



Commentary: What it was like to cover Bloom-Carroll’s historic run

SPORTS, 17A



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Mike Todd is Dairy Queen owner by day, Columbus Blue Jackets announcer by night



Owner Mike Todd stands inside his Dairy Queen on Oct. 27, in Pickerington. Mike is the announcer for the Columbus Blue Jackets who interviews fans at all of the Blue Jackets games. TY WRIGHT/EAGLE-GAZETTE

‘I’m still having fun’

Jeff Barron Lancaster Eagle-Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK

Mike Todd may work behind the scenes as owner of the Dairy Queen at 541 Hill Road North. But the same can’t be said for his side gig. • Todd, 57, has been a Columbus Blue Jackets in-arena host since 2003. • “A lot of the stuff I do is promotions with the fans,” Todd, who also owns an east Columbus Dairy Queen store, said. “Like when we have a commercial break, we’ll have about two minutes to do a promotion with the fans and get them to participate so they have a fun and positive experience during the game.” • Fans can often watch Todd work promotions on Nationwide Arena’s large scoreboard and on the ice for bubble ball or tricycle races or any other type of contest that may involve a sponsor between periods.

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Congress passes hemp ban

Ohio debates rules for THC drinks, gummies

Haley BeMiller

State Bureau
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When Congress voted to end the government shutdown, it also threw a wrench in Ohio’s efforts to regulate hemp gummies and THC drinks.

President Donald Trump signed legislation Nov. 12 to fund the federal government and end the record-breaking shutdown that caused chaos at airports and left 1.4 million Ohioans without food assistance.

Tucked into the spending bill is a measure that would ban most hemp-derived cannabis – something critics say will decimate businesses.

“Everything that we carry is hemp related and protected by the Farm Bill over these last 10 years,” said Joe Brennan, owner of Columbus Botanical Depot. “That’s all we carry. We specialize in that one product. ... It would be everything.”

The measure aims to close a loophole in the 2018 Farm Bill, which paved the way for a booming industry that sells everything from synthetic delta-8 THC to THC beverages. The ban, which does not take effect for one year, applies to products with more than 0.3% total THC or 0.4 milligrams per container.

And it’s already complicating efforts by Ohio lawmakers to set rules for the state’s hemp industry.

The Ohio House and Senate are in the middle of negotiations over Senate Bill 56, which aims to tweak the recreational marijuana law approved by voters in 2023 and place guardrails around intoxicating hemp. The House passed a new version in October that would create hemp dispensaries and regulate THC drinks, but senators rejected those changes.

The Legislature has spent months debating how to handle intoxicating hemp, which critics say is dangerous and too easy for children to access. Among the most vocal opponents are marijuana operators, who contend they can’t compete against stores that don’t have to follow the same rules.

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Ohio bill would protect missing children with autism

Jessie Balmert and Victoria Moorwood

State Bureau
USA TODAY NETWORK

On Nov. 20, 2024, Jonisa Cook called 911 to report that her 6-year-old son, who had autism and was nonverbal, had gone missing.

Cook wanted an emergency alert sent so the community could look for her missing boy. Cook was told that the missing Joshua Al-Lateef Jr. didn’t meet the criteria for an immediate alert. Instead, a community-wide notification

was sent after more than five hours.

Joshua’s story ended in tragedy 28 hours later. The 6-year-old boy drowned in a pond at the family’s West Chester apartment complex.

Joshua’s family wants to save other children from the same fate. To that end, the Ohio House of Representatives passed the Joshua Alert law unanimously on Nov. 12. The proposed law heads to the Ohio Senate for consideration.

Also known as House Bill 359, the proposed law would require local law

enforcement to notify the statewide emergency alert program immediately if a child diagnosed with autism or another developmental disability goes missing. A Change.org petition advocating for the change had 16,000 supporters.

“Joshua’s life was filled with love and light. And though he is no longer physically with us, I believe that his legacy can live on through this bill – through the lives it saves and the families it

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Joshua Al-Lateef Jr., 6, went missing in West Chester Township on Nov. 20, 2024. PROVIDED BY WEST CHESTER TOWNSHIP

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