

U.S. DOE keeps Schahfer plant open

Board renews emergency order to keep NIPSCO's facility going

By Maya Wilkins
POST-TRIBUNE

The U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Chris Wright renewed an emergency order to keep NIPSCO's R.M. Schahfer generating station in operation — one week after a federal court decision brought hope that it wouldn't be renewed.

On Saturday, Wright issued the emergency order renewal for Schahfer and CenterPoint Energy's F.B. Culley generating station in Newburgh in southwestern Indiana. Both stations were scheduled to retire at the end of 2025, and this is the third time the DOE has

extended the order.

The orders went into effect Sunday and will end Dec. 18, according to a DOE news release. The department claims that both plants are needed to maintain energy reliability, and the order "is necessary to address elevated reliability risks in that region during extreme weather and reduce the risk of power outages that could threaten public health and safety."

"Forcing reliable, dispatchable coal generation off the grid would compromise energy reliability and needlessly raises energy costs for Americans," Wright said in the release. "Midwestern families

should not be forced to pay the price for misguided energy subtraction policies of the past. They deserve affordable, reliable, and secure energy, regardless of the wind blowing or the sun shining."

In a statement to the Post-Tribune, a NIPSCO spokesperson said Monday that the company will continue to follow the government's orders.

"NIPSCO continues to comply with the U.S. Department of Energy's 202(c) orders regarding R.M. Schahfer Generation Station and to assess the impact of these orders

See PLANT on Page A2



Sandhill cranes fly near a smokestack of the Schahfer Generating Station, a coal-fired power plant, as it operates, Feb. 9 in Wheatfield. BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE



Attendees at the annual World Cultural Festival at Valparaiso's Central Park Plaza gather Sunday for a parade of nations. DOUG ROSS/FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

'The world under one roof'

Valparaiso festival celebrates many cultures

By Doug Ross
FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

Central Park Plaza in downtown Valparaiso took on an international flavor Sunday for the annual World Cultural Festival sponsored by the Valparaiso International Center.

Tiger Kumar, of Valparaiso, was 4 years old when he saw a Chinese zither at the festival for the first time and wanted to learn how to play it. Last year, he said, he won a gold medal in an international competition in China.

Kumar, 16, said getting a zither and supplies like replacement strings means sourcing them from China. "You can't really find good ones over here," he said.

Chinese zithers like Kumar's were developed about 2,000 years

ago in China, he said.

"It's pretty basic what you do; pluck the string," Kumar said. As a musician's skills develop, advanced compositions require advanced training. He's taking online lessons now.

"I'm starting a group called Resonance," he said, featuring different performers each month. The group will meet at the Valparaiso Public Library. "I want to connect different generations of people," he said.

Baba Yaga's Stew performed onstage at the amphitheater during the festival while the audience gathered under umbrellas. The group then did an encore performance under the Urschel Pavilion roof.

See WORLD on Page A3



Sales of these worry dolls offered by Fort Wayne-based Third World Shoppe support a project to produce clean water in Guatemala. Jim Goetsche, a volunteer with the nonprofit shop, said the legend is that telling the doll your worry at night means the problem will be solved in the morning.

See CREDIT on Page A3

Hobart OKs \$500 tax credit for seniors

By Jim Masters

Hobart's senior citizens are in line for \$500 property tax relief.

On Wednesday, the Hobart City Council passed an ordinance providing a tax credit that can be renewed annually. Homeowners who apply for the program must be 65 years of age or older and have a homestead exemption on their dwelling.

Applications for the program will be accepted at the Hobart Clerk Treasurer's office from October 1-31.

The program is being funded through the city's Community Impact Fund, which is derived from proceeds from the Amazon Web Services data center development.

Hobart Mayor Josh Huddleston said the fund has approximately \$100 million and more money is on the way to support additional community-focused programs. He indicated that the property tax relief program could one day include to all Hobart homeowners.

"I don't know what the future holds, but obviously there's the possibility it can be extended," he said.

For now, Huddleston was pleased that the city could do something to help its seniors.

"Some homeowners are struggling and we want to make sure that we're doing our part to provide as much relief as possible and continue to reduce costs for our residents," he said. "This is an opportunity for our seniors, some of whom are on a fixed income, to help them keep their home."

Local governments in Indiana are bracing for the financial impact of Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 1, which offers up to \$300 in property tax relief but triggers more than \$1.4 billion in cuts to school districts, libraries and local governments over the next three years. Huddleston said Hobart doesn't

Portage Girl Scouts build pet pantry for dogs, cats



Serenity Nelson, left, of Portage, and Heidi O'Bannion, of Lake Station, built a pet pantry for their Silver award, the second-highest honor for Girl Scouts. They stocked the pantry at Woodland Park in Portage on Friday. DOUG ROSS/FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

By Doug Ross
FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

Girl Scout Troop 35579 used the Little Free Library concept to build a pet pantry for dogs and cats. It now stands outside Portage's Woodland Park dog park.

"People have been asking for help with animals. They can't afford food," troop leader Karen Naumann, of Portage, said.

Heidi O'Bannion, of Lake Station, and Serenity Nelson, of Portage, built it for their Silver award, the second-highest honor for Girl Scouts.

The project started with four girls in 2024, Naumann said, with her cancer journey causing a pause, but two kids dropped out of Girl Scouts before O'Bannion and Nelson completed it.

Naumann emailed Barb Lusco, the parks department's maintenance director, for permission to erect the pet pantry at the dog park.

"When I first heard from you, I was like, oh my God, what a wonderful idea," Lusco said.

"We were all trying to come up with an idea all together that we could all agree on," O'Bannion said. Runner-up ideas included bat boxes, bee houses and butterfly habitat.

The girls researched the ideas, planned it out and found a kit on Amazon. "We all sat there for a couple of hours and looked at all our phones," she said.

The box has plastic-coated wood to make the pet pantry last longer in Northwest Indiana's harsh weather. Naumann's husband added a latch to the design.

It took about an hour to assemble, O'Bannion said. She didn't have trouble using the tools. "I'm a truck driver's daughter."

The troop picked out pet food and treats, including tennis balls for the dogs and toys for the cats, to stock the pet pantry on Friday. They bought so much there were items left over.

That's OK, Naumann said, because she lives nearby and visits the dog park multiple times a week. "I encourage people, too, if they want to bring stuff," she said.

Mayor Austin Bonta was on hand to watch them stock the pet pantry. "This is great. This is exactly the kind of stuff we get excited about," he said. The girls saw what was needed and just did it themselves.

See PET on Page A2