

THE Daily Advocate

Happy Holidays



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Ansonia Local Schools installs solar panels



STEPHANIE LEIS/Advocate Photo

Tony Frangiosa, project manager for TMI Electric, is pictured talking with Ansonia Superintendent Jim Atchley about the solar panel project on the roof of Ansonia Local Schools. The \$1.5 million solar panel project is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

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ANSONIA - On the roof of Ansonia Local Schools, 1,953 solar panels are being installed in hopes of providing 40 percent of the school's

energy. Superintendent Jim Atchley said the school entered into a power purchasing agreement for the \$1.5 million project with Solar Power & Light Solar Installers LLC, the general contractors for the project. "The company, Solar Power and Light, are putting all of the panels in at their own cost, and we just

agreed to buy the electric from them," said Atchley. "We have a 15-year agreement, and we had no up-front costs with this project, which is the only way we could have entered into it." The design, engineering and construction for the project is being

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Local Ansonia hires new police officer

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ANSONIA - The village of Ansonia recently welcomed a new police officer, Jamie Joseph. He was sworn in on Oct. 18, and his first day was Oct. 20. "I came here and everyone welcomed me with open arms," said Joseph. "Everyone's been polite and very respectful." Joseph previously worked for 6 1/2 years with the Cridersville Police Department. He is from the St. Marys area. "I needed someone with experience because I do not have time or resources to train a new officer," said Ansonia Chief of Police Frank Shapiro. "I had narrowed the choice down to 4-5 applicants with experience. This gentleman came out on top."

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Arcanum to begin virtual academics program

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ARCANUM - The Arcanum-Butler Local School District is beginning a new virtual academics program called the Arcanum Virtual Academy. Students will be able to enroll in the academy for fall 2012 classes. Jim Gray, current high school principal,

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Pillar, Harry Niswonger

Craftsman puts heart and soul into his work

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Christmas Story

ARCANUM — It is people like Harry Niswonger who make Christmas time special for the children in Darke County.

Winner of the Ansonia Lumber Co.'s Toys-For-Tots toy contest, he made a working firetruck out of wood that will be opened up by some lucky child this weekend. In fact, 40 other youngsters will be getting the homemade gifts that were entered in the contest after being distributed through the Marine Corps Reserves' Toys For Tots' collection of toys from the age of newborns to the age of 17.

Niswonger has been entering the contest for three consecutive years, winning second-place awards the past two years. He was also recipient of two rosettes at the Great

Darke County Fair this year with another firetruck, which was the People's Choice award, and a clock.

His woodworking projects, he said, take a lot of hours, but hours he is willing to spend.

"I've been into woodworking all my life," he said. "I hope whoever gets it (the firetruck)...the parents realize what it is and takes care of it."

Niswonger, who turned 87 on Dec. 14, is retired and was widowed two years ago upon the death of wife Lois Irene. He had worked in the model shop of Delco Products, making all of the new products.

"Since she died, I have so much time on my hands I don't know what to do," he said.

The most favorite thing he



Harry Niswonger



has ever worked on is a crane on tracks, which he plans to consider for his next year's fair entries.

Niswonger, who also makes such things as jewelry boxes,

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Sports

Kayla Linkous



'We will be better because of it.'

— Tri-Village girls basketball coach Brad Gray

Tri-Village loses to Miami East

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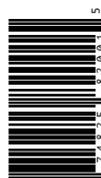
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STEPHANIE LEIS/Advocate Photo

Ansonia Chief of Police Frank Shapiro (left) was pleased to hire another police officer, Jamie Joseph, to join Ansonia's Police Department. Joseph's first day at work was Oct. 20.

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Shapiro explained that while he and Joseph work full-time, the department is considered part-time there are not enough people to operate it 24 hours a day for seven days a week year-round.

"Since I'm appointed as chief of police, I have a lot of administrative duties, which limits my actual patrol time on the streets," said Shapiro. "Having another officer stretches the number of hours of people on street, watching people's houses and traffic."

Shapiro was hired in August 2009 when Ansonia had no police department at that time. He officially opened the new police department on Nov. 2, 2009.

Shapiro said he would like to hire more officers, but money is an issue. Shapiro's plans for 2012 are to hire 1-2 auxiliary officers, which are full-fledged police officers who volunteer their time to the community. He said the requirements would be very stringent, and the auxiliary officers would still need to be certified by the state of Ohio.

"Things are going very well," said Shapiro of Joseph joining the police department. "He's good with the public."

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done by TMI Electric out of Cincinnati. Tony Frangiosa, project manager for TMI Electric, said he is very pleased with the progress. He said the company hopes to have the wiring completed and ready for final inspection before the end of 2011.

"We started talking about this back in May or June. They came out and did some site reviews to determine if it made sense for them," said Atchley about the project. "It probably took us a month and a half to go through the actual contract and the document. Once we completed that step, they [TMI Electric] came in and they've been working seven days a week to try and get the project completed by the end of the year."

The solar panels cover 2/3 of the roof of the K-12 building. Atchley expects the solar panels will save the school between \$6,000 and \$8,000 on its electric bill each year.

"We're very optimistic with it, not only from the energy savings, but the whole idea of going green," said Atchley. "Ideally, I think we would like to get this in our curriculum and let our students see that there are opportunities for careers in alternative energies."

Ansonia Local Schools is located at 600 E. Canal St., Ansonia.

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airplanes and locomotives, had known about the Ansonia Lumber Co.'s toy contest by seeing it advertised in the newspaper but was never interested in entering until three years ago. And, as for the domestic arts competition at the fair, it was friend Byron Brehm who encouraged him to enter this year.

Brehm was also a contestant in Ansonia Lumber's homemade toy contest, taking fourth place with a tractor he made.

The top six contestants in Ansonia this year received prizes and all of the entrants received lumber from Frank Miller Lumber Co.

"The greatest thing about this is the lumber we get," Niswonger said.

A lifelong resident of Darke County with the exception of 13 years he resided in Dayton, Niswonger is a veteran, having served in the U.S. Navy out of high school from 1943-45.

A charter member of the Arcanum Veterans of Foreign Wars, he has four children, eight grandchildren, nine great-great-grandchildren and one great-great-great-grandchild.

"I've made all of the girls jewelry boxes," he said.

Santa Claus still flying high in new poll

WASHINGTON (AP) - Why do kids believe a chubby guy in a flying sleigh can deliver joy across America? Because their parents do. A whopping 84 percent of grown-ups were once children who trusted in Santa's magic, and lots cling to it still.

Things are changing fast these days, with toddlers wishing for iPads, grade schoolers emailing their Christmas lists and moms wrestling over bargain toys at midnight sales. Despite all the pressures on the rituals of the season, an AP-GfK poll confirms that fam-

ilies are sticking by old St. Nick.

"It's important for kids to have something to believe in," says great-grandmother Wanda Smith of Norman, Okla.

And so they do. Year after year, Santa Claus survives the scoffers and the Scrooges and the 6-year-old playground skeptics. He endures belittling commercials that portray him shopping at Target or taking directions from an iPhone. He shrugs off scolds who say his bagful of toys overshadows the reason for the season.

Two-thirds of parents

with kids under 18 say Santa's an important part of their celebrations this year. Moms, especially, have a soft spot for the man in red 71 percent of them say he's important, and that's a big jump from 58 percent just five years ago.

His overall popularity is up slightly from an AP-AOL poll in 2006, before the recession hit. In these bleaker times of homes lost to foreclosure and parents sweating out their next paychecks, the poll shows Santa riding high with families both wealthy and poor.

Maybe that's because the big guy's always known how to stretch a dollar to make a kid smile.

Smith, whose childhood gifts were mostly handmade by her mother things like cookies and knit scarves remembers that every year Santa Claus managed to put one present under the tree for her to share with her two brothers (four more siblings came later).

"One year it was a bicycle, one year we had a sled. One year we got a puppy his name was Jack and he was a border collie," recalls Smith, now 70. "We didn't have a lot," she said, "but we didn't know it. Our mother and daddy made it a wonderful time for us."

In multicultural America, Father Christmas isn't just for Christians any more. Three-fourths of non-Christian adults say they believed in Santa when they were children. And half feel he's important to their holiday celebrations now.

Developmental psychologist Cyndy Scheibe, who's been interviewing kids about Santa since 1986, said lots of Jewish children told her that Santa Claus was real, even though he didn't stop at their houses on Christmas Eve.

And many non-Christian parents embrace Santa because they see Christmas serving as a

secular as well as religious holiday in the U.S., she said.

"Santa Claus is more than someone who just comes and gives you a present, it's this whole spirit of giving and magic that you get to be a part of and celebrate," said Scheibe, an associate professor at Ithaca College in New York.

That's what keeps Santa going over the decades and across cultures, she said. "That, and there's almost nothing as much fun as getting to see your kid's face so completely excited."

Scheibe knows firsthand. She used to climb a ladder to the roof every Christmas, her daughter watching, to leave a key tied to a big red bow, because they didn't have a fireplace.

It's not all snowflakes and mistletoe in Santaland, however. Even among Christians, there's tension about how big a role, if any, a jolly old elf deserves in the celebration of Christ's birth.

Almost half of Americans polled said Santa detracts from the religious significance of Christmas more than he enhances it.

When she was growing up, Naomi Stenberg's fundamentalist Baptist parents didn't want her mixed up with Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny or Halloween trick-or-treating.

"I didn't understand why everybody else got to believe in Santa, and me and my brother didn't," says Stenberg, 32, now a stay-at-home mom in Baxter, Minn. "I felt left out."

Her own three children have gotten the full Kris Kringle experience, but sometimes she feels ill-equipped to handle the tough queries from her youngest, 6-year-old Rylen.

"She's been asking questions like how does Santa fit through the chimney," she said. "I don't know how to answer things like that."

Versailles recognized as top school

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VERSAILLES - Versailles High School has been recognized as a top academic high school in Ohio. Based on performance on the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT), Versailles is in the top 10 percent of all schools in Ohio, according to a Gerber Analytics report.

Versailles ranked 56 out of 1,017 schools which were analyzed, according to the report.

"It feels great," said Versailles Superintendent David Vail of the recognition. "It is a great testimony to the dedication of our staff and students."

Gerber Analytics also compares schools' OGT

scores to other schools within their athletic conference. Versailles was ranked second in the Midwest Athletic Conference, with Minster coming in first place, according to the report for that conference.

While Vail said he is very proud of the accomplishment, he said he also looks at it as a challenge to those students who will take the OGT in the future to meet or do better than this year's OGT scores.

"We are fortunate to have a very supportive community, a truly dedicated staff and some of the best students in the State of Ohio," said Vail.

Both the top schools report and athletic conference reports can be found at <http://gerberanalytics.com/ogt/ogt.php>.

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will be the director of the program, while Jason Stephan will take over as interim principal.

"My job as the director of the Arcanum Virtual Academy will allow me the opportunity to work with students and their parents to provide a unique and individualized educational experience," said Gray in an email.

The program is for students who are home-schooled or students who have left school and want to come back. The academy is an online program which allows students to complete their work outside of the traditional school setting, according to Superintendent Joe Scholler.

"The Arcanum Virtual Academy is a great option for home-schooled students in our county, as well as other students who choose to pursue a path other than traditional education," said Gray.

Academy students "will have the opportunity to participate in all Arcanum-Butler Schools activities, including sports," according to Gray.

In addition, "academy students will receive the same diploma as any other Arcanum High School student, once they fulfill all graduation requirements," said Gray.

Students of the academy will have "online access to teachers 24 hours a day, five days a week and technical support is available 24/7," said Gray. "Options for the program can and will vary to meet the individual needs of each student. The rigorous curriculum of the program will provide a positive and rewarding learning experience for all students."

Students in seventh through twelfth grade are eligible to enroll in the academy. Over 100 course offerings will be available with 18 advanced placement courses offered, according to Gray.

Monthly informational meetings concerning the academy will begin in February. For questions about the academy or to set up an individual appointment, Gray can be reached at 692-5174 ext. 1355.

"I believe the Arcanum Virtual Academy will be a great addition to out already fantastic district," said Gray.

Obama on political high, but momentum hard to keep

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama has capped a bruising year by winning a tax cut extension for millions of Americans, but his momentum may be hard to maintain in the coming election year.

The president's victory in a tax fight with House Republicans overshadowed Washington's deepening dysfunction and the slow progress of the economy on his watch.

He left Friday for Hawaii with the look of a president who was back in command of the political stage.

The lasting impression was of Obama presiding over a two-month extension of a payroll tax cut after House Republicans caved on demands for a longer-lasting deal.

Yet on this issue, as on many, much work remains for Obama after the new year, just when voters begin choosing a Republican nominee to try to defeat him.



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