



Lack of parental leave creates hardship for many teachers

FAMILY, 5C

Palladium-Item WEEKEND

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2026 | RICHMOND, IND.

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

WOMEN OF THE YEAR



After her son's abduction in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, Rachel Goldberg-Polin was thrust into the global spotlight, becoming a voice for hostages and their families. AVISHAG SHAAR-YASHUV/SPECIAL TO USA TODAY

Goldberg-Polin's resolve a lifeline for world's bereaved

Romina Ruiz-Goiriena USA TODAY

Maybe, for the first time since her son's death, Rachel Goldberg-Polin can grieve. • Or so she told her therapist. • But how would it happen? • Goldberg-Polin imagines herself in a grocery store. In the aisle, she'd spot a box of her son's favorite cereal, which would trigger some kind of flashback. That's when, unprompted, she'd fall screaming onto the floor. • Her scene of grieving plays out that way, Goldberg-Polin deadpans to USA TODAY, "because that's what happens on TV." • The delivery is vintage Goldberg-Polin, her friends say. But she hasn't made it to the grocery store yet – going out in public is too hard. People easily recognize her petite frame, even under the hat, parka and big glasses. • "I'm still very much this symbol of pain and a trigger for a lot of people's trauma," Goldberg-Polin says.

She is the embodiment of every mother's worst nightmare: losing a child. Except Hersh Goldberg-Polin was taken, tortured, maimed and held captive by Hamas for 328 days in underground tunnels in the Gaza Strip after the militant group's assault on Israel Oct. 7, 2023. Before her 23-year-old son could be rescued, he was executed.

Her commitment to save as many of the 251 hostages as possible from the throes of Hamas captivity never wavered, even after her son was returned to her in a body bag. Rachel Goldberg-Polin, 56, tallied each day of the hostages' detention. She wrote the number on a piece of masking tape for all to see.

She took planes. She made speeches. She mixed with global

About the Women of the Year project

USA TODAY's Women of the Year is a recognition of women who have made a significant impact in their communities and across the country.

Meet this year's honorees at [womenoftheyear.usatoday.com](https://www.womenoftheyear.usatoday.com).

elites in Davos, Switzerland. On day 47, she had an audience with Pope Francis. On day 320, she addressed the Democratic National Convention. She traveled to four continents. She met with world leaders, even some who scared her, in undisclosed locations. One time, she was so afraid, she

See GOLDBERG-POLIN, Page 3A

"It's very affirming that it is pain that is so universal. It's really symbiotic because I think that they think they're reaching out for help, and they're actually really helping me. So, there's this wavelike experience where we meet in the middle."

Rachel Goldberg-Polin

Richmond man charged in meth bust

Sheriff's office links suspect to drug dealing

Douglas Walker
Richmond Palladium-Item
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Richmond man has been charged with dealing in meth after he was allegedly found to be carrying nearly 225 grams of the drug.

The dealing count filed in Wayne Superior Court 1 against 54-year-old Mark Erwin Poling II is a Level 2 felony carrying up to 30 years in prison.

According to an affidavit, Poling was arrested by Wayne County sheriff's deputies on Thursday, March 12, after a traffic stop along Waterfall Road.

A deputy reported the sheriff's department had received tips indicating Poling "was involved in the distribution of methamphetamine in the Richmond/Wayne County area."

On March 12, an investigator was told Poling had traveled to Trotwood, Ohio — a suburb of Dayton — "to obtain large amounts of narcotics."

The deputy reported the traffic stop took place after Poling returned to Indiana.

He wrote that he saw the Richmond man "begin to pour sweat from his forehead area and visibly start trembling" after learning a police K-9 would conduct a "free air sniff" around his Ford Taurus.

A package containing 224.9 grams of meth was found in Poling's pants, the court document reported.

Deputies also reported they found

See METH BUST, Page 3A

Funding to help visitors with mobile issues enjoy state parks

Karl Schneider
Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Visitors to Indiana's state parks who have limited mobility will now be able to head out on the trails with ease, thanks to a \$1 million investment from Lilly Endowment.

The money will allow the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to distribute 45 track chairs to each state park and the seven state park inns. The chairs are all-terrain motorized wheelchairs with special continuous tracks much like those on construction vehicles and tanks that allow them to travel over rough terrain.

"Nature is for everyone, and that includes the ability to enjoy the scenic trails at Indiana State Parks,"

See STATE PARKS, Page 3A

Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to pal-item.com/enewspaper or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 195 | No. 68
Subscribe 888-725-2472
©2026 \$2.50

