

Local high schools are named 'Best Buy' schools

Comet staff report

Hoosier high schools that have excelled academically while providing good value for Hoosier tax dollars were recognized last Wednesday by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce with the release of the ninth edition of the Indiana's Best Buys report.

Among the 136 public high schools named are Carroll Jr.-Sr. High School, Delphi Community High School, and Rossville Senior High School. In addition to the Best Buy designation, DCHS is also recognized as an "honor roll" school.

The school study, which was presented by Indiana State University, examined 350 Indiana public high schools and, for the first time, charter schools with the appropriate available data. Using ISTEP+ pass rates, ISTEP+ Pass+ rates, graduation rates,

SAT participation rates and average composite scores, and Advanced Placement (AP) passing scores, the Indiana Chamber developed a total school performance index for each school.

This index, called the school's quality index, was then compared to each school's total expenditures per pupil to determine "best buy" schools and to each school's at-risk student/poverty rate, as measured by participation in the federal free/reduced lunch program, to determine "honor roll" schools.

For 2007, 136 public high schools were designated as a "best buy" for giving taxpayers the most value for their money. Two methods determined this honor. A school was named a best buy if it had a quality index above the state median and expenditures below the statewide median of \$10,196 per student. The second method was by having a quality index ranking that was 20% higher than the school's expenditures ranking.

In addition, from the best buy group, 31 high schools were given the "honor roll" distinction for excelling academically despite having at-risk student demographics above the statewide median. For their exemplary efforts, the top three schools from the best buy and honor roll lists were then selected as "head of the class" members.

The 2007 "head of the class" selections are: Adams Central High School, Adams County; Hauser Jr.-Sr. High School, Bartholomew County; Loogootee Jr.-Sr. High School, Martin County; Orleans Jr.-Sr. High School, Orange County; Signature School (charter high school), Vander-

burgh County; and Western High School, Howard County.

"The Indiana's Best Buys report is about celebrating excellence and encouraging improvement. Indiana high schools have the necessary resources to be among the best in the world. However, to be the best, everyone must work at continuously analyzing, reforming and/or maintaining quality instructional programs. Those schools on this list are doing just that, and their communities are reaping the benefits," states Indiana Chamber President Kevin Brinegar.

All data used in the Best Buys report was collected from Indiana Department of Education databases.

This year, the Indiana Chamber modified how it compared educational costs among schools. Capital projects and debt service funds were examined, along with the money re-

ceived from the state's General Fund, to comprise a school's total expenditures per student. Previous Best Buy reports included General Fund revenues only.

"This adjustment was needed to provide an even more accurate picture of how wisely, or unwisely, tax dollars are being spent. We've been seeing an increase in use of these capital projects and debt service funds for standard operating costs - for such things as utilities or loans - and wanted to acknowledge that trend," says Brinegar. "Furthermore, with the widespread impact of high property tax bills on many Hoosiers, and acknowledging that local schools are a significant benefactor of that revenue, we felt it only appropriate to take a stricter look at school spending."

To view the Best Buys report visit www.indianachamber.com/bestbuys.

Different dairy, same concerns

Dairies debated again at commissioners meeting

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Carroll County Commissioners met for more than four hours Monday night, however relatively few decisions were made. What the three elected county leaders experienced was another marathon session of disgruntled and concerned county residents voicing disapproval of the encroachment of dairies in the county and the lack of control over the situation exercised by commissioners.

Local attorney Courtney Justice, who represented those opposed to the construction of the second dairy, Optima Dairy, planned for Liberty Township, presented three action plans for commissioners to consider. In addition to the plans, testimony was given from residents, a local physician and a Purdue professor, and an indictment was made against the Carroll County Economic Development Corporation for "inviting" dairies into the county under the guise of being good for the county.

"I fear for the health of all in Carroll County," local physician Dr. Tom Anderson told commissioners.

"The soils are just not the right kind of soils for this," Dr. Daryl Leap of Purdue said. "This is a bad way to do things."

County resident Lisa Henry was more direct with commissioners' president Loren Hylton.

"You need to step down," Henry told Hylton. "You are wrong."

At one point in the meeting, more than one audience member exploded in anger. They shouted at commissioners in indignation and the shouts were returned by at least one county leader sitting on the dais.

"Get out! Get out! Get out!" Bill Brown yelled as he pointed at one audience member.

The offending audience members were escorted out of or left the meeting room.

The first proposed action plan presented by Justice included a request for an immediate moratorium and suspension of all construction or operation of any CAFO, to immediately cease any use of public funds by EDC to solicit or promote pending or future CAFOs and to consult with outside counsel to take all lawful measures to prevent construction of CAFOs pending the amendment of Section 23 of the zoning ordinance.

The second action plan called for Hylton to remove himself from any discussions, which would allow the proposed Optima Dairy to build in Washington Township. Justice presented a copy of the contract Hylton signed with the facility in May to allow the dairy to apply manure on his fields.

The third action plan called for commissioners' attorney Barry Emerson to exclude himself from any discussions which would lead to a commissioners' decision about the dairy. Justice alleged Emerson represented the landowner in the sale of the land to the dairy and was therefore in conflict of interest. Emerson said he did represent the landowners and would disqualify himself if an Optima Dairy matter would come before the commissioners or drainage board.

George Mears disputed a chemical analysis presented by Leap. He accused the professor of "jumbling a lot of figures to scare the public."

Mary Susan Brown of Washington Township suggested commissioners revisit

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The vision of the new mayor

Bringing everyone along at the same time

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

In less than two weeks, mayor-elect Randy Strasser will assume leadership of the City of Delphi. Strasser is a believer in planning the work and working the plan to achieve goals and objectives. Strasser shared his vision and expectations of his new office and city government.

"I truly believe in transparent government and that has to do with wrap-around planning," Strasser said.

Meeting with council members one-on-one prior to taking office has been important to Strasser. He said he would emphasize the need for and strive to enhance communication between department heads and council members.

Strasser said he does not anticipate significant changes in council meetings or the agenda.

"Council meetings should be informative, but predictable," he said. "The agenda was established by the Indiana Code and the city adopted an ordinance enacting it."



Strasser

Strasser said department head reports at council meetings will take the form of reports of benchmarks to reach budgetary and action goals for the department. Because of the benchmark approach to presentations, council members will be provided informational building blocks, which will form a basis for their decisions.

"As time passes, council members will become more and more informed about all aspects of the inner-workings of the city," he explained.

Strasser plans to take his first few months on the job to learn, assess and evaluate city services and needs before deciding what, if any, significant

changes are warranted.

He appointed new council member Brian Garrison and Delphi resident Bob Conner to the board of works, which will meet the first and third Monday of each month. Per Indiana Code, the mayor is also a member.

"Decisions will be made the way they should with the board"

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Winter fun



Carroll County's first big snow came last weekend, with an average of 7-8 inches around the county. School was cancelled Monday, so children took advantage of the time off to play in the snow. Pictured here, l-r, are Carroll Elementary fifth graders Jake Gamel and Jared Forgey. Comet photo by Jennifer Archibald

Neighborhood Watch works!

Questioning neighbors lead to local apprehension

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Several weeks ago Carroll County Sheriff Tony Burns and Maj. Tobe Leazenby attended a Neighborhood Watch meeting in Jefferson Township. The meeting seemed routine with several procedural questions from neighbors about what to do in different situations.

One question stood out to the two seasoned law enforcement officers. Neighbors wondered

what to do about a possible "peeping tom." The discussion led to a revelation that two female juveniles might be visiting a local residence and the occupant was rumored to be a sex offender.

Acting on the inquiry, the department checked into 27-year-old Charles R. Davidson's information utilizing jail records and the Indiana Sex Offender Registry. It was discovered Davidson listed home addresses in both Carroll and

Howard counties when he last registered with the Carroll County jail. Davidson claimed to be employed at Tyson Foods in Logansport, which meant he should be registered in Cass County, as required by Indiana statute.

Carroll County address verification visits by two different deputies, Sgt. Dennis Randle and Deputy Tony Liggett, on two separate occasions proved unsuccessful. An address verification with police in Howard

County was also unsuccessful as was an employment check at Tyson Foods. It was discovered Davidson was last employed there in July 2007.

An investigation through the Carroll County Prosecutor's Office revealed Davidson's employment at Indiana Packers Corporation since October, which he was required to report to local authorities. He was located by Leazenby Dec. 6 and taken into custody on two

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Merry Christmas from all of us at

The Carroll County

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