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These photographs are from other BHI properties and are representative of the Athens Crossing neighborhood.

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HOME & FAMILY

Creative Freedom

Fred and Jodie Cusack design a spec home



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Dr. Amanda Dornfeld
photographed by
Angela Jackson

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Sandwich Creations



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COLUMBUS

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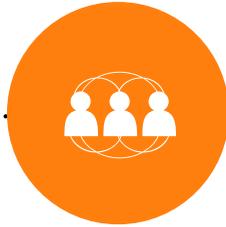
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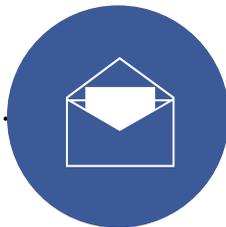
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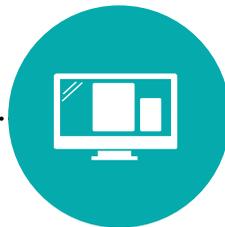
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DAVID HYDE

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Happy spring!

Hello again! I hope you all are embracing the warmer weather and enjoying springtime in Columbus.

As spring rolls around each year, I'm reminded of my trips to Ireland.

My first trip was in 2015, when I went with the Columbus East Marching Band and marched through the streets of Dublin as a flute player in the St. Patrick's Day parade. Then, last year, I studied abroad in Kilkenny, Ireland during my senior year

of college. I visited several places around the island while taking a deep dive into Irish history and culture and experiencing my second St. Patrick's Day on the Emerald Isle.

To the right is a picture of me at Woodstock Gardens — a restored Victorian garden — located in Kilkenny. The gardens were one of the highlights of my trip; they were so beautiful, and the picture does not do the scenery justice. I would highly recommend visiting Ireland if you're looking to travel outside of the United States — the island is roughly the same size as Indiana, but is rich with historic places to visit dating back hundreds of years.

I have a greater appreciation for my trip last year compared to when I was younger. When you're 15 years old, you don't tend to notice and reflect on the small things. However, as an adult, I've realized the value of stopping to smell the roses from time to time.

In this spring issue of Columbus Magazine, read about the wonderful variety of sandwiches our local diners have to offer, the 'why' behind Fred and Jodie Cusack's home design, Dr. Amanda Dornfeld's unique approach to healthcare and the mission behind REACH Columbus Inc.



Enjoy!

Rachel

Rachel Hensley

rhensley@aimmediaindiana.com



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In each issue of Columbus, we ask people for their opinions on a variety of topics. This month's question:

What's the best advice you've ever received?



"Treat people well because the impressions you make can be a lifetime memory to someone."

— *Kelly Simpson Schwarze*



"Always be true to yourself."

— *Joy Basa-King*



"Just because you are not good at something is no reason not to do it if you enjoy it."

— *Doug Showalter*



"Decide what you would do for free and then find a way to make a living doing it." My dad's advice on how to pick a vocation.

— *Bud Herron*



When I was in beauty school and just starting out, really nervous about doing hair, one of the best things I was told was to "Fake it until you make it". So pretend you know what you are doing even if you feel like you don't and people will know that confidence means that you can do it.

— Laurel Wilson



"Don't worry about what you think you were meant to do and what you went to school for. Have multiple careers through out your lifetime. It makes life much more interesting."

— Lisa Abendroth



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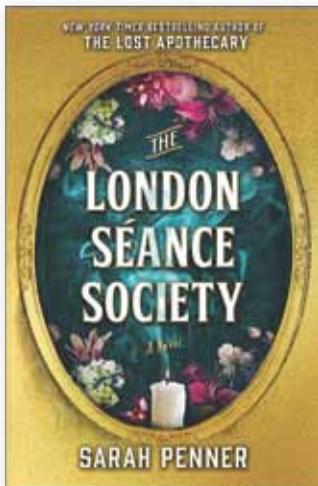
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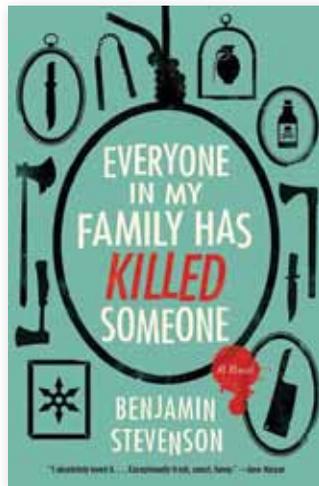
“The London Séance Society”

By Sarah Penner

“May mercy be upon the man who finds himself the enemy of a vengeful medium...” At an abandoned chateau on the outskirts of Paris, a dark seance is about to take place, led by the acclaimed spiritualist, Baudeline D’Allaire. Known worldwide for her talent in conjuring the spirits of murder victims to ascertain the identities of the people who killed them, she is highly sought after by widows and investigators alike.

Sarah Penner, who brought us “The Lost Apothecary” (a VP bestseller), is back with a haunting, gothic tale of murder, mystery and the occult, strong and vengeful women, an exclusive Seance Society and many mysterious and spooky goings-on in Victorian Paris and London. I’m all in! Fans of historical fiction mixed with murder, mystery and a bit of the unknown will want to add this to their TBR and personal libraries because we expect a limited number of signed copies. Available March 7 from Park Row.

— Nanne Cutler



“Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone”

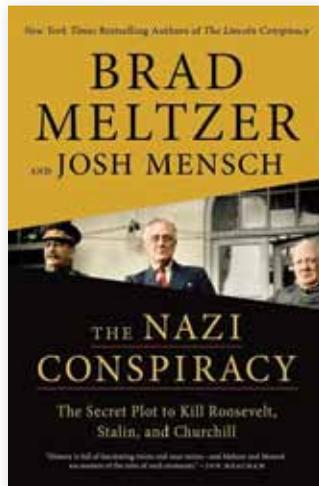
By Benjamin Stevenson

Intriguing title, right? You should read this book. This twisty, tongue-in-cheek, suspenseful mystery checks all the boxes. It’s a whodunit of the original sort, mixed with some modern-day elements by Australian author Benjamin Stevenson, whose resume also boasts “stand-up comedian,” which is evident throughout the book, with witty observations sprinkled throughout.

The narrator is Ernest Cunningham, who starts off by telling us that everyone in his family has killed someone. Each chapter details a new family member’s past transgressions or switches back to the present-day mystery, progressing the story in a quirky but logical way.

A constant evolving and entertaining thriller, I devoured this book over just a few days and immediately gave it to my favorite family member. I’ve since recommended it to several co-workers and customers.

— Angie Revell



“The Nazi Conspiracy: The Secret Plot to Kill Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill”

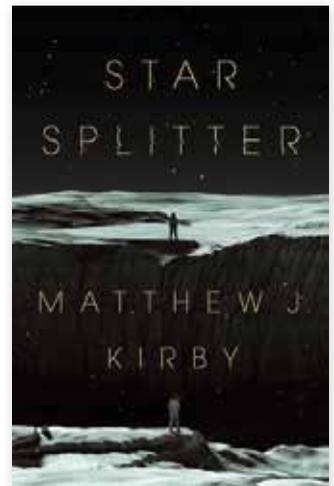
By Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch

“The Nazi Conspiracy” is the third book by Brad Meltzer and Josh Mensch about alleged attempts to assassinate world leaders. In their most recent book, the targets are Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, known as the Big Three. The authors acknowledge that there is some question as to whether the conspiracy really occurred, but their extensive research strongly supports their conclusion that it did.

In 1943, the Big Three met together for the first time in Tehran to discuss the strategic plans for the remainder of World War II. The Nazis learned of the meeting and created an assassination plan that would have changed the course of history.

The authors have combined an accurate presentation of history and an exciting plot into a compelling thriller.

— John Stroh

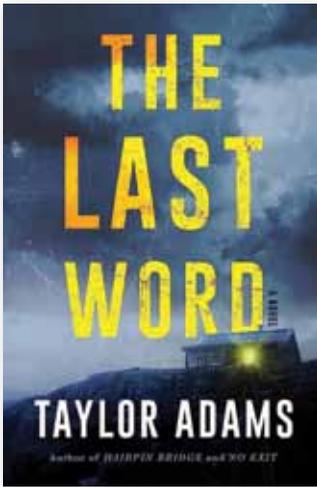


“Star Splitter”

By Matthew J. Kirby

The YA novel “Star Splitter” by Matthew J. Kirby introduces us to Jessica, a woman forced into a mission to explore a planet that is recovering from an extinction event. She must leave behind the life she has known while submitting to a controversial method of teleportation that is challenged both morally and ethically. This novel offers action, adventure and gives a new meaning to self-reflection. Available April 25 from Dutton Books for Young Readers.

— Tom Watts

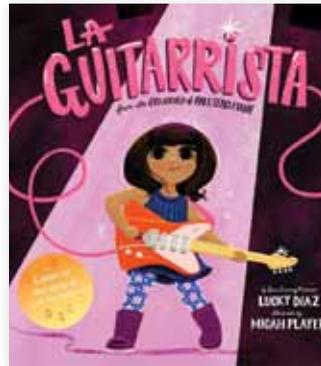


“The Last Word”

By Taylor Adams

I just love a story that makes me leave on the lights and make sure the doors and windows are locked! Not for the faint of heart, “The Last Word” by Taylor Adams fits the bill! The book tells the story of an introvert, Emma, who dares to leave a bad review of a horror novel. When she refuses to take the bad review down at the request of the author, odd things begin to happen. Emma decides to dig deeper into who the writer is, while discovering his truth may be scarier than his fiction! Available April 25 from William Morrow.

— Celia Allman Watts

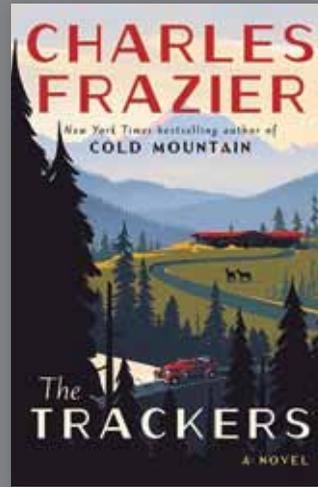


“La Guitarrista”

By Lucky Diaz

Viewpoint Books was fortunate to host Lucky Diaz, and feature his first children’s book, “Paletero Man” for a special edition of our summer scavenger hunt in 2021. Imagine how excited we were when we received a call from Diaz asking if we’d be interested in helping him launch his second book, “La Guitarrista,” with a special storytime, a book signing and singing on Saturday, May 5. “La Guitarrista” is about achieving one’s dreams with hard work, determination and a little help from our friends. It includes Spanish words and phrases throughout the story. Plan to celebrate his newest book on Saturday, May 6, and watch for more details closer to the event time. Available May 2 from HarperCollins.

— Beth Stroh



“The Trackers”

By Charles Frazier

You’ll remember Charles Frazier from his best-seller, “Cold Mountain.” Frazier’s genius is in choosing a niche setting that is both universally experienced yet under-represented in literature. Viewers of the TV series “Yellowstone” will feel a kinship with the characters. Collected wealth is juxtaposed with hard-scrabble poverty. Fine art and public art are in play. A woman is “on the lam.” This story doesn’t unfold at the pace of a thriller; rather this is a layered story; it’s one that evolves, not unlike a post office mural. I’m trying hard not to read the last page.

— Polly Verbanic

Charles Frazier, the author of “Cold Mountain,” which won the 1997 U.S. National Book Award, has done it again with intriguing storytelling that will keep you turning the pages. Set during the Great Depression, a young artist finds himself out of school and jobless when he signs up for a government jobs program, which lands him in Wyoming painting a mural on a post office wall. He is given a place to stay by wealthy rancher John Long, the project’s sponsor, and his wife, Eve. Eve is a former hobo and singer, used by Long as arm candy to help launch his political career. Early in the novel, Eve takes off and Long, for a variety of reasons, sets Val on her trail. Crisscrossing the country from Seattle to the swamps of Florida, Val’s search for Eve narrows, and he soon turns up secrets that could spark formidable changes for all of them. Set in the American West in the 1930s, the setting, characters and artwork — all of it — are beautifully created and described.

— Kate Stinebring

Scrumptious SANDWICHES

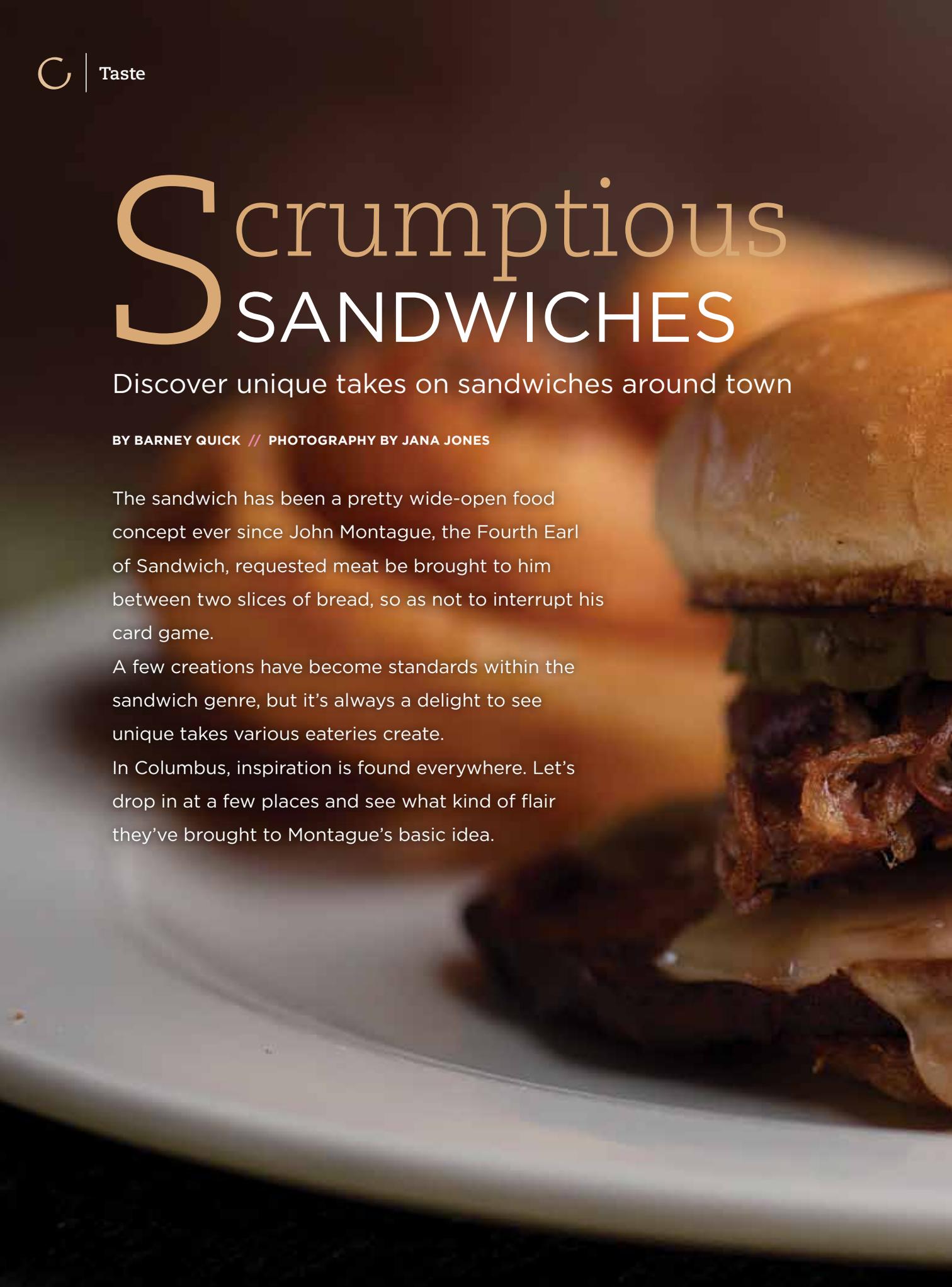
Discover unique takes on sandwiches around town

BY BARNEY QUICK // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANA JONES

The sandwich has been a pretty wide-open food concept ever since John Montague, the Fourth Earl of Sandwich, requested meat be brought to him between two slices of bread, so as not to interrupt his card game.

A few creations have become standards within the sandwich genre, but it's always a delight to see unique takes various eateries create.

In Columbus, inspiration is found everywhere. Let's drop in at a few places and see what kind of flair they've brought to Montague's basic idea.







Central Cafe

1606 CENTRAL AVE. | 812-657-3144

Central Cafe's high-profile location in a strip mall on Central Avenue ensures that its dining room stays full. That, and the tasty fare and general atmosphere of congeniality.

Owner Katie Rogers, has a dual background in hospitality and proper management. Many locals know her from her years working at the Cozy Lounge.

She's infused her place with an ethos of civic-mindedness by being one of Columbus' biggest donors to the city's hot meals program.

The cafe's breakfast sandwich is Katie's concept. A sandwich with many options for you to choose. Customers have their choice of meat (cut-in-house ham, bacon or sausage), cheese (Swiss, American, pepper jack, cheddar) and style of egg preparation. And it's all placed between two hot slices of grilled Texas toast.

The sandwich is popular, but Rogers is keen to mention the Big Bad BLT, which is also served on Texas toast, and graced with mayonnaise and six slices of bacon.

Mancino's Pizza and Grinders

1301 N. NATIONAL ROAD | 812-375-1000

This locally-owned Eastside staple has been ensconced in the Clifty Crossing shopping center since its inception in 1992. They offer a wide array of grinders, but the staff feels they really shine in the making of their Italian grinder.

"It's one of our biggest sellers," said Joanne England, who has worked there since 1994.

The ham, sausage and salami is layered onto the baked-fresh-daily bread, whole wheat or white, and given four minutes in the oven. Then, it's adorned with onion, green pepper, tomato, mushrooms, cheese and mayonnaise. It's served with a kosher dill pickle spear and a bag of chips, but one is well-advised to spring for onion rings or French fries to really complete the experience.

Grinders are available in a number of size options: a quarter (4.5-inch), a half (9-inch) and a whole (18-inch).





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Rohde's Family Diner

1040 SECOND ST. | 812-372-1890

Rohde's Family Diner changed their location in the beginning of 2023, and the move has multiplied their success. Its spacious new dining room is filled daily, and proprietor, Sarah Rohde, has hired additional staff to keep her high standards of customer service. Thankfully, menu favorites followed along, too.

Such is the case with Sarah May's Cuban. It's a generous pile of smoked ham, pulled pork, Swiss cheese, mayonnaise, mustard and pickle on a butter-toasted bun.

It found its place among the diner's offerings because it's long been a favorite of Rohde's customers.

Dale Moore's Corner Store

854 COTTAGE AVE. | 812-657-3005

Two of this eatery's proprietors answer to the name Dale Moore. They're father and son, and the elder Dale has an extensive background in area dining.

At the young age of 14, he began cooking at Sap's Coffee House, which was located at 12th and Washington Street. Over the decades, his experience has ranged from working for the Lemley catering operation, Chef James Gregory, Claire Gregory and their daughter, Bianca Gregory Snyder. He was also executive chef at the Left Banke, an upscale downtown restaurant that was in business from 1979 to 1992.

Neighborhood residents frequent the store, not only for the tantalizing fare, but for the sundry items sold in the retail area, as well as the camaraderie of their neighbors.

Dale, the father, said he started making the bacon-wrapped grilled cheese about four years ago, when he worked at a North Vernon establishment.

Smoked Gouda and American cheeses are stacked between warm slices of Texas toast, and then wrapped in mouthwatering Mariah bacon.

"It takes about 30 minutes to grill it," he said. "You have to cook it on all six sides."



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Dr. Amanda Dornfeld's
approach to taking
care of patients

BY GLENDA WINDERS //
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGELA JACKSON



Imagine being able to see your doctor whenever you don't feel well, having all the time you need during an appointment to discuss your issues and being able to contact him or her over the weekend with every expectation of getting a quick response. That's exactly what Dr. Amanda Dornfeld — who prefers to be known as Dr. Mandy — provides at Sage Direct Care.

Hers is one of two such practices that follow this model in Columbus — the other is Dr. Teresa Lovins at Lovin My Health — along with others in Batesville,

Greenwood and Indianapolis. Some pediatricians in Zionsville and Carmel have also adopted this type of practice. They are among some 2,000 physicians across the country who have left large hospital networks to join a movement known as direct patient care.

"Practices for economics are large and that takes away a lot of the personalization and the personal feel," Dornfeld said. "I wanted to be able to do things differently."

She moved from Boston to Indianapolis as a child when her father took a job at Eli Lilly and Co. After graduating

from Ben Davis High School and getting her undergraduate degree at Valparaiso University, she completed medical school at Loyola University's Stritch School of Medicine in Chicago and her internship and residency at Ball Memorial Hospital in Muncie. She practiced in the Columbus Regional Health system for 13 years and was chief of staff at the hospital before leaving. She emphasizes that she received excellent mentoring from other physicians there, made many friends and still refers patients to them, but the network model was just not for her.



Violet, Luke, Amanda, David and Noah Dornfeld.

“I became disillusioned with the trajectory of health care all over the country and how general health care is working now,” she said. “I felt that I couldn’t give my patients the time they deserved. I’m a family doctor, and I think continuity of care is very important. I felt that when my patients were sick or had an urgent issue they could never see me and I could never see them. I don’t feel like that’s the best we can do.”

Along the way, Dornfeld married her husband, David, whom she met as a senior in high school when his sister set them up on a blind date. A CPA specializing in taxes, he was able to be a stay-at-home dad to their three children — Luke, 17; Noah, 15; and Violet, 12. The couple always wanted

to live in another country so that their children would learn that people are the same everywhere, and Mandy’s decision to leave the hospital system and start something new provided the perfect opportunity.

In January 2020, they moved to New Zealand, where she joined a practice on the North Island. They had planned to host a continuous string of visitors, but then COVID-19 changed everything.

“When we left we never thought we wouldn’t see friends and family for a year and a half,” she said. “I never intended to take my kids away from their grandparents for that long.”

They lived in Whitianga on the Coromandel Peninsula,

and she said their isolation caused them to become closer as a family. The experience came with other benefits, as well.

“There were no stoplights or fast food,” she said. “It forced us to slow down. I walked to work every day. We made all of our own food. The whole commercialism of America is just not there. There’s no overnight delivery, no Amazon. You just make do with what you have. That was an important lesson for our family. You don’t need all that stuff.”

The closest hospital was in Auckland, three hours away, and son Luke had some serious medical issues that Dornfeld credits with affirming her decision to practice medicine in a different way.

“I became disillusioned with the trajectory of health care all over the country and how general health care is working now. I felt that I couldn’t give my patients the time they deserved. I’m a family doctor, and I think continuity of care is very important. I felt that when my patients were sick or had an urgent issue they could never see me and I could never see them. I don’t feel like that’s the best we can do.”

— Dr. Amanda Dornfeld

“That helped me to be more empathetic and see things from the patient’s side,” she said. “People go through things that you don’t really know about. It definitely affected me and how I think about my patients.”

When they returned to Columbus in June 2021, the couple leased space where they both now have offices, and Mandy opened her practice in August. She chose the name “Sage” because she wanted something that was fresh and alive and that would appeal to people of all ages. She also liked that it means “wisdom,” which she said is something she tries to impart to the people who come for her help.

With everything set up and ready to go, she wondered if people would come to a non-traditional practice, but she needn’t have worried. Some who had been her patients at her former practice came, and others learned about her on social media or through word of mouth. Her schedule quickly filled up, and today she has a waiting list. She has 350 patients, whereas in the



traditional practice she had 1,000. In the old system, she saw 20 to 24 patients each day. Now, she sees eight to 10.

Her patients pay a set monthly fee, whether she sees them during that period or not. She charges \$100 for the first family member, \$75 for the second, \$50 for the third and \$25 for the fourth.

She caps the total amount a family might be charged at \$250, even though one family she sees has eight members, saying that she thinks health care should be accessible.

The fees cover everything she can do for them: office visits, lab tests, joint injections, IUDs and much more. She encourages her patients to have



medical insurance to cover hospitalizations and helps them find affordable options such as health-share plans.

A new patient can expect a one-hour appointment the first time and a half-hour for subsequent visits, unless the person needs more time, in which case she blocks out 45 minutes or an hour.

“People seek this practice out because they feel like they weren’t heard before,” she said. “Or they felt like their doctor was too busy and didn’t have time for them.”

One of those patients is Dusty Blackburn, who had been Dornfeld’s patient when she was part of CRH. She and her husband, Randy, didn’t have health insurance because they were self-employed.

“The most important thing to me is that Dr. Mandy is more personable,” Blackburn said. “She has time for me

when I go in. I’m not rushed, and I feel like she really stays on top of my care. I don’t have the pressure like I had before of letting health matters slide. Whenever I need her, I can go.”

Blackburn said she also appreciates the HIPPA-compliant app Dornfeld provides for her patients. She makes sure they can reach her 24/7, even if it’s the weekend or a holiday. When she is out of town, her registered nurse, Megan Mathews, monitors the app and knows how to reach her if that becomes necessary.

“Her availability to us is phenomenal,” Blackburn said. “Our four boys are grown, but I wish we’d had this option when they were younger. That would have been a godsend.”

Today, one of those sons and his family are also patients at Sage Direct Care, even though he and his wife have health in-

surance through their jobs, because they like the continuity of care and the trust she instills in their children. Blackburn’s parents are also patients.

“She’s taking care of four generations of us,” Blackburn said. “She’s great. We love her.”

One of the aspects of her work that Dornfeld most enjoys is that she doesn’t have to meet a list of requirements to get paid by an insurance company.

“Generally in a fee-for-service world there are all these things you have to do — five vital signs, social history and hospital history every single visit — boxes to check in order to be paid,” she said. “I’m going to get paid no matter what, so I feel like I can spend more time doing things that are actually useful and important for the visit. That also means that I can do a lot more virtually without having to worry about if it is going to meet the criteria to get paid.”

Another of her professional passions is working with breastfeeding mothers, and she has been an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant for 12 years. Since she is a doctor, too, she can see mothers and babies who have complex medical problems associated with breastfeeding. She has a separate room in her office outfitted with a recliner and breastfeeding supplies where she sees people from as far away as Louisville, who aren’t necessarily her patients. She is always happy to help other doctors who face similar issues.

“I feel like if we as a medical community are telling women that we want them to breastfeed and then we don’t support

them by giving them the resources they need, then we're failing them," she said.

Mathews said she enjoys being a nurse in this type of setting. In fact, she contacted Dornfeld while she was still in New Zealand to see if she could be a part of the new practice.

"This model of care is so unique and necessary in today's healthcare landscape, and I love it as much as our patients do," she said. "Our core values are accessibility, continuity and excellence, and these values are enabled by the DPC model. I would have to say that my favorite thing about the DPC model is that our focus is on our patients as individuals and not worrying about the barriers that are inherent with a traditional fee-for-service model."

Mathews said Dornfeld is the ideal employer.

"She works tirelessly to provide her patients with exceptional care," she said. "Whether it is spending extra time at in-person visits or doing virtual visits when it's more convenient for the patient, or researching the best-fit medication or really digging deep to find out the root cause of a concern that's previously been overlooked, Dr. Dornfeld cares for her patients' physical, social and emotional needs with great care. She cares for them as a whole person."

She said Dornfeld also makes coming to work fun, recalling that on the first anniversary of the practice's opening, she hired a catering company to provide treats for all of the patients. During

Nurses' Week, she said she was similarly "spoiled" and that Dornfeld makes her feel appreciated all year long.

Personal time

Dornfeld said she doesn't have much time off because of being the only physician in the practice, but when she does, one of her passions is traveling. She spent a month working at a hospital in Swaziland during medical school, and she has also been to South Africa, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Mexico and France. The family has hosted two exchange students and visited one of their families in Germany.

Since her children are involved in music and athletics, much of Dornfeld's free time is spent attending their events,

which she said she loves to do since her previous job didn't allow her the time. Often she was up until midnight making notes, answering messages and dictating charts.

"What's driving this movement is that physicians are just getting beaten-up and burned-out in the traditional model," she said. "They feel like they are unable to take care of patients the way they'd like to and they have a lot less autonomy. Doctors — especially primary care doctors — are searching for a different way to practice in order to keep their mental health and find their love and joy in medicine again. I'm happy that Columbus has supported me and allowed me to do this because it really brings a lot of joy to me. I love practicing this way." ©



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Fred and Jodie Cusack

inspired spec houses

A look inside the Cusacks' latest home construction

**BY GLENDA WINDERS //
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANGELA JACKSON**

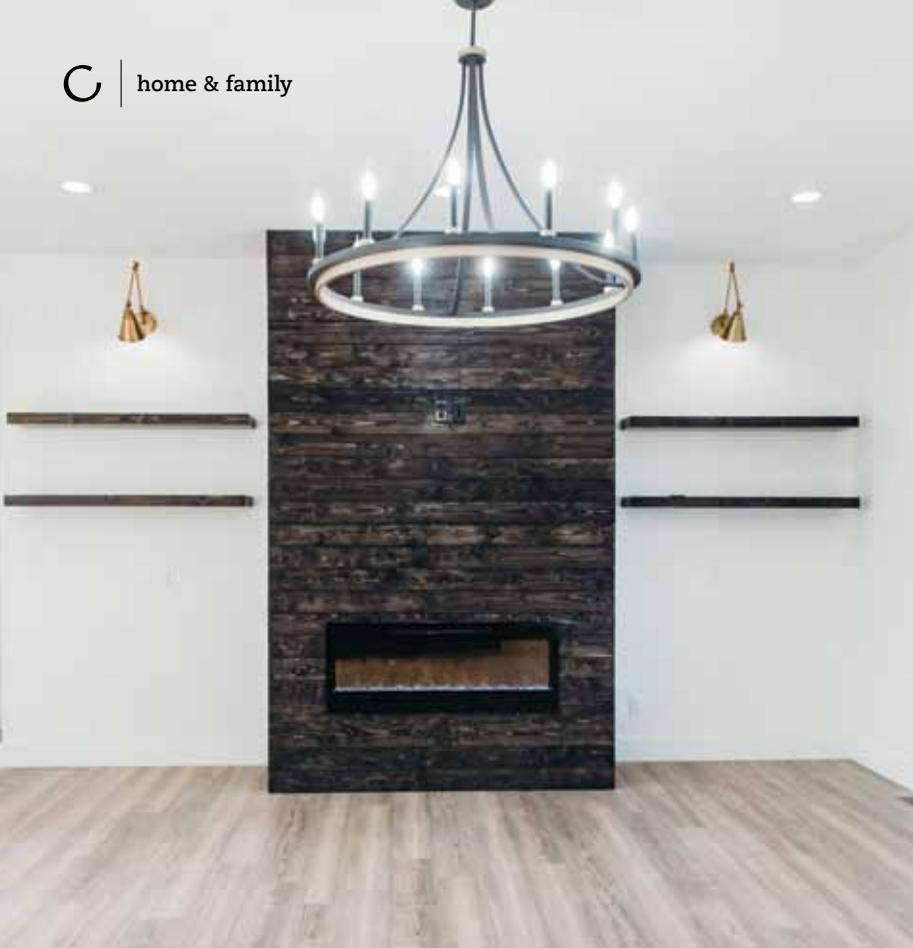
Construction companies usually build homes to their clients' specifications, but once in a while, they have the opportunity to build a spec home — a house they design, build and decorate before it goes on the market.

Fred and Jodie Cusack of Mac General Contractors said they enjoy doing both, but creating a spec house allows them to give free rein to their imaginations and create a home where they might like to live. That's what happened when they went to the drawing board with ideas for their most recently built property in Elizabethtown. First, though, comes inspiration.

"Inspiration is everywhere," Fred said. "Especially living in Columbus with all of the architecture. It's full of different ideas that we internalize and turn into different looks. We're always pushing the envelope."

He said ideas often come from clients for whom they have previously built homes, too. They listen when those people tell them what they like or don't like, what they want or need.

Once they know where they are headed, the process begins with Jodie.



“I follow trends and look constantly at different designs to come up with new ideas,” she said. “This time I wanted to do a Craftsman house with a farmhouse look inside. When we work with a client it’s all about what they want. With a spec house I get to do my own thing, like I’m designing my own house. I go with my gut.”

Once she is finished drawing up her plans, she shows them to Fred and their project supervisor, Ryan Newland, to make sure they can turn her vision into reality. Once they are all in agreement, the building begins. Meanwhile, Jodie surfs the internet to find unusual details that will make the home unique.

This time, the result has been a study in compact luxury that is filled with as many surprises as it has thoughtful details. The first is apparent as soon as visitors enter through the

double doors that lead from the front porch and hang their coats in a small but sufficient closet in the foyer. While the house is sided in gray with manufactured stone accents in gray, black and tan, the interior is filled with light. Fred said one of the company’s hallmarks is the high-efficiency oversized windows they use in every room, as well as outside doors with glass panels.

The couple also ensured that the house is well-lit at night, too, by installing overhead can lights and chandeliers. Coordinating fixtures in black and brushed gold light up every room in the house, and plenty of outlets are available for lamps.

“We pride ourselves on using larger windows,” Fred said. “You can be in the house without turning on light fixtures and still have a lot of light. It’s very refreshing.”

Another surprise is the efficient use of space. The 2,400 square feet plus garage seems like much more. Anyone looking for “enough” rather than ostentation could find a house this size with its clever amenities the answer to their needs. Not a McMansion, it takes into consideration the realities of everyday life in a comfortable and affordable but elegant way.

With heating bills spiraling upward, for example, Fred said the common wisdom now is to “build tight, ventilate right.” To this end, fans in the bathrooms do double duty as they help with air exchange. A practical consideration outside is the LP Smartside engineered siding that is impervious to hail and which some insurance companies offer discounts on when used. Floors in every room are covered with light tan and gray luxury vinyl planks that are 100% waterproof.

The great room onto which both the front and back doors open contains the living space and kitchen. One surprise here is the electric linear fireplace surrounding the kitchen hood cover and island that are made from pieces of pine that have been stained black in order to maintain the features of the grain, Fred said, and “to change things up.” Floating shelves in the same material flank the fireplace with space below to be finished in whatever way the buyers decide.

The star of the kitchen is the light-gray-and-white mosaic tile backsplash that looks as if it came from Morocco. The contrast with the white cabinets, black appliances and black granite countertops is striking. A brushed gold pot filler

extends from the section over the range, and drawer pulls are in brushed gold, too. The double stainless-steel sink is located in the island, while the window is over a countertop.

“It’s for entertainment purposes,” Jodie said, adding that this is where they put the sinks in 90% of their homes unless owners have a special view they want to see outside. “When you’re washing dishes, you can still watch TV and be a part of things.”

This positioning also allows the person working at the island to see into the dining room to the left and the office across the great room. The office is closed off at the corner facing the room with two sliding glass-paneled barn doors, and the dining room can comfortably accommodate a large table beneath a chandelier that mimics the one over the living space. A wet bar in one corner of the room has space under the counter for a beverage or wine cooler.

Down a hallway, past the pantry and the powder room, comes the biggest surprise of all. On this side of the house, tucked behind the garage, is a spacious master suite that would be at home in a spa hotel. Light is provided by two

of the same large windows and a chandelier. The walk-in closet alone measures 100 square feet and is outfitted with plentiful drawers, shelves and hanging racks.

The en suite bathroom is outfitted with a soaking tub, as well as an oversized walk-in shower with two heads and a wand. Three walls are covered in subway tile, while a fourth sports another gray “Moroccan” tile design, as does the niche that will hold shampoo and soap. Two sinks, each with its own complement of cupboards and drawers, flank the door leading to the bedroom. The cupboards are white and the countertops black granite, like in the kitchen, and each is illuminated with its own quartet of lights. The fixtures in this room are black. A linen closet and separate commode complete the suite, and a door at one end leads directly to a laundry room. The countertop here is made of black stained and sealed butcher block.

On the other side of the house, a hallway leads to two more bedrooms. Each bedroom has its own walk-in closet and set of oversized windows, and they are connected with a roomy Jack-and-Jill bathroom.

By the door that leads from the house to the garage, the builders have left a nook that Fred said they will build out to the new owners’ specifications.

“It could be a locker area or hook area,” he said. “I envision a situation where we could do a built-in bench with cubbies underneath and hooks and a shelf above where you could hang up your coats. It would be a little mudroom area.”

The surprises don’t stop inside the house, either. Inside the two-car garage is an elevated space covered with attractive black double doors. A peek inside reveals the furnace and hot-water heater. Both the front porch and covered patio across the back of the house have brushed concrete floors in a fan design.

So now that this house is finished and on the market, what happens next? The couple said they are constantly looking for another property where they can build and are always thinking about what the next project will look like.

“We don’t want to build the same house twice,” Fred said. “So we’re always working to change the design to make it fresh and current. We also want the buyers to be able to make it their own.” ©





Eliana Miller, Danielle Green and Robert (Bob) Jackson.

Opportunity in the Community



REACH helps young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities

BY REBECCA BERFANGER // PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY VASQUEZ

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What started as a group of caregivers looking for a friendly and safe group for their then high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to spend their time in a social and meaningful way, has since grown into a non-profit organization that just secured its own building, as of late January, to help those now high school graduates and others.

REACH Columbus — which stands for Relationships, Employment, Activities, Community and Health — started because “the majority of us are moms who had our young adults in other programs. Not that they’re bad, but they didn’t work out for us,” said Laurie Booher, a board member and founder of the organization.

“We wanted to make sure they were able to live their best life,” added Christy Farrell, president of the board. “They are not able to do a lot of the things their peers might have been able to do. Once they got out of high school it was much harder to find things to do.”

Director of Operations Jennifer Fields noted that as caregivers, it is helpful to have a safe place for the participants to go during the day when before they would be going to school. She added that some caregivers will need to quit their jobs when their children are finished with high school because someone needs to supervise their now adult children, at least for part of the day.



Top: Kristine Miller, Melissa Barkes, Jennifer Fields, Christy Farrell, Stacey Stillinger and Danielle Green. // Bottom: Ryan Farrell and Zoe Miller play air hockey.

For now, there is no age limit if participants are out of high school and at least 18 years old.

“We decided not to limit age or diagnoses right now. As of right now, we are not limiting ourselves by who can come. They’ve already been limited. We will be getting some new participants out of high school in May. Plus, we may have some participants who may not have graduated yet, but if they are at least 18, they can join for a summer program,” said Booher.

This group was a natural fit from the beginning, said Stacey Stillinger, a board member, because “some of our kids knew each other since elementary school and started meeting up once a week” while still in high school. From there, she said, it just made sense to do something more organized.

This easily fits the “Relationships” piece of REACH, as participants can meet and





Christy Farrell and Ciara Matern work on a puzzle together.

spend time in a relaxed and safe environment.

As for “Employment,” Booher shared an example of how other organizations will connect their participants to job opportunities, such as bagging groceries or working in janitorial or food service jobs. She said those jobs aren’t a bad thing, but REACH’s founders wanted to do more than just help adults gain employable skills; they wanted people to find jobs that interested them in the long term.

At REACH, Booher said, “We are trying to hone in on those skills, expose them to places they might not have thought about and help them find somewhere they would fit, whether that is as a volunteer or as paid employment. We want to help them find the skill level and interest to see if that is a real thing, what can be accomplished or if a portion of that can be accomplished. We’re not putting them somewhere and hoping they make it.”

One example Booher shared

was about her son, who is interested in coaching athletics and in broadcasting, as well. To help him find the right fit, she said they considered: “How would you do a podcast? What would it look like for him to do a podcast.” Then we are able to explore different possibilities such as producing a new podcast for and about REACH or helping with a preexisting local one.

But that’s not the only thing they want to help participants achieve, she said.

“Anything along those lines that looks like something they’d want to do. What’s their passion? Can we make it happen or make a part of it happen?” she said.

The group also has community partners helping them connect to REACH participants with jobs and volunteer opportunities, including Toyota, Dairy Queen, Dollar Tree and many others in the Columbus community.

Activities are also a big part of REACH’s mission. This includes a shared space in First

Christian Church until they were able to move into their own building.

Farrell said, while there, the participants learned how to play pickle ball, learned soccer skills from a local team; they would race each other on scooters. She added they also played basketball, met with therapy dogs, went on walks and participated in many other outdoor activities offered by the church.

As for the “Community” part of REACH, Farrell said, “They’ve gone to the movies, we’ve worked with YES Cinema, they’ve played putt putt golf, gone bowling and other different activities in the community. We have volunteers practice yoga with them, plus different art projects and other fun things.”

The “Community” aspect of REACH also includes things like taking the city bus and going to the library as a group, Farrell said. She added they went to Toyota around the holidays for a facility tour and watched a movie in the plant’s movie theater room. They also volunteered at various places, including a food pantry, the Humane Society and sang Christmas carols at a local nursing home.

“We bring them into the community to show our children and other participants they can do everything like everyone else,” Stillinger added. “We also want our participants to have self-worth for themselves. We want to make sure they’re seen doing these things.”

As for the H in REACH, “Health,” Fields explained this has a broad definition.

“We promote exercise, walks and even healthy relationships,” Fields said. “We have a life skills portion where we teach how to make healthy snacks, smoothies, things like that. Health covers a lot.”

Booher added that each of the estimated 20 participants have a tablet. During an eight-week cooking class, participants can use the tablets to search for healthy food that is easy to make with limited ingredients and steps, as well as ideas for healthy activities.

While REACH will continue to offer many of the same experiences within the community, the new building space will offer 5,700 square feet that includes a life skills area with a full-kitchen and laundry room to teach those skills. Also, there is an art room for projects, an exercise room, a quiet sensory room, a large activity room to play a variety of games like foosball and air hockey and basketball and a large group gathering area.

The organization’s founders all hope to see REACH continue to grow in all aspects. They’re looking to hire more coaches to maintain a four-to-one ratio of coaches to participants. They also want to be able to keep adding more participants, from more community partnerships and add more opportunities for participants.

“We also offer participant assistance care and one-on-one service in the community for people on the Medicaid waiver,” Fields added.

To help support REACH’s goals, they will host a few

events for the community throughout the year. In April, they are planning a wine and canvas fundraiser. For Mothers’ Day, they’ll sell gift baskets. Last fall, they had local artists paint chairs to be auctioned and participants baked pumpkin muffins that were sold for Thanksgiving.

They also have an Amazon wish list, which in the past has helped them acquire items for the exercise room and the kitchen area.

Going forward: “We want to be able to expand and grow REACH. We want to do that through the people we’re working with, and we want to work with more people, have more participants, have more

employment partners, more volunteer partners and raise the awareness that having a person with a disability is a great person to work with you,” Farrell said.

She added that there has been some discussion of adding a small business, such as a vegetable garden or a coffee shop, but those would be down the road.

“We want to be sustainable,” Fields said. “We want to offer a safe, enjoyable place that benefits people for years to come. I can use myself as an example. My son is an only child, and I want him to continue to live his best life. I want him to have relationships and volunteer.” ©



Noah Goble-staff, Collin Booher and Ryan Farrell throw basketballs.

Kara Koepfer & Thomas Myers

Ceremony at St. Agnes Catholic Church, reception at Factory 12 Event Loft

Kara and Thomas met working at CYO Camp Rancho Framasa as summer camp counselors, just down the road in Brown County.

“We met years before we began dating, working as summer camp counselors at CYO Camp,” Kara said. “We became good friends over campfire s’mores, caving expeditions, sailboat adventures and late-night hammock chats.”

They were friends for a few years and crossed paths every so often until, according to Kara, the timing was perfect, and they began dating in March 2018.

However, sometimes things work out for the better when they don’t go as planned.

“The proposal did not go as planned, but it was totally perfect,” Kara said. “Thomas had planned to propose at the spot where we first said, ‘I love you,’ to each other, but a marathon was blocking the entrance.”

So he made a game-time decision to propose at a local park where they hiked a few times before.

“Thomas took me for a walk and waited until he spotted the perfect location,” Kara said. “He had to stall for his secret ‘photographer,’ a coworker, to catch up to us before he got down on one knee. Finally, when he could just see his coworker out of the corner of his eye, Thomas knelt down and asked me to marry him.”

There weren’t any more roadblocks and their wedding went as smoothly as possible.

“Our wedding was so dreamy, it was like magic,” Kara said. “We celebrated with a Catholic mass surrounded by our friends and family from near and far. Our bridal party wore steel blue and our decor ranged from deep to soft blues with gold and white accents.”

For their reception, they wanted a bright, radiant atmosphere with fairy lights, greenery and soft fabrics throughout. For this, they had to visit a few places around town to find one that would suffice.

“We toured a number of venues and Factory 12 was our perfect fit with its glowing fairy lights and beautiful skylight,” Kara said.

Then afterward, it was honeymoon time.

“We went to the Dominican Republic and stayed in our very first all-inclusive resort!” Kara exclaimed. “We took cooking classes, swam in the ocean, practiced our Spanish and enjoyed romantic beachfront dinners every night.”





kidscommons Wild West Carnivale

The Commons

Feb.10, 2022

1. Mandy Wyant ropes Ryan Fisher during kidscommons Carnivale Wild West.
2. Carrie Pumphrey and George Devidze
3. Colton Evans
4. Event co-chairs Drew Runion, Claire Runion, Stephanie Pushor and Jeremy Pushor
5. Melissa Francis, Sarah Barrett and Bre Russell
6. Brett Findley rides the mechanical bull.
7. Telma Santana, Miriam Portaluppi and Leo Portaluppi
8. Live auction items are on display.
9. Victoria Craig Griffin and Christopher Raskob
10. Carla Willis, front right, teaches line dancing.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY Carla Clark







A Brighter Path

A mural brightens the Jackson Street Parking Garage Pedestrian Tunnel.

PHOTO BY TONY VASQUEZ | WWW.TONYVASQUEZ.NET

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