



Wilkerson's big numbers turning heads in Big Ten

SPORTS, 1B

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Anna Kepner of Titusville, 18, died while on a cruise on the Carnival Horizon, according to the FBI, the lead agency investigating the case. PROVIDED BY KEPNER FAMILY

Stepbrother suspected in teen's death on cruise

Federal charges haven't been filed yet, mom says

Michelle Spitzer
USA TODAY

The stepbrother of Anna Kepner, a Florida teenager who was found dead aboard a Carnival Cruise Line ship in November, has appeared before a federal judge but charges are still pending,

according to the girl's mother.

Kepner, an 18-year-old cheerleader from Titusville, a coastal city about 50 miles east of Orlando, died while on a cruise on Carnival Horizon. Her body was found under a bed on Nov. 7, 2025 by a person cleaning the cabin she shared with her stepbrother and another sibling.

The ship returned to Port Miami on Nov. 8, 2025 when Kepner's body was taken to the Miami-Dade County Medi-

cal Examiner's Department. Her death was ruled a homicide and several media outlets, including ABC News and People.com, reported that the medical examiner determined Kepner died as a result of mechanical asphyxiation.

Kepner's mother, Heather Wright, originally made a social media post that said she was informed the stepbrother would be charged with murder.

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City restores fluoride water levels

Brian Rosenzweig
The Herald-Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Bloomington has restored fluoride to its tap water supplies after more than six years without consistent levels, the city announced Monday.

The city had been without consistently fluoridated tap water since late 2019 due to persistent erosion issues with the City of Bloomington Utilities' (CBU) water tank lining. As of Jan. 28, the city said fluoride levels have been restored via a temporary system with a more "resilient, modular design." The city said this solution will allow the CBU to make repairs and continue consistent fluoridation until a new, permanent fluoridation system can be constructed.

"With the temporary system now operational, CBU is once again feeding fluoride at recommended levels," the city said in the release.

Restoration comes after city was criticized for not publicizing fluoride issue

The CBU faced pushback in the fall for not widely notifying the public about its fluoride problem in the nearly six years since it first arose. Experts say communities often see a spike in cavity and gum issues — particularly among children — in communities where fluoride is withdrawn.

Stephen Pritchard, a retired dentist and member of the Monroe County Board of Health, said in September that there had been a "serious lapse in communication" from the CBU. He called on the CBU to publicize more information about the issue, and to notify the public when fluoride levels were restored.

The city acknowledged those criticisms

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Black History Month celebration kicks off

Boris Ladwig
The Herald-Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

More than 300 people kicked off Bloomington's Black History Month celebrations at city hall, organizers said, and they invited the community to attend upcoming related events, including a Black Market, a poster board contest and a gala.

Andrew Shannon, the city's safe and civil city director, said the event on Feb. 7, 2026, which featured dance, poetry and performances from local choirs, was the "largest BHM kickoff event in recent history." He said the program was

"educational, cultural as well as inspirational."

The event's emcee, Nia I'man Smith, said she hoped this month's celebrations "will reflect and honor all of the ways in which Black people have contributed to the world in which we live, from education to politics to business and, of course, the arts."

Smith, a doctorate student in ethnomusicology, noted that this year's celebration marks 100 years of Black history commemorations in the U.S.

This year's Black History Month theme, "A Century of Black History

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Bloomington kicked off its Black History Month celebration on Feb. 7, at City Hall. PROVIDED BY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY RESOURCES DEPARTMENT, CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

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