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Members of the Downtown Hiram Revitalization group stand outside the Jessie Smith House, one of three structures Hiram College plans to sell. From left are Graham Rubin, Chris Williams, Ken Ule, DHR President Kim Ule, Village Councilman Juan Fernandez, Mayor Ann Haynam and Tom Franek. PROVIDED BY DAVE DREIMILLER

## Hiram revitalization group hosting festival

In conjunction with festival, Serenity Realty plans open houses at 3 homes Hiram College is selling

**Jeff Saunders**  
Ravenna Record-Courier  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A couple of months after formally organizing as a non-profit, a group dedicated to improving downtown Hiram Village is getting ready to introduce itself to the community.

Downtown Hiram Revitalization will temporarily take over Hayden Street by Hiram College from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 26 for its Spring Fest.

"It's to establish who we are; let's have a party," said DHR President Kim Ule.

The event is expected to include at least 20 business vendors, four food trucks, music and crafts. DHR and the college also have partnered on a project in which students will create posters to show what they believe Hiram will look like to a child in 2035.

"The awards will be happening also that day," said Ule, who owns Serenity Realty in the village.

In conjunction with the festival, Serenity Realty plans open houses at three homes the college owns and wants to

sell. Ule said the college has been using the structures as offices and hopes to sell them for commercial use.

Ule said Spring Fest is expected to generate seed money for DHR.

"I kept the vendor prices low so we should have a little money to open a bank account," she said.

Downtown Hiram Revitalization dates to February 2025, when Mayor Anne Haynam formed a task force to look at revitalizing the downtown area.

"As I see it, we lost a lot of businesses historically, and Hiram has become a pass through," Haynam said recently. "We wanted to flip the script, so to speak, and start to look at how can we create a community where there are businesses the residents can walk to, whether it's restaurants or other businesses that create common space for our residents to hang out in."

Eventually, the task force had 17 members, whom Haynam described as "really a diverse group of Hiram Village and Hiram Township representation."

She said that around the end of 2025, she asked Ule and Daren Houck, now DHR's vice president, to join. Haynam

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**Mayor Anne Haynam**

said she wanted Ule involved because the downtown business owner also is a member of Downtown Mantua Revitalization Corp., which has been working to improve that village and attract businesses for roughly two decades.

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## Pope speaks against using God for politics

**Jeanine Santucci and Marc Ramirez**  
USA TODAY

Pope Leo XIV said the world is "being ravaged by a handful of tyrants" and decried world leaders who use religion for military gain in a speech in Cameroon on April 16.

"Woe to those who manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic and political gain, dragging that which is sacred into darkness and filth," Leo said during his four-country tour of Africa. "It is a world turned upside down, an exploitation of God's creation that must be denounced and rejected by every honest conscience."

Leo, the first U.S.-born head of the Catholic Church, has been highly critical of armed conflict, and repeated his stance on April 16: "The masters of war pretend not to know that it takes only a moment to destroy, yet often a lifetime is not enough to rebuild."

The remarks came as President Donald Trump has attacked the pontiff on social media to defend the U.S.-Israel war in Iran, drawing international criticism.

Trump shared an AI-generated image depicting himself as a Jesus-like healing figure April 13; two days later,

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KENT STATE

## Nursing school nets \$1.8 million donation

**Diane Smith**  
Ravenna Record-Courier  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Kent State University's College of Nursing has received a \$1.8 million donation aimed at reducing a workforce shortage.

The Bedford Falls Foundation Donor Advised Fund recently made the gift, which will be used for 150 scholarships for junior and senior nursing students over the next three years.

Kent State said in a news release that the gift will help to reduce students' financial burden, helping to ensure they complete their degrees.

"When private foundations join

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