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CODE: VS703773



A photo taken by Scott Blanford shows his mother’s dinner at Newburgh Health and Rehab on Oct. 6. He said the sparse meal is just one of several issues at the senior living facility. PROVIDED BY SCOTT BLANFORD

Local nursing home’s tater tot dinner sparks ire on social media

Jon Webb
Evansville Courier & Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

EVANSVILLE – Scott Blanford couldn’t believe it.

He was sitting with his wife in his mother’s room at Newburgh Health and Rehab on Sunday evening when an employee delivered dinner. Usually, the senior living facility on Pollack Avenue provides more balanced meals. But that night was different.

Scattered across an otherwise empty plate was the main course: 12 tater tots. Their only companions were a small dish of fruit and a cup of now-cold soup with what looked like a piece of celery floating in the broth.

“When they pulled the lid off and I saw nothing but tater tots ... you know, my wife actually stuck her head out in the hallway and said, ‘What is going on?’” he told the Courier & Press. “Can they not afford meat?”

That night he went home and did something he said he never does: made a frustrated post on Facebook. Alongside a picture of the tots, he wrote that he’d filed a formal complaint with the state of Indiana, and he expressed disbelief that a facility charging thousands of dollars for care would offer such a sparse supper.

The post has since sparked hundreds of comments and reactions. The local employees who care for his mother, Norma Jean Blanford, are “great people,” he wrote. So he had to wonder if the blame for the dinner rested instead with the facility’s corporate owners, New-Jersey-based GreenTree.



Newburgh Health and Rehab Center is located at 10466 Pollack Ave. in Newburgh. MACABE BROWN/COURIER & PRESS

He said he’s since been told that corporate cuts have left employees scrounging for some supplies. Some workers reportedly had to go to the grocery store themselves to buy bread and eggs after the facility’s supply ran low. And according to inspection documents reviewed by the Courier & Press, some of those same employees have even cooked the food after an exodus of dietary employees left Newburgh Health and Rehab severely short-staffed earlier this year.

Then there was the nurse’s call button in Norma Jean’s room.

A key function, it allows residents or their families to summon help. But Blanford said his mother’s button, as well as those for patients across the facility, recently stopped working for at

least two weeks. Workers reportedly provided a temporary solution: tiny, handheld bells residents could ring if something went wrong.

“My mom, she’ll be 95 years old in December, and she can’t shake it (very hard),” he said. “How are they going to hear that down in the nurse’s area when she’s down the hall?”

His brother called state officials to complain, Blanford said. The next day, the button was working again.

The Courier & Press sent an email to GreenTree seeking comment. The “contact us” feature on their website was malfunctioning and their “leadership team” doesn’t include a media spokesperson, so the questions went

See DINNER, Page 2A

INDIANA CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Judges may get expanded ability to deny bail

Mackenzi Klemann
INDIANA CAPITAL CHRONICLE

Indiana judges may soon have the ability to deny bail for more defendants they believe pose a danger to the public.

Defendants are guaranteed the right to bail under the Indiana constitution except in cases of murder or treason — even when a judge believes the defendant may reoffend while awaiting trial.

Hoosiers will vote this fall on a proposed constitutional amendment years in the making to rewrite these rules, so judges could deny bail to any defendant if the state proves they cannot be safely released.

Supporters say the amendment is needed to detain defendants who repeatedly commit violent crimes while on bail, while critics worry it jeopardizes due process rights for defendants who may spend months in jail without a conviction.

Two successive general assemblies approved the proposed amendment: in 2023 and 2026. Now it goes to the people on the Nov. 3 ballot.

What does the amendment say?

The amendment would preserve the right to bail for all offenses other than murder or treason — unless the defendant poses a “substantial risk to any other person or the community.”

Those offenses would not be eligible for bail if “the proof is evident or the presumption strong” of their guilt. The state would then need to prove “by clear and convincing evidence” no other release conditions would “reasonably” protect public safety.

Defendants are entitled to an attorney and a hearing if the state asks to deny them bail, as well as the right to appeal the court’s decision.

A companion bill adopted earlier this year directs courts to consider the evidence against the defendant and nature of the offense — did it involve drugs, alcohol or an act of violence?

Judges should consider the arrestee’s character, health, family ties, employment, financial resources,

See BAIL, Page 3A

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