



Logan County to received \$700K grant to improve housing

BY THE EXAMINER STAFF

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Development announced this week a total of \$22.4 million in grants to 27 communities to improve access to housing and provide homeownership and rental assistance for low- and moderate-income families.

Logan County will receive a \$700,000 grant to rehabilitate six owner-occupied



of Bellefontaine.

The Community Housing Impact and Preservation (CHIP) program partners with communities to preserve and improve Ohio's housing stock through various housing-related initiatives such as home renovation and repair, rental assistance, and

homes, repair 10 owner-occupied homes, and include a fair housing component. The county will partner with the city

more.

"We want all Ohioans to have a safe and stable place to call home, and these grants support that mission by improving housing, supporting homeownership and creating opportunities for a better future," said Governor Mike DeWine.

CHIP program grants are funded by the Ohio Housing Trust Fund, the federal Community Development Block Grant, and HOME Investment Partnership Programs.

"When families have access to quality housing, it transforms lives and strengthens communities," said Lydia Mihalik, director of the Department of Development. "We are committed to working alongside our partners to make transformational investments just like these that ensure every Ohioan has the chance to live their best life."

The Ohio Department of Development empowers communities to succeed by investing in Ohio's people, places, and businesses.

ARTIST FEATURE

Artist finds beauty in the abstract

BY SHARYN KOPF
EXAMINER STAFF WRITER

When April King found out the Logan County Art League wanted her to be a contestant in this year's Not So Bad Art by Good People contest, she made a quick decision about her submission based on one simple reality — she's not an artist.

"I cannot draw a stick figure correctly, let alone anything amazing," King confessed. "So something abstract would be right up my alley."

Using acrylic paint and plastic wrap, King created something she could be proud of—so much so that she would display it in her office, if she could. But the activity was not without its snags.

For instance, after finishing her first painting, King left it to dry on a table at home. Then "a little cof-

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April King wanted to create a painting that looked like "the ocean with a wave going through it" for the 2025 Not So Bad Art by Good People fundraiser. (EXAMINER PHOTO | SHARYN KOPF)

ARTIST FEATURE

Paper mosaic idea goes full bloom

BY MANDY LOEHR | EXAMINER STAFF WRITER

The program director at the Dr. Sloan Library in Zanesfield pulled together an inspirational art medium from her past and also paid a special tribute to her late grandmother through her colorful floral-themed entry to this year's contest.

See MOSAIC on P3



Cori Morse, Dr. Sloan Library's program director, displays her finished entry in the Not So Bad Art by Good People contest. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)



Benjamin Logan Environmental Science Club members study daphnia under a microscope during a recent session. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

Environmental Science Club delves into daphnia

BY THE EXAMINER STAFF

The Benjamin Logan Environmental Science Club members launched their activities for 2025 by delving into the study of daphnia, a type of small crustacean that is a crucial part of the food web in many aquatic environments.

Twenty-five members, under the guidance of their instructors, used compound light microscopes to observe and record the surprisingly rapid heart rates of these transparent creatures, with some heartbeats reaching up to 300 beats per minute.

The exploration continued outdoors at the Benjamin Logan Land Lab despite the winter chill, where students engaged in observing and recording the subtle beauties of nature during winter, guided by Catherine Carter, Logan County Land Trust director.

Carter introduced the students to the practice of keeping a nature journal, encouraging them to record and reflect on their surroundings with a scientist's eye.

The session culminated in a creative display of the students' observations through various art mediums back in the classroom. This artistic endeavor was complemented by the warmth of hot chocolate and homemade cookies.

The club, now in its eighth year, continues to offer a diverse range of activities, including guest speakers, dissections, and service projects like constructing habitat structures on school grounds.

It is co-sponsored by the Benjamin Logan School District and the Logan County Land Trust, with leadership from educators Bruce Smith, Bob Stoll, Spencer Reames, Ryan Kerns and Carter.

For more information about the Environmental Science Club or to support its activities, contact Bruce Smith at smithb@benjaminlogan.org. To learn more about the initiatives of the Logan County Land Trust and how you can contribute, visit logancountylandtrust.org.

Adult winners in Shrine Design Competition honored Saturday

BY THE EXAMINER STAFF

The American Society of Ephesus ("ASE"), in cooperation with ArtSpace/Lima, has announced the winners in the adult age category (Over 18) of the Design Competition for the new Our Lady of Fatima Shrine at Indian Lake.

Those winners are: Robert Patricy of Columbus; The Faith in Action Team of Minster; and Matt Bensman of Anna.

A reception takes place at ArtSpace/Lima, 65 Town Square, in Lima, from 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 25, during which the top three winning entries in this age category will be displayed.

Cash prizes will be presented to the winners by ASE board members.

"The amount of creativity put into these designs by artists of all ages has been very impressive. We are very excited to host this reception for the adult age group," said Sally Windle, Executive Director of ArtSpace/Lima.

Youth winners were honored during a previous reception Oct. 26.

The statewide design competition for the new shrine opened last June after the original shrine in Russells Point was destroyed by a tornado that hit the Indian Lake region March 14.

The Our Lady of Fatima Shrine was one of the tallest statues of the Virgin Mary in the United States. Dedicated in August 1964, the 43-foot tall monument included a rotating 19'-6" fiberglass statue on a concrete pedestal with fountains, music and lighting. The shrine property is located at 261 Chase Ave., Russells Point.

"We held a statewide design competition to get community input as well as new ideas from Ohio artists of all ages," said Bill Quatman, president of ASE.

A five-person jury reviewed the design submissions and selected the winners in several age groups.

"The three finalists in the over 18 age category will receive cash prizes at the upcoming reception," Sally Windle said. "After interviewing multiple firms, ASE has hired an architect and a sculptor to design the new shrine. I know they hope to use the best ideas from several of the winning entries."

"We were very impressed with the quality and variety of designs that were submitted," Quatman said. "Now comes the hard part of creating a new shrine that uses the best ideas that we have received. Our architect, Freytag & Associates, will help us to do that."

"Once we have the site design finalized and plans drawn up, we will solicit bids from area contractors to build the new shrine."

ASE plans for an Aug. 15, 2026, dedication for the new shrine at Indian Lake.

For more info, visit www.ase-gbfoundation.org



The original Our Lady of Fatima Shrine was destroyed by a tornado. (THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF EPHEBUS PHOTO)



The design entry from The Faith in Action Team. (THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF EPHEBUS PHOTO)

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ABE MARTIN



"Some fellers pay as they go an' others stick around."

Written prior, 1931, by Kin Hubbard, a world-famous newspaper humorist and father of late T.E. Hubbard, former Examiner owner/publisher

LOGAN COUNTY BEAT SHERIFF & HIGHWAY PATROL

Minor injuries reported in crash

Ina Pratt, 67, of Wapakoneta, was transported by a Macochee Joint Ambulance District squad to Mary Rutan Hospital for suspected minor injuries following a two-vehicle crash that occurred Sunday, Jan. 19, in the area of State Route 508 near County Road 187.

Deputies from the Logan County Sheriff's Office were dispatched around 8:30 a.m. the intersection in Liberty Township on a report of truck crashing into a car.

Azamat Adylov, 28, of Illinois, reportedly was operating a 2024 Dodge Ram westbound along S.R. 508 when he attempted a left turn onto C.R. 187 and pulled into the path of 1987 Pontiac Firebird driven by Pratt.

Adylov was cited for failure to yield the right of way when turning left. Damage was minor to the pickup truck. Heavy damage was reported to the Pontiac.

WEST LIBERTY POLICE

Woman missing for more than 10 days found safe

An adult who reportedly had been

missing for nearly two weeks has been located unharmed in a neighboring county, officers of the West Liberty Police Department report.

Rhonda Fleming, 42, was last seen leaving her residence Sunday, Jan. 10. Witnesses reported seeing her walking in the area of north Detroit Street in West Liberty and getting into an unknown vehicle.

The West Liberty Police Department was notified of her disappearance on Monday, Jan. 20, at approximately 4 p.m. Following an investigation involving multiple agencies, Fleming was found safe at a residence in Cable, located in Champaign County. Authorities confirmed her well-being and instructed her to contact her family.

Chief of Police Shane Oelker expressed gratitude for the coordinated efforts of law enforcement.

"I would like to thank the Logan County Sheriff's Office Communications Center, Logan County Sheriff's Office Detective Section, the Champaign County Sheriff's Office and the Bellefontaine Police Department for all of their assistance in locating Ms Fleming in a quick manner," Oelker said.



seniors of the month

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JACOB FREYHOF

Parents: Joe and Brandy Freyhof

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS: Soccer, Track and Field, Quizbowl, NHS, Laker Leadership Council, Musical, Marching Band, Jazz Band, Pep Band and Symphonic Band

If I were principal for a day: I would increase the lunch budget for better quality food.

Favorite school memory: My favorite memory is going to Hershey, Pennsylvania with the band.

People who have inspired me include: My parents, Mr. Steinbarger and Mr. Levingston

Lately I've been reading: Fahrenheit 451 for Mr. Levingston's class

My advice to parents: Help your kids to enjoy learning new things, but don't force it so much that a kid will loathe it.

My biggest regret: I regret not taking Choir.

Next year I will be: Attending an undecided 4-year university for Nursing.



ADELINE ROBINSON

Parents: Matt and Anna Robinson

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS: National Honor Society, Kiwanis Key Club, Science Club, Softball, Meistersingers, Vocal Jazz, Honors Choir, and the ILHS Musical. 4.0 Honor Roll, Perfect Attendance, Academic Hall of Fame, and Honda Achievement Breakfast CBC Scholar Athlete.

If I were principal for a day: I would host a Spikeball tournament and let the students out two hours early.

Favorite school memory: My favorite memory is the 8th grade Washington D.C. trip. I liked learning about all of the historical monuments while spending time with my friends.

People who have inspired me include: People who have been an inspiration to me include my parents, grandparents, teachers and friends.

Lately I've been reading: Fahrenheit 451, The Alchemist, The Great Gatsby

My advice to parents: Push your kids to be the best they can be, but don't put too much pressure on them! Let them learn from their mistakes and continue to grow.

My biggest regret: I regret not taking Spanish earlier in high school.

Next year I will be: Attending college to pursue Nursing in hopes of becoming a CRNA.

Mary Rutan Foundation medical scholarship, loan program underway

The Mary Rutan Foundation offers Logan County students an opportunity to apply for healthcare career scholarships and medical school loans for the 2025-26 academic school year.

Completed applications including all required documents must be submitted to Mary Rutan Foundation through the online application process no later than April 1, 2025.

The online application and detailed information are available on the health system's website at <https://foundation.maryrutan.org/scholarships>.

Since 1992, more than \$2.5 million has been awarded to Logan County residents pursuing a degree in the medical field as an investment in the community and in the future of healthcare.

For additional information about Mary Rutan Foundation's scholarship program or how you may make a financial contribution, visit the Foundation's website at <https://foundation.maryrutan.org> or contact the Foundation

ABSTRACT

Continued from Page 1

fee incident" ruined that work, forcing her to start over again. Fortunately, she feels the second effort came out even better.

And then there was the family response.

"My daughter watched me make the second rendering of my art and made fun of me the entire time," she said. Emma, who's 19, even sent photos of her mom's painting to an art teacher friend. Still, King admitted, she enjoyed the process.

That process involved putting blobs of paint on the canvas and covering it with plastic wrap. She smeared the paint, lifted the wrap off, then balled up more plastic wrap and dabbed it on the canvas. After the first coat dried, King applied white paint, which she also let dry before adding the gold streak.

King is a lifelong Logan

County resident and still lives on her family farm outside Huntsville. After graduating from Indian Lake High School, she worked in education for the Indian Lake School district as well as at Noah's Ark preschool and Adriel School. King has been employed as the news director for V-Teck Communications since August 2023.

In addition to their daughter, King and her husband of 22 years, Doug, have a son, Jacob (21), who is the new agriculture and natural resources educator for The Ohio State University Extension Office in Logan County. Emma, a sophomore at Miami University, is pursuing a political science degree.

Overall, King is happy with the piece she created and honored to have been asked to participate.

"The Art League is such a vital part of our community," she concluded.

INAUGURATION TREK TO D.C.



Several Benjamin Logan High School seniors and alumni braved the cold to experience the historic atmosphere of Washington, D.C., for the 2025 inauguration of President Donald Trump on Monday, Jan. 20. Pictured, from the left, in front of the U.S. Capital are seniors Harry Stratton, Tristan Sheets, Henry Wall and Nash Schneider and Class of 2023 alumni Evan Wall. "Though we were unable to watch the inauguration due to the move inside, it was a great experience to be in D.C. on such an important day. We visited several Smithsonian museums, saw all the major monuments, and got to walk across the frozen Reflecting Pool," shared Tristan, senior and student government president. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

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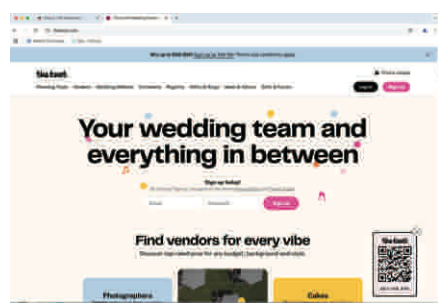
The Knot Unveils Top Wedding Professionals with the 2025 Best of Weddings Awards

AP BUSINESS WIRE

The Knot, a leading all-in-one wedding planning resource offering a comprehensive suite of digital products and tools, today announces the winners of its annual The Knot Best of Weddings and Hall of Fame awards. In their 19th and 13th years respectively, these prestigious awards honor the top wedding professionals in the industry across all wedding vendor categories, determined by real couple reviews on The Knot Vendor Marketplace. The winning vendors represent the best of the best professionals for all wedding budgets, styles and sizes, who consistently deliver exceptional service to couples throughout planning and on their wedding days.

The Knot Best of Weddings and Hall of Fame awards recognize and celebrate the outstanding service from wedding professionals nationwide whom couples trust for expert knowledge and guidance throughout their entire wedding planning journey. Recent data from The Knot* shows couples increasingly rely on vendors before they even get engaged: One-quarter of proposers enlisted the help of pros for their 2024 proposals, more than double the number in 2019. Outstanding vendors who have earned four or more The Knot Best of Weddings awards are inducted into The Knot Best of Weddings Hall of Fame. Underscoring the awards' representation of the best of the best, this year approximately 5 percent of vendors on The Knot have received the Best of Weddings award, and less than 1 percent were inducted into the Best of Weddings Hall of Fame.

To determine the winners, The Knot assessed hundreds of thousands of user reviews for 200,000+ wedding professionals within its Vendor Marketplace across various categories—planners, venues, officiants, musicians, DJs, florists, photographers, caterers, hair and makeup artists, and more—to find the top vendors of the year. Vendors who have received at least seven reviews on The Knot with an average score of 4.5+ in 2024 received The Knot Best of Weddings award. These winners represent the top wedding pro-



professionals who best embody and deliver what matters to couples in their wedding planning journey.

"At The Knot, we know vendors are critical to every great wedding, and their significance is not lost on couples: They continue to hire an average of 14 vendors year after year to execute their wedding day visions," said Casey Moujaes, Vice President of US Vendor and Global Product Marketing. "We're thrilled to honor the elite wedding professionals whose dedication and excellence set the gold standard for the industry and to provide a platform for couples to find them. These trusted partners deliver above and beyond expectations, provide unmatched guidance and expertise, and make the planning process easier."**

"We feel incredibly honored to receive The Knot Best of Weddings Award along with so many other remarkable wedding professionals," said Tamara Branch Rouse, Founder of Lush Event Design & Floristry in Philadelphia. "This award inspires our dedication to set the benchmark for excellence in the wedding industry. The Knot is our doorway to connect with so many wonderfully brilliant clients and allows us the opportunity to be discovered by our soulmate couples! We are thrilled to be part of such an exceptional community."

Through The Knot Vendor Marketplace, couples can find the best wedding professionals in the industry, browse real wedding images for inspiration and read reviews from over 3 million couples. Spanning 25 categories—from venues and wedding planners to DJs, videographers, officiants and more—The

Real Couple Reviews on The Knot Vendor Marketplace:

Alchemist Weddings in Asheville & Charlotte, North Carolina

"We were absolutely thrilled with Lee Everette's ability to capture not just photos but feelings and moments. From the first call, it was clear that he had a unique talent for seeing beyond the surface and capturing the unique things that made our relationship so special. Throughout the entire process, Lee was more than just our photographer—he was a dedicated and supportive presence, offering his expertise and guidance whenever we needed it. The photos we have received so far perfectly encapsulate the joy, love and magic of our wedding day. We highly recommend him to anyone seeking a photographer who goes above and beyond to capture their wedding," one couple said of wedding photographer Lee Everette of Alchemist Weddings in Asheville & Charlotte.

HBIC Weddings in Chicago

"Diane and her team at HBIC Weddings are truly exceptional. She kept everything organized and stress-free, all while adding warmth and laughter to every interaction. We actually found ourselves looking forward to our calls, and we'll genuinely miss planning our wedding with her. Diane and her team didn't just make sure our wedding ran smoothly—they made the entire planning process an absolute joy. For anyone seeking a planner who combines professionalism with a personal touch, we cannot recommend HBIC Weddings enough," one couple said of wedding planner Diane Brisk of HBIC Weddings in Chicago.

Knot Vendor Marketplace allows couples to search, compare and connect to book any of the hundreds of thousands of local wedding professionals across the country all in one place. The Knot Best of Weddings awards, in combination with years of trusted content and

innovative technology from The Knot, give couples the confidence to book expert vendors to help plan a wedding that's authentically them.

Wedding professionals who win The Knot Best of Weddings and Hall of Fame awards are members of WeddingPro, The Knot Worldwide's business-to-business wedding brand. As the largest wedding Vendor Marketplace and community for wedding professionals, WeddingPro connects small businesses with millions of engaged couples each year on The Knot and WeddingWire, as well as with hundreds of thousands of pros in the industry. Through its online marketplaces, performance insights, educational programs and community-building events, WeddingPro is dedicated to giving wedding professionals access to the largest community of couples, a network of pros and data-backed guidance to help them grow their businesses.

For more information about The Knot Best of Weddings and this year's winners, please visit www.theknot.com/vendors/best-of-weddings.

*Based on The Knot 2024 Jewelry and Engagement Study, conducted among 7,800+ respondents who got engaged in 2024.

**Based on The Knot 2024 Real Weddings Study, conducted among nearly 17,000 US couples who married in 2024.

About The Knot

The Knot is a leading all-in-one wedding planning resource offering a comprehensive suite of digital tools to help couples throughout their planning journey. Powering wedding celebrations through technology, the brand offers The Knot Vendor Marketplace, which connects couples with more than 200,000 local wedding professionals, and personalized wedding websites, invitations and registry services. The most trusted authority on wedding planning, The Knot reaches a majority of engaged couples in the US through TheKnot.com; a leading wedding planning app with the most 5-star reviews on iOS and Android, The Knot Wedding Planner; The Knot national wedding magazine; and The Knot book series. Since its inception, The Knot has inspired approximately 25 million couples to plan a wedding that's authentic to them. Visit The Knot online at TheKnot.com and follow on social media: @TheKnot on TikTok, Instagram, Pinterest and Threads and Facebook.com/TheKnot.

Why more Americans are choosing the Maldives resorts for their honeymoon destination

MANDY APPLIGATE
AP WIRE REPORTS

Choosing a destination that is worthy of celebrating your new marriage is no easy feat. It has to be perfect - romantic, exciting and a

place that can evoke a little jealousy from onlookers. Find out why the Maldives has become a paradise for American newlyweds, satisfying even the pickiest brides with its lavish accom-

modations and stunning natural beauty.

Highly coveted scenic views

The secret to a magical honeymoon lies in being surrounded by white sandy

beaches and clear turquoise waters, which is what the Maldives effortlessly provides - breathtaking scenery. Made up of over 1,000 islands, this country brings lush palm trees and

vibrant marine life, not to mention vivid sunsets that paint the skies with a kaleidoscope of colors, from orange to pink and purple. This serene environment is what newlyweds need to unwind from the hustle of wedding preparations, allowing them to enjoy each other's company amid nature's beauty.

Luxurious overwater bungalows and more
Many resorts in the Maldives offer overwater bungalows instead of tradi-

tional hotel accommodations. There is nothing quite like waking up to the soothing sound of waves beneath you and stepping out onto your private deck for a morning swim. For the ultimate lavish experience, you can book an underwater hotel at The Muraka. Here, you can stay in a room with a curved glass ceiling, allowing you to watch marine life swim all around you.

These resorts often go above and beyond with their

See MALDIVES on P5

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MAKING LIFE MORE FUN
How To Plan A
Big-Group Mountain
Vacation

FROM NAPS REPORTS

From destination weddings to family reunions and corporate outings, planning a group affair can be quite a large feat. Whether you're gathering 50 or hundreds of your closest family and friends, you'll need plenty of space and things to do. Big hotels or resorts are often quick-to-mind, but bringing everyone together in one spot to bond can be hard when you're trying to reserve conference rooms or common areas.

To add a touch of homelike hospitality to group gatherings, many people are turning to luxury big cabins instead. From cabins with eight-plus bedrooms to renting out multiple cabins on one street for a private block party, it's a unique option growing in popularity. One new community in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, is taking the trend to heart.

Gather in the Mountains

Mountain vacations are often reserved in people's minds for ski groups or avid hikers. But plenty of mountain destinations cater to everyone. Tennessee's Smoky Mountains is a great option for groups because excursions such as white-water rafting and hiking are easily shareable. The area is also home to a theme park, aquarium, minor league baseball games and more, offering plenty of choices for outings. Gatlinburg itself, with restaurants, distilleries, a local craft scene and shopping, gives everyone the chance to head to one place, while spreading out and exploring the area based on their own interests. It's also the gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the country's most visited national park with more than 11 million visitors annually.

Staying active and sharing new experiences can help groups bond and break the ice if it's a corporate or church retreat where people might still be getting to know one another. Heading to the mountains can offer a nice break from the traditional beach retreat, and rest and relaxation are still an option. From a soak in the hot tub back at your rental cabin to visiting an area day spa, calm and peaceful mountains are a great backdrop for a relaxing getaway.

Stay Under One Roof

New communities such as Cherokee Orchard are meeting a growing demand for luxury big cabin options in mountain destinations such as the Smokies. The neighborhood recently opened with four cabin rentals ranging in size from eight to 16 bedrooms, along with a pool house. Four more cabins are under construction, varying in size from eight to 20 bedrooms. Once completed, the neighborhood will feature eight log cabins sprawling across more than 1.2 private acres, all within walking distance of downtown Gatlinburg.

In the community's Majestic Pine Retreat, for example, 13 bedrooms include 10 king suites and three rooms with queen-sized bunks, making the cabin fit for 60 guests. A massive kitchen comes fully equipped, while log dining tables can seat everyone for a feast after an action-packed day. A home theater features a large screen, surround sound, stadium seating and plush leather chairs, while two hot tubs join outdoor seating and a grill for entertaining outside.

Depending on the size of your group, The Mighty Crabapple Manor offers eight bedrooms, while The Big Oak Lodge provides 16. Each cabin has an impressive great room where the group can relive the day's memories or break into teams for some board games. Or, everyone can head to the neighborhood's community pool house for a swim.

Whether a single cabin will fit your group or a large event has you renting out the neighborhood, this luxury big cabin trend is a great, unique way to get everyone together.



WeddingWire 2025 Couples' Choice Awards® Winners Revealed

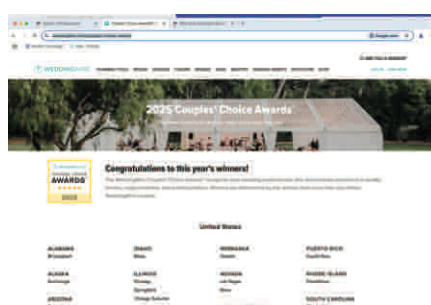
AP BUSINESS WIRE

Trusted wedding vendor directory WeddingWire today announces the winners of its 17th annual Couples' Choice Awards® to honor the wedding industry's top local wedding professionals. The Couples' Choice Awards® recognize the exceptional vendors who demonstrate superior quality, service, responsiveness and professionalism, as determined by real couple reviews on WeddingWire.

To identify these distinguished wedding professionals, WeddingWire analyzed thousands of user reviews within its wedding Vendor Directory across more than 20 service categories—from venues and caterers to officiants and photographers—to find the top local vendors of the year. Vendors who have received at least seven reviews on WeddingWire with an average score of 4.5+ in 2024 received a WeddingWire Couples' Choice Award®. The award celebrates top vendors that showcase hard work and outstanding service, exemplifying the qualities that matter most to couples in their wedding planning journey. Less than 3 percent of vendors on WeddingWire have received the Couples' Choice Award®, making this an esteemed honor.

"More than ever, today's couples seek trusted experts to transform their unique styles and shared values into unforgettable celebrations," said Casey Moujaes, Vice President of US Vendor and Global Product Marketing. "The WeddingWire Couples' Choice Awards® stamp of excellence, alongside nearly 5 million trusted reviews on WeddingWire's Vendor Directory, allow couples to feel confident in booking pros that can bring their authentic and personalized wedding vision to life."

"So many engaged couples go to WeddingWire to begin their wedding planning and find valued vendors," said Cleo Brown, owner of La Bella Luna in Granbury, TX. "Being a WeddingWire Couples' Choice Award® win-



ner means couples recognize our 'product'—our venue—as an amazing choice. This recognition gives us such gratification that we have satisfied and exceeded couples' expectations for their wedding day."

Wedding professionals who win WeddingWire's Couples' Choice Awards® are members of WeddingPro, The Knot Worldwide's business-to-business wedding brand. As the largest wedding Vendor Marketplace and community for wedding professionals, WeddingPro connects small businesses with millions of engaged couples each year on The Knot and WeddingWire, as well as with hundreds of thousands of pros in the industry. Through its online marketplaces, performance insights, educational programs and community-building events, WeddingPro is dedicated to giving wedding professionals access to the largest community of couples, a network of pro and data-backed guidance to help them grow their businesses.

For more information about WeddingWire's Couples' Choice Awards® and this year's winners, please visit www.weddingwire.com/couples-choice-awards.

About WeddingWire

Available in the US, Canada and India, WeddingWire is a trusted wedding vendor directory that helps engaged couples search, compare and find the perfect local wedding professionals for their big day. With the Wedding Vendor Manager tool,

Real Couple Reviews on WeddingWire:

Unending Beauty by Maria in Chicago

"I cannot recommend Maria at Unending Beauty enough. Her talent, professionalism and ability to enhance natural beauty are truly exceptional. If you're looking for a makeup artist for your wedding or any special occasion, I highly recommend her services. She will undoubtedly make you feel and look like the best version of yourself," one newlywed said of makeup artist Maria Hernandez of Unending Beauty by Maria in Chicago.

Peachtree Catering and Events in Philadelphia

"Peachtree Catering and Events provided an outstanding experience for our wedding. From the moment we began planning, their team was professional, attentive and truly invested in making our day perfect. We also have to call out the service during the wedding. We can't stress it enough—Peachtree takes care of their guests. They seemingly had eyes everywhere to take an empty glass or refill someone's water but weren't 'in the way' for lack of a better way to put it. We can say for certain that the Peachtree team added to the experience of our wedding. We wanted guests to feel seen, cared for, welcomed and truly hosted—and they delivered," one couple said of Peachtree Catering and Events in Philadelphia.

couples can discover and message wedding pros, compare reviews and pricing and add reference notes all in one place for easy decision-making. WeddingWire's suite of planning tools and services, inspiration and community make it simple for couples to plan their wedding. Visit WeddingWire online at WeddingWire.com, WeddingWire.ca, and WeddingWire.in and follow on social media in the US on Instagram.

Maldives

Continued from Page 4

amenities, providing infinity pools and private dining options. It's a place where your wildest travel dreams can come true, like being served crostini appetizers on a floating tray in your private pool. The unforgettable experiences offered in the Maldives make it a highly sought-after destination for American couples looking to celebrate their love in comfort like kings and queens.

Romantic activities for honeymooners

Honeymooners won't be bored after spending a few days in the Maldives, as there is something to do for every occasion. Couples looking to rejuvenate can relax with a massage and spa treatment using local ingredients like coconut scrubs and flower baths. Afterward, they can enjoy a romantic candlelit dinner on the beach prepared by top chefs, savoring what might be the best chocolate cake of their lives under starlit skies.

The Maldives also offers water sports for adventurous newlyweds eager to get their adrenaline pumping with activities like snorkeling, diving, sailing and wakeboarding. For a more unique experience, couples can explore the ocean aboard a submarine that navigates through shipwrecks and allows for close encounters with sharks.

The adventures continue even after sunset at the Bioluminescent Plankton Beach, which

offers a magical experience. Here, you can see tiny fluorescent lights emitted by plankton in the ocean, creating an enchanting scene known as the Sea of Stars. This phenomenon gives the illusion that stars have fallen into the water, making it a sight not to be missed.

Increasing accessibility

Although the Maldives is quite far from the United States, many flights are available due to the high demand for this destination. Major airlines offer flights from various cities in the U.S., typically with one stop along the way. Despite its remote location, improved flight connections have made the Maldives more accessible to American travelers, particularly those looking to honeymoon in this beautiful island nation.

Once you arrive at Male Airport, many

resorts provide transfer services by seaplane or speedboat, making it easier to reach your final destination. Your dream honeymoon truly begins as soon as you land, as you are whisked away to your resort in snazzy vehicles.

A honeymoon to remember

There is no wonder why this beautiful island nation is a top honeymoon destination for Americans. With its breathtaking scenery across hundreds of islands, luxurious accommodations and countless romantic experiences, the Maldives offer everything newlyweds could wish for in a romantic vacation. For an unforgettable start with your new life partner, look no further than the Maldives, where every moment will be filled with romance and serenity.



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College

Continued from Page 9

Conference title chase and would've been their last game of their season in years past.

This time, they got a second chance after being ranked sixth by the College Football Playoff selection committee and seeded eighth thanks to a system that allowed conference champions (Boise State of the MWC and Arizona State of the Big 12) to leapfrog past them and earn byes.

It would take a unanimous vote of 10 conference commissioners and Notre Dame athletic director Pete Bevacqua to change the seeding system that many agree is worth tweaking.

"I think there will be a good, honest conversation, are there any changes that we ought to make from this year to next year to make something that's worked really well work even better," Bevacqua said over the weekend. "Will there be changes? I don't know. I'm just one person."

Uncertainty still exists about schools paying players

It's a given, though, that there will be changes in the way name, image and likeness (NIL) pay-

ments are doled out to players. Under terms of the House settlement, schools are allowed to pay the players directly by sharing up to \$20.5 million in revenue.

The general thought is that the lion's share of those funds would go to the players whose sports generate the most money — football and basketball (men's and women's). A government memo released last week, however, placed some of that in question by suggesting that paying an outsized portion to men could run afoul of Title IX rules.

The new administration sworn in Monday could change that, but the clock is ticking. The settlement is set to be approved on April 7 and its rules are due to go into effect to start the next school year.

"It's been five years of every day being different than the day before it, and adapting and adjusting and being maleable," said Grant House, the Arizona State swimmer who is the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit that's triggering all these changes. "No one has all the answers right now, but we're looking for solutions."

Maybe what college football could really use is

a commissioner to sort out all these problems.

Whether it would be former Alabama coach Nick Saban or someone else, it's a suggestion that keeps coming up when the topic turns to anything from the playoff to scheduling to paying players to the transfer portal, which has become a flood of players looking for better deals at different places.

"It would help the fans' enjoyment of the game," said ESPN's Chris Fowler. "You need some centralized scheduling, you need a more level playing field. You need better enforcement. You need an entity that can enforce what's going to happen when you go to revenue sharing, because that opens a whole new potential of rule breaking."

2025 top teams projected as a who's who of college powerhouses

Even with the portal and all the new money changing things — see, the \$8 million quarterback at Duke and NFL coaching great Bill Belichick at North Carolina — the list of next season's favorites looks like the usual cast of college football's best programs.

• LSU pulled what's widely regarded as the best haul out of the transfer portal.

• Texas will start the season with Arch Manning, grandson of Archie, at quarterback.

• At Georgia, Gunner Stockton is expected to replace Carson Beck, who committed to Miami.

• The Hurricanes also nabbed Xavier Lucas, a defensive back from Wisconsin who never officially entered the portal, thus raising a whole slew of new questions about tampering and how this system works.

Meanwhile, the champs will look to Julian Sayin, a five-star recruit who transferred to the Buckeyes from Alabama before playing a down of college ball, to replace the NFL-bound Howard.

Coach Ryan Day — his very job threatened after the loss to Michigan — will celebrate briefly. Asked if the pressure has dialed down now that he has a national title, Day already was thinking about next year's opener, Aug. 30 against Texas.

"Try losing the first game and see how that goes at Ohio State," Day said. "We'll see about that."

Tumbling and Trampoline team travels to invitational

Members of Gloria's Tumbling and Trampoline team competed in a Winter Wonderland invitational on Jan. 18 in Rio Grande, Ohio.

There were 12 teams from Ohio and Kentucky on hand, with about 200 individuals.

Kaleigha Alig received a high point award in trampoline.

The rest of those taking part were Eleanor

Alig, Riley Harless, Kinzlee Alig, Aaryahi Sharp, Camille Schmunk, Cooper James, Harper Dean, Brenny Harless, Serenity Miller, Veyda McJunkin, Piper James, Abby Stinebaugh, Amelia Martin, Avery Perkins, Colbee Little, Mileigh Carroll, Catrina Sturgell, Marley Snoke, Rileigh Carroll, Morgan Williams, and Nora Kopus.

Beltran likely to make Hall of Fame next year

BY NOAH TRISTER
AP BASEBALL WRITER

It now appears it's a question of when, not if, Carlos Beltrán will be voted into the Hall of Fame.

In fact, next year could be his time, with the ballot wide open.

Ichiro Suzuki, CC Sabathia and Billy Wagner were elected in voting by the Baseball Writers' Association of America announced Tuesday night. Beltrán fell 19 votes short of the needed 75%.

It was only Beltrán's third year on the ballot — the maximum is 10 — so the graceful outfielder is in good shape to make it eventually. And next year should work in his favor because there probably won't be any first-ballot inductees. Cole Hamels and Ryan Braun are expected to headline the newcomers.

"He's going to be the closest to the finish line, and there's I don't think anybody who's going to threaten 75% coming onto the ballot," said Ryan Thibodaux, whose online ballot tracker provides a preview of the results in the weeks leading up to each year's announcement.

Fellow center fielder Andruw Jones may have a shot next year after his approval rating jumped from 61.6% to 66.2% this time. The concern for Jones is he has only two years left.

"You'd maybe want to see a little bit more of a jump to be sure about him being able to close the gap," Thibodaux said. "Not in a bad position at 66%, but I don't think he's in 'sure thing' territory at this point."

New 2026 arrivals

Hamels went 163-122 with a 3.43 ERA in 15

major league seasons and was the MVP of the 2008 World Series for the Philadelphia Phillies. Braun played all 14 of his seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers and won National League MVP honors in 2011, although he served a drug suspension that will presumably hurt his chances.

Also newly eligible next year are Matt Kemp, the runner-up to Braun for that MVP, as well as 2016 Cy Young Award winner Rick Porcello and longtime Kansas City Royals standout Alex Gordon.

Last chance

Manny Ramirez gets his 10th and final try next year. He received 34.3% of the vote this time, with his own drug-suspension history holding him back despite his 555 home runs.

Coattail effect?

Andy Pettitte's percentage more than doubled from 13.5% to 27.9%, perhaps a result of Sabathia's high support. The two had similar career win totals and ERAs.

Pettitte, however, has two problems: He admitted using performance-enhancing drugs, and he has only three more years on the ballot with a long way to go.

"He's definitely got to make some serious headway quickly," Thibodaux said.

Long road ahead

Of the four first-time candidates this year, two of them — Suzuki and Sabathia — were voted into the Hall. Two others cleared the 5% threshold needed to stay on the ballot. Dustin Pedroia debuted at 11.9%, and Félix Hernández drew 20.6% approval.

junior high

Tigers 8th grade boys win

West Liberty-Salem defeated Triad 50-12 in eighth grade boys basketball Tuesday.

For the Tigers, Grant Krabill had 13, Eli Jones 12 and Brandel Sullivan 10 points. Other scoring: Tyler Hershberger 5, Isaiah Barth 3, Rylan Leichty 2, Nate Shivley 2, Ashton Brannon 2, and Terrelle Sadler 1.

WL-S seventh grade girls win

West Liberty-Salem's seventh grade girls defeated Triad 36-14. Rylee Falloon had 17 points, Bella Johnson scored 13, Avery Brown had four and Lilly Yeater put in two.

For Triad, Cayda Millice had 12 points and Serenity Phillips scored two.

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