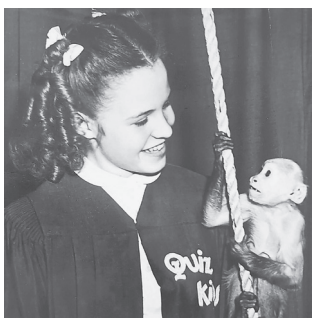




Truth previews
boys tennis
in the area

SPORTS, C1



'Quiz Kids'
celebrity
remembered

LOCAL, A5

The Elkhart Truth

WEEKEND EDITION • AUGUST 22-23, 2026

As low as 78¢ with
a paid subscription

\$4

elkharttruth.com

WE BUILD COMMUNITY • YEAR 137, NO. 166

City leaders confident in police chief hire

TRUTH STAFF

ELKHART — City officials are standing by their pick of a longtime law enforcement officer as police chief despite issues raised in news reports about his departure from a Missouri department and a lucrative separation agreement.

Ray Juengst is scheduled to be sworn in as the new chief of the Elkhart Police Department on Monday at Elkhart City Hall.

Assistant Chief Andy Whitmyer has been acting as interim chief after Dan Milanesi announced his resignation in May.

The City of St. Charles announced Juengst's retirement on Jan. 7, according to



JUENGST

TV station KMOV. He had served as police chief since 2021 after working his way up through the department for over 30 years.

The reports show Juengst was paid a salary of \$220,000 per year. A separation agreement states he was to receive half a year's salary over the first three months of this year, followed by payments of \$9,328 each pay period until March 2027, giving him about \$340,000 in taxpayer-funded payments from the city. The agreement covers severance, sick time and vacation time and states Juengst had accumulated nearly 2,000 hours of combined sick and vacation time.

KMOV said it also obtained a report detailing personnel allegations involving Juengst and other officers but said a private attorney investigating the complaints concluded the allegations were unfounded or unsubstantiated.

City leaders expressed confidence in their decision to hire Juengst. The mayor's office stands by the statement it sent out to media, City Communications Director Alex Otto said on Friday morning.

In a statement issued to media, the city said its search for a new police chief was

extensive and that it considered nearly 30 candidates through resume reviews, screenings, two rounds of panel interviews and an expanded background investigation. The panel of city and community leaders unanimously agreed that Juengst was the strongest and most qualified candidate, according to the statement.

See HIRE, page A6



Elkhart Truth photo / Clayton Sidenbender

Elkhart Mayor Rod Roberson (right) speaks with residents during the City Hall in the Park event at Roosevelt Park on Thursday.

City Hall in the Park reaches out to residents

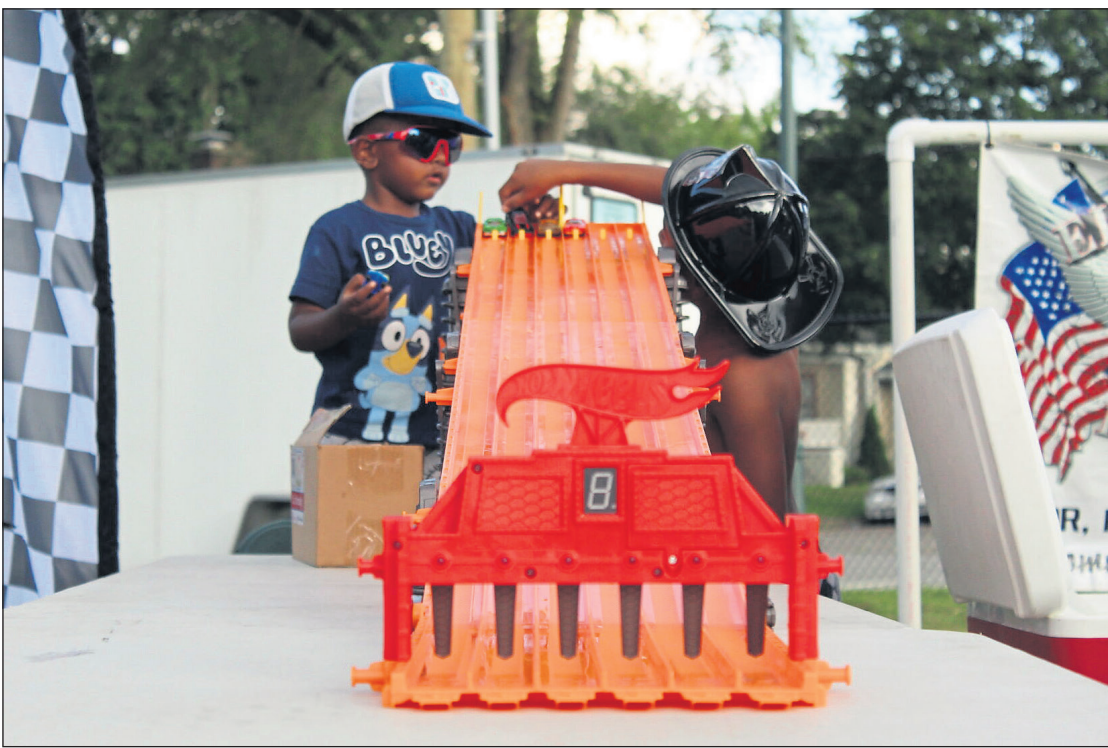
By CLAYTON SIDENBENDER
csidenbender@elkharttruth.com

ELKHART — City Hall in the Park returned at Roosevelt Park on Thursday to give residents an opportunity to meet city department heads and elected leadership.

"We wanted City Hall in the Park to create an availability to our department heads and elected leadership that normally people wouldn't get," City Communications Director Alex Otto said. "We tried to be deliberate about all of our locations being really located in a neighborhood and then we tried to pick three different parks that would distribute us equally throughout the city."

While the format for the event remained the same, the one new addition to this City Hall in the Park was the inclusion of Sadie, a rescue dog that belongs to the Elkhart Fire Department.

"It's always positive interactions," Elkhart Fire Chief Rodney Dale said about Sadie. "Kids love her. I mean, they keep coming over asking can they pet her. It's a great attraction for us. We got the coloring books, the helmets, Sadie and the fire engine. So we



Children play with toy cars during the City Hall in the Park event at Roosevelt Park on Thursday.

got the quadruple threat here going on."

The first City Hall in the Park took place at Weston Park on July 28. Weston Park is located on the northwest side of the city and

Roosevelt Park is located on the south side.

The feedback for the first City Hall in the Park was positive from both departments and residents, Otto said.

"We used to do this thing called Let's Talk Tuesday, and the attendance wasn't very good," Otto said. "It didn't seem to get people

See CITY HALL, page A6

Woman accused of using credit cards in dead woman's name

By JORDAN FOOTS
jfoots@elkharttruth.com

ELKHART — An Elkhart woman is accused of making over \$100,000 in purchases in a matter of weeks by fraudulently using a dead woman's name.

Heidi Tompkins Pedzinski, 40, faces four counts of fraud and three counts of theft in an arrest warrant issued this week. One count of fraud is charged as a Level 5 felony and all other counts are Level 6 felonies.

She also faces three counts of obtaining a controlled substance by fraud, a Level 6 felony, in a separate case. The warrants were issued following an investigation into alleged incidents that occurred between April and July of 2025, after she was hired to take over the late woman's job.

Tompkins Pedzinski's bond is set at a total of \$75,000 in the two warrants.

According to court documents: The owner of an Elkhart marketing company told police in May 2025 that she had hired Tompkins Pedzinski

See CHARGES, page A3

Motorcyclist in critical condition after crash with semi-truck

TRUTH STAFF

ELKHART — A 26-year-old man is in critical condition after his motorcycle collided with a semi-truck on Thursday.

The Elkhart Police Department is investigating the crash that occurred at South Main Street and U.S. 20, Elkhart. Police and first responders were called to the scene after the Elkhart City 911 Communications Center received a report of a semi-truck vs. motorcycle crash with injuries at around 9 p.m.

The initial investigation indicates that the semi was traveling northbound on South Main Street and was attempting to turn left onto the westbound U.S. 20 ramp when a southbound motorcycle crashed into the semi, according to information from the Elkhart Police Department.

See CRASH, page A3

Tomorrow's weather

75° 54°



Weather, page C6

Business: B1
Classified: C4
Comics: B3

Life: D1
Obituaries: A5
Opinion: A4

Puzzles: B2
Sports: C1
Weather: C6

@ElkhartTruth

The Elkhart Truth



2025★ THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY CHOICE AWARDS
South Bend

NORTH WOODS Village

> EDISON LAKES <

PAIN & DEMENTIA: HOW TO IDENTIFY PAIN WHEN COMMUNICATION IS LIMITED

Presented by: Patty Piechocki - Alzheimer's and
Dementia Services of Northern Indiana

THURS., AUGUST 27 AT 3-4PM

1409 E. Day Road • Mishawaka, IN 46545 • NorthWoodsMemoryCare.com

When words fade, pain can be misunderstood. Learn to recognize the subtle, non-verbal signs of distress in your loved one with dementia and ensure their pain never goes unnoticed. Scan, call or go online to RSVP by Aug. 24. 574-247-1866.

