



V.J.'s Law passes Ohio House

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Chillicothe Gazette

Oldest newspaper west of the Alleghenies

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Signs from Community Market still hang in the empty grocery store over 10 years after the business vacated the building. PHOTOS BY SHELBY REEVES/CHILLICOTHE GAZETTE

Decade of vacancy leaves former grocery store with signs of decay

Shelby Reeves
Chillicothe Gazette
USA TODAY NETWORK

CHILLICOTHE— Years ago, before Bridge Street became what it is today, Central Center in Chillicothe was the shopping destination in town. Anchored by a grocery store, the stores in the center sold people much of what they needed for their homes.

Now, while other stores still populate the center, the focal point is empty.

Ben Butt, with Butt Realty, said the center was owned by three families, two of which are still involved in the center. The now-empty storefront was built in 1990 to accommodate Big Bear, which was already in Central Center and wanted a larger space. The building is around 44,000 square feet in size.

Big Bear used the building from 1990 to 2003. The store sold groceries and featured a bakery and deli. Big Bear would become the Community Market in 2003. This store sold the same products that customers were used to before leaving the building in 2014.

Today, the building sits empty with a few pieces of furniture left. When inside, you can still see signs for the frozen food section, the deli, customer ser-



Most of the furniture and equipment in the Central Center grocery store is gone, leaving the building empty.

vice and more, but all of the shelves and almost all of the equipment are gone, having been moved or auctioned off years ago.

While not much is left in the building, colorful floor and wall tiles, along with paint throughout the store, show that the grocery store had a much different aesthetic compared to the chain

that serves the town today.

“It’s pretty much how it was when the grocery closed up,” said Butt.

Those at Butt Realty visit the property regularly to make sure that no one has broken into the building and that the roof doesn’t leak, which could cause

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Senate blocks raising marriage age to 18

Lilli Malone
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Ohio Senate declined to vote on a bill that would end child marriage during its final session before a lengthy summer break.

Senate Bill 341 would raise the marriage age to 18 and close a loophole that allows 17-year-olds to wed with a judge’s approval. A Senate committee advanced the bill after a fifth hearing June 10, but it never reached the floor.

“It’s unfair to have young women be the wards of their husbands,” said Sen. Bill DeMora, D-Columbus, one of the bill’s sponsors. “It’s ludicrous. If you’re not 18, you have no rights. You can’t go to a shelter, you can’t have an attorney. I mean, you’re basically the property, most of the time, of your husband – who’s over 18 – and it just leads to such bad, bad outcomes.”

Current law allows 17-year-olds to marry if they can convince a judge that they have gone through sufficient marriage counseling, have waited at least 14 days and have an age gap of four years or less with their partner.

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Stephanie Lowry, of Chagrin Falls, with her daughter on the right and her niece on the left talks about her forced marriage at the age of 16, during a protest at the Ohio Statehouse.

COURTNEY HERGESHEIMER/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

New pediatric therapy office to help kids, new mothers



Owner Mackenna Harper stands in front of the sign for Branch Pediatric Therapy in Chillicothe.

PROVIDED BY MACKENNA HARPER

Shelby Reeves
Chillicothe Gazette
USA TODAY NETWORK

CHILLICOTHE— Growing children reach milestones at different times. Some kids take their time crawling, while others seem to jump right to walking. While it takes time, things like fine motor and speech development are important skills a child has to learn to succeed in school and the rest of their life.

Hands-on play can actually help build those skills, which is why Branch Pediatric Therapy will be using it to help

children grow and thrive.

Branch Pediatric Therapy is a new child-centered support system. Occupational therapists will be offering services to help with fine motor skills, executive function, sensory processing, speech development and more.

Owner Mackenna Harper has worked at schools for the last six years and has noticed a need as parents try to find local places that offer these services without a long waitlist. This led her to open Branch as a way to help children in the area.

“There is just such a high need and it

continues to grow,” said Harper.

In addition to helping children learn important skills, Branch will also be offering lactation support for new or expecting mothers.

“People think that nursing is natural and easy,” said Harper. “The truth is, sometimes you just need some support.”

Branch Pediatric Therapy is located at 133 Star Drive in Chillicothe. The business is set to officially open on June 19, 2026. Parents interested in signing their children up for services can do so on the Branch Pediatric Therapy website.

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