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Weather outlook

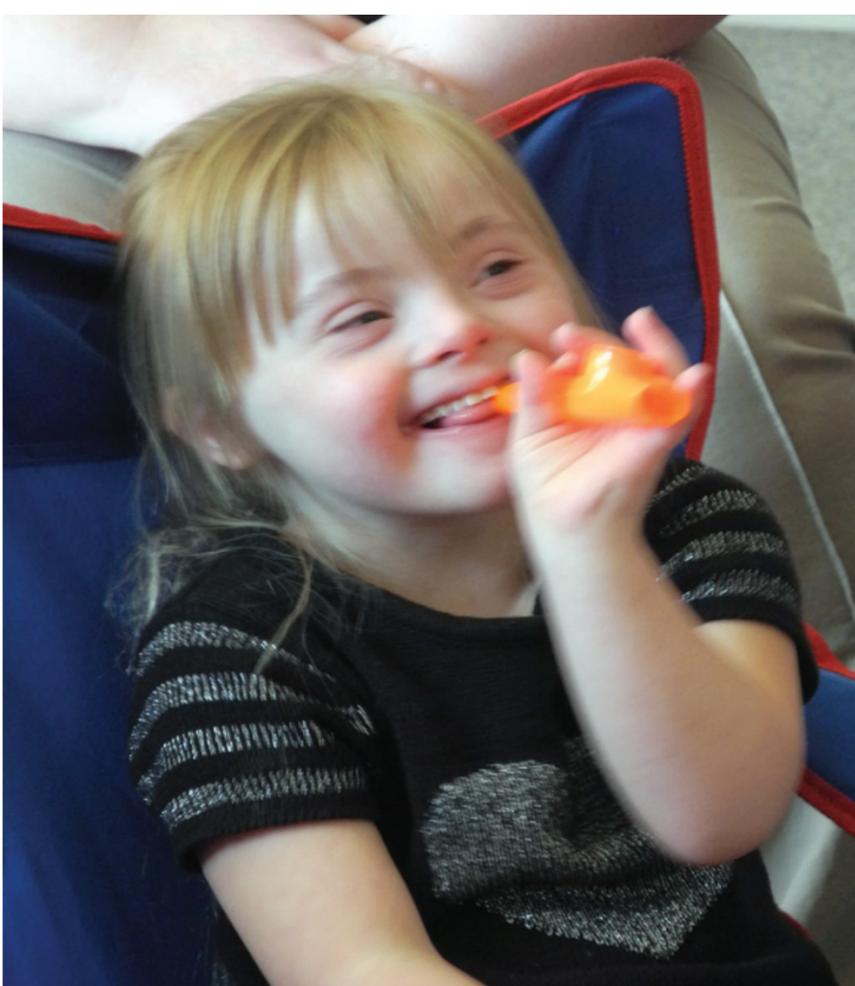
Saturday High 67, Low 47 	Sunday High 61, Low 46 	Monday High 63, Low 51
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Local news and weather at www.thepilotnews.com

Weekend, April 6-7, 2013

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PILOT PHOTO/LYDIA BEERS

Emily King, 6, laughs while practicing her music at Walkerton Elementary School Wednesday.

Music therapy

BY LYDIA BEERS
STAFF WRITER

WALKERTON — Every Wednesday, a small group of Walkerton Elementary students gathers around for a special lesson.

Music therapist Angel Leung hands out instruments and leads the kids in song, dance, and more than a few bouts of laughter. Special needs teacher Lisa Rizek, who started music therapy in her class this January after receiving a grant from the Autism Resources Group of Marshall County, said she's impressed at how engaged her students are during the music sessions.

"Music is universal," said Rizek. "We have some students who are non-verbal and (music) is a way they can communicate in a non-threatening setting. It allows them to express themselves."

Rizek said she found Leung, who works for Michiana's Behavior Services and Therapy, when attending an autism resources event last November. Around that same time, Rizek learned that the Autism Resources of Marshall County group had some grant money available to local teachers.

"I knew (music therapy) was a service

that was available, and I had been looking for something to add to our program," said Rizek.

The grant Rizek received will pay for Leung's services for the rest of the school year. Rizek said fundraising events will be held in order to continue to offer the music program in future years.

"(Music sessions) are about following directions, social interaction with peers, and attending in a group," said Rizek. "Our long-term goals are to increase social skills and working together — and we've already seen increases in those areas."

She added that the students really enjoy the music activities each week and look forward to "Miss Angel" arriving.

"This is presented in a different manner than their other lessons during the day," said Rizek. "Something new is always exciting. It's hard to pick out one thing they like more than another, because they are really engaged during the whole session. They do enjoy playing the instruments when they have the opportunity, especially (Leung's) guitar. That's what she does for a closing activity every week, she lets (the students) strum the guitar and sings a goodbye song to them."

Rizek said because of the success of the music therapy program, she's looking into adding more similar things — like art therapy.

Leung said she's seen

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PILOT PHOTO/LYDIA BEERS
Music therapist Angel Leung hands out kazoos to Walkerton Elementary School students Wednesday. The special needs class started weekly music therapy sessions with Leung in January of this year thanks to a grant from Autism Resources of Marshall County.



School security changes ahead?

BY LYDIA BEERS
STAFF WRITER

MARSHALL CO. — Area schools are thinking about safety, but most say they aren't ready to consider adding an armed guard quite yet. Indiana may be the first state to require an armed employee in every school if a bill that's currently in House committees passes.

Plymouth Community School Corporation Superintendent Dan Tyree said that he's discussed the bill with school board member Gary Cook and Cook feels that it's too early in the legislative process to make a prediction of what could eventually become law.

"The proposal (to require an armed employee in every Indiana school) was very comprehensive and ranked by importance steps we (as school administrators) should take to make changes in school security,"

said Tyree. "Ironically, the person who did the audit spoke about risk containment a lot. It was his opinion that every time you bring a gun into schools, the risk of something happening increases."

The audit Tyree referred to was a recent school safety audit. The school board is currently reviewing the results. While the results cannot be made available to the public, Tyree said results of the audit may be summarized in a future school board meeting.

"Once the board has digested the results of the audit, the School Safety Committee will start their work on revisions to the plan in time to file it with the state before the start of the next school year."

Jennifer Lucht, superintendent of Argos Community Schools, said the proposed bill will not affect Argos because there are just 700 students in the school corporation. The bill

currently only applies to school corporations with at least 1,000 students.

"We will be auditing our school corporation to make sure we are as safe as possible for students and staff," said Lucht. "Our facility is locked down during the day, people have to buzz to get in. We had some concern from community members (about) whether this is really needed in little Argos. Sadly, recent events support what we've been doing. We now have more support (for locking down the building)."

Lucht said that although Argos is a small community, it's a good idea to be careful.

"We are right by U.S. 31, anything can happen," said Lucht. "We do have a safe schools committee that meets periodically to discuss situations. Our main situations here don't deal with the outside, but situ-

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PILOT PHOTO/LOIS TOMASZEWSKI

Marilyn Miller, representing Plymouth Foundry, accepts an award for top Marshall County Large Industry Per Capita Giving from Tom Blackburn, chairman of the United Way of Marshall County Campaign as executive director Linda Yoder looks on.

United Way hits mark

BY LOIS TOMASZEWSKI
STAFF WRITER

PLYMOUTH — What can a half million dollars buy in Marshall County?

Those attending the United Way of Marshall County's annual meeting and recognition event Thursday night at the Plymouth Country Club found out just how far local dollars can stretch. The 2012 campaign raised \$475,000 this year, and 21 local organizations lending a hand to those less fortunate are the beneficiaries.

"We can't thank each and everyone of you enough for all you do and your commitment to Marshall County," said Jessica Oliver, the allocation chairwoman for the United Way of Marshall County.

The money was distributed to organizations involved in education, health and the

general welfare of the community, such as Red Cross and the Salvation Army. A portion of the money raised in the campaign helps pay for expenses related to the United Way campaign. This "Cornerstone Program" raised slightly more than \$99,000 this year.

"When we started this two years ago, the goal was to create a fund to cover operating expenses," Master of Ceremonies and United Way volunteer Mike Lintner said. "It has been a successful event."

Lintner told the crowd gathered Thursday that enough support has been realized through these efforts that only two percent of the annual operating and administrative costs are not covered. That means that 98 percent of every donation can go to the agencies and organizations that are helping others.

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PILOT PHOTO/LYDIA BEERS
Jonathan Nowitzki, 7, shows off his skill with the kazoo during music time.

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great improvement in the students since she started in January.

"Social interventions such as...instrument exploration require students to initiate social interactions with peers, staff or me while participating — such as initiating eye contact, sharing, verbally saying 'please' and 'thank you' which people with autism and intellectual disabilities generally have difficulty doing," said Leung. "Once they have acquired and are used to the skills (I hope) that they will be able to initiate social interaction with their peers

outside of music therapy time so as to be able to make friends, maintain friendships, develop connections and relationships, and eventually be more independent in their social lives."

Leung said she's also working with the students to increase their attention span and level of participation.

"All of the students enjoy music therapy time, and show so much enthusiasm in learning through the use of music, so this program is really a win-win for the classroom," said Leung.

Security, from Page A1

ations that happen inside (the school) — like fights in the hallways. We have very few incidents due to the low number of students we have."

Lucht said that if any changes to safety procedure happen, students and parents can expect to see those changes by the start of next school year, or potentially during summer school.

Triton Community School Corporation Superintendent Donna Burroughs said that her district had security revisions in the works last year before the Sandy Hook shooting. The security camera at the high school is currently being updated to a web-based system and a

similar system is also being installed at the elementary school

"We are awaiting a safety inspection of our schools by the state police team that specialized in this area," said Burroughs. "After that, we will review our safety plan as we do every year and make any suggested alterations made by the safety team."

She added that administration has not yet discussed the possibility of having armed personnel in the school buildings.

"At this time, we would not have funding for such a position without removing another employee or program," said Burroughs.

The Superintendent of the

Culver Community School Corporation, Brad Schuldt, said Culver schools were also planning some safety improvements this year before the Sandy Hook shooting.

"The plan included specific projects but we have decided to wait until the Indiana legislative process is complete so that we might have a better idea of what might be required of us and what dollars are available," said Schuldt.

He added that projects planned include upgrading video capabilities in both buildings and making some changes in doors and entrances.

Bremen Superintendent Russ Mikel said that the cor-

poration's principals, four Safety Specialists in the district, the town police and fire chiefs, and the Board of School Trustees met to discuss safety. He added that some of the things discussed in this meeting were numbering entrances and exits of the building from the outside, possibly putting a radio in each office area, and having the local police walk the hallways of the schools on a regular basis.

"We feel comfortable with the response time of our local police and fire department," said Mikel.

Senate Bill 1 addressing armed officers in public schools can be viewed at

www.in.gov.

What about private schools?

Private schools taking steps to look at school security

By LYDIA BEERS
STAFF WRITER

MARSHALL CO. — Recently proposed Indiana legislation to require an armed guard at every school won't apply to private schools.

Several area private school administrators weighed in on the subject recently, describing their current safety measures and whether they might be willing to consider an armed guard at their building.

"I'm not offended by the notion of (having an armed employee)," said Matthew Elliott, administrator of Grace Baptist Christian School in Plymouth. "Immediately after the Newtown shooting there were several parents who asked if that could happen. The parents in our area of dealings have been supportive or at least open to the idea."

Elliott said that school administrators have not yet entered into any formal

discussions about hiring an armed guard.

"The financial side will be tough if it's required," said Elliott. "That could be difficult for schools that are not on a subsidized budget."

Elliott added that school administrators at Grace Baptist are taking a proactive approach when it comes to school safety. The school has always been locked down during the day except for the main office doors. After the Newtown shooting, the front doors are now locked as well.

"We've implemented a new security system where visitors must be buzzed in by the receptionist," said Elliott. "That ensures that strangers aren't coming in. Obviously, people that you know and think are safe could still do things. We are trying to be proactive and not reactive. We feel that we have a fairly good handle on security."

Grace Baptist is a K-12 school that has approximately 70 students currently

enrolled.

Saint Michael Catholic School in Plymouth is another local private school thinking seriously about upping safety. Amy Weidner, principal, said she plans to invite Plymouth police officers to the school soon so they can become familiar with the building's layout.

"We want officers to be extremely familiar with the school facilities and our children, so if there ever was an emergency (the officers) would be familiar faces to the kids," said Weidner.

She said that parents shouldn't be alarmed if they see police vehicles outside the school.

"The police are happy to (visit the building) they are great folks to work with," said Weidner. "We are looking to do safety training for the teachers the day before school starts next year. We are having a safety specialist come in and show teachers different (self-defense) moves and things to look for. We have a safety plan

that we practice with students and staff. Nothing is ever foolproof or perfect but we work toward that."

Weidner said that the school's diocese and policy does not allow for anyone to be armed at the school, with the exception of visiting police officers. She doesn't know if the push to have armed employees at schools will affect Saint Michael.

"As far as arming teachers, that's not a policy as of yet," said Weidner. "That may change — I don't know."

Culver Academies has a full-time campus safety department. Campus Safety Manager Troy Heckaman said that students, faculty, and staff members are trained in accepted safety and security protocols. He didn't specifically say if any changes to the security plan are coming, just that the plan is constantly under review.

Heckaman said that there has been discussion of adding armed guards on campus, but did not elaborate.

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