

A SEASON OF GIVING IN JOHNSTON CITY

JC Manna Mission continues Angel Tree tradition for 29th Christmas

BY DOUG HANCOCK

For the past 29 Christmases, JC Manna Mission has “planted” an Angel Tree in the lobby of Banterra Bank to help struggling families have a merrier Christmas for their children. Director Cheri Litton explained that approximately 100 children are blessed every year with clothing and toys.

Parents register at Manna Mission for their kids ages 0–13 and must bring proof of residence showing they live within the Johnston City school district. A family cannot be registered on another Angel Tree.

Each child is represented on an ornament that includes the child’s number, age, clothing size, and toy wish list. When an “angel” chooses a child, they are registered at Banterra Bank, and that information is relayed to Manna Mission.

Depending on the generosity of the angel, a few items or even the entire wish list may be purchased and delivered to either lo-



Banterra Bank's Angel Tree

Every child receives two sets of clothes, pajamas, toys, and often a few extra surprises.

SIDE NOTE: The food pantry at Manna Mission does accept venison, provided the meat has been processed at a certified plant. Food donations of all kinds are always welcome, especially during the holiday season.

JCMA preparing to bless local families with Christmas food boxes

BY RANDY CARNEY

With holiday grocery prices climbing, the Johnston City Ministerial Alliance is once again working to ensure every family in the school district can enjoy a traditional Christmas meal.

JCMA's Christmas Food Box Project is now underway, offering boxes filled with fresh, local ingredients. No income verification is required—just proof of residency within the Johnston City School District.

Registration

Sign-ups will be held December 1–5 and 8–12 from 10:00–11:00 a.m. at First United Methodist Church, 400 W. Broadway.

Residents may also register during business hours, December 2–11, at JC City Center for Hope and Renewal.

Distribution

Boxes will be distributed Saturday, December 20, from 9:00–10:30 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church. Volunteers are needed to carry and deliver boxes.

Local businesses, churches, and individual donors help fund the fresh ingredients, while participating churches supply canned and boxed items. Any excess donations support families in need throughout the year.

To contribute, send checks payable to JCMA at:

JCMA c/o JC City Center,
504 E. Broadway Blvd.,
Johnston City, IL 62951.

Every gift helps put food on a neighbor's table—and joy in a local home for Christmas.

Rotary to place veterans' wreaths at Lakeview cemetery

The Johnston City Rotary Club will place wreaths on veterans' graves at Lakeview Cemetery on Saturday, December 13, at 9:00 a.m. The event marks the culmination of the club's year-long effort to purchase honor wreaths through the Wreaths Across America program. Community volunteers are encouraged to take part. Please meet at the maintenance building at the cemetery entrance.

An opportunity to double donations for next year

Honor Wreaths for Veterans, part of Wreaths Across America, is offering a special opportunity for you to donate a wreath for \$17, and they will match this; so you get two wreaths for each \$17



Sidney Stephens, Johnston City Rotary Club president-elect, directing wreath placement at Lakeview Cemetery last year. Wreaths will be placed on Dec. 13, 2025 at 9:00 am. Volunteers from the community are welcome.

donation you make.

The wreaths must be purchased from December 16, 2025 to January 10, 2026, to qualify for this offer. Wreaths designated for Lakeview Cemetery will be placed in 2026.

If you want to take advantage of this special offer please make your check

payable to Honor Wreaths for Veterans and mail it to 1212 N. Garfield, Marion, IL 62959. Please earmark your check Lakeview Cemetery. If you have any questions contact Jim Koonce, area coordinator, at 618-201-6636 or email Jim at jim@honorwreathsforveterans.org.

JC Schools launch district-wide food & toy drive

Johnston City CUSD #1 has kicked off a district-wide food and toy drive, running through December 12. Students, families, and staff at Jefferson School, Washington Middle School, and Johnston City High School are collecting items to support local families this Christmas season.



A cake-baking kit for students to take home for a weekend treat

Donation boxes are set up in school entrances and offices, and organizers report a steady stream of contributions. “We’ve seen students bring in canned goods, new toys, even blankets,” one organizer said. “It’s wonderful to see how seriously our kids take helping others.”

The drive supports local agencies including J.C. Manna Mission, area churches, and family-as-

sistance programs. Needed items include non-perishable food, new unwrapped toys, hygiene products, winter accessories, and baby supplies.

Student groups such as Student Council, FFA, and Educators Rising are assisting with sorting and preparation. Community members without students in the district may also donate by dropping items at any school office during regular hours.

Hometown Christmas rescheduled due to weather

ONLINE EDITION UPDATE: Johnston City had planned to celebrate its 15th Annu-

al Hometown Christmas on Saturday, Nov. 29 (as noted in our print edition), but

inclement weather forced organizers to shorten the schedule and move festivities to Sunday afternoon.

Shooting Star Photography offered free photos of children with Santa, and Mrs. Claus and the Grinch were also set to make appearances. Despite the cold, a handful of kids came out to enjoy the inflatable games and try their luck in the Arctic Drop, sponsored by Andresen's Café. The afternoon concluded with the lighting of the town Christmas tree.

Hometown Christmas began as an idea from downtown business leaders—most notably Anthony Spiller, owner of Andresen's Café. A citizens committee coordinated the celebration for many years before the city government took over the event in recent seasons.



plies to leaks occurring after February 1, 2026, and includes service lines up to two inches in diameter.

For questions—or to decline participation—residents should contact

ServLine at 888-977-7512. The Johnston City Water Department can be reached at 618-983-5223 or at City Hall, 100 W. Broadway, Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

JC Water Dept. to launch leak loss protection program

Beginning February 1, 2026, the Johnston City Water Department will launch a new protection program to help residents avoid unexpectedly high bills caused by hidden leaks or sudden line failures. Partnering with ServLine®, the plan provides up to \$500 in leak-related bill adjustments for qualifying residential customers once the leak is repaired.

All residential customers will be automatically enrolled at a cost of \$2 per month, added to the regular water bill. Residents may opt out at any time by calling ServLine at 888-977-7512, but those who decline coverage will be responsible for all excess charges from leak-related water loss.

City officials say the program is designed to prevent financial strain, noting that even small, unnoticed leaks can create large bills. Coverage ap-



Merry Christmas

My Hometown Means...
Big Mike's Steakhouse
Santa's Workshop
Community Calendar
Where do we find our hope?
Coloring Contest Winners
A dozen Christmas cookies
WMS students on gifts
Christmas Concert
Lincoln, Jefferson honored
Can reindeers really fly?
Prevent identity theft
Winter sports preview
New baseball coach

A LOOK BACK



My Hometown Means...

BY MIKE EDWARDS

My hometown means... riding down Broadway with Pawpaw, listening to him talk about the people and places he remembers; asking him if he's OK, and hearing him reply that he just has a little frog in his throat.

My hometown means... going to the Dairy Queen after Bible Study on a summer Wednesday night—eating a hot fudge sundae with a little red plastic spoon and studying the huge wall mural of the Zeigler #4 Coal Mine that sat two miles east of town.

My hometown means... going to Peppy's Food Shoppe with Nanny LaVerne because—though I'd never admit it—I was already bored, just two weeks into summer vacation. She'd buy a box of Eskimo Pies, a box of Fudgies, and a box of those double-wide Popsicles with two sticks.

My hometown means... a glass mug of A&W root beer so insanely cold that it was coated in velvet ice—and accidentally causing the tray to fall off the car window, spilling our cheeseburgers onto the parking lot.

My hometown means... going to the Becker Cemetery and placing plastic flowers on our family's graves—not nearly so many then as there are now—looking at Grandpa Paul's tombstone and wondering what it would have been

like to have known him.

My hometown means... a stop at a small corner grocery, looking at Hot Rod magazines and candy bars while the nice older man—who smelled like Vitalis and Electrashave—sliced us a pound of baloney and wrapped it in slick white paper.

My hometown means... visiting my great-grandma Ramsey's farm just north of the #6 Freewill Church—sitting on the porch steps, listening to the old ones talk about sickness and the weather.

My hometown means... an early-morning trip to Keupper's to buy tomato plants and all the seed for Pawpaw's garden—Iroquois Chief corn and Kentucky Wonder pole beans—the scent of fertilizer and the dust of time that I can still smell 50 years later.

My hometown means... going to a home basketball game on a Friday night—washing down a paper bag of buttered popcorn with a wax-paper cup of Orange Crush, cheering proudly as Mom's cousin Chuck led the Indians to victory.

My hometown means... going to Grandpa John's Discount Variety Store on Friday night and following the adults up and down the aisles while polka music played overhead.

My hometown means... grabbing lunch at Andersen's Café—the scent of ancient woodwork mixed with the aroma of pot roast

and potatoes with gravy.

My hometown means... Christmas downtown, with the 20-foot pine tree ablaze with colored lights in the middle of the street, and all the decorated stores open late on Friday nights throughout the entire month of December.

My hometown means... going with my best buddy on a Saturday afternoon to the Palace Theater to see a Three Stooges marathon—not noticing that the Palace had seen better days, just reveling in our two hours of near-total independence.

My hometown means... family reunions at the WPA Boy Scout Cabin in the park—helping Grandma Myrtle and Aunt Lorene carry in food from the cars, letting Uncle Walter squeeze the growing muscle in my ten-year-old arm, and grinning when he'd whistle.

My hometown means... having to say goodbye to so many precious people as they lay "in state" at Murman & Wilson's Funeral Home—the scent of roses and carnations that haunts me still today.

My hometown means... driving Uncle Charley's Plymouth down Broadway with my young grandson by my side, telling him about the people and places that I remember—and assuring him that I'm OK: "Pawpaw just has a little frog in my throat."

Business secrets from Big Mike's Steakhouse

BY JIMMY DEAN

A lot of businesses use catchphrases or slogans to grab the attention of customers.

This past week, I ran into three of them—and the last one was my favorite.

Buc-ee's has Bucky the Beaver to draw a crowd. Lambert's has the famous "thrown rolls" to catch your eye. But my favorite slogan came from Big Mike's Steakhouse in Orange Beach, Alabama.

"We serve good food," part-owner and general manager Casey Taylor told me, without batting an eye.

All three of those businesses sit within a short distance of each other. Buc-ee's is a convenience-store-meets-gas-station extravaganza, while the other two are sit-down restaurants. I had heard plenty about Big Mike's—the long wait to get in, the great service, and most importantly, the great food.

I was NOT disappointed.

Our group of eight arrived about an hour before opening. Even that early, the parking lot was nearly full and a line had already formed. Cars from nine different states were represented in the lot. Thankfully, the wait wasn't nearly as long as we expected.

Once we were seated, Casey came over and visited with us until the food arrived.

"The earliest I've seen folks show up is about one o'clock," he said. "We're open every day except major holidays—and Super Bowl Sunday."

He went on to explain that the front part of the building was moved from the beach, and the section we were seated in had been added on later. The restaurant now seats about 111



Jimmy Dean is a freelance writer and former mayor of Johnston City. He can be reached at jrdean@mchsi.com.

people and employs a staff of around 44—something he's proud of, especially since turnover is very minimal. Our waitress, Julia, has been there four years and said she loves her job.

The rustic setting and laid-back atmosphere add to the charm. Another thing that sets Big Mike's apart from other steakhouses is the way they prepare their steaks.

"We cook on charcoal on a wood-fired grill," Casey said, showing us the grill, which was full of sizzling steaks.

So how did this Alabama-to-Florida landmark get its start?

"Three Southern gentlemen," as Casey described them—Big Mike Cole, Scott Powell, and Caine Conway—were students at West Alabama University in Livingston when they came up with the idea. Taylor joined them in 2017 when the Orange Beach location opened.

With Mike's decade of experience running a steakhouse and Scott and Caine's business backgrounds, the trio built a successful restaurant concept. Today, all of them can still be found working in one of their locations—either cooking in the kitchen or greeting customers at the door.

A trip to the Florida-Alabama coastline is always about the beach—but the next time you go, make sure you include a stop at Big Mike's in Orange Beach.



Casey Taylor (left), co-owner of Big Mike's Steakhouse, and cook Cameron Eggers stand in front of the old-fashioned stove where the restaurant's meals are prepared (photo by Jimmy Dean).

Library presents Santa's workshop

The Johnston City Public Library invites families to a festive evening of holiday fun at our annual Santa's Workshop! Join us December 23, 6:00–7:30 pm, at the Scout Cabin, 1308 Parkway Drive, for games, treats, and cheerful activities designed for children of all ages.

Librarian Cindy Pulsford and the library staff will also be announcing the winners of this year's Library Coloring Contest—a favorite tradition that showcases the creativity of our local kids.

And keep your eyes open—we've heard there may be a very special visitor stopping by to greet the children.

For more information, call the Johnston City Public Library (618) 983-6359, or visit the library at 506 Washington Ave.

Come celebrate the season with your library—everyone is welcome!

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Johnston City, IL 62951

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



December Events

DECEMBER 1-5

JCMA Christmas Food Box preregistration, First United Methodist Church, 10-11 am

DECEMBER 2

JC Business Meet N' Greet, Andresen's, 9 am

DECEMBER 3

Rotary Club luncheon, Andresen's, Noon

DECEMBER 4

JCMA Meeting, JCity Center, 6:00 pm

DECEMBER 5

School early dismissal

DECEMBER 7

Free Christian Movie Night, JCity Church, 5 pm

DECEMBER 8-12

JCMA Christmas Food Box preregistration, First United Methodist Church, 10-11 am

DECEMBER 9

JC School Band & Chorus Christmas Concert, JCHS, 7 pm

DECEMBER 11

Prime Timers, JCity Church, 1 pm

DECEMBER 12

School half day

FSCS Mobile Pantry, Washington Middle School, 1-7 pm

DECEMBER 13

Veteran's Wreath Placement, Lakeview Cemetery, 9 am

DECEMBER 17

4th Annual Nathan Spiller Blood Drive, JCHS Gym, 2-6 pm

Rotary, Indigo Realty, 5 pm (NOTE NEW TIME)

DECEMBER 18

Food pantry / Commodity distribution, First United Methodist, 9 am

DECEMBER 19

School early dismissal

DECEMBER 20

JCMA Christmas Food Box Distribution (preregistration required), First United Methodist, 9:00-10:30 am

DECEMBER 21

Downtown Carriage Rides, Linemen's Lounge, 5-8 pm

DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 5
School Christmas Break

DECEMBER 23

Santa's Workshop sponsored by Public Library, Scout Cabin, 6:00 - 7:30 pm

DECEMBER 24

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, JCity Church, 5 pm

DECEMBER 25

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

DECEMBER 31

New Year's Eve

Public Meetings

DECEMBER 8

Library Board Meeting, 6:30 pm

DECEMBER 9

City Council meeting, Scout Cabin, 5 pm

DECEMBER 15

Planning Commission meeting, Scout Cabin, 5 pm

DECEMBER 18

School Board meeting, Unit Office, 6 pm

DECEMBER 29 (MON.)

City Council meeting, Scout Cabin, 5 pm

For calendar updates, please see Facebook or watch our video podcasts. To submit an event, email date, time, and details to jcitycenter@gmail.com or call 618-952-1272.

DEVOTIONAL

Where do we find our hope?

BY MICHELLE PALMER

The government shutdown caused uncertainty for many people. There was uncertainty concerning healthcare, being able to pay bills and buy food due to disruptions in paychecks and food assistance. There was uncertainty in travel and being able to celebrate the upcoming holidays. There was no way to be certain what would happen because there was no way to know the decisions that would be made. We all hoped for something in a situation that to some, seemed hopeless.

Where there is uncertainty, there is a desired outcome. Often, we call this hope. It's usually an outcome we know is possible,

but is not guaranteed. We all have hoped for something and been told to hope for the best and prepare for the worst. We've all been told not to get our hopes up, because we can't be certain what will happen. We know that any number of things could change the course of our lives for better or worse.

There is a hope we can be certain of, however. 1 Peter 1:3-4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." Peter is telling us that

Jesus is our hope. With salvation, we have hope we will receive our inheritance in heaven for eternity. It cannot be taken away through death or corruption. It will never fade away. God won't change his mind.

Hebrews 6:18 says, "it is impossible for God to lie" and "we might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us." We know God is faithful, and therefore we will receive what we hope for when we hope for his promises.

Christians are not then promised to never struggle

or suffer before we get to Heaven. The Apostle Paul encouraged us to have hope in the promises of God, saying in Philippians 4:12-13, "I know what it is like to be in need, and I know what it is like to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." We can also do all these things in Christ who strengthens us. This is certain.

In whatever situation you face in life, I encour-

age you to put your hope in God. You may not know what the outcome of a situation will be, but you can be assured that, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13)

And so, I leave you with the promise of Romans 8:28, "For those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose."

Michelle Palmer leads home Bible studies for youth and is an active member of JCity Church.

**Active members of Johnston City Ministerial Alliance*



Family Worship Center

400 W. 13th St.
Johnston City, IL 62951
(618) 952-1280
Brad & Kelly Dexter, pastor

First Baptist Church

401 E. 7th St.
Johnston City, IL 62951
(618) 983-6455
Larry Stevens, pastor

*First Christian Church

505 E. Broadway Blvd.
Johnston City, IL 62951
618-952-2591
Adam King, pastor

*First United Methodist Church

400 W. Broadway
Johnston City, IL 62951
618-983-5150
Paul Jacob, pastor

*Heritage Fellowship

(Church of God of Prophecy)
308 W. 12th St.
Johnston City, IL 62951
Gaylon & Dawn Stewart, pastors

*JCity Church

(Free Will Baptist)
609 Monroe
Johnston City, IL 62951
618-983-5254
Dr. Randy Carney, pastor

Johnston City United Pentecostal Church

1101 W. 10th
Johnston City, IL 62951
618-983-5938
Brandon Abernathy, pastor

*St. Paul's Catholic Church

1103 Washington Ave.
Johnston City, IL 62951
618-983-5073
Father Brian Barker

*Washington Ave. Baptist Church

9th and Washington
Johnston City, IL 62951
Barry Robertson, pastor
618-694-2995

Other Ministries

*JC Kids' Lunch Bunch

c/o JCity Church
(see above)

*JCity Center for Hope and Renewal

504 E. Broadway Blvd.
Johnston City, IL 62951
618-952-1272

*J. C. Manna Mission

306 E. Broadway Blvd.
Johnston City, IL 62951
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CHRISTMAS COLORING

Arrow News is proud to announce the winners of our Christmas Coloring Contest. We received 55 creative and beautifully colored entries, and our judges were impressed by the care, imagination, and technique each young artist displayed.

First Place: Paizley McPhail's artwork stood out for its smooth, even coloring and rich nighttime backdrop, giving her nativity scene a warm, glowing atmosphere.

Second Place: Alessandra Martinez used only crayons with excellent control and creativity, resulting in a clean and simple Christmas illustration.

Third Place: Maggie brought wonderful creativity to her page with expressive sky colors and imaginative shading that made her scene lively and unique.

Congratulations to all three artists—and thank you to every student who participated. Your artwork brings Christmas cheer to our community and reminds us of the joy and wonder of the season!

Note: Students wrote their own names on the entries, and Arrow staff was unable to decipher some names. Our apologies for incomplete names or incorrect spelling.



Paizley McPhail from Ms. Weber's 2nd Grade Class

Artists' Names (L-R)

Korbin Bullard
Aubree Burnett
Luca Intravaia



Finley Greeney
Ariana Rice
Annabell Denise Lyerla



Kolson Clay
Kaynen Meadows
Raylan Kellermier



Kendall Crain
Johnathan Gower
Miles Dobraski



Jayden Smith
Willow Nestor
Hayden Hartwick



Hannah Wells
Abigail Smith
Teegan Gream



Annastyn McVey
Caroline Nordmeyer
Brandon Yates



Tori Ragsdale
Ender Henry
Carter Keffer



Waylin Castro
Major Miner



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CONTEST WINNERS

2nd



Alessandra Martinez from Ms. Dover's 2nd Grade Class

3rd



Maggie from Ms. Dover's 2nd Grade Class



Kyron Roberson



Luke Todd



Grayson Groves



Logan Harris



Carter Tedrow



Jace Moschino



Jodie Beck



Aubrey Morgan



Christopher Williams



Zaiden Gass



Nora Koontz



Michael Joplin



Spencer Reed



Presleigh Roethler



Addyson Quillman



Emma Cullum



Crimson Evrard



Aerie Ray



Corban Lacy



Emmett Cedar



Maddox Walsh



Jaxon Johnson



Hyder Robinson



Oliver Lockwood



Aria Kaszain



Taylor Stroud

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Washington Middle School students consider intangible gifts

Imagine that no one had money to purchase gifts and there were no stores open to buy presents this Christmas season. What gift would you wish for this year?



MADISON LEWIS
7TH GRADE

If no one had money to purchase gifts and there were no stores open, I would want a big Christmas tree where people could come and we could visit. I would want a big Christmas tree because people could come, and we could all sit around a warm campfire and drink hot cocoa. Another reason is because Christmas isn't just about presents. It's about spending time with family, friends, and others. Another thing that we could do while sitting around the Christmas tree and the campfire is to do a gift exchange. We could bring things that we don't play with anymore or things we don't want anymore. Then, we could all pass our presents in a big circle and exchange them. This is what I would want for Christmas if no one had money and no stores were open.

WYATT STEAD
7TH GRADE

If no one had money to pur-

chase gifts and there were no stores open to buy presents this Christmas season, the gift I would wish for this year would be for everyone in the world to get along. I think there is a lot of hate in the world nowadays, and I hope that hate is no longer a thing. It would be so nice to watch the news and see everyone get along, and everyone would work together to fix worldwide problems. The world would be so peaceful and amazing to see big companies help everyone by not overpricing their goods. No more countries arguing about their borders, or tariffs. And seeing everyone be treated equally!

ADDISON STEPHENS
7TH GRADE

If no one had money to purchase gifts this Christmas season, I would want a homemade gift. I would want this because I think a handmade gift is a lot more sentimental and thoughtful than a gift you would buy from a store. That means

you have to really think about the person and put in effort to make them happy. Not just buying them something they want or something you think they want from the store. At the end of the day, a homemade gift may not seem like much. But it's always the thought that counts, and you will always know that person truly cares about you enough to make you a gift.

KARSYN LEWIS
8TH GRADE

If no one had money and no stores are open, I would wish for everyone to show gratitude towards others. There are so many people that are caught up with their own lives. It is so much easier to smile than frown. It takes very little effort to be kind, when it takes a lot more effort to go out of your way to be rude and hateful. It would mean a lot to me if on Christmas morning there was a change in the attitudes of all people.

JC Schools to present annual Christmas band, chorus concert

BY MARGIE SANDERS

Ready for some really good Christmas music? Our Johnston City Band and Chorus students have been working hard to prepare for the annual Christmas Concert, Tuesday, December 9, 7:00 pm in the JCHS gym. Admission is free.

Families, friends, and community members are invited to enjoy an evening filled with festive music, student talent, and holiday spirit.

This year's concert will once again be directed by Ms. Alexis "Lexi" Ligon and Dr. Mike Smith, who together have revitalized and expanded the district's music program over the past several years.

The Christmas Concert will feature performances from both band and chorus students across grade levels. From classic carols to lively modern selections, the evening promises a mix of pieces that showcase students' dedication and hard work throughout the fall semester.

School District announces new hires

The Johnston City School District has announced several new hires who will join the staff for the rest of the school year.

At the high school level, Will Carmickle has been named the new bowling coach, while Bryce "Lex" Glasco will take the helm as the baseball coach for the upcoming season.

Jefferson Elementary School welcomes two new team members to its Wrap-Around program. Renee Grisham has been hired as supervisor. She brings an Associate's Degree in Child Care and Guidance, certifications in CPR/First Aid and Early Childhood Education, and extensive experience as a childcare professional, most recently serving as a center teacher in Saline County.

Joining her is Maddilyn McCormick, a JCHS graduate and newly appointed Wrap-Around AM Aide. McCormick has completed basic nurse assistant training at John A. Logan College and also holds a Diploma in Medical Assisting.

A DOZEN CHRISTMAS COOKIE RECIPES



Almond Bark Brittle

MARGIE SANDERS

INGREDIENTS
9 squares almond bark ½ cup peanut butter
1 cup chocolate chips

INSTRUCTIONS
Melt almond bark in a double boiler. Spread melted bark onto waxed paper on a cookie sheet. Melt chocolate chips and peanut butter together. Pour over almond bark and swirl. Chill until firm, then break into pieces.

Roll Out Sugar Cookies

MARGIE SANDERS

INGREDIENTS
1 cup softened margarine or butter 1 tsp vanilla
1 cup of sugar 2 tsp baking powder
1 large egg 3 cups of flour

INSTRUCTIONS
Cream together butter/margarine and sugar, beat in egg and vanilla. Add sifted flour and baking powder in thirds. Mix well after each addition. Divide into 4 balls. Do not chill. Make a floured surface and flour your rolling pin before each use. Roll out dough to the thickness you desire. Use cookie cutters. Bake on an ungreased cookie sheet on the top oven rack for 6-10 minutes. Length depends on your oven. (I find 7-8 minutes is long enough.) Allow the cookies to cool before frosting them. They freeze well. Makes at least 4 dozen.

Easy Christmas Goopy Butter Cookies

SARAH MILLER

INGREDIENTS
1 box yellow cake mix 1 tsp vanilla
8 oz cream cheese, softened ½ cup sprinkles
½ cup butter, softened ½ cup powdered sugar (for rolling)
1 egg

INSTRUCTIONS
Preheat oven to 350°F; line baking sheets. Beat cream cheese and butter. Add cake mix, egg, and vanilla. Fold in sprinkles and chill 1 hour. Roll into balls, coat in sprinkles and powdered sugar. Bake 9-12 minutes.

Four-Ingredient Shortbread Cookies

SARAH MILLER

INGREDIENTS
1 cup butter, softened ¼ cup cornstarch
½ cup powdered sugar 1½ cups flour

INSTRUCTIONS
Preheat oven to 350°F. Cream butter and sugar. Mix in cornstarch and flour. Roll into balls or cut shapes. Bake 20 minutes until edges are golden

Christmas Chocolate Chip Cookies

SARAH MILLER

INGREDIENTS
1½ cups flour 1 egg
1 tsp baking soda 1 tsp vanilla
½ tsp salt 1½ cups semisweet chocolate chips
½ cup butter 1 cup white chocolate chips
½ cup brown sugar ½ cup M&Ms
6 Tbsp white sugar ⅓ cup sprinkles

INSTRUCTIONS
Preheat oven to 350°F and line baking sheets. Sift flour, soda, and salt. Cream butter and sugars. Add egg and vanilla. Mix in dry ingredients. Fold in chips, sprinkles, and M&Ms. Drop by tablespoons and bake 10-14 minutes.

Joe Froggers

MARTA PHILLIPS

INGREDIENTS
4 cups flour 2 Tbsp rum (or water)
1½ tsp ginger 1 cup dark molasses
½ tsp cloves 1 tsp baking soda
½ tsp nutmeg 1 cup sugar
¼ tsp allspice ½ cup butter

INSTRUCTIONS
Mix dry ingredients. Combine rum and water; mix molasses with baking soda. Cream butter and sugar. Add dry ingredients alternately with liquid mixtures. Chill several hours. Roll ¼ inch thick; cut cookies. Bake 10-12 minutes at 375°F.

Potato Chip Cookies

MARTA PHILLIPS

INGREDIENTS
1 cup sugar 1½ cups flour
1 cup shortening ¼ tsp baking soda
1 egg 1 tsp vanilla
¾ cup crushed potato chips ½ cup nuts

INSTRUCTIONS
Cream sugar and shortening, add egg. Mix in potato chips, nuts, flour, and soda. Drop by spoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheet, Bake at 350°F.

Ribbons

MARTA PHILLIPS

INGREDIENTS
2 cups flour 1 egg
1½ tsp baking powder 1 tsp vanilla
½ tsp salt 3-4 drops food coloring (optional)
¾ cup soft butter 2 squares unsweetened chocolate, melted
1 cup sugar

INSTRUCTIONS
Sift flour, baking powder, and salt. Beat butter; add sugar, egg, and vanilla until fluffy. Add half the flour; mix in the rest by hand. Divide dough: add chocolate to one half and food coloring to the other. Shape each into 7-inch rolls, flatten to 1½ inches wide. Stack colored-chocolate-colored to form ribbons. Wrap and chill several hours. Slice ½ inch thick; bake 8-10 minutes at 375°F.

NOTE: May omit coloring or chocolate; yields approximately 8 dozen.

June's Sugar Cookies

MARTA PHILLIPS

INGREDIENTS:
2 sticks margarine 4½ cups flour
½ cup oil 1 tsp soda
2 eggs 1 tsp salt
1 cup sugar 1 tsp vanilla
1 cup powdered sugar ½ tsp lemon crystals OR 1 tsp lemon juice

INSTRUCTIONS:
Cream margarine, oil, sugar, and powdered sugar. Add eggs. Add sifted dry ingredients. Add vanilla and lemon. Bake 15 minutes at 325 degrees.

Thumbprint Cookies

SARAH FLETCHER

INGREDIENTS
1 cup butter, softened ½ cup raspberry or apricot jam
¾ cup sugar ½ cup powdered sugar
½ tsp almond extract ¾ tsp almond extract
2 cups flour 1 tsp milk

INSTRUCTIONS
Preheat oven to 350°F. Cream butter and sugar; add almond extract. Mix in flour until dough forms. Shape into 1½-inch balls; place on cookie sheet. Press indentation and fill with jam. Bake 14-18 minutes. Mix glaze ingredients; drizzle over warm cookies.

Brownies in a Jar

SARAH FLETCHER

INGREDIENTS
¾ tsp salt ¾ cup brown sugar
1 cup + 2 Tbsp flour ½ cup white chocolate chips
½ cup cocoa ½ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
¾ cup sugar ½ cup walnuts

INSTRUCTIONS
Layer dry ingredients in a jar; close with lid.

NOTE: If decorating jar as a gift, include the following instructions: "To prepare: Combine mix with 3 eggs, 1 tsp vanilla, ¾ cup oil. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes in 9x9 pan."

Lemon Snowflake Cookies

SARAH FLETCHER

INGREDIENTS
1 lemon cake mix 1 egg
1 container whipped topping Powdered sugar

INSTRUCTIONS
Mix cake mix, topping, and egg. Drop dough into powdered sugar and coat. Bake at 350°F for 10-12 minutes. Press down halfway through baking for chewier texture.

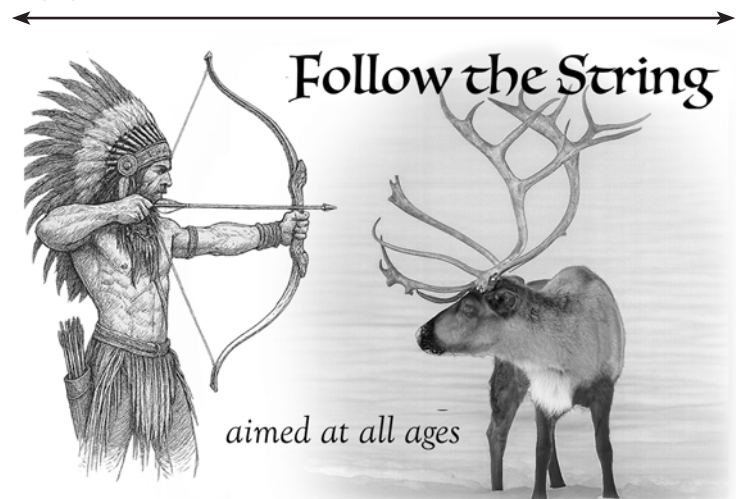
State names Jefferson, Lincoln as Exemplary Schools

The Johnston City school district is proud to announce that both Lincoln Elementary and Jefferson Elementary have been designated "Exemplary Schools" by the Illinois State Board of Education for 2025. The honor places each building among the top 10% of elementary schools statewide, with no student group identified as under-performing.

The recognition highlights years of steady progress supported by strong instruction, high student engagement, consistent at-

tendance, and committed staff and families. ISBE report card data show Lincoln's growth trends dating back to 2019, while Jefferson's earlier attendance and truancy rates reflect a long-standing culture of success.

These designations confirm that the schools' achievements are the result of sustained effort—not a single-year spike—and showcase the excellence and equity present throughout the district.



Can Reindeer Really Fly?

BY DON MCCHESENEY

Hey kids! People have wondered for years whether reindeer can really fly. Before we answer that big question, let's take a look at some amazing facts about these incredible animals.

Reindeer have gray or brown fur made of two layers, including hollow hairs that trap warm air—perfect for icy weather. Male reindeer can grow up to 7 feet long and weigh around 530 pounds, while females reach about 6 feet and weigh around 310 pounds.

Both males and females grow antlers, and those antlers can stretch over 4 feet long! Males shed theirs in the fall, while females hold onto theirs until spring. Even their eyes change color—golden in the summer and bright blue in the winter—to help them see better in low light.

Reindeer also have extra-wide, split hooves that spread out like snowshoes so they can walk on deep snow. And guess what? They do have "red noses," sort of. Their noses are full of tiny blood vessels that warm the air they breathe—just like Rudolph's famous beacon.

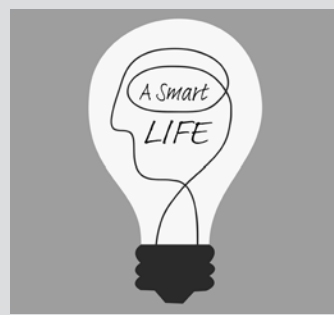
Their knees even make a soft clicking sound, which helps the herd stay together in blizzards.

Reindeer travel in large herds to stay safe from predators like wolves and bears. They are super fast—able to run up to 50 miles per hour—and they're excellent swimmers. Their favorite food is lichen, a moss-like plant found in cold climates. Each year, reindeer migrate more than 1,000 miles in search of food.

Because they spend nearly 40% of their lives in snow, reindeer live in the Arctic regions of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Russia, and Scandinavia, as well as the Arctic tundra. And of course, Santa's special reindeer live at the North Pole. Most reindeer live 15 to 20 years.

So, can reindeer really fly? Regular reindeer can't fly on their own—but Santa's magic helps his reindeer take to the skies, if you believe.

On Christmas Eve, bundle up, look to the sky, and see what you can spot.



A SMART LIFE

Can my identity really be stolen?

BY DON MCCHESENEY

YES — identity theft is real, and it happens every day. It occurs when someone uses your personal or financial information without permission. Thieves may steal your name, address, Social Security number, credit or bank account numbers, or medical insurance information. With it, they can make purchases, open credit or utility accounts in your name, claim your tax refund, use your health insurance, impersonate you when arrested, or even take out loans against your property.

Identity theft happens in many ways— in person, online, through social media, and by phone. Scammers may steal your wallet, purse, phone, or

mail, or pull bank statements and tax documents from your trash. They may install skimmers at ATMs, cash registers, or fuel pumps, or gather your information from public Wi-Fi or social media profiles.

Warning signs include bills for items you didn't buy, calls from debt collectors about accounts you never opened, unfamiliar entries on your credit report, loan denials you can't explain, or mail that suddenly goes missing.

If you've been scammed, act quickly. Contact the companies where the fraud occurred and tell them your identity was stolen; then ask them to close or freeze affected accounts. Change

your logins, passwords, and PINs. Place a fraud alert on your credit and request your credit reports. Report the theft to the Federal Trade Commission at IdentityTheft.gov or 1-877-438-4338, and file a police report.

Depending on the situation, you may also need to notify the Social Security Administration, the driver's license bureau, your bank, the IRS, your utility or phone providers, or your medical insurance company.

Staying vigilant is the best protection. Guard your personal information, monitor your accounts, and stay alert to avoid becoming a victim of identity theft.

SPORTS NEWS

Winter Sports (FROM P. 8)

- Dec. 2—West Frankfort (Boys), 3:30 pm
- Dec. 8—Harrisburg, 3:30 pm
- Dec. 9—Massac Co., 3:30 pm
- Dec. 11—Herrin, 3:30 pm
- Dec. 16—Harrisburg, 3:30 pm

After the holiday break, the Indians resume on:

- Jan. 6—Herrin, SI Bowl, 3:30 pm
- Jan. 8—Mt. Vernon, 4 pm
- Feb. 3—Massac Co., Girls, 4 pm

The postseason arrives with IHSA Boys Regionals (Jan. 16–17) and IHSA Girls Regionals (Feb. 6–7).

Wrestling: A season of Duals, Tournaments, and Conference Action

Wrestling season is off to a strong start, having opened in late November with meets in Jerseyville, Carbondale, Williamson County, and

Lawrenceville. Girls and JV wrestlers also saw early action, including a trip to Notre Dame (Cape Girardeau) and a home meet against West Frankfort.

December features a busy lineup:

- Dec. 13—Marion Duals, 9 am
- Dec. 17—JC Triangular, 5 pm
- Dec. 20—Cumberland, 9 am
- Jan. 2—Marion (Girls), 9 am

Afterward, the team heads into January's major competitions:

- Jan. 7—Triangular (Senior Night) at Johnston City
- Jan. 9–10—Murdale Tournament (Carbondale)
- Jan. 14—BDC Conference (Johnston City)
- Jan. 17—Paducah Tilghman
- Jan. 21—Marion (Girls)
- Jan. 23—Anna (Freshmen)

The postseason begins with IHSA Regionals (Jan. 31) followed by IHSA Girls Regionals (Feb. 6).

Indians Boys Basketball opens season

Just after press time for the December Arrow, the Johnston City Indians officially opened the 2025–26 season with a tough late-November stretch. Under new management with head coach Quinton Smothers and assistant coach Hayden Holloway, the team entered the year with a blend of returning players and newcomers working to define their roles.

The Indians hosted Elverado in the November 25 season opener, then faced Crab Orchard at home on November 26, testing their resilience with back-to-back games. They wrapped up November with a November 30 road trip to Galatia.

As December begins, the schedule offers more challenges but also opportunities to turn early lessons into growth. With continued development and building chemistry, the Indians hope to make steady strides as the season progresses.

WMS Student Council spurs donations to Food & Toy Drive

The Washington Middle School Student Council is upping the ante for the district-wide food and toy drive. The group is offering a donut party to the home base that collects the most donations from Dec. 1–10.

In addition, the Full-Service Community Schools team will provide a sweet treat to the JC School that collects the most items.

Items to be collected include: Canned fruits and vegetables, pasta, rice and grains, peanut butter and canned protein, instant meals and boxed cereal, and unwrapped toys or gifts for kids.

Please make sure items are not outdated and do not come in glass containers.

Football season ends (FROM P. 8)

battled," he said. "Nobody quit, not tonight and not all season. Our seniors left a mark on this program, and our underclassmen got a taste of what championship football requires." Families and fans lined the fence after the game to congratulate the senior class, many of whom have been multi-year starters and community favorites.

Even as the Indians turn the page to next fall, the conference honors rolling in this week underscore just how talented this roster was. The Black Diamond Conference named Logan Moore as Conference MVP, with Jace Weaver earning Offensive Captain. First-Team selections included Jace Weaver, Landon

Moore, and Logan Moore on offense, and Marcus Leitzen and Trey Johnson on defense. Second-Team honors went to Colin Hermetz on offense and to Wyatt Kerley, Hayden Burton, and Wyatt Henderson on defense. Kaden Koenig and Keegan Deason received Honorable Mention recognition.

The accolades highlight a high-powered group that delivered memorable Friday nights for Johnston City fans and set a solid foundation for the coming year. Coach Mummert noted that the work toward 2026 begins immediately. "We're building on this," he said. "This group set the bar. Now it's time for the next class to raise it."

School Employment Opportunities

The Johnston City School District is currently seeking to fill these positions for the 2026–2027 academic year: district registered nurse, high school business teacher, high school math teacher, high school physical education teacher, and high school head volleyball coach.

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Washington Middle School teacher Lex Glasco has been named JCHS head baseball coach (photo: jcitndians.org).

From childhood dream to dugout leader

Glasco named JCHS head baseball coach

BY BROOKE KELTNER
JOHNSTON CITY SCHOOLS
Washington Middle School teacher Lex Glasco is stepping into a longtime dream—becoming the new head baseball coach at Johnston City High School. The Board of Education approved his hiring at its November meeting.

A former standout player, Glasco grew up in the program. He started baseball

at age four, went on to earn a varsity spot as a freshman, and later set JCHS's single-season and career home run records. But he still points to his 2012 senior team, which set a single-season wins record, as his proudest achievement. "For me, it's all about the team," he said.

After playing at John A. Logan College and graduating from SIU, Glasco began

coaching at Herrin before returning to Johnston City as an assistant in 2015 and again in 2021. He credits mentors Todd Thomas and Marshall Mummert for shaping his coaching philosophy and hopes to bring continuity between the school's football and baseball programs.

Glasco inherits a strong group of athletes, including a 2024 regional-cham-

pionship squad, and he's encouraged by the talent rising through the middle school ranks. His goals reach beyond wins: he aims to build fundamentals, strengthen players' understanding of the game, and develop young men who succeed on and off the field.

"My goal is that they go

on to have successful careers, become great fathers and husbands," Glasco said. "Teaching them how to lead a family—the right way."

For Glasco, leading the Indians is the fulfillment of a dream and the start of a new chapter for JCHS baseball.

Winter sports heat up in Johnston City

As November turns to December, winter sports are officially underway at Johnston City High School. From the hardwood to the lanes to the wrestling mats, athletes across multiple programs are gearing up for busy seasons filled with new match-ups, familiar rivalries, and postseason aspirations. This year also begins with well-deserved recognition for standout football players following a memorable fall campaign.

Boys basketball: A full slate ahead

The 2025-2026 boys JV/Varsity basketball season opened in late November with the Elverado Tournament, where Johnston City played on November 25 and 26 and wrapped up the event on November 28.

December brings a stretch of both home and away contests, including:

- Dec. 6—Galatia Shootout (Away)
- Dec. 12—Trico (Home), 5 pm
- Dec. 13—Eldorado (Away) 2 pm
- Dec. 16—Sesser-Valier (Away), 5 pm
- Dec. 19—Zeigler-Royalton (Home), 6 pm
- Dec. 20—Vienna (Home) 5 pm
- Dec. 26-29—Cobden Holiday Tourney (Away)

After the new year, the Indians face a packed January and February schedule, featuring match ups

with Century, Christopher, Thompsonville, Webber, Wayne City, Hardin County, Waltonville, and multiple late-season home games. Postseason-setting games in February include home dates against Christopher (Feb. 10), Goreville (Feb. 17), and Sesser-Valier (Feb. 19).

Girls basketball: Strong start and busy December

The Lady Indians opened their season in mid-November with home and away contests:

- Nov. 17—Murphysboro (Home)
- Nov. 18—Elverado at Sparta
- Nov. 20-21—TBA at Sparta
- Nov. 24—Chester (Away)

The team continues December with a heavy lineup:

- Dec. 1—Vienna (Away)
- Dec. 4—Gallatin Co. (Home)
- Dec. 6—Meridian (Away), 1 pm
- Dec. 8—Sesser-Valier (Home)
- Dec. 11—Trico (Home)
- Dec. 13—West Frankfort (Home), 11 am
- Dec. 15—Hardin Co. (Away)
- Dec. 18—Goreville (Home)
- Dec. 26—CORLS Tourney (TBA)

The remainder of the season includes early-January match ups with Anna-Jonesboro, Christopher, Galatia, Goreville, and Steeleville before the team heads into a February push culminating in IHSA Regionals on Feb. 14.

Bowling: Boys, girls roll into tournament season

The Johnston City bowling teams, under the leadership of newly hired coach Will Carmikle, began competition in November with matches against Carbon-dale and Massac County. Additional early-season events included West Frankfort and Harrisburg.

The season continues in December with:

CONTINUED ON P. 7

Football season ends in round 2, All-Conference picks honors key players

The Johnston City Indians' impressive football season came to a close November 8 in a hard-fought Round 2 IHSA Class 2A playoff battle against the Maroa-Forsyth Trojans. In front of a packed crowd of loyal traveling fans, the Tribe left everything on the field, showing the same grit and togetherness that marked their entire 2025 campaign.

Though the postseason run ended earlier than the team hoped, the Indians finish the year with pride—and with plenty of recognition across the Black Diamond Conference.

Head Coach Marshall Mummert reflected on the playoff loss with deep appreciation for his seniors and optimism for the program's future. "These boys

CONTINUED ON P. 7

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