



## Chubb is a welcome addition

But Bills defense still has a hole to fill at inside linebacker | PAGE C1

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

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## When will cherry trees bloom? It's a big window



JOSHUA BESSEX, NEWS FILE PHOTO

Heather Stevens takes a closeup photo of the beautiful pink cherry blossoms blooming at the Japanese Garden in Delaware Park last April during the Buffalo Cherry Blossom Festival. This year's bloom could come near the end of the month.

*'Mother Nature always surprises us,' co-founder of festival says*

BY MACKENZIE SHUMAN  
News Staff Reporter

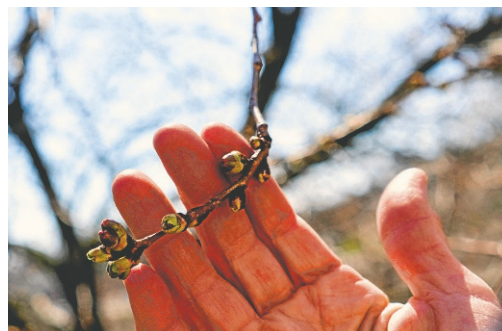
In early springtime, it can almost feel like the Japanese Garden at the Buffalo History Museum is holding its breath.

The grounds are nearly silent. Only the occasional blackbird or robin call breaks the relative silence against the steady hum of the nearby Scajaquada Expressway.

But in a matter of weeks, the grounds will explode with activity.

The annual bloom of the cherry trees could come anytime in April, said Paula Hinz, co-chairman and co-founder of the Buffalo Cherry Blossom Festival. This year, she suspects the "peak bloom" – the time when most of the cherry trees in the garden have fully pushed out their flowers and adorn the area in pink and white – could come near the end of the month.

"Mother Nature always surprises us, so we can never be so sure," Hinz warned. "The window in Buffalo is always April. It's a very



LIBBY MARCH, BUFFALO NEWS

Buds were noticeable Wednesday on a cherry blossom tree in the Japanese Garden.

big window."

The 13th Annual Buffalo Cherry Blossom Festival will arrive on April 25 and 26. The annual festival boasts a special Japanese tea ceremony and tea tasting, live music, food trucks, activities, boat rides, arts and crafts vendors and local nonprofits tabling all weekend.

When the blooms will arrive, however, is always hard to tell, Hinz said.

Please see **CHERRY**, Page A4

## Gendron defense allowed to see info of potential jurors

*Judge orders process to guard confidentiality in death penalty case*

BY PATRICK LAKAMP  
News Enterprise Editor

A federal judge will allow Payton Gendron's lawyers and their statistical expert to see the names and other personal information of prospective jurors under strict conditions.

Prosecutors had pushed back on releasing the personally identifiable information.

Defense lawyers last month told U.S. District Judge Lawrence Vilaro they need the information to assess whether to challenge jury selection in the death penalty case.

The federal court in Buffalo uses five sources of names, including voter registrations and state Department of Motor Vehicle records, to compile a list of potential jurors. Names are randomly selected to receive jury qualification questionnaires and jury summonses.

Gendron's lawyers want to see if people included in two or more sources appear as duplicates on the prospective juror list. Undetected duplicates destroy the randomness of the jury pool, because people included on all five source lists would be more likely to be drawn as potential jurors than those listed just once, according to Gendron's lawyers from the Office of the Federal Public Defender.

Gendron's defense lawyers say they want to ensure

Gendron's jury is chosen from a fair cross section of the community and at random.

A federal grand jury returned a 27-count indictment against Gendron in July 2022 for the 10 people he killed and the three he wounded in his racist attack on May 14, 2022, at the Jefferson Avenue Tops supermarket. The Justice Department announced in January 2024 that it will seek the death penalty. Gendron already has been sentenced to life in prison without parole on his guilty pleas to 10 state charges of first-degree murder and three counts of second-degree attempted murder among other charges.

In-person juror questioning is scheduled to begin Aug. 17. Three thousand summonses were to be mailed to Western New Yorkers by the end of March, directing the prospective jurors to come to the downtown Robert H. Jackson U.S. Courthouse between June 15 and 26 to fill out a questionnaire.

At a court proceeding last month addressing the defense request for the data regarding potential jurors, Assistant U.S. Attorney Brett Harvey said that "whenever information like this is turned loose, things can happen."

Vilaro said he understands the prosecution's concern that the juror data could "get out where it shouldn't."

"Both sides make valid points, and the Court has given this issue substantial

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### ANALYSIS

## Trump's turnabout gives Iran plenty of leverage over U.S.

BY MICHAEL WILNER  
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON – Morning broke in the Middle East on Wednesday with a wave of attacks by Iran. Air defenses in Kuwait were overwhelmed. Three dozen drones and 17 ballistic missiles were shot down over the United Arab Emirates. The most important oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia suffered a hit. Sirens flared in Tel Aviv, and a devastating drumbeat of Israeli strikes targeting Iran's allies in Lebanon killed scores in Beirut.

A day after President Trump hailed a ceasefire in his war with the Islamic Republic, reversing course on his threat to escalate, the only country spared from attack appeared to be Iran itself.

The "fragile truce," as Vice President Vance called it, began with a calculated show of force from an Iran militarily weakened by six weeks of U.S.-Israeli strikes, yet strategically positioned to press for sweeping

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## Trump administration is seeking federal workers' medical records

BY AMANDA SEITZ AND  
MAIA ROSENFELD  
KFF Health News, TNS

WASHINGTON – The Trump administration is quietly seeking unprecedented access to medical records for millions of federal workers and retirees, and their families.

A brief notice from the Office of Personnel Management could dramatically change which personally identifiable medical information the agency obtains, giving

it the power to see prescriptions employees had filled or what treatment they sought from doctors. The regulation would require 65 insurance companies that cover more than 8 million Americans – including federal workers, retired members of Congress, mail carriers and their immediate family members – to provide monthly reports to OPM with identifiable health data on their members.

The proposal is prompting unease from insurers as well as

health policy and legal experts, who are concerned about the legality of OPM acquiring such a sweeping database of sensitive health information, and the agency's ability to safeguard it.

OPM could use the data to analyze costs and improve the system, said Sharona Hoffman, a health law ethicist at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio.

"But," she said, "they are going

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