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► Woman can't make it to hospital, gives birth in parking lot/B5 ► Diesel fuel spills into White River in Muncie/B7

3 drug court employees lose jobs

"Undertrained and overworked at the same time: If errors are made, that's the right environment."

Samie Dixon

■ Hundreds of key documents were destroyed, perhaps as part of effort to lighten workload.

By Vic Ryckaert
STAFF WRITER

Three drug court workers were fired Friday for discarding hundreds of important documents. They might face criminal charges as well.

A Marion County grand jury will decide if criminal charges are warranted against the former employees, Court Administrator Mark Renner said.

"The public has to know that the court takes this very seriously," Renner said, noting that the embarrassing incident has shaken the integrity of the justice system. "It literally may be months, or a year with some files, before we know the full extent of what has been lost or thrown away."

Samie Dixon, who has 15 years of service with Marion County courts, and seven-month employee Jovan Bonds were fired Friday.

Damont Glenn, on the staff for six months, will be fired when he returns next week after taking time off because of a death in his family, Renner said.

No one knows why the documents were thrown out, but Renner speculated employees might have been trying to lighten their workload.

Court workers had fallen several months behind in their filing duties, and plans were made to bring some workers in on Saturdays to try to catch up. Even though they would be paid overtime, the workers might not have wanted

the extra work, Renner said.

Dixon and Bond could not be reached for comment Friday but said earlier this week they are being used as scapegoats for other problems in the court system.

"Undertrained and overworked at the same time: If errors are made, that's the right environment," Dixon said.

It's common practice, Dixon said, to cull duplicate copies from court files. If original documents were discarded, they probably were accidentally mixed in with

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Judge David Shaheed took over the troubled drug court this week.

Drive-by shooting suspect arrested

■ Police believe man linked to hate groups shot girl, 14, solely because she's black.

By Michael J. Rochon
STAFF WRITER

A California man whom police linked to hate groups was arrested Friday in connection with the drive-by shooting of a 14-year-old black girl.

Trevor David Thompson, 20, who is white, was charged with attempted murder after a month-long investigation into the shooting of Ashley McNeil. The girl was attacked June 21 as she walked in front of her father's Southside home.

Thompson, of Pleasant, Calif., surrendered to Avon police. Authorities said he had eluded them for about a month.

Police said Thompson allegedly shot from a speeding car as Ashley and two other girls walked in the 2100 block of East Hanna Avenue.

The girl suffered a single gunshot wound to her buttocks. Doctors said they couldn't remove the bullet because it was located near a vital artery.

Investigators said Thompson is a member of the Nazi Low Riders, a West-coast based prison and street gang known for violent attacks on minorities. He earned several of the tattoos that cover his body by committing violent acts for the neo-Nazi faction, police said.

"He is a very dangerous man with very strong ties to this violent group," said Detective Wayne Sharp of the Indianapolis Police Department.

Thompson is also an active member of the World Church of the Creator, police said. That group was linked to former Indiana University student Benjamin Smith, who in July 1999 went on a racially motivated shooting spree across Indiana and Illinois that left two people dead and nine injured. One of the victims was a South Korean student at Indiana University in Bloomington. Smith committed suicide as authorities pursued him in Illinois.

Sharp said Thompson targeted the girl solely based on her race.

"He was looking for a minority to shoot. This is a definitely a hate crime," Sharp said, adding the FBI has joined the investigation.

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Planned charter schools to help at-risk students

■ Most of the programs will focus on youths with special needs, not top performers, official says.

By Celeste Williams
STAFF WRITER

Nearly all of the 29 people and organizations who want to open charter schools in Indianapolis plan to address the needs of at-risk children in Indianapolis Public Schools, a city official says.

David Harris, Mayor Bart Peterson's director of charter schools, said Friday proposals range from phonics-based instruction to military-style training, and enrollments of 20 students to 1,000-plus.

Critics often say private and charter schools only go after the best students, "the cream." That hasn't been the case here, Harris said.

"To the extent there is a theme, these schools are designed to serve people with special needs. I think people are starting to understand that charter schools are first and foremost public schools," Harris said.

Charter schools aren't new. Indiana debated the idea for years before becoming the 38th state to adopt the concept.

The schools are publicly funded but are uncumbered by state budget and curriculum requirements. They can be run by virtually

IndyStar.com: The online version of this story includes a link to the list of people contacting the mayor about starting a charter school.

any not-for-profit group under charters, or contracts, that set out achievement goals and measurements. Failing to meet the goals could result in a charter being revoked.

Monday was the deadline to submit a "letter of intent." Full applications are due Oct. 8.

Harris, who was a lawyer with Baker and Daniels before joining Peterson's office, said the application process is intentionally arduous.

The application is 62 pages long and has 22 parts. A five-year budget, a mission statement and curriculum overview are required.

"We want to make sure these schools are viable and sustainable for a long period," Harris said.

The Charter Schools Board, appointed by Peterson, will recommend schools for the mayor's approval. The final OK will come from the City-County Council.

If the process goes as anticipated, the city's first charter schools will open in 2002.

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Swan song: The last WRTV newscast for Clyde Lee and Diane Willis will be Aug. 31. They'll co-anchor all that week.

Anchors Lee, Willis to leave Channel 6

■ Married couple's exit to form own company follows lagging ratings for local ABC affiliate.

By Marc D. Allan
STAFF WRITER

Word started spreading two weeks ago that Clyde Lee and Diane Willis would be leaving the WRTV (Channel 6) anchor desk to start their own communications business.

Friday, Clyde and Diane — and that's how we all know them, by their first names — made it official. Lee, the 25-year veteran anchor, and Willis, who's been here 14 years, are opening Lee/Willis Communications. Their last newscast will be Aug. 31.

The couple, who were married in January 2000, have opened a Northside office. They plan to produce television programming for local and national distribution and provide production, promo-

tion and talent services for commercial, non-commercial and corporate entities.

"We've been drinking the water at Channel 6 a long time," Lee said. "So that's going to run in our veins, probably forever. But it doesn't preclude us from growing and looking at other opportunities."

"There's a lot out there to do, and the people that we talked to before we did this, who are already in communications or production or media or some other aspect, have not discouraged us at all."

He and Willis said they already have three projects — none of which they wanted to announce until the work is completed. Lee said they also have been contacted by several potential clients who want them to examine and improve their media campaigns.

They leave Channel 6 at a time when the station appeared to be stabilizing after several some-

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Brownsburg starts with win



Staff Photo / Joe Vitti

Plenty of smiles to go around: The Brownsburg team celebrates its victory Friday. Manager Gary King is at right. Behind him is winning pitcher T.J. Baumet, who didn't give up any runs. Brownsburg plays its next game today at 6 p.m. against a team from Lincoln, R.I.

Sacrifices and hard work pay off for the families of team members

By Tim Evans
STAFF WRITER

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — A Brownsburg team that has rallied fans throughout Indiana won its first game in the Little League World Series Friday night.

But the winning tradition that propelled them to Williamsport for the second time in three years isn't something that just happened. It is the result of a lot of hard work and sacrifice.

As players and supporters walked into Volunteer Stadium at Little League International Headquarters for Brownsburg's first-round game Friday night, the high prices they have paid — in both time and money — seemed like a bargain.

Brownsburg's victory over a team from Lake Charles, La., highlighted by a home run by Michael Bradburn, made the night even sweeter.

Bradburn hit the blast — the first in the new stadium — over the center-field wall in the second

inning to give Brownsburg all the offense it needed. Kyle Waggoner doubled in the fourth and scored an insurance run as Brownsburg went on to win 2-0.

Pitcher T.J. Baumet kept the opponents at bay all night, throwing 11 strikeouts and allowing just three hits.

"Somebody here said this is the last breath of innocence, and it brought tears to my eyes," said Marsha Decker, whose son, Nick, is an outfielder on the team.

"And you know what? I believe it is true," added Decker, who made the 12-hour drive to Williamsport on Wednesday with Rhonda Bradburn, Michael's mom.

Seeing their youngest son enjoying the experience so much made cost of the trip worthwhile, said her husband, Bob, who flew in Friday from a construction job in Detroit.

"My boss has been very, very supportive. He told me not to worry about the time (off), and he

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Schedule for the Little League World Series

Tournament facts

Television: Championship games will be televised on ABC. Most other games will be on ESPN or ESPN2.

Format: Eight U.S. and eight international teams compete. Brownsburg is in Pool A. U.S. and international winners meet for the championship.

Schedule (Indianapolis times)

Today: Brownsburg vs. Lincoln, R.I., 6 p.m., ESPN2

Monday: Brownsburg vs. Oceanside, Calif., 6 p.m., ESPN2

Wednesday: International semifinal, Pool C No. 1 vs. Pool D No. 2, 3 p.m., ESPN2; U.S. semifinal, Pool A No. 1 vs. Pool B No. 2, 7 p.m., ESPN2

Thursday: International semifinal, Pool D No. 1 vs. Pool C No. 2, 3 p.m., ESPN2; U.S. semifinal, Pool B No. 1 vs. Pool A No. 2, 7 p.m., ESPN

Aug. 25: U.S. championship, 3:30 p.m., ABC; international championship, 7 p.m., ESPN2

Aug. 26: U.S. runner-up vs. international runner-up, noon; championship, 5:30 p.m., ABC

Book rekindles interest in USS Indianapolis

■ WWII ship's survivors gathered at reunion are buoyed by best-seller, exoneration of captain.

By Mike Ellis
STAFF WRITER

For many years, the sinking of the USS Indianapolis was something people wanted to forget.

The loss of nearly 900 sailors and Marines in the waning days of World War II prompted U.S. Navy officials to court-martial the heavy cruiser's skipper. Many of the 316 who lived didn't want to talk about their painful memories.

But with the publication of a new best-selling book and the recent exoneration of Capt. Charles Butler McVay III, a new generation of Americans is taking interest in those who lived through the ordeal.

"I think kids need to know about it," said survivor Cleatus LeBow, of Memphis, Texas. "They need to know what a lot of guys went through to pay for their freedom."

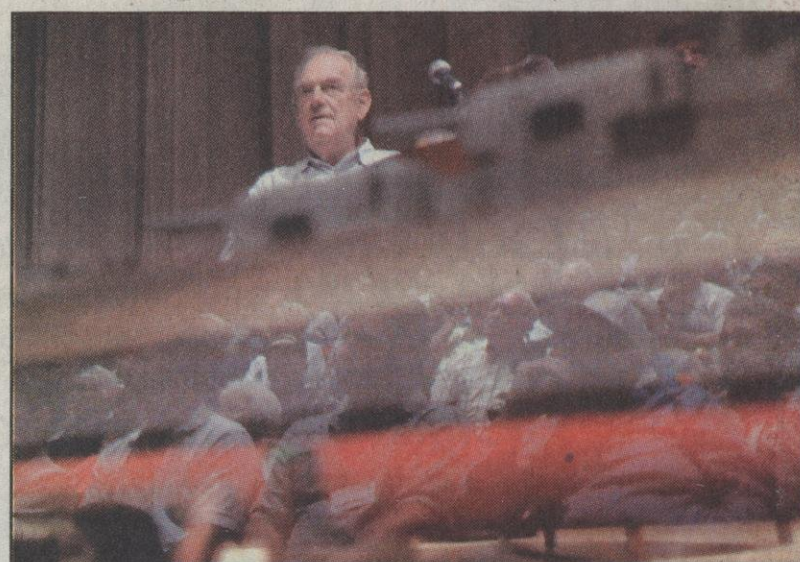
The survivors, of whom about 100 are still alive, gathered in their ship's namesake city this week for their 12th reunion.

It's their first meeting since Navy Secretary Gordon England in July ordered McVay exonerated of wrongdoing in the ship's sinking by a Japanese submarine on July 30, 1945. Last fall, Congress exonerated McVay as part of the 2001 defense spending bill.

Survivors view those actions as long overdue.

"It's about time," said Clarence Hershberger, of Elkhart, Ind. "We've been trying to get this accomplished for 50 years."

It's made for what LeBow de-



Staff photo / Rob Goebel

Survivors reunion: An overflow crowd at the Indiana Historical Society is reflected in the glass encasing a model of the USS Indianapolis as survivor Edward J. Brown addresses the group.

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ANCHORS

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times-painful years of budget cuts, personnel changes and the voluntary or forced retirements of familiar faces such as veteran anchors Howard Caldwell and Barbara Boyd and meteorologist Bob McLain.

The ratings also have suffered from the loss of *Oprah* as a lead-in to the evening newscasts and from ABC's comparatively weak prime-time schedule. Where WRTV once battled for first place, it has fallen to third.

Lee acknowledges that it hasn't been easy.

"You'd much rather be No. 1, no matter what it is," he says. "Whether it's first on the story, getting the best awards, being No. 1 in the ratings, we're a competitive lot. It doesn't grate on me, but it's a lot more fun to be No. 1 than it is to be runner-up, or third."

The station hasn't settled on a replacement for Lee, who anchors five newscasts a day. Likely inside candidates include current reporter/anchors Ray Cortopassi and Eric Weisfeld.

Willis switched to part time in 1999 and has been anchoring only the 5:30 p.m. news. Martha Weaver, who co-anchors with Lee on the 5, 6, 10 and 11 p.m. shows, most likely will add the 5:30 news to her duties.

For their final week on the air, Lee and Willis will co-anchor the five evening newscasts.

"They're such a part of Channel 6," news director Debbie Bush said. "And they always will be a part of Channel 6. We hope that they will continue to come back. Even though they are officially leaving the station, we feel like they are still part of us."

And they will be hard to replace, because of their work and what academics called "parasocial interaction," said DePauw University communications professor Jeff McCall.

"People who get used to watching a particular newscast end up developing what amounts to a kind of false social relationship with these people," McCall said. "They start to feel like they know them."

So while Channel 6 now has an opportunity to attract a new audience, it risks losing those viewers who feel comfortable watching Lee

and Willis, he said.

Indianapolis has been watching Lee since he came to Channel 6 in 1976 to replace Ken Beckley. He expected the city to be a three-year stop on his resume.

"I liked the city, I liked the people here, developed good friends, liked the station and liked the people I worked with a lot," he said. "There was a comfort level that I really liked."

He says he interviewed a half-dozen times for other jobs, but ultimately decided he wanted to stay here.

Willis moved to Indianapolis from Boston in 1987. She and her husband at the time adopted two children: Min, who's now 19, in 1988, and Kao, who's now 15, two years later.

"Indianapolis felt like home very quickly," she said.

They say the city has always been friendly to them as individuals and as a couple. As for occasional gossip, from their personal relationship to Lee's decision to grow a beard a few years ago: "We must be oblivious to it," Lee said. "We thought we were very old news."

When they think back on their tenures at Channel 6, both point to reporting as the high points. Lee says 10 years covering the medical beat was his proudest achievement. For Willis, it was a list of stories — including a long-term project on outstanding teachers and coverage of her trip to Korea to adopt her first son, Min.

Their decision to leave local TV to start a company has some precedent. Anchorman Tom Cochran quit WTHR (Channel 13) to form Nineteenth Star productions. And reporter Gerry Dick left Channel 6 to create the *Inside Indiana Business* radio and TV shows.

Lee and Willis announced their plans on Friday's 5:30 p.m. news. Both say they haven't considered what they're going to say on their final broadcast.

"I'm not very schmaltzy about all this," Lee said. "It's such a transition. I'm not walking out one door; I'm walking in another. I've got things to do. We've got people depending on us to get things done."

"And it's TV," Willis added. "You might get 30 seconds. We both might get 30 seconds."

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Brownsburg residents get behind players

■ Fans of all ages root, root, root for home team as televised game draws crowds of supporters.

By Jeff Shireman
STAFF WRITER

BROWNSBURG, Ind. — It wasn't 'N Sync, but the high-pitched screams were similar.

About 200 pre-teens piled into the Brownsburg Middle School cafeteria to root the hometown little-leaguers on to victory Friday night. Across town, an older but no less enthusiastic crowd dominated by coaches gathered at Creekside restaurant to whistle and cheer every pitch.

Little-league fever has hit Brownsburg. With their classmates on a nationally televised stage, some youths were eager to discuss their brush with fame.

As T.J. Baumet struck out a batter on his way to the 2-0 shut-out win, 12-year-old Micaela Hornstein of Brownsburg exclaimed that she once "went with him."

"You know, the awesome one," Micaela said, giggling.



Staff Photo / Mpozi Mshale Tolbert

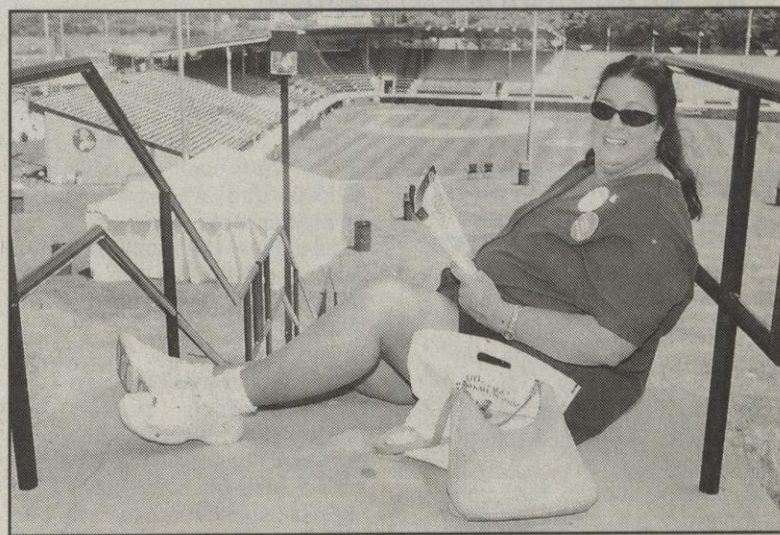
Hometown fans: Brownsburg Junior High School students cheer on the team from the comfort of the school's cafeteria. About 200 students gathered to watch the game on TV.

Friend Talli Davis, 12, rolled her eyes. "I went with him first," she pointed out.

The two wore hand-painted shirts with their ball-playing classmates' names on the back. They had watched the team win regionals in Indianapolis last week

but couldn't travel to Williamsport, Pa., because of the start of school this week.

Michael Bastmagel, 12, got up three times to run in front of the local TV cameras. But his attention was mostly focused on his classmates and former teammates.



Staff Photo / Joe Vitti

Proud mother: "Somebody here said this is the last breath of innocence, and it brought tears to my eyes," said Marsha Decker, whose son, Nick, plays on the Brownsburg team.

in a game televised on cable network ESPN2.

Rhode Island lost Friday to West champion Oceanside, Calif., 8-0.

Brownsburg plays again today against the New England champion from Lincoln, R.I., at 6 p.m.

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INDIANAPOLIS

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scribed as "the best reunion ever." Hershberger shared that sentiment.

"It's an entirely different atmosphere than all the others," he said. "It's more cheerful, more relaxed. It's fantastic."

Still, some survivors think more needs to be done. Woodie James, of Salt Lake City, intends to press on with trying to get the court-martial removed from McVay's record.

"In 1965, we passed a resolution to do everything in our power to clear his name," he said. "His name has not been cleared yet, and I'm still alive."

The survivors gathered Friday at the Indiana Historical Society for a speech by Doug Stanton, author of *In Harm's Way*. His book, a recent fixture on the *New York Times* best-seller list, details the ship's voyage to deliver components for the first atomic bomb, its sinking on the way from Guam to Leyte and the horrible aftermath.

The survivors spent nearly five days at sea, fighting off shark at-



Doug Stanton spoke Friday at a reunion of survivors — several of whom he interviewed for his book *In Harm's Way*.

tacks while enduring thirst, exposure to seawater and the tropical sun.

"There's nothing superhuman about these people," Stanton said. "But the fact that they lived, it's a miracle that there were any survivors."

Stanton became interested in writing about the USS Indianapolis after visiting the survivors' reunion in 1999. He later interviewed several survivors, some of whom told their stories for the first time.

It was an emotionally charged, cathartic experience for the survivors, Stanton said. He learned much about service.

"The story of the Indianapolis is about the hardship, the challenge, the tragedy of being in the service

of something bigger than you," he said.

Dan Kurzman, author of the 1990 book *Fatal Voyage*, said the sinking of the USS Indianapolis is rich in human drama.

"You have one of the worst sea disasters in history, and then on top of that you have something that would make a best-seller if it were a novel, with the captain being made a scapegoat for all this," said Kurzman, who's also in Indianapolis this week. "There's two huge stories there."

Kurzman has released a new edition of his book, updating the story with the exoneration of McVay.

Despite their newfound attention, survivors don't consider themselves heroes. They say they were just doing their jobs; the real heroes are the ones who didn't make it.

"For a lot of years the people I worked with didn't know I was a survivor," said Grover Carver, of Monterey, Calif. "I didn't talk about it. It was just too hurtful."

Still, the survivors are glad for the attention their story is getting after all these years and hope that

Fatal trip

The USS Indianapolis went down on July 30, 1945, after delivering atomic bomb material to Tinian. It was headed for the island of Leyte when it was struck. Only 316 of the ship's crew of 1,196 survived.



some good will come from it.

Hershberger said that lessons learned from the sinking of the Indianapolis were passed on to his grandson, Jeremy Hoke, during his basic training for the Navy.

"He is so proud to have a grand-

■ Just after midnight on **July 30, 1945**, the Indianapolis, carrying 1,196 sailors and Marines, was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine.

■ It was not until **Aug. 4** that the men were spotted by accident. On anti-submarine patrol, Lt. Chuck Gwinn spotted the wreckage of the Indianapolis and radioed the military base on Palau, an island in the Pacific Ocean. Three hours later, a Catalina PB-Y flying boat arrived. Of about 900 men who initially survived, only 316 were still alive.



Staff Graphic / Greg Nichols

dad that was on the Indianapolis," he said. "He is telling everybody, including his commanders."

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JOBS

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the duplicates, the employees said.

The problems in Marion Superior Court 14 stem from a combination of a heavy caseload, new employees and Judge Z. Mae Jimison's health problems. Jimison went on medical leave in June after suffering a minor stroke.

The state Supreme Court this week named David Shaheed to be Jimison's stand-in until she recovers and resumes her duties. The appointment gives Shaheed control over the day-to-day operations of the court.

Shaheed, who as a commissioner had been overseeing the court, said he had some difficulty exerting authority over some staff members.

"I don't think there was the same kind of respect given to my interim position as was given to Judge Jimison," Shaheed said.

While Renner and the three judges on the court's executive board recommended the employees be fired, Shaheed made the final decision Friday.

Jimison declined to comment Friday on the firings. She said earlier this week that she believed Shaheed would do what is best for the court.

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