation reportedly reached a boiling point in the days immediately following the March 14 tornado. A heated argument took place between Mayor Elaine Fagan-Moore and former Fire Chief Norm Spring that resulted in the Logan County Sheriff's Office having to come and settle everyone down, individuals with knowledge of the argument said.

Mayor Fagan-Moore was described to have "verbally assaulted" the fire chief. Mayor Fagan-Moore has not yet responded to a phone call or text message seeking comment.

Monday, council accepted the resignation of Fire Chief Norm Spring for the purpose of retirement effective immediately. Chief Spring has been fire chief since 1979.

A pair of other first responders, Zachary Perigo and Brandon Stevens, also turned in

letters of resignation during the meeting.

"More resignations are coming," one firefighter said.

The argument between the mayor and the fire chief occurred Sunday, March 17, and had to do with the storage of donated supplies for tornado relief efforts. Initially, donated supplies were stored and distributed from the fire department.

Former and current firefighters reported the mayor wanted those donations moved to a different location. The firefighters reportedly told Mayor Fagan-Moore there wasn't a better location in the village -- both big enough and structurally sound -- to house the donated goods.

Later that day, the mayor reportedly went to the fire station and confronted Chief Spring. According to accounts of that confrontation, the mayor demanded "more respect" from the first responders.

"This took place with a room full of firefighters from different departments, and several people from the public," one person with knowledge of the argument said. "It spiraled and got to the point where the chief's wife had to call the sheriff's office, because the mayor and another council member had (Chief Spring) cornered in his office.

That confrontation was repre-

See RESPOND on Page 2

Judge Braig sentences child molester to near-minimum sentence

BY THE EXAMINER STAFF

Logan County Common Pleas Judge Kevin P. Braig ordered defendant Michael McCleery to serve a total of 18 months in prison for sexually molesting his young daughter over a period of five years, the Logan County Prosecutor's Office reports.

McCleery's sentencing took place Tuesday, April 16.

March 12 following a two-day trial, it took a jury approximately 30 minutes to find the defendant guilty of two counts of gross sexual imposition, both felonies of the third degree.

The total sentencing range for these offenses is 12 months to 10 years in prison.

At trial, the victim — now 13 years old — testified that between the approximate ages of 5 and 10 years old, her non-custodial father, Michael McCleery, sexually molested her in his bed nearly every time she visited him.



Testimony from the victim, the victim's mother, and the victim's therapist revealed that, as a result of these years of molestation, the victim suffered post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.

In an interview with detectives from the Logan County Sheriff's Office, McCleery blamed his young daughter for

instigating the sexual contact. The defendant offered no statement at his sentencing hearing.

The Logan County Prosecuting Attorney's Office requested consecutive prison terms that reflected the seriousness of the charges and the harm caused to the victim.

The state noted that McCleery had been conducting this behavior during a significant period of time, caused incalculable harm to a small child and betrayed his duties as a father.

When confronted with his crimes, McCleery responded not with remorse, humility, or decency, but with evasion, minimizing, and victim-blaming. The state argued that McCleery has no capacity to reform his own conduct.

In pronouncing the concurrent 18-month prison terms, Judge Braig found that the victim had suffered significant harm, but noted that McCleery had no prior criminal convictions.

LONG TERM RECOVERY MEETING

Group meets to plan long term disaster recovery efforts

BY THE EXAMINER STAFF

Logan County Emergency Management Agency Director Helen Norris conducted the first of what is likely to be several meetings Monday afternoon to discuss long term disaster planning for the county in the wake of the March 14 tornado.

About 40 community and business leaders gathered for the meeting in one of the conference rooms at the Logan County Family Jobs and Family Services offices, 1 Hunter Place.

Norris said the initial meeting's purpose was "to bring individual community efforts into a coordinated structure."

The local EMA head noted we are still in a phase of disaster recovery between short and long term, as things like debris removal and helping impacted individuals with basic needs such as food, housing and transportation are still on-going.

Currently, the EMA reports that about 1,565 Logan County residents were impacted by the disaster.

To report tornado damage, contact the Recovery Call Center

at (937) 292-4041 or remit information online at <https://report-oh-logan.orioncentral.com>.

Dave Bezusko, director of the United Way of Logan County, said to date about \$1.25 million has been raised via the Indian Lake Tornado Relief Fund. A large chunk of the funds have come from outside the area with donations coming from at least 40 other states, he noted.

His agency's efforts to help with needs from rent and security deposits to insurance deductibles for tornado-impacted individuals have been brisk. A staff of five from UW and other agencies is now handling about 40 appointments per day with some 277 appointments conducted or scheduled in a roughly two-week period.

On April 16, the UW reported \$152,346 had been distributed to 64 households. Another 69 cases are in process awaiting applicant decisions or verifications.

Some 144 additional appointments are scheduled between now and next week.

Eligible residents may receive

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NEWS Local & State

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"Nothing is stronger than public opinion; given the facts, nothing is wiser."



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ABE MARTIN

 "There seems t' be an excess of ever'thing 'cept parkin' space an' religion."
 Written prior, 1931, by Kin Hubbard, a world-famous newspaper humorist and father of late T.E. Hubbard, former Examiner owner/publisher

LOCAL RETROSPECTIVE

History Center spotlights 236 S. Main St. auto dealerships legacy

BY MARY E. MORTIMER
 LOGAN COUNTY HISTORY CENTER ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The property at 236 S. Main St. in Bellefontaine was home to several automotive dealerships for over 70 years.

The first auto dealership at the S. Main St. location was owned by George W. Cronley. He entered the automobile business with Ford in 1911 in Ridgeway and Mt. Victory.

In 1914, he became Logan County's first authorized Ford dealer in a rented building on Court St. in Bellefontaine. Ernest Cronley joined his brother, George, in his automotive business in November 1915.

A fireproof cement, brick and steel garage was built in 1916 at 236 S. Main St. Ernest Cronley then opened his own auto dealership on S. Opera St. selling Packard and Oldsmobile autos until he passed away in August 1937.

Michael B. Cronley, son of George W. Cronley, wrote in an article for Automotive Old Timer Magazine.

"The building was as modern as a garage building could be at the time. It had steam heat, electric exhaust system, parts room, office, showroom for six cars, washrooms, basement for coal storage and steam plant, heated water to wash cars in the winter, modern shop with all Ford electric power equipment for burning in bearings and storage space for 80 cars.

"The building, with its riveted, steel roof was 80' wide and 220' long. The early airlines selected this particular roof for early air routes and completely maintained it in order to have the letters BELLEFONTAINE painted in large letters the entire width and length of the roof, serving as a



CRONLEY'S GARAGE

guide for the early pilots."

The Union County Journal reported in June 1916, "At Bellefontaine it is estimated that three hundred automobiles have been sold in Logan County since January 1916. George Cronley, proprietor of Ford sales agency, stated Tuesday that he had sold and delivered one hundred fifty cars this year. Fifteen cars were assembled last week at his garage on South Main Street."

In the early 1920s, George Cronley sold Hudson-Essex automobiles. He was the largest tire dealer in Bellefontaine and sold as much as \$40,000 worth of Firestone Tires in one year.

Lee Miller purchased the George Cronley dealership in the early 1930s. He sold new DeSoto-Plymouth automobiles and used cars. In September 1936, the Marion Star reported George W. Cronley and his stepson, Jack Carr, had purchased the A.L. Holloway Motor Sales Co. in Marion, Ohio. They changed the name to the Cronley-Carr Co. and sold Studebaker cars and trucks.

Lee Miller sponsored a softball team that won the Logan County championship in 1941. The Lee Miller DeSotos, managed by Leon Tapp, defeated the DeGraff Food Co 5 to 3.

Lee Miller passed away in July 1949 and his son, Richard Lee Miller, took over management of the business. In November

1954, Richard sold the Lee Miller dealership to Paul J. Smith who had worked for the firm as a salesman. Smith renamed the business Paul J. Smith Motor Sales and continued to sell new DeSoto-Plymouth automobiles and used cars.

In August of 1958, Smith sold his dealership to Ed Gillespie. He and his brother, Joe Gillespie, had owned a Buick dealership at 241-245 W. Columbus Ave. since 1946. They continued to sell Buicks at the south Main Street location.

The Gillespie property on W. Columbus Ave. was sold to Willard "Bill" Barton who had been in the auto business since 1947 selling Oldsmobile.

In April 1970, Barton purchased the Pontiac and Rambler dealership of Earl W. Miller at 541 S. Main St. He then merged the two dealerships and renamed it Barton Oldsmobile - Pontiac. Barton later sold American Motors automobiles.

Bill Barton continued to own and operate his Oldsmobile - Pontiac dealership until he sold it to Ron Foreman in October 1977.

Foreman remained at the 541 S. Main St. location until he purchased Ed Gillespie's Buick dealership at 236 S. Main St. in 1983. He then opened Ron Foreman Ford - Mercury - Lincoln.

In October 1983, Foreman sold the 541 S. Main St. property to Wilson Anderson, who had a Ford - Mercury - Lincoln dealership at 207 W. Columbus Ave.

The Ron Foreman dealership at 236 S. Main St. was destroyed by fire in December 1991. After the fire, the dealership buildings were razed. In 1996, Rite Aid purchased the property and built a new store.

Visit the Logan County History Center to learn more interesting aspects of Logan County History.

The History Center is open for tours Wednesday - Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m.



LEE MILLER AUTO, WITH HIS CAR IN FRONT, CIRCA 1939 OR 1940



GILLESPIE BUICK

LOCAL NOTES

'Improving A Cure' returns April 25 to BLHS

BY THE EXAMINER STAFF

Jazz Appreciation Month is celebrated once again at Benjamin Logan High School with the 11th annual "Improving A Cure" benefit concert, slated for Thursday, April 25.

The Benjamin Logan Instrumental Music Department hosts the event, which is open to the public, to raise funds for the Logan County Cancer Society.

Festivities begin with dinner served at 6 p.m. in the high school commons, with the barbecued themed menu featuring bbq pulled pork, macaroni and cheese, cheesy potatoes and coleslaw. Music by the BLHS Jazz Combo starts at 5:45 p.m.

"Improving A Cure" will feature the high school and middle school jazz ensembles and combos.

The evening also includes a silent auction of student artwork, bake sale, 50/50 drawing, and the sale of event T-shirts as well.

There is no cost to attend this event, but donations are appreciated. All proceeds will be donated to the Logan County Cancer Society.

"I know the members of the jazz ensemble would love to see you there," Instrumental Music Director Myles Bowers said. "This event is truly one of highlights of the year for our Music Department."

"Please come out to this informal setting for an evening of jazz, food and community."



PROM SAFETY PROMOTED



With prom and graduation season approaching, Bellefontaine High School is promoting safe driving. Pictured, a BHS student tries out Fatal Vision Goggles this week, which demonstrates the vision and danger of an impaired driver with a blood alcohol level of .08 to 2.0. The hands-on lesson was hosted for students in the BHS Cafeteria. School Resource Officer Doug Walters and the BHS DARE Club also are sponsoring various activities throughout the week. Bellefontaine High School hosts its prom at the Winner Harvest Barn from 8 to 11 p.m. Saturday, April 20. After prom will follow at T-P Lanes. Graduation is set for 7 p.m. May 24. (BCS PHOTO)

RESPOND

Continued from Page 1

representative of the kind of relationship between the fire department and the council/administration for months, sources said.

Chief Spring was placed on paid administrative leave on or about Feb. 7 that lasted for 15 days. He was reinstated after two weeks, sources said, with no explanation or result of findings from the administration's investigation into the matter.

Firefighters had reportedly sought more information into the chief's placement on administrative leave, and made public records requests of personnel files to that end. The mayor called one firefighter a "queen ant," and told her, "this (stuff) is going to stop," according to multiple sources.

Previous to that, the council had appointed Dave Scott, village administrator, as an "administrative liaison" with the fire department.

"Dave Scott would probably be a good option since he had handled all the

meetings when they had the last issues. Dave Scott can gather necessary information and bring it to council," read minutes from the Jan. 16 council meeting.

Currently, there are about 11 firefighters in the Lakeview Fire Department. Former and current firefighters reported that as many as six more resignations were forthcoming and at least one or two were set to be turned in Wednesday, April 17.

Mayor Fagan-Moore is in her first term in office. She was sworn-in in January and will serve through the end of 2027. She replaces Ryan Shoffstall, who served as mayor for five terms, beginning in 2003.

Firefighters who served under both mayors reported a stark difference.

"I can confidently say that we wouldn't have the mess that we do if (Shoffstall) was still mayor. And I can confidently say that the tornado efforts would not have played out the same. It would have been handled a lot better under (Shoffstall)," one source reported.

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