

# THE NEWS SUN

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Happenings  
Fort Wayne  
'The Voice'  
contestant  
sets tour, A3



**Warm and rainy**  
MORE WEATHER, PAGE A6.

**FRIDAY**

**DECEMBER 24, 2021**

Kendallville, Indiana

NEWS - SUN . COM

\$1.50

## White Christmas only a dream this season

### Warm, rainy weather on tap for northeast Indiana

**BY STEVE GARBACZ**  
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SYRACUSE — If you're dreaming of a White Christmas, well, best keep dreaming. Santa may hit some rain coming into northeast Indiana tonight and Christmas Day is looking to be warm with rain drops likely and snowflakes nowhere to be seen, the Northern Indiana National Weather Service office in Syracuse is forecasting. Looking back over the last decade, northeast Indiana has seen more gray Christmases than white ones, with snow on Dec. 25 proving increasingly uncommon. Today's forecast from the National Weather Service Northern Indiana office is

for a high of 52, a low of 49 and a chance of rain throughout the day. For Saturday, temperatures will be about the same with a balmy-for-Christmas high of 53. It's likely to be another Gray Christmas, with a forecast of more rain, so don't expect to throw open the shutters to find a shock of fluffy snow in the yard. "The chance for a white Christmas is not looking all that great," National Weather Service meteorologist Chris Morris said earlier this week before forecasted temperatures increased even more and the chance of rain shifted to later in the week. If you're sitting at home straining to think of the last time there was snowman-levels of accumulation on

Christmas morn, you're not alone. National Weather Service historical data for Dec. 25 from 2010 through 2020 for the Fort Wayne region showed just three years with an appreciable snow on the ground and just three years with a measurable snowfall on Christmas day. Last year the region picked up about a tenth of an inch of snow on Christmas, with a trace dusting on the ground. Prior to that, you have to go back to 2017 when the region saw three-tenths of an inch snowfall on top of 3 inches snow depth. That 2017 year was the coldest and snowiest over the 11-year period. Other than that, the area had about 2 inches on the

ground in 2016 and 1 inch of snow in 2010. Otherwise, it's been not-white Christmases every other year. Rain has actually been much more common, with trace amounts of precipitation or more in eight of those past 11 years. And in 2019, it wasn't just not snowy and not cold, it was downright Frosty melting outside with a near all-time high of 59 degrees. Anyone who got a new bicycle for Christmas two years back could have taken it out for a comfortable joy ride in a pair of shorts on Christmas afternoon that year. Temperatures this year aren't quite that high, but still way above average for

### Christmas Weather

White Christmases have been a rarity over the past decade, with rain more common than snow on Dec. 25. Here's a look at historical weather data for the Fort Wayne region.

Year	High	Low	Precip.	Snow	Depth
2021*	53	32	70%	0	0
2020	20	15	0.01	0.1	T
2019	59	26	0	0	0
2018	45	25	0	0	0
2017	20	8	T	0.3	3
2016	36	34	0.02	0	2
2015	49	37	0	0	0
2014	38	33	T	T	0
2013	27	16	T	0.1	0
2012	35	28	T	0	0
2011	46	31	0	0	0
2010	29	23	T	T	1
Normal	35	22	0.09	0.3	X
Record	64	-15	1.03	11	11

\*Forecast

Source: National Weather Service Northern Indiana

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## Harp retiring as chief of police for Auburn

Was previously Noble County Sheriff, current Noble County Council member

**BY ANDY BARRAND**  
abarrand@kpcmedia.com  
AUBURN — Auburn Police Chief Doug Harp's career in law enforcement is coming to an end after 35 years as he officially announced his retirement during Thursday morning's Auburn Board of Works and Public Safety meeting. "This is a difficult day for me," Harp said as he addressed the board. "I originally intended on staying another year or two." Harp, 64, was appointed chief on Sept. 28, 2020. He served as Noble County Sheriff from 2011-2018. After serving two terms as Noble County Sheriff, he served as commander of the NET43 multi-agency drug task force in Kosciusko County before coming to Auburn. With Harp's announcement, Mayor Mike Ley made the announcement that the city was appointing

the next chief from within the department. Capt. Cory Heffelfinger will be assuming the role as police chief on Jan. 1. Heffelfinger has been with the department since 1997. Upon accepting the position, Heffelfinger joked, "I plan on being here a little longer than Chief Harp." He said his goal when he was hired in 1997 was to retire from the Auburn Police Department as chief. Harp said his decision to retire was a hard one, but after evaluating things in his life, he said it was time. "I felt like I was missing out on my grandson growing up," he said. He said his wife also had a hand in nudging him toward retirement. "We have been married a long time. When my wife said something, I knew it was time," he said. Upon making the announcement, Harp complimented all of his officers, the city's administration, department heads and the residents of Auburn. "I feel like every job I have had, I have taken

SEE HARP, PAGE A6



STEVE GARBACZ

The Treehouse Real Estate office at 129 S. Main St. is one of 10 buildings that has signed up to access grant funds and get renovated as part of Kendallville's \$2 million Preserving Main Street program. Applications from building owners to be included will be taken until Jan. 3.

## A Dozen Redos

About 12 owners seeking facade makeovers through \$2M grant

**BY STEVE GARBACZ**  
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KENDALLVILLE — Ahead of a looming Jan. 3 deadline for downtown Kendallville owners to sign up to take part in the city's \$2 million Preserving Main Street facade grant, 10 buildings owners have committed with a couple more likely to get in before the application window closes. A dozen buildings would represent a little shy of a fifth of the structures in downtown and, if numbers stay around that level, would allow each building to easily take on \$100,000 or more in renovations and still be comfortably inside the available money. Kendallville has selected a Fort Wayne-based architecture firm that will help those building owners draw up concepts and engineer the restoration and renovation work to their buildings, with the entire package planned to be put up for bid in summer 2022. The city set a Jan. 3 deadline for building owners to get their applications in and as of Tuesday afternoon, Kristen Johnson, president of the downtown organi-

zation Experience the Heart of Kendallville and soon to be the city's full-time Main Street manager starting in January, said 10 buildings owners have committed thus far. "We have received 10 applications so far, and I'm expecting at least two more before the deadline on Jan. 3," Johnson said. Mayor Suzanne Handshoe said that level of participation exceeded her initial expectations. Building owners can get 85% of the cost of their renovations covered through the \$2 million Preserving Main Street grant, a new pilot program from the state with a focus on historic preservation and downtown revitalization in historic communities, if they put up a 15% match. That's much more generous than the city's facade grant program run by the Kendallville Redevelopment Commission, which offers 50/50 grants with a maximum value of \$15,000. Kendallville was one of 25 applicants seeking that grant, then was part of five finalists before being selected as one of two

winners of a \$2 million grant. With \$2 million to work with and a dozen buildings to be fixed, the city could fund some significantly expensive makeovers of downtown buildings. If split equally among 12 projects, each could get more than \$150,000 in funds. It's possible that the projects won't be that expensive overall, which could leave funds on the table. It's not clear at the moment whether any left over would have to be sent back to the state. Handshoe doesn't think there will be much, if any remaining. "Once we see how much of the grant would not be used, we will reach out to OCRA to see what options we might have. Honestly, I cannot imagine there being anything left if all 12 utilize it," Handshoe said. Johnson said that if there are funds remaining, ideally she'd like the state to OK a second round of grants for building owners who didn't jump at the first opportunity. If it does work out, a second cycle could attract more takers if the first

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### Merry Christmas

Due to the Christmas holiday, there will be no newspaper produced on Saturday. Our next edition will print on Sunday.

### Info

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### 10 DAY FORECAST

FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
40%	40%	0%	40%	30%	30%	20%	0%	30%	20%
52	54	43	48	41	46	44	40	42	34
39	51	30	35	32	34	33	26	28	22

Temperatures will be in the 50s today with a chance of rain. The chance of rain continues on Christmas Day as temperatures stay in the 50s.

**Sunrise Friday 8:03 a.m.**  
**Sunset Friday 5:17 p.m.**

### Thursday's Statistics

**LOCAL**  
HI 40  
LO 25

**FORT WAYNE**  
HI 42  
LO 28

**SOUTH BEND**  
HI 40  
LO 24

**INDIANAPOLIS**  
HI 48  
LO 32

Submit your weather drawings to: Weather Drawings, Editorial Dept., P.O. Box 39, Kendallville, IN 46755

**Today's drawing by:**  
**Jordan Thompkins**



STEVE GARBACZ

The long-vacant building at 101 N. Main St., Kendallville, previously known as the Relaxation Station, was purchased recently by Carla Lowe, who plans to restore the building and hopefully turn it into a downtown brewpub. The building is one of an expected dozen that will be fixed up as part of the city's \$2 million Preserving Main Street grant.

**Briefs**

**Fort Wayne woman charged in death of her 9-year-old stepson**

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — A Fort Wayne woman has been charged in the death of her 9-year-old stepson, who died last weekend at a hospital after suffering blunt force injuries.

Alesha Lynn Miller, 30, was arrested Tuesday and charged with aggravated battery resulting in death, neglect of a dependent resulting in death and two counts of neglect of a

dependent.

She was being held without bail at the Allen County Jail. Miller appeared Wednesday for an initial hearing on the charges. Online court records do not list an attorney who could speak on her behalf.

Elijah Thomas Ross was taken to a Fort Wayne hospital, where staffers tried to save him before he was pronounced dead early Saturday by the doctor who treated him, The Journal Gazette reported.

Although an autopsy revealed that Ross suffered

multiple blunt force injuries, investigators were still trying to determine the cause and manner of his death, said Dr. E. Jon Brandenberger, Allen County coroner.

Fort Wayne police officers were called to a home early Saturday to investigate possible juvenile neglect or abuse.

Dozens of mourners gathered outside that residence Tuesday for a candlelight vigil where they shouted the boy's name, released balloons and celebrated Miller's arrest.

**GRANT: City picks MartinRiley as architect**

**FROM PAGE A1**

round of facade fixups goes well.

"I think once building owners see the transformations taking place, they will lose any hesitation they may have," Johnson said.

The city has been interviewing architecture firms to bring on as technical advisor for the project, since the facade work will need to be formally designed and put out for competitive public bids as a requirement of the grant.

Johnson said the city has recently selected Martin-Riley out of Fort Wayne.

That firm has a wide-range of services, but historic preservation projects are in its scope of capabilities and would be particularly relevant to Kendallville's project.

MartinRiley's Fort Wayne office is actually located in the historic restored Baker Street Train Station in the city and itself is an example

of the type of restoration and new use projects the firm has been involved with.

"Our state-certified historic architecture staff has designed many award winning projects involving historic renovation and adaptive reuse. We can transform a century-old school into senior housing, or an abandoned hospital into a multi-functional office, while allowing them to give tribute to the history of the original space. It is our belief that historic structures and building techniques can coexist with contemporary uses," Martin-Riley's website states about its preservation work.

Previously city officials estimated engineering work could cost up to \$200,000, 10%, out of the total grant funds. Details on the cost and scope of services on MartinRiley's contract haven't been made public at yet.

While the grant will offer

a big boon to the building owners willing to go through a construction phase, it doesn't help to address problem problems that have been vacant for long periods and have owners that are either absent or unmotivated to make improvements.

While the ongoing revitalization has helped to turn over some of those buildings with new owners — Handshoe said she's especially excited about the former Relaxation Station at 101 N. Main St. that was vacant for nearly 20 years getting a new owner and a revamp project — the city is addressing what issues it can with the other stubborn structures.

"Letters have recently been sent to those with blatant code violations such as a hole in the roof, broken windows etc.," Handshoe said. "The rest we hope to assist with the creation of the historic preservation district and commission."

**SNOW: La Niña brings warmer winter temps**

**FROM PAGE A1**

the typical Dec. 25. Normal temperatures are a high of about 35, with an all-time record high of 64 degrees in 1982.

Lows usually hang around 22 degrees, with a record low of -15 degrees in 2004.

The biggest Christmas Day snowfall was 11 inches recorded in 1909, with the largest historical snow depth at the start of the day being 11 inches back in 1929, according to National Weather Service records for the Fort Wayne area.

Historical 30-year climate data collected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration showed that for the period 1990-2020, the odds temperatures and snow chances had shifted as compared to the 1980-2010 period.

A recent analysis of national weather observations conducted by the University of Arizona showed that the average temperature between 1981-1990 was just below freezing, while for 2011-2020 it was around 35 degrees.

Snow coverage on Christmas Day across the U.S. also dropped from about 47% of the country with an average of 3.5 inches to 38% with an average of 2.7 inches on the ground. The reduction in snow was most pronounced in the Midwest, especially in the area from about central Indiana and Illinois north through Chicago and Detroit regions, that study showed.

Morris said snow has been a rarity in December the last few years, with appreciable snowfalls typically holding off until January. Northern Indiana has been seeing warmer-than-usual Decembers the last few years.

"It definitely seems like we have this brief cool period late October/early November and then kind of a warm up. And a lot of that has really been a reflection of the La Niña pattern we've been in," Morris said.

For those of you who don't remember much about La Niña and El Niño outside of the Saturday Night Live bit featuring Chris Farley, those represent weather patterns affecting the general position of the atmospheric jet stream, and where those upper-atmosphere winds run can impact weather patterns in the U.S.

La Niña, which is the rarer of the two, is when the jet stream is pushed further north. What that means for northern Indiana is typically warmer temperatures but wetter conditions in the the winter time, Morris said. El Niño patterns are the opposite — with the jet stream further south during those years, Indiana sees colder temperatures but drier conditions.

To get snow on the ground, Indiana has to have a wet system approach the region and then drop into air chilled by below-freezing temperatures.

Morris said northern Indiana has seen some systems that have brought the necessary moisture to the region — that's all that rain we've been suffering the last month or so — but it's simply been too warm out to produce snow.

"We've actually had a few of those systems come through. It's unfortunate they didn't have the cold air already in place," Morris said. "If there's cold enough conditions out ahead of the system already, then any precipitation we get generally does come out in snow."

If climate patterns are shifting with higher temperatures even by a few degrees lasting later in the year, that reduces the chances of seeing snow on the ground in time for Christmas Day.

"That has been the trend and even with the new 30 year normals that came out ... the endpoint on that would have been 2020," Morris said. "That did actually decrease our annual snow slightly. It is kind of indicative of that lower snow amounts trend that we're seeing."

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**Nominations Due by Feb. 8th, 2022**

**HARP: Served as Noble sheriff 2011-18**

**FROM PAGE A1**

away more than what I have given," he said. "I have enjoyed working with everyone. What a way to end a career being associated with the people here."

A swearing-in ceremony for Heffelfinger will be held after the first of the new year.

"I appreciate the opportunity. This is a tremendous honor," Heffelfinger said.

His goal for the department is to continue the

momentum of HARP's administration.

Heffelfinger also took time to compliment his fellow officers.

"We are proud that you are going to represent the department," Ley said.