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Inside: Trojans start basketball season with home victory. **Page B1**

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2026 $4

Hometown Christmas traditions

Seasonal activities planned in Middletown, Spiceland and Kennard

By MEGAN HAYNES
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Santa, a helicopter and a "Hometown Heroes" parade highlight some of the Christmas celebrations in Henry County this December. Middletown and Spiceland are holding events Dec. 5 and Kennard will follow Dec. 19.

Middletown

The Middletown Christmas Parade and Merry Middletown Celebration will take place Dec. 5 at Dietrich Park and along historic Locust Street in Middletown. Around 3:15 p.m., Santa will arrive at the gazebo in Dietrich Park from a helicopter. The parade lineup begins at 3:30 p.m. in Dietrich Park. Santa will join the parade, which will feature floats from groups in the Middletown community like the VFW and some ball teams.

The parade heads east along Locust Street at 4 p.m. This year's parade theme, in honor of America's 250th birthday, is "Hometown Heroes." Anyone who served in the military and called Middletown home is invited to be a part of this year's parade. Following the parade, the Merry Middletown celebration will take place at the gazebo.

Brianna Chapman, a member of Middletown Main Street, said the event serves as a way to close out America's 250th birthday celebration while integrating the Christmas parade.

When asked about the importance of the event to the Middletown community, Chapman said seeing Santa brings out the child in everyone in the community. It is an event that people look forward to every year.

"It's a parade that's gone on for more than 70 years," she said. "People who grew up in Middletown, they look forward to this. They spent their childhoods going to this parade. And now we have whole new generation of people in Middletown who are now growing up with this parade."

See **TRADITIONS**, page A6

Wilbur Wright Elementary School hosts Leadership Day

By KIM MATHIS
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Wilbur Wright Elementary School welcomed community members Nov. 20 for Leadership Day, an event showcasing the school's commitment to providing an authentic environment to celebrate leadership, build culture and allow students to practice skills that are taught and practiced in the classroom.

The purpose of Leadership Day was to share the school's "Leader in Me" journey with the community and highlight leadership opportunities available to every student.

Visitors were greeted when they entered the building by a group of students: Meilani Hernandez, Everleigh Maroney-Sons, Ulfie Watson and Carson Racine. The students offered information about the event and explained what each visitor could expect.

Riley Nickelson and Wesley Sparks opened the program by welcoming guests and thanking them for attending. The event provided visitors with an opportunity to tour the building, meet students and learn how classes incorporate the "Leader in Me" program into their daily activities.

Community visitors had the opportunity to explore various stations highlighting the "Seven Habits of Highly-Effective People."



Kim Mathis / C-T photo

Kindergarteners Collin Tolliver (left) and August Emmons shared about classroom leadership jobs.

See **LEADERSHIP**, page A3

CAB school board gives update on building project

Approves transportation purchases for new trucks

By MEGAN HAYNES
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A drive past Knightstown High School on U.S. Hwy 40 reveals a nearly cohesive, one-campus building. When the project broke ground early this year, its current state could only be imagined. Over the summer, the steel beams and framework slowly began to form a silhouette of what was to come. Now, the building is tangible.

At the Nov. 17 Charles A. Beard Memorial School Corporation (CABMSC) board meeting, Superintendent Jediah Behny updated the district on the status of Project 27.

"We had a pretty long construction meeting today and got some good updates," Behny said.

He said framing, second-floor drywall and exterior brickwork are nearly finished.

Behny said production on an in-depth video tour of the construction process is under way. The video will be released on the district website and social media around Thanksgiving.

The board approved policies 4111 and 4130 on second reading. The policies are intended to help the transition to one campus go smoothly.

Early learning center

Discussions began about leasing space at the current Knightstown Elementary to a day care. Behny outlined a concept for using the building as a cost-neutral day care and early childhood center.

See **BOARD**, page A6

New Castle senior turns childhood fascination into passion for flying

By LYLA SHUE
For The Courier-Times

For Cormac Stilwell, a fascination with airplanes that began during a childhood trip to an air show has grown into something much bigger.

The New Castle High School senior is now a licensed private pilot, turning an interest he discovered at 6 years-old into a pursuit he hopes will become his career.

Stilwell is the son of Chris and Megan Stilwell.

Stilwell's interest in aviation began when his grandfather took him to an air show in Hagerstown. During the trip, he had the opportunity to ride in an older airplane with an open cockpit.

"I just loved it. It was one of the best experiences of my life," Stilwell said. "Ever since then, it's been everything aviation."

That early experience stayed with him. Whether driving past an airport or watching airplanes overhead, Stilwell found himself drawn to flying.

The possibility of becoming a pilot became more serious as he researched flight schools. Stilwell eventually had the opportunity to take a discovery flight. The introductory experience allows someone to see what flying an airplane is like before committing to lessons.

Although he enjoyed that first experience, Stilwell said his first solo flight was the moment he knew aviation was something he wanted to pursue long-term.

"I wasn't nervous. I was really confident about it," he said. "After my first solo, I kind of knew that's what I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

Stilwell began flying more consistently during the summer between his sophomore and junior year, when he was 16. His training included learning basic flight operations, completing a medical examination, practicing landings and eventually flying cross-country routes.

Much of his training took place out of Anderson, with flights to destinations such as Columbus, Indiana and Oxford, Ohio. As he progressed, he transitioned from completing cross-country flights with an instructor to navigating those routes independently.

Becoming a licensed pilot also required passing a written examination and completing a check ride, the final practical test that evaluates a pilot's knowledge and flying abilities.

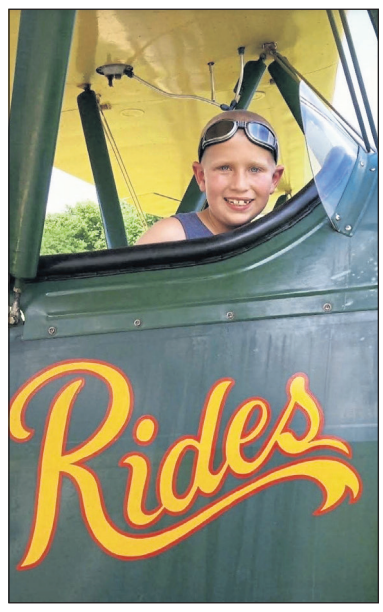
Stillwell scored an 84 on his written examination and passed his check ride on his first attempt.

The process, however, did not come without challenges.



Photos provided

Cormac after his discovery flight.



Cormac's first flight took place at an air show in Hagerstown.

As a student-athlete involved in baseball, Stillwell had to balance school, practices and the time commitment required for flight training. Living about 40 minutes from Anderson also meant additional travel.

For the first seven or eight months, Sundays were often the only days he could fly.

"When you want to be good at something, you have to do it every single day you can," Stilwell said. "I only flew once a week, so whatever I learned last Sunday, I had to work on again."

Once his schedule allowed him to fly twice a week, he began making more progress.

Today, Stilwell rents an airplane out of Anderson. Before each flight, he completes a preflight inspection and other preparations to ensure the aircraft is ready. Depending on the trip, planning can take additional time.

He has flown to several destinations, including Columbus, Oxford and Purdue University. One of his favorite experiences was flying to Purdue at night, when he could see the Indianapolis skyline from the airplane.

Although he has only taken his brother as a passenger so far, he hopes to take his father and friends flying in the future.

See **FLYING**, page A4

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