



Snake hunter explains how quick mistake led to rattlesnake bite

SPORTS, 1B

COVERING WAYNE, PIKE AND LACKAWANNA

TRI-COUNTY INDEPENDENT

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It took under 10 minutes for Wolfe House & Building Movers to move the historic Maplewood Schoolhouse across Lake Henry Road in Salem Township, Wayne County, on July 15. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JUSTIN HAYDEN

Old Maplewood Schoolhouse relocated

Wayne County building saved from demolition

Peter Becker
Tri-County Independent
USA TODAY NETWORK

A rare example of a 19th-century two-room schoolhouse in southern Wayne County was saved from demolition on July 15 by a concerned neighbor who had it moved across the road in Maplewood to his spacious front yard.

Justin Hayden, a Western Wayne High School art teacher, said his wife Jordan plans to move her hair salon from their house to the former schoolhouse, while using part of the building for his art studio.

The wood-frame schoolhouse was physically attached to Avoy Christian Church. The church has plans to expand its building, and removal of the old school was deemed necessary.

“It was a big undertaking,” Hayden said. “But a lot of doors opened... it kept me moving forward, from financial aspects to the project, to support from people.”

The biggest motivation, he said, was historic preservation. The Maplewood native, who serves as a trustee for the Wayne County Historical Society, was researching his genealogy; he was raised in the house his great-great-grandfather lived in most of his life. This interest led Hayden to write a book on the history of Maplewood.

He interviewed elderly people who shared memories of going to school in the Maplewood schoolhouse.

Children in the area of this historic farming community, part of which is on



Justin Hayden sits by the newly saved historic Maplewood Schoolhouse.

Lake Henry and Maplewood roads in Salem Township, were educated at this schoolhouse from 1876 until it closed in 1949.

“Naturally, having the building right across from my house, I always had an in-

terest what it looked like inside, can we preserve it somehow, and go from there,” he said.

The church’s pastor, Sean Leonard,

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COMMENTARY

Perfect storm driving up produce prices

Weather, labor shortages and tariffs in the mix

Elizabeth Canales
Mississippi State University
THE CONVERSATION

From tomatoes and berries to lettuce and peppers, shoppers are feeling sticker shock in the produce aisle.

Recent headlines have focused in particular on soaring tomato prices. They spiked by roughly one-fifth from June 2025 to June 2026, according to consumer price data published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But across the board, fruits and vegetables have gotten more expensive. Lettuce prices jumped by about 32% during that same 12-month period, while prices for all fresh vegetables increased about 10%. Fresh fruit saw smaller hikes, with apples up 7% and citrus fruit prices rising 6%.

As an agricultural economist, I see a complex mix of factors at work: extreme weather, worker shortages and rising labor costs, and high energy and shipping prices, as well as fallout from the Trump administration’s trade policies, just to name a few. And because some of these inflation drivers affect multiple sectors, costs are building up throughout the supply chain.

The breadth of these factors suggests that widespread relief may not come quickly. But inflation-weary shoppers can still take some steps to ease the sting of high prices.

What’s driving higher fruit and vegetable prices?

To start with, weather disruptions have cut supply and pushed prices up. Unusual freezes in Florida in early 2026, for example, hit a variety of crops – including citrus, strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes and sweet corn – leading to yield losses and higher prices.

Imports also play a critical role in the U.S. food supply, especially during the winter and early spring months, when domestic production is limited. And if adverse weather conditions coincide with changes in trade policy, as is the case with the U.S.-Mexico relationship, produce supply and prices are especially affected.

The surge in tomato prices is a good example.

To protect the domestic tomato in-

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