

Bright Futures Readies Students for Success



Long tables full of shoes and other school supplies are distributed by Bright Futures at Trenton High School. GABE STARK/STAFF PHOTO

Bright Futures Trenton and community partners helped hundreds of area students prepare for the new school year during the organization's annual Back to School event, providing everything from school supplies and shoes to haircuts, clothing and personal hygiene products.

A total of 377 students participated in the event, including 155 elementary students, 83 middle school students and 139 high school students. Bright Futures also reported serving 330 lunches and providing

223 students with new shoes.

The event brought together a wide range of services intended to remove some of the financial barriers families face as children return to the classroom.

Terri Critten, an organizer for Bright Futures Trenton, said the event is about more than simply distributing supplies.

"When every student has the supplies and resources they need for

BRIGHT FUTURES

CONTINUED TO PG 2

Trenton Assembly of God Prayer Walk to Cover Students in Prayer

Gabe Stark
Reporter

Trenton Assembly of God is inviting the community to gather Sunday, Aug. 16, for its annual school prayer walk, an event church leaders say is intended to bring residents together in prayer for students, teachers, staff and the coming school year.

The event will begin at 6 p.m. in C.F. Russell Stadium with a time of praise and prayer before participants walk a mapped route around the school grounds. Freedom Sound will provide music during the opening gathering.

Darcie Taylor, women's ministry director at Trenton Assembly of God, said the prayer walk predates her leadership of the ministry and has changed over time. This will be the eighth prayer walk she has helped organize.

The event originally coincided with See You at the Pole, with

adults walking and praying while students participated in the student-led prayer gathering before school. Taylor said attendance became difficult because many adults were working during the morning hours, prompting organizers to eventually move the prayer walk to the evening.

Participants will begin at the stadium, where organizers will pray over students and teachers and explain how to use a web-based prayer walk map. The map includes links tied to different locations along the route, with each stop providing a specific prayer focus.

At the stadium, for example, participants will be encouraged to pray for student-athletes. At the playground, the focus will turn toward younger children and topics such as friendships. After the

PRAYER WALK

CONTINUED TO PG 3



Grundy County Health Department encourages residents to follow basic food-safety practices to help prevent illness, including washing fresh produce, properly cooking raw foods to appropriate temperatures and washing hands. METRO CREATIVE

Grundy County Reports Cyclospora Cases

Gabe Stark
Reporter

Grundy County has recorded fewer than 10 cases of cyclosporiasis amid a nationwide outbreak of the intestinal illness, according to the Grundy County Health Department.

Administrator Elizabeth Gibson said the department does not release an exact number when there are only a few local cases because doing so in a small community could create privacy concerns. The department's investigations into the Grundy County cases have

been completed.

While the local investigations have concluded, a large multi-state outbreak remains under investigation.

As of Aug. 5, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 6,358 illnesses in 15 states, including Missouri, associated with an outbreak linked to iceberg lettuce from Taylor Farms in Mexico. At least 278 people had been hospitalized and two deaths had been reported.

CYCLOSPORA

CONTINUED TO PG 2

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Bright Futures

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

school — a backpack, the required school supplies, a new pair of shoes, etc. — we are setting them up for success and sending the message that this community cares for them and supports them,” Critten said.

Students received 250 backpacks, 377 sets of school supplies, 130 hygiene bags, 223 pairs of shoes, 44 pairs of underwear and 32 pairs of socks. Organizers also distributed 277 Bulldog shirts and hoodies, while 22 students received haircuts.

Critten said items such as personal hygiene products and fresh haircuts can help students build confidence, while Bulldog clothing can provide a sense of belonging within their school community.

The assistance can also ease a substantial financial burden for families. Critten said the average cost of school supplies alone can range from \$75 to \$170 per student, before accounting for clothing, shoes, hygiene products and other necessities.

“Everything is more expensive



Mia Searcy, daughter of Holly Searcy, gets a free haircut during Bright Futures' back-to-school event. GABE STARK/STAFF PHOTO

this year — shampoo, detergent, shoes, underwear, notebooks, glue sticks, markers, all of it,” Critten said.

She recalled one single mother of three young children saying that, aside from Christmas, preparing her children to return to school was the most expensive time of the year.

First Baptist Church partnered with Bright Futures to offer donated clothing, used shoes and some furniture to community members. Marjorie Keuhn said the church has held clothing giveaways for many years, including before Bright Futures was established. Church members donate items throughout the year, and the congregation also holds a separate giveaway around the beginning of December.

Keuhn said partnering with the



Clothes were also distributed to the public at First Baptist Church. GABE STARK/STAFF PHOTO

back-to-school event makes the resources particularly useful to families preparing children for another school year.

“I think a lot of people have a hard time buying all these things,” Keuhn said. “It’s very expensive to buy all those things right when they need school.”

Anna Muselman said the giveaway reaches beyond students, with adults also coming through to find items they need.

“This event has helped a lot of families, especially when getting ready to start school,” she said. “Kids go through a lot of clothes.”

The effort was made possible by 71 volunteers, who contributed a combined 349 volunteer hours. Those volunteers included 13 Trenton High School students.

Bright Futures’ work continues

throughout the school year.

Critten said the organization’s Food Pals program, formerly known as Backpack Buddies, provides groceries each month to more than 140 Grundy County students experiencing food insecurity.

As a nonprofit organization, Bright Futures depends on financial contributions and volunteers. Community members can assist by donating money or volunteering to pack food bags, shop for clothing, organize supplies and inventory resources.

“The best way to support the work of Bright Futures Trenton is by donating your time, your talent or your treasure,” Critten said.

To learn more about Bright Futures Trenton, including how to donate, visit facebook.com/BrightFuturesTrenton.

TRENTON TELEGRAPH

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Cyclospora

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Taylor Farms de Mexico recalled iceberg lettuce sourced from central Mexico July 17. The CDC said the recalled products’ best-by dates have passed and they should no longer be available in stores or restaurants, although consumers who still have recalled lettuce at home should throw it away or return it.

Cyclospora is a microscopic parasite that causes cyclosporiasis, a gastrointestinal illness most commonly associated with watery diarrhea. People become infected by consuming food or water contaminated with the parasite. Symptoms normally begin about a week after infection but can appear anywhere from two days to two weeks or longer.

Unlike many communicable illnesses, Cyclospora is unlikely to

spread directly from one person to another. The parasite generally must spend at least one to two weeks in the environment after leaving the body before becoming infectious. U.S. outbreaks have frequently been associated with fresh produce.

For local public health workers, a positive test begins an investigation into where the infection may have originated.

Gibson said that the health department works to interview patients and work backward through the illness’s incubation period, asking where they traveled and what foods they consumed.

The goal is to find common exposures among patients that can lead investigators to a contaminated product or other source.

“We investigate them because we want to make sure that we identify the source,” Gibson said. “What’s making people sick?”

The work can also extend to

checking retailers and restaurants after food recalls to ensure affected products have been removed.

Gibson encouraged residents to continue following basic food-safety practices, including washing fresh produce, properly cooking foods when appropriate and washing hands.

“Generally your food is safe in the United States,” Gibson said. “We have lots of ways of keeping it safe, and it’s well tracked.”

Cyclosporiasis can last from several days to more than a month without treatment, and symptoms can disappear and later return. People with weakened immune systems may be at greater risk of prolonged or severe illness.

Anyone experiencing persistent symptoms should contact a health care provider. The CDC notes that Cyclospora may require a specific stool test because routine testing does not always screen for the parasite.

Health Department Reminds Families of School Shot Requirements

Gabe Stark
Reporter

With the start of the school year approaching, the Grundy County Health Department is reminding families to make sure students have the vaccinations required for school attendance.

Health Department Administrator Elizabeth Gibson said the department provides vaccinations and information about the state schedule, but it does not establish vaccination requirements.

"We are a source of credible information about vaccination, but we don't require any vaccination," Gibson said. "That's not our role."

Gibson said the requirements are tied to school attendance and are established through Missouri's school immunization rules. The Health Department's immunization nurses work with families to determine which shots students still need and can administer the required vaccines.

The department sees increased demand during the summer, particularly among students preparing to enter kindergarten, eighth grade and 12th grade.

For students



With the start of the school year approaching, the Grundy County Health Department is reminding families to make sure students have the vaccinations required for school attendance. Health Department Administrator Elizabeth Gibson said the department provides vaccinations and information about the state schedule, but it does not establish vaccination requirements. METRO CREATIVE

entering kindergarten, the Health Department lists DTaP, which protects against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis; MMR, which protects against measles, mumps and rubella; and the chickenpox vaccine.

Students entering eighth grade need Tdap, which protects against tetanus, diphtheria and

pertussis, along with a meningitis vaccination.

Students entering 12th grade need a meningitis vaccination.

The Health Department begins working with students and families before the previous school year ends, but Gibson said the department continues administering vaccinations throughout the summer

and into the final days before classes begin.

"We run right on up to the school year," Gibson said.

In addition to providing required school vaccinations, Gibson said health department staff can answer questions about other vaccines that may be recommended even when they are not required for school attendance.

She said immunizations are part of the department's larger emphasis on preventing illness throughout the community. While a physician's office generally focuses on treating an individual patient, public health agencies work to reduce the spread of disease across the population.

"The health department really is focused on prevention," Gibson said.

That work includes immunizations, communicable-disease investigations, restaurant and food inspections, health screenings and other programs intended to prevent illness and injury.

Families who are unsure whether their child is up to date on required vaccinations can contact the Grundy County Health Department for assistance before the beginning of the school year.

Prayer Walk

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

opening praise and prayer time, participants will disperse and follow the trail at their own pace.

Taylor said the event is rooted in several biblical passages, including Jeremiah 29:7, in which the Israelites in exile are instructed to seek the welfare of the city where they have been sent and pray on its behalf.

"And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare," reads the scripture.

"That passage really struck with me because at the school we are in a place where it's worldly, obviously, and the lord told Jeremiah that no matter where you're at, you are to pray for the peace of that situation," Taylor said.

She also pointed to 1 John 5:14-15, which speaks about the confidence Christians have in approaching God in prayer according to his will.

"We have a responsibility to cover our children and our staff and our schools in prayer, knowing that that's what God asked us to do," Taylor said.

For Taylor, the event also carries a personal connection through her years working in education. She retired after 29 years in the school district, but will return part time under a critical-shortage arrangement for what will be her 30th year.

Taylor said she has made prayer a regular part of her own classroom throughout her career. She recalled people telling her over the years that her classroom felt different when they entered it.

"I'm always very quick to say, 'Well, that's because I pray over my classroom. It's not me,'" Taylor said.

That experience has helped reinforce her commitment to continuing the prayer walk each year. While the event is organized through Trenton Assembly of God, Taylor emphasized that it is intended for the broader community rather than only members of the congregation.

"It brings the community together," Taylor said. "It's not just an event for our church. It's an event for all. Everybody can come. It's an open event."

Taylor said the prayer walk has generally drawn between 50 and 70 people in recent years. Although most participants have traditionally come from Trenton Assembly of God, members of other churches have also attended. Organizers have increased publicity this year and

selected C.F. Russell Stadium as the starting point in hopes of making the gathering feel welcoming to the entire community.

Following the prayer walk, Trenton Assembly of God will host a youth after-party from 7 to 8 p.m. All area youth are invited to attend, with games and walking tacos planned.

"We want our schools to be a place where all are welcome and peaceful," Taylor said.



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Join us as we pray over the upcoming school year for Grundy County area schools, homeschool families, and NCMC. All are invited to attend. Following the prayer walk will be a free youth event at the stadium with food, yard games, and music until 8pm.

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The Daily Celebrates Grand Opening



Members of the Trenton Area Chamber of Commerce joined representatives of The Daily for a ribbon-cutting ceremony Monday, Aug. 10, celebrating the gym and wellness center's grand opening at 916 Harris Avenue in Trenton. GABE STARK/STAFF PHOTO

Mouse Races Aug. 29

A fundraiser benefiting the North Central Missouri College Athletic Department was the topic of a program presented to members of the Trenton Rotary Club on Thursday, Aug. 6, in the BTC Bank community room.

Athletic Director Nate Gamet said the races are scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 29, in the Ketcham Community Center on the NCMC campus.

The fundraiser will include mouse races, a meal and silent and live auctions.

The evening will begin with a social hour at 5 p.m., followed by the meal at 5:45 p.m. The races are expected to begin around 7 p.m., with the event concluding around 9 p.m.

Tables for six are available and include admission for six guests, the meal, one drink ticket per person and a keepsake NCMC-logoed wine bottle. Individual tickets include admission, the meal and one drink ticket. Tickets can be purchased from Gamet at the Ketcham Community Center.

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Trenton Trap and Skeet League Offers Friendly Competition for All Skill Levels

Gabe Stark
Reporter

The Trenton Trap and Skeet League will begin its fall league at 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 20, at the Trenton Trap and Skeet range north of Trenton, offering area residents an opportunity to enjoy friendly competition while practicing and improving their shooting skills.

The league will run for 10 weeks and is open to anyone interested in participating. Organizer Dick Thompson described the league as a family-friendly activity for people of all ages and both sexes, with an emphasis on gun knowledge, safety and improving hunting skills.

Participants will shoot a round of 16-yard targets and a round of handicap targets during a typical league night. Shooters are responsible for providing their own

shells.

Last season, approximately 18 to 22 people participated, although some shooters did not compete every week.

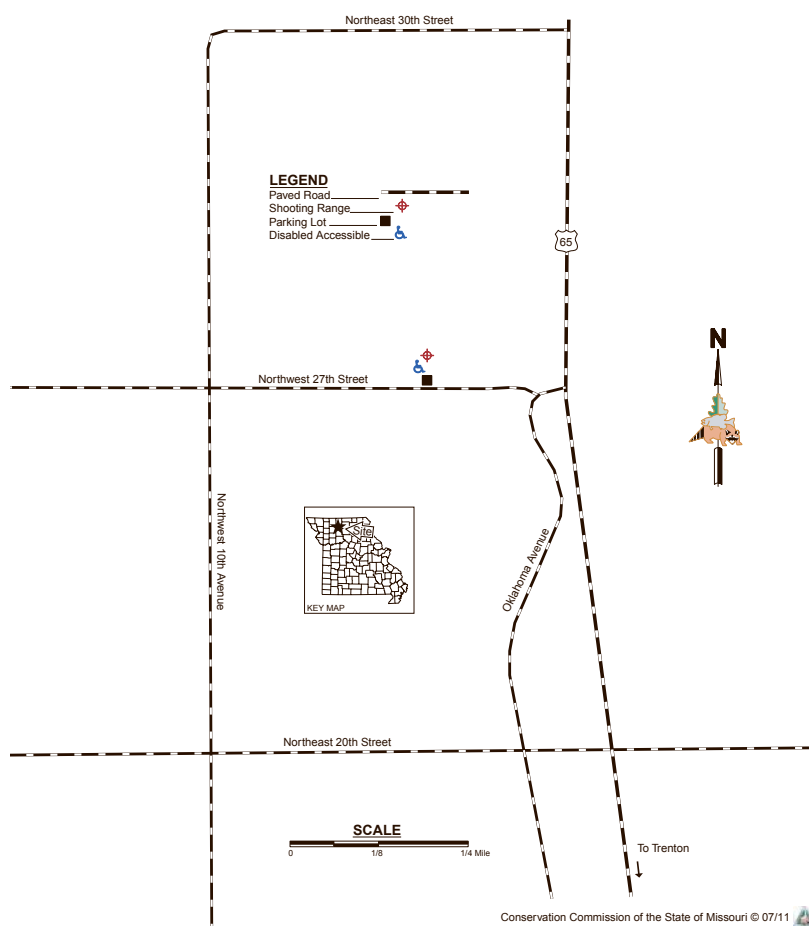
Thompson has been involved with the club for about 21 years and said the league continues to provide a low-pressure way for people to participate in the sport.

The club is open to anyone wanting to participate and places an emphasis on maintaining a welcoming, family-friendly environment. Safety and proper firearm knowledge are also important parts of the club's activities, along with giving shooters an opportunity to practice and improve their hunting skills.

New shooters interested in joining the fall league may contact Dick Thompson at (660) 359-2902 or (660) 359-1964 for more information.

TRENTON AREA TRAP AND SKEET RANGE

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GRUNDY COUNTY



Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri © 07/11

Trenton Girls Tennis Opens New Era Under Lewis

Gabe Stark
Reporter

The Trenton High School girls tennis program will enter the 2026 season under first-year head coach Lucas Lewis, with a young roster and several experienced players expected to lead the way.

Lewis inherits a program that finished 3-7 in dual matches last season.

Trenton graduated three seniors

from last year's squad, leaving the Bulldogs with some holes to fill as they prepare for the fall schedule. However, the team returns juniors Emma Lowrey and Addisyn Wehar, who finished among the top four in their district doubles competition last season.

Lowrey and Wehar are expected to be two of Trenton's primary



contributors this season, along with sophomore Kennedy Cross.

"We will rely on juniors Emma Lowrey and Addisyn Wehar and sophomore Kennedy Cross," Lewis said.

Although the Bulldogs will have some experience near the top of the lineup, much of the roster could be made up of players still learning the sport.

Lewis expects approximately four or five freshmen to join the program, although none of those players have previous tennis experience. The final roster was still uncertain heading into the season.

That youth and uncertainty could present one of Trenton's biggest challenges, but the returning players give the Bulldogs a foundation to build around.

"A strength of the team would be that we do have a few girls with solid experience returning, and they have a desire to show strong

growth both as a program and individuals," Lewis said. "Our weaknesses are really just the unknown of how many girls we will have, and we will be very young."

With a first-year coach and potentially several first-year players, improvement throughout the season could be an important measure of success for the Bulldogs.

Lowrey and Wehar provide the team with postseason experience after their district doubles performance last year, while Cross gives Trenton another returning player expected to contribute heavily.

Lewis said Chillicothe could potentially emerge as one of Trenton's notable opponents during the season, although no particular matchup has been identified as a definitive rivalry.

For a Bulldog team featuring both a new coach and several inexperienced players, the early portion of the schedule should provide an opportunity to establish roles and build toward improvement as the season progresses.

Notice of Annual Shareholders Meeting

The 2026 Annual Meeting of Shareholders (Members) of the Common Stock of Grand River Mutual Telephone Corporation (d/b/a GRM Networks®) will be on August 26, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in the conference room of the GRM Networks® Corporate Office located at 1001 Kentucky Street, Princeton, MO.



Each member was mailed a proxy with the official notice of this meeting. If you are unable to attend, please return your signed proxy. A quorum must be met to conduct the business meeting.

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August 2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in December of 2004 incorporated several changes in regard to local district responsibilities/requirements for the provision of services to parentally-placed private school children with disabilities. The term “parentally-placed private school student” refers to children placed by their parents in private, parochial or other religiously-affiliated schools or home schools. Due to these changes in IDEA the Trenton R-IX School District will offer information to all officials of private schools and parents of parentally-placed private school children, including some home schooled children, within the Trenton R-IX School District. If you would like information regarding the IDEA changes, please contact Brenda Thorne, Director of Special Services for the Trenton R-IX District, at 660-339-6266, Option 5. If interested in information, Brenda Thorne, Trenton R-IX Director of Special Services, will explain how, where and by whom special education and related services can be provided for students with disabilities who are privately placed in non-public school settings within the Trenton R-IX School District.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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The Trenton R-IX School District assures that it will provide information and referral services necessary to assist the State in the implementation of early intervention services for infants and toddlers eligible for the Missouri First Steps program.

The Trenton R-IX School District assures that personally identifiable information collected, used, or maintained by the agency for the purposes of identification, evaluation, placement or provision of FAPE of children with disabilities may be inspected and/or reviewed by their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians may request amendment to the educational record if the parent/guardian believes the record is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the privacy or other rights of their child. Parents have the right to file complaints with the U.S. Department of Education or the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education concerning alleged failures by the district to meet the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

The Trenton R-IX School District has developed a Local Compliance Plan for the implementation of State Regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This plan contains the agency’s policies and procedures regarding storage, disclosure to third parties, retention and destruction of personally identifiable information and the agency’s assurances that services are provided in compliance with the General Education Provision Act (GEPA). This plan may be reviewed at S.M. Rissler Elementary School during school hours.

This notice will be provided in native languages as appropriate.

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Fish Fry
Sept. 12

The Trenton Rotary Club's annual fish fry will be held Saturday, Sept. 12, at the Rock Barn. Both dine-in and carryout meals will be available.

Tickets may be purchased from any Rotary Club member. To learn more about the club and it's events, visit facebook.com/TrentonMORotary.

Rotary
Donates to
Bright Futures



Rotary Past President Daniel Gott presents a \$1,250 check to Bright Futures shoe project organizer Adriane Hoffman during the Aug. 6 Trenton Rotary Club meeting. Funds were raised by the club as part of its Rotary District 6040 Shoes for Orphan Souls project earlier this year.

SUBMITTED

PUZZLES

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS
- 1 Good buddies
 - 5 End of life
 - 10 Stinging insect
 - 14 Sinful
 - 15 Type of navel
 - 16 Catch sight of
 - 17 Tiny amount
 - 18 Screen star Garbo
 - 19 Untrustworthy one
 - 20 "What's it matter to me?": 4 wds.
 - 23 Scandinavian capital
 - 24 Retailer with cat toys
 - 25 Mathematical mean: Abbr.
 - 27 Your and my
 - 29 Tuba's sound
 - 33 Armed conflict
 - 34 Endorse digitally
 - 37 "You've got some _!"
 - 38 In the style of: 2 wds.
 - 39 Listless feeling
 - 41 "That had to hurt!"
 - 42 Drive away
 - 45 From the Netherlands
 - 47 Take a load off
 - 48 Of a cultural group
 - 50 "Told you so!"
 - 51 '90s music holders: Abbr.
 - 52 Overact
 - 55 Chomp on
 - 57 Star dancer: 2 wds.
 - 62 Actress Loughlin
 - 63 Measuring stick
 - 64 Graceful melody
 - 66 Wind instrument
 - 67 Imitating
 - 68 Dancer's stiff skirt
 - 69 High ratings
 - 70 Sown things
 - 71 Visible air pollution

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Created by Stella Zawistowski 8/14/26

DOWN

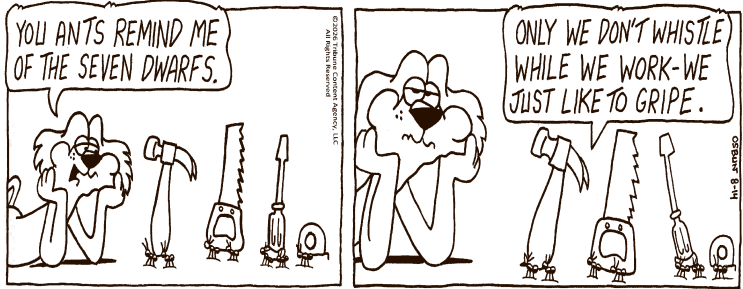
- 1 Architect I.M. _
- 2 Openly declare
- 3 Fine art print
- 4 Does in
- 5 Canine shelter
- 6 Money in Greece
- 7 Devoured: 2 wds.
- 8 Mr., Mrs., or Ms.
- 9 Approach: 2 wds.
- 10 Word of greeting
- 11 Japan's region
- 12 Practice boxing
- 13 Heap for burning
- 21 Gin flavoring
- 22 Sacred image
- 25 In the know
- 26 Parking attendant
- 28 Orange peel
- 30 Area of a stage
- 31 Keep away from
- 32 Tests the weight of
- 35 Bearded antelope
- 36 Trail mix ingredients

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R	I	A								I
Y			E	S						E
										A
										L
										S

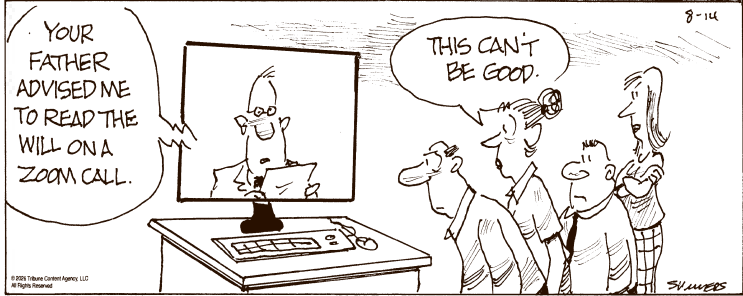
Friday's Puzzle Solved

- 40 Arctic Ocean floaters
- 43 Foes
- 44 Peru's capital
- 46 Estate beneficiary
- 49 Hooded snakes
- 53 Gray-brown color
- 54 Singer Goulding
- 56 Leans slightly
- 57 Mathematical graph
- 58 After-bath garment
- 59 Wrought _ (gate material)
- 60 Allow to borrow
- 61 _ saxophone
- 65 Sharp pull

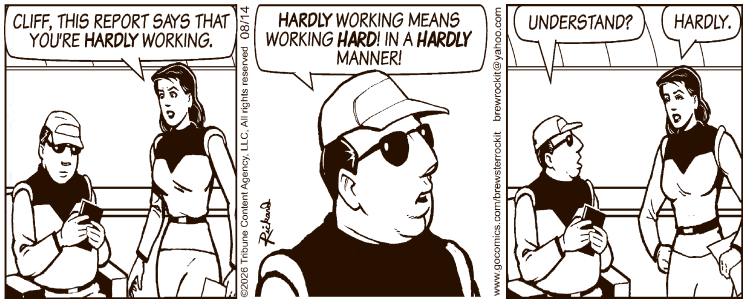
ANIMAL CRACKERS



BOUND & GAGGED



BREWSTER ROCKIT



SUDOKU

THE SAMURAI OF PUZZLES By The Mephram Group

Level 1 2 3 4

		5				3	7	
		2	5	7			6	
	1			3				2
			3	6				
		8	2		1	7		
				8	4			
2				4			5	
	7			1	5	6		
	9	1				4		

8	3	4	7	2	9	1	6	5
6	2	9	5	1	8	4	7	3
7	5	1	3	4	6	9	8	2
9	1	2	4	8	7	3	5	6
3	6	7	1	5	2	8	4	9
5	4	8	6	9	3	7	2	1
2	8	5	9	3	4	6	1	7
1	9	6	8	7	5	2	3	4
4	7	3	2	6	1	5	9	8

8/14/26

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk

Earth Touch Opens New Headquarters

Gabe Stark
Reporter

Earth Touch has established its new headquarters in Gallatin after purchasing the former McBee family grain facility. The move creates a central location for its growing Black Einkorn business while expanding the agricultural services it offers to producers across north-west Missouri.

The company purchased the facility in late September 2025 and has spent the past several months preparing it for operation. Earth Touch President Jon Thomas said the location provides office space, grain storage and room for continued growth.

"We've been moving in and getting everything ready to go," Thomas said. "It was a great opportunity for us, and I think it was a great opportunity for the McBee family as well."

The Gallatin headquarters serves as the company's main office and includes approximately 840,000 bushels of grain storage. In addition to producing its Black Einkorn products, Earth Touch offers grain handling, custom fertilizer blending, livestock feed production and custom farm services, including planting, seed drilling, fertilizer application, harvesting and hauling.

Although the company provides a variety of agricultural services, Thomas said its primary focus is Black Einkorn, an ancient grain that has gained popularity among consumers looking for minimally processed foods and alternatives to modern wheat.

According to Earth Touch, Einkorn is the world's oldest cultivated wheat. Unlike modern wheat, which has been extensively hybridized over the past century, the company said Einkorn has retained a much simpler genetic structure.

Thomas explained that modern wheat varieties were bred to produce larger harvests, but that process also created a more complex gluten structure. Earth Touch emphasizes that people with celiac disease should continue to avoid wheat products, but Thomas said many customers with non-celiac gluten sensitivities have found they can enjoy Einkorn without the discomfort they experience from conventional wheat.

Earth Touch grows a naturally pigmented variety known as Black Einkorn. During processing, the company carefully selects the darkest kernels, which Thomas said contain the highest concentrations of naturally occurring anthocyanins—the same type of antioxidants responsible for the color found in foods such as blueberries.

"When plants experience certain natural stresses, they produce pigments," Thomas said. "Those pigments also increase antioxidants and anthocyanins."

According to the company, Black Einkorn is naturally high in protein, dietary fiber and iron while also providing lutein and manganese. Because the grain has not undergone the extensive hybridization of commercial wheat, Earth Touch says it retains a simpler gluten structure while offering a rich, nutty flavor that many customers prefer over traditional whole wheat flour.

"We've been told by multiple mills across the country that our Black Einkorn has the best flavor profile of any Einkorn they've worked with," Thomas said.

Earth Touch currently grows more than 500 acres of Einkorn each year. The grain is cleaned, dehulled, milled and packaged at the company's nearby processing facility before being shipped to customers throughout the United States.

Customers can purchase whole berries to mill at home or buy ready-to-use flour through the company's retail store in Gallatin or online. Earth Touch also produces cookies, crackers and pasta made with Black Einkorn and plans to expand its product line with baking mixes for pancakes, biscuits and other recipes.

"It is more expensive than regular wheat," Thomas said. "But you're also getting two to three times the nutritional value pound for pound."

The company traces its roots to the mid-1990s when founder Roger Billings and agricultural specialist Don Finn began researching ways to improve both soil health and human nutrition. Their work eventually led Earth Touch into producing ancient grains as interest in healthier food options continued to grow. Thomas said that mission still guides the company today.

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