

A group of volunteers, mostly older adults, are standing in a large, well-lit hall with high ceilings and exposed wooden beams. They are wearing red vests over white shirts. Some are holding clipboards or papers. In the background, there are tables, chairs, and other people, suggesting a community event or gathering.

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Ryan Seward

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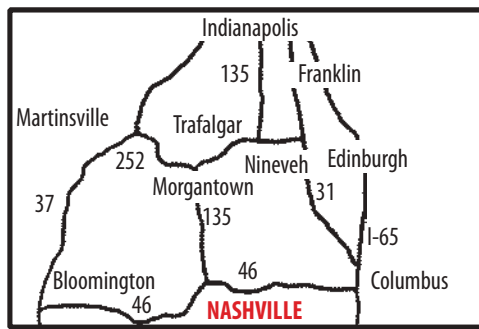
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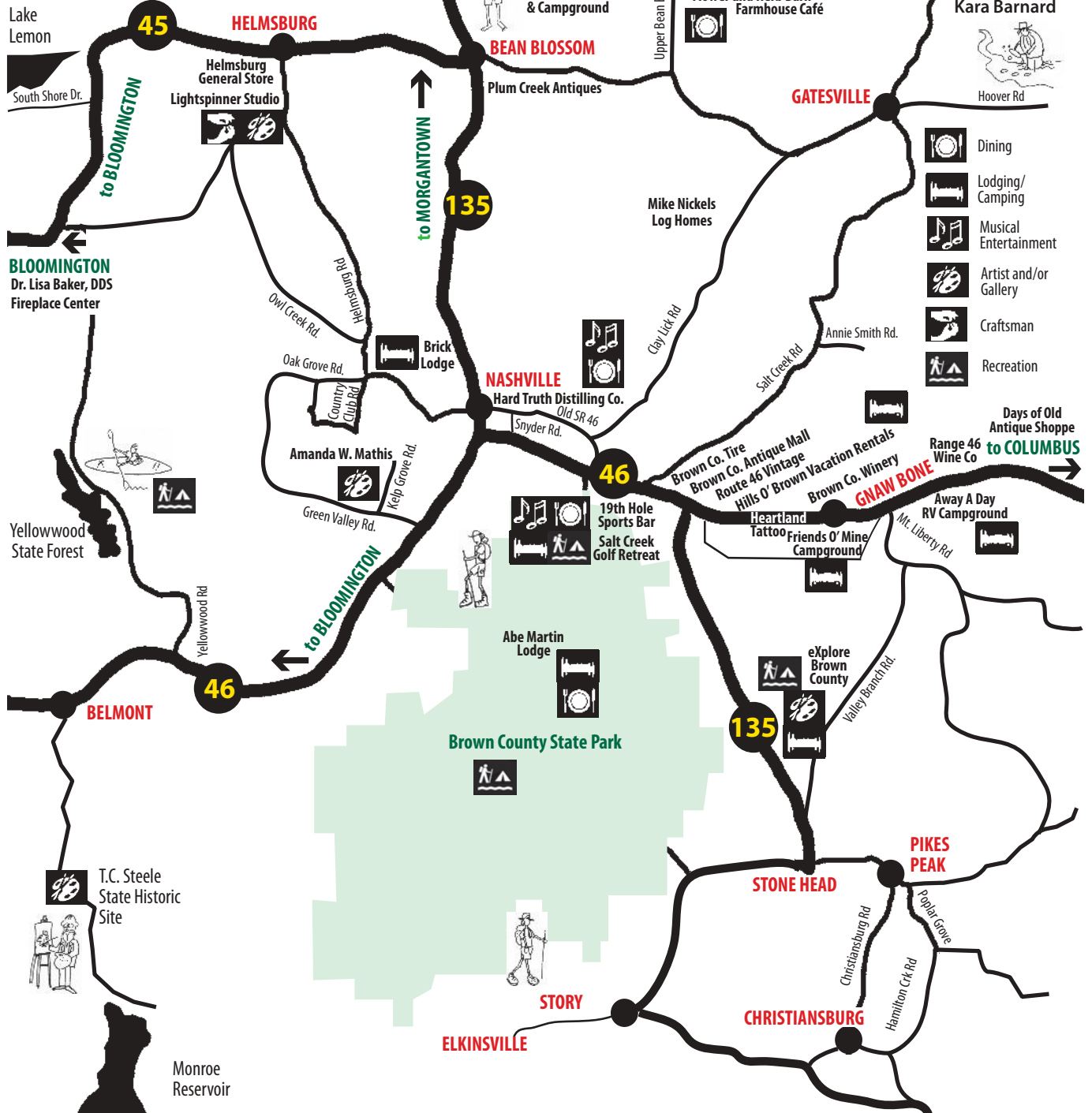
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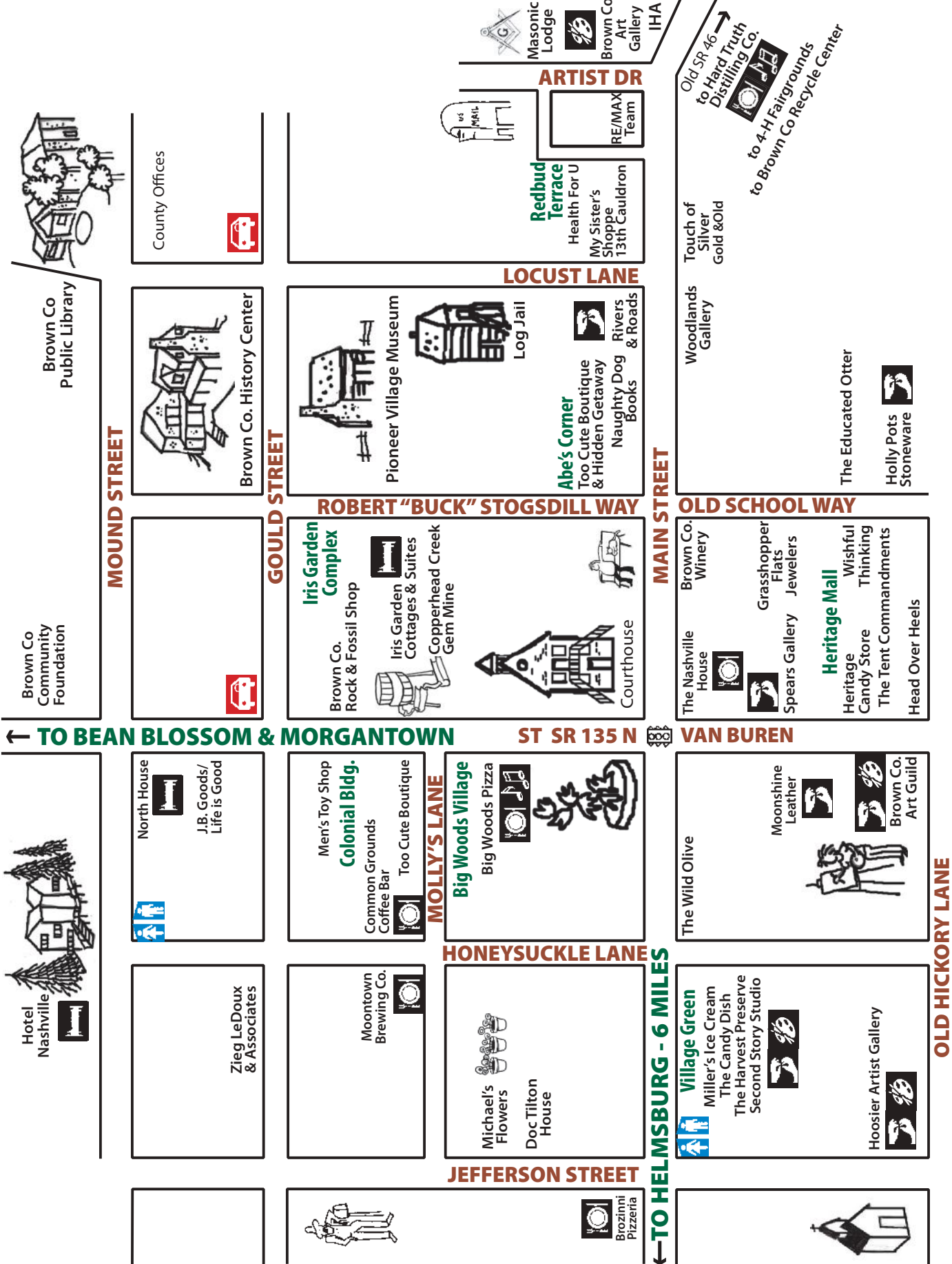
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MORGANTOWN

Antiques Co-op
Grandpa Jeff's Trail Rides
Paul's Supermarket
The Tasty Plate Cafe







Nashville

Indiana

map not to scale

COUNTY MAP ON PAGE 5

	Parking		Musical Entertainment
	Rest Room		Artist and/or Gallery
	Dining		Theatre
	Lodging		Craftsman

Doodles by Kara Barnard



Nashville General Store & Bakery

Brown Co Craft Gallery

WASHINGTON STREET

Bone Appetit Bakery

Visitors Center



Country Heritage Winery



Nashville BP
The Chocolate Moose

PAT REILLY DR

Thrift Shop Community Closet



Coachlight Square



Seasons Hotel & Event Center



Rafters

SR 46 TO COLUMBUS - 16 MILES →

Brown County IGA

Brown County Inn

Bear Hardware



Brown Co Community YMCA

Brown Co Health & Living

Salt Creek Park

Brown Co Sugar Shack

IU Health Nashville



Brown Co Music Center

← SR 46 TO BLOOMINGTON - 16 MILES



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Nashville Express



Mossy Rock Pottery



Cornerstone Inn



Artists Colony Inn

Artists Colony Shops

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Lolli's House

Lakehouse Candle Co.

Possum Trot Square

Nashville Fudge Kitchen



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The Totem Post



Olde Bartley House Coffee & Donuts

HONEYSUCKLE LANE

Brown Co Model Trains
Old McDurbin Gold & Gifts
Rustic Charm Permanent Jewelry

Antique Alley

Clay Purl



Brown Co Pottery



The Ferguson House
Hat Co. Bistro & Bar



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JB Goods

New Leaf
Amy Greely



The Toy Chest

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~by Bob Gustin

Contributors



Baptist minister.

Jeff Tryon is a former news editor of *The Brown County Democrat*, and a former regional reporter for *The Republic*. Born and raised in Brown County, he currently lives with his wife, Sue, in a log cabin on the edge of Brown County State Park. He is a



still spends considerable time there.

Mark Blackwell no longer makes his home in Brown County where "the roadway is rough and the slopes are seamed with ravines." He now resides within sight of the sixth green of an undisclosed golf course. He was born in the middle of the last century and



& Bailey Clown College, and a veteran circus performer.

Joe Lee is an illustrator and writer. He is the author of *Forgiveness: The Eva Kor Story*, *The History of Clowns for Beginners*, and *Dante for Beginners*. He is an editorial cartoonist for the Bloomington *Herald-Times*, a graduate of Ringling Brothers, Barnum



board. He enjoys reading, hiking, music, and birding.

Jim Eagleman is a 40-year veteran naturalist with the IN DNR. In retirement, he is now a consultant. His program "Nature Ramblings" can be heard on WFHB radio, the Brown County Hour. He serves on the Sycamore Land Trust



and investigative reporting.

Boris Ladwig is a Columbus-based journalist who has worked in print, online and TV media in Indiana and Kentucky and has won awards for features, news, business, non-deadline news, First Amendment/community affairs



Weaving Studio. He enjoys expanding his book and record collections.

Bob Gustin worked as a reporter, photographer, managing editor, and editor for daily newspapers in Colorado, Nebraska, and Indiana before retiring in 2011. He and his wife, Chris, operate Homestead



Mandi Rainwater is a freelance travel/lifestyle writer, and also runs Rainwater Studios with her husband Kenan. She promotes local musicians and supports the Southern Indiana music scene. She lives in Nashville with her husband, children, and cats.



Brian Blair is a former longtime features writer for *The Republic* in Columbus. His work has appeared in publications ranging from the *Miami Herald* to *U.S. News and World Report*.

***Michele Wedel** is a photographer and visual imaging artist in Nashville. She is the house photographer for the Brown County Music Center. She finds inspiration for her art in the natural beauty of Brown County and in the variety of amazing people that live here. You can view more of her work on Facebook at Michele Wedel Photography.



Cindy Steele is the publisher and editor of this magazine. She sells and designs ads, sometimes writes, takes photos, and creates the layout. For fun, she likes to play the guitar or banjo and sing.

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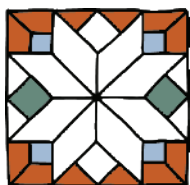
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What was the name of this federal government work program?

The answer to last issue's mystery was the Pittman Inn.

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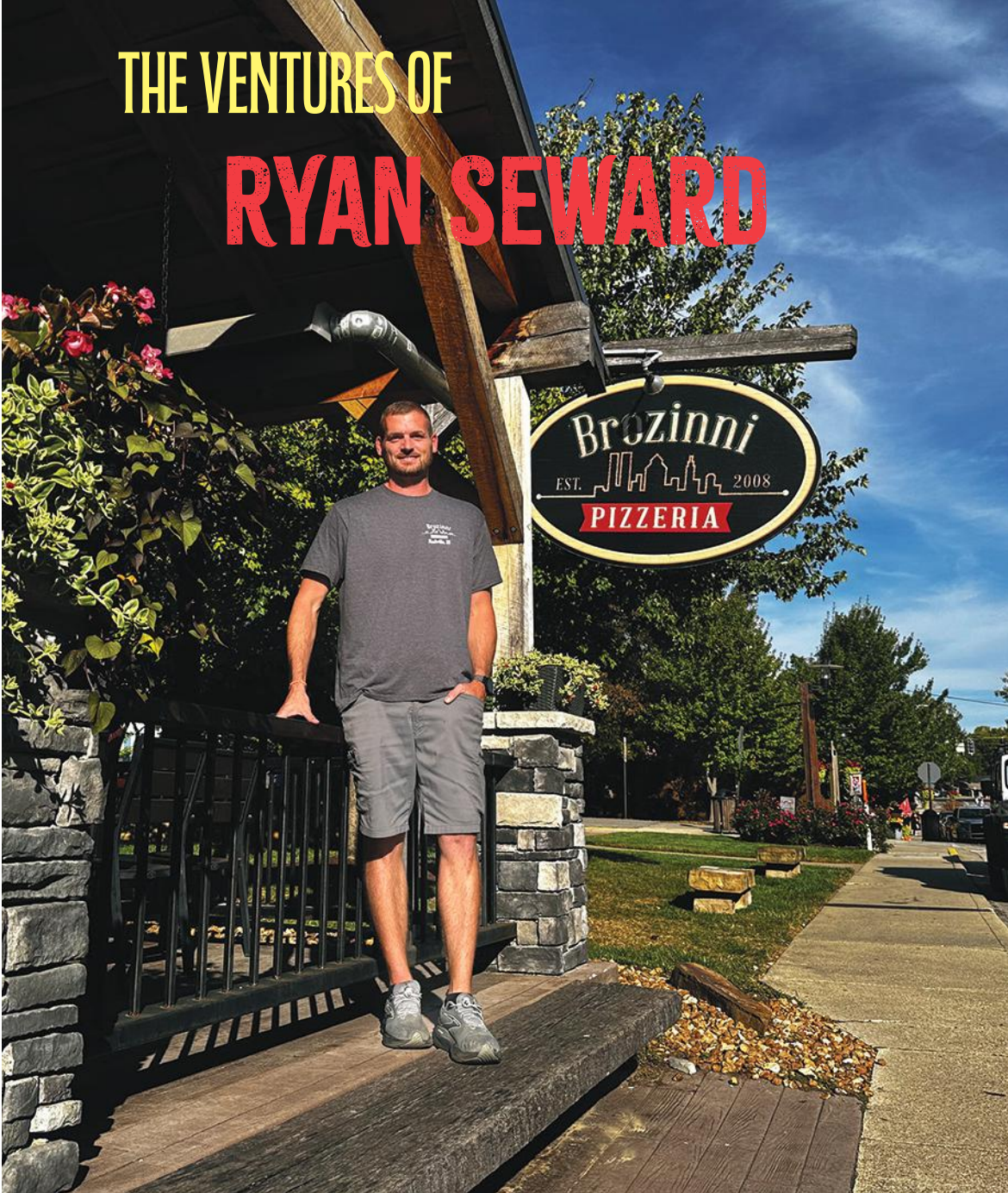
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THE VENTURES OF RYAN SEWARD

~story and photo by Boris Ladwig

The entrepreneurial spirit of Ryan Seward, who owns Brozinni Pizzeria in Nashville, began in his teens, when he'd find good deals on inexpensive cars and sell them for a small profit, often hundreds of dollars.

His career has involved everything from bussing tables at restaurants to advising people at a hardware store, and launching multiple ventures: pizza restaurants, a party supply rental company, and a foam insulation business.

"He is one of the hardest-working young men that I've ever met. You'll never hear him complaining about how much work he has to do."

—Penny Scroggins

Seward moved from Delphi, Indiana, to Brown County at age 13 with his brother, Dale Jr., and father, Dale Sr.

He bussed tables, washed dishes, and worked as a server at the Artists Colony Inn from age 14 to 20. During those later teen years, he'd go to school in the morning, work at Bear Hardware, and then head to the inn to work a few more hours.

"I was a hustler," Seward said.

Penny Scroggins, who co-owns the hardware store with her husband, Curt, said Seward often would drive cars to the hardware store and park them with a for-sale sign in them.

Seward said he sometimes found clients while working at the hardware store. People would come in to ask him where they could find "for sale" signs, and when he'd take them to the right spot in the store, he'd ask them what they were selling.

"I ended up buying a couple of cars that way," he said.

His relationship with the Scrogginses proved helpful in other ways on his journey to becoming a business owner.

Seward said he was a huge Pizza King fan from when he grew up in Delphi, and when he spotted a for-lease sign at Salt Creek Plaza on a lunch break in 2007, he called his father, who had befriended a neighbor back in Delphi who worked as a delivery truck driver for Pizza King. The father called his friend and asked about the franchise, and, Seward said, it was surprisingly easy and inexpensive. The chain charged neither a franchise fee nor a percentage of restaurant sales but required Seward to buy ingredients and supplies from them.

Seward said he also got help from the Scrogginses.

"They were very supportive," he said, "and Curt actually co-signed on a small business loan to help me get going."

Seward combined the loan with \$20,000 he had saved—mostly from selling cars—and opened his first restaurant at age 20.

Seward hired three friends from high school and a colleague from the inn, and they got to work. Everybody did pretty much everything that was needed. Seward, too, would take orders, make the pizza, put it in the oven, and serve it. Even his high

school sweetheart, and now wife, Kharysa, would deliver pizzas in a pinch.

With low overhead, the restaurant became profitable right away, he said.

"Did it ever make a huge profit? No, but it was a stepping stone," Seward said. "It got me a ton of experience."

Some of that experience involved less-than-supportive customers. Seward remembered one occasion on which a woman was unhappy about not being able to get a deal without a coupon. After Seward told her she needed a coupon, she demanded to speak to the manager.

"I was, you know, maybe 20, 21 but I looked like I was 14," he said. "I was tall, but I didn't weigh anything, and [had a] baby face."

When he told the customer he was the manager, she said she'd just come back the next day and talk to the owner. She had no comeback when he told her he was the owner, too.

Seward ran into some startup challenges.

As he lacked bookkeeping skills, Penny Scroggins functioned as his accountant for the first year of the Pizza King venture. She said she remembered a day on which Seward rode his motorcycle to the hardware store to bring his payroll paperwork, which he carried in a backpack. Only he had forgotten to zip the backpack, and when he arrived he realized the paperwork was likely scattered through various Nashville streets.

Scroggins and Seward had to call the employees to get information about how many hours they had worked.

Despite some of the hiccups, Scroggins said she knew Seward would succeed.

"He is one of the hardest-working young men that I've ever met," she said. "You'll never hear him complaining about how much work he has to do."

From early on when he worked a lot of hours as a teenager to running multiple businesses now, Scroggins said Seward has always tried to improve, to take the next step.

"He's just an exceptional young man," she said.

A year after he opened Pizza King, Seward launched a party rental business with bounce houses, wedding tents, and tables and chairs. He sold that business to his brother, who still owns it.

Continued on 18

SEWARD continued from 17

He owns some properties for rental income, and recently built a duplex, though he said a friend did about 95 percent of the work.

Seward also started up and operates an insulation business called Affordable Spray Foam.

Around 2015, one of his frequent pizza customers, the late Bob Kirlin, local real estate agent and community leader, convinced him to buy the former Harvest Moon Pizzeria building on Main Street in Nashville. Seward initially planned to move and expand the Pizza King restaurant there, but decided to launch a Brozinni Pizzeria instead after chatting with the owner of one in Greenwood who had a Brown County connection.

With support from his wife, Seward opened the new business. Brozinni meant a big step up in size from the Pizza King. The restaurant can seat about 100 and during the busy season has about 25 employees.

Seward still pursues other opportunities. His most recent venture involves flying.

Seward got a pilot's license two years ago and bought a four-seater 1968 Piper Arrow, on which he has gone on a couple of lunch trips, to Franklin. He uses it primarily, though, to take the family, including children Ellie, 10, and Emerson, 8, to Mobile, Alabama, where his parents would take the family on vacation, in part to visit the battleship USS Alabama, on which his grandfather, Charles R. Seward, served.

Seward said he got the "entrepreneurial bug" probably from his father, who worked as a police officer but also owned a car wash in Delphi. His mom, Melinda Rossetter, worked in the athletics department at Purdue University.

But he's also quick to point out that lots of family, friends, and acquaintances in the Brown County community have provided a lot of help for which he is immensely grateful.

A local electrician he knew from working at Bear Hardware put probably about a thousand dollars' worth of work into what would become the Pizza King restaurant.

When the electrician was done with the work, and Seward asked how much he owed, the electrician just said, "Don't worry about it, kid. I'm glad to help out a young entrepreneur," Seward said, still visibly touched by the kindness.

In addition to the assistance he got from the Scrogginses, friends helped him remodel and paint the Pizza King restaurant, and his father-in-law and other family and friends helped remodel what would become Nashville's Brozinni Pizzeria.

For Seward, opening a restaurant was a huge undertaking, especially early on as a young man with little experience. The community's support played a vital role in his success.

He says this is a great place to live. ■

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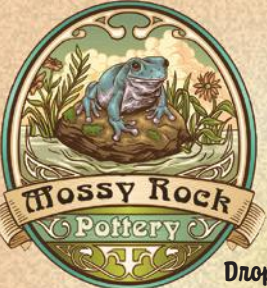


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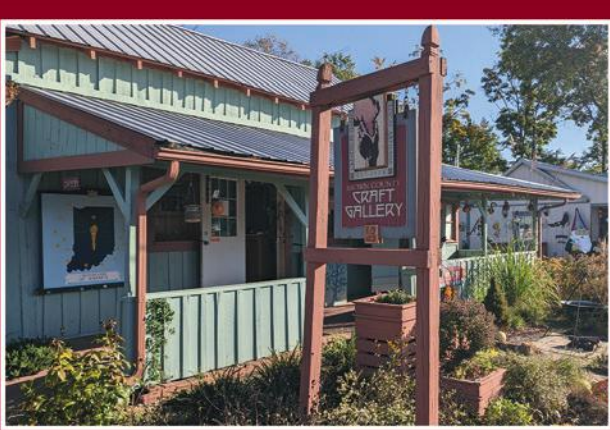



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The Brown County MUSIC CENTER VOLUNTEERS

~story and photos by Bob Gustin



Above: Braden Buehler leads RVA huddle. Below: Dale Wedel directs traffic.



At every performance at the Brown County Music Center, dozens of people wearing red vests, white shirts, and blue jeans handle all sorts of tasks, welcoming patrons with a smile, spreading Midwest hospitality.

Known as the Red Vest Army, all the members are volunteers, and all are working for free, spending up to five hours a night on their feet, through muggy summer evenings and snowy winter nights. Forty or more volunteers are needed for each show.

The venue on the eastern edge of Nashville attracts an array of nationally known acts and gives back thousands of dollars to the Brown County community. The efforts by the volunteers help make it possible for the center to function as it does.

"It takes an army of volunteers from the parking lot to the stage to ensure our guests enjoy the music they've come to hear," said Martha Smith, who has been a volunteer since a Vince Gill concert opened the music center August 24, 2019.

"I like being around happy, enthusiastic people who take pride in representing the Brown County Music Center.

"I have made lasting friendships with other volunteers, and I've enjoyed genres of music that I would never have experienced," she said. "I've been in the theater with Grammy winners, hall-of-famers, and music idols.

"My favorite thing about volunteering at the Brown County Music Center is the excitement and

“It takes an army of volunteers from the parking lot to the stage to ensure our guests enjoy the music they’ve come to hear.”

—Martha Smith



Longtime volunteer Martha Smith scans tickets at the Celtic Thunder concert.

thrill in the concertgoers’ eyes when they walk through the door. Maybe they saw this band in their youth. Maybe the music was played at their wedding. Maybe they traveled to Nashville, Indiana, for the first time to see a band that they follow.

“But for everyone, volunteers and concertgoers alike, we all come for the music,” Smith said.

Christian Webb, executive director of the music center, said volunteers are “literally the key” to the nonprofit status of the center. The music center is unique when compared to music venues of similar size because of its use of volunteers instead of paid employees in many roles.

“Volunteers mean everything to us,” said Webb. “They are the backbone of the operations we do here. They handle all touchpoints in the venue—parking, greeting, bag checks, ticket checks, and escorting patrons to their seats.”

As established, the music center gives back to the community all “excess revenue,” the money that remains after all bills and obligations are paid. That has meant thousands of dollars going back to the county government and the Brown County Community Foundation in the past two years. Volunteers, Webb said, are a big reason the center is able to do that.

Money sent back to the community totaled \$74,780 last year, and \$267,000 the year before. According to the terms of the center’s management agreement, each was done with the foundation getting 75 percent of the total, and county government 25 percent. The community foundation redistributes the funding it receives to a variety of nonprofit organizations in

Brown County. Beyond the agreement, the center also gave county government \$54,000 in 2022 and in 2023 and \$55,000 in payments in lieu of taxes.

Local businessman Kevin Ault, who has been on the music center’s board of directors since its inception and is currently co-president, said the board estimates that if volunteers were paid \$15 an hour, their labor would cost \$780,000 to \$800,000 annually.

If the music center were to be sold to a private entity, instead of giving back up to \$300,000 to the county and the foundation, it would be operating in the red after paying for the work that volunteers do.

Volunteers are important to the community as a whole, Ault said, citing the work also being done at other local nonprofit entities.

Dale Wedel, who heads the parking attendant crew, has been a volunteer at the music center for about six years, and estimates he has signed up for more than 500 shows. But he doesn’t watch most shows, instead waits in the lobby before directing exiting traffic.

If he were getting paid the going wage for parkers, Wedel said he probably wouldn’t be doing it. Instead, it’s something he chooses to do for different kinds of rewards.

He said he enjoys the challenge of directing the parking, and the music center is close to his home. He enjoys getting out of the house, getting some exercise, and interacting with volunteers and patrons. Though he doesn’t watch most shows, he said he has enjoyed the music from the lobby.

Continued on 24



VOLUNTEERS continued from 24

His wife Michele is the paid photographer for each show.

"I could either stay home alone or come out here. It's kind of a no-brainer," he said.

Along the way, Wedel said he has learned how to work with patrons or volunteers who can sometimes be difficult. The key, he said, is to let people do what they want until it becomes a problem for others.

Duane Szymanski has been greeting patrons at the music center for about two and a half years and has worked at more than 40 shows this year.

"I enjoy being with people, enjoy being with volunteers, and it supports the community," Szymanski said. "And the music's good too, by the way."

Likewise, volunteer Ed Wrightsman said he just enjoys the people he meets at concerts, and the exercise he gets as a volunteer parking attendant.

Volunteers are "massively important," said Braden Buehler, operations and engagement manager for the music center.

He said from 250 to 300 volunteers are currently active, and the number continues to rise. Volunteers are fairly evenly split between men and women, and most members are aged 45 or older, with retirees making up a good portion of the crew. In some cases, married couples volunteer together. But younger people sign up too, Buehler said, some as young as 16.

Many volunteers live in Brown County, but the geographic range is expanding to Columbus, Bloomington, Franklin, Greenwood, or even as far away as Muncie and Anderson.

A variety of Christmas-themed shows are headed to the Brown County Music Center this year. Among the scheduled acts are:

Nov. 28 Bela Fleck and The Flecktones "Jingle All the Way"

Dec. 4 Old Crow Medicine Show's "Holiday Hootenanny"

Dec. 5 Chris Young "It Must Be Christmas"

Dec. 9 Jane Lynch's "A Swingin' Little Christmas"

Dec. 10 Rain "A Beatles Christmas Tribute"

Dec. 11 Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder "Christmas"

Dec. 18 Sara Evans Holiday Road Tour

Dec. 21 "An Old English Christmas with Herman's Hermits"

Tickets and info browncountymusiccenter.com 812-988-5323

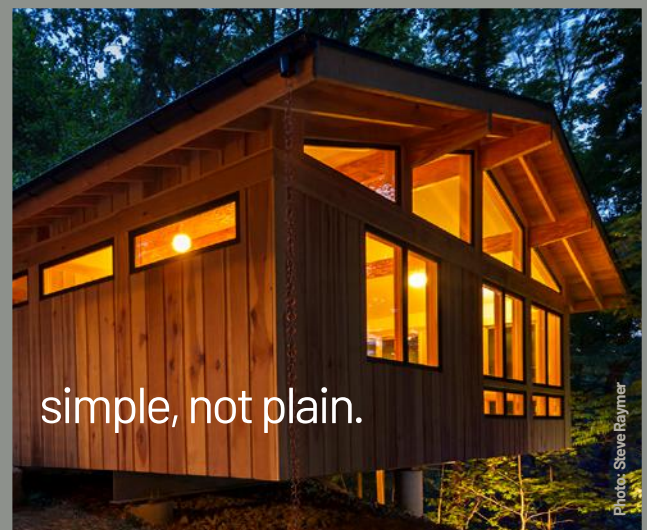
Volunteers are recruited through a tab on the BCMC website. Prospective volunteers are then invited to an orientation session, and if they sign up, they are then assigned to shadow experienced volunteers. Safety information and responsibilities are outlined in the orientations.

Buehler said most volunteers get to see a portion of the concerts they attend, though that is not guaranteed. Volunteers are usually allowed to sit in folding chairs near the balcony during the show, and are entitled to free popcorn and soft drinks. Two volunteer parties are held each year, which can include prizes.

"We have a lot of fun," Buehler said. "It is my pride and joy to work with volunteers."

He said the volunteers form a community and often respond to events in the personal lives of its members, celebrating births or marriages, for example.

"They're also there when things are difficult," he said. "To watch the group rally around volunteers is incredible," he said. ■



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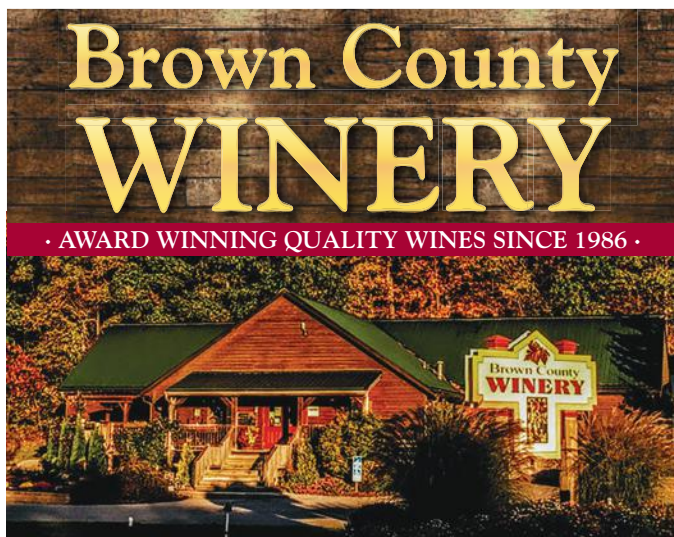
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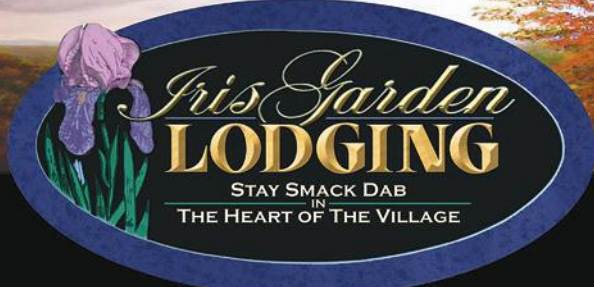
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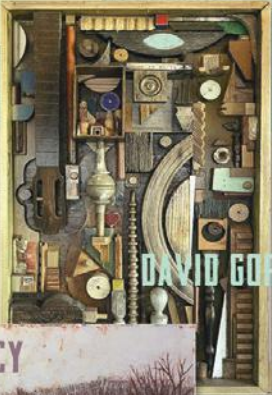
Nov./Dec. 2025 • Our **Brown County** 27

Native Sons

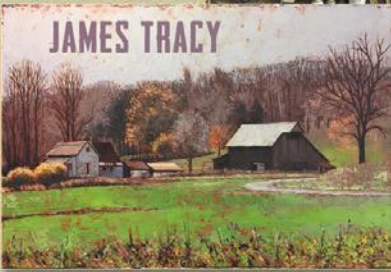


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~by Jeff Tryon

The Brown County Art Gallery, at the corner of Main Street and Artist Drive in Nashville, will host a show featuring three Brown County artists with strong native connections.

“Native Sons,” an exhibition of the art of David Gore, John Wm. Sisson, and James Tracy, will be held November 22 through December 15, 2025 with an opening reception from 3 to 5 p.m. on November 22.

The three artists have deep roots in Brown County and have spent the majority of their lives here creating original art.

James Tracy was born in Brown County, his pioneer ancestors arriving here in the early 1830s. He began formal art training at eight years of age, won many regional and national art competitions while at Columbus North High School, and attended the University of New Mexico and Indiana University. His work is widely collected and has won awards in many regional and national art exhibitions.

John Wm. Sisson has a life-long association with Brown County. He began visiting relatives here when he was a boy. Upon graduating from Purdue University with degrees in fine art and anthropology, he moved to the art colony in 1970. He is also an avid writer and collaborated with the artist Nancy Noel on the successful book, *Believe*.

David Gore's family moved to Brown County when he was a boy. His interest in the arts was piqued by his exposure to the art of the early Brown County masters. He studied fine art at Indiana State University and Indiana University and has had a successful multi-faceted career as a visual artist, musician and singer, and master carpenter.

He describes his work as “a form of abstract expressionism,” using bits and pieces of found objects. The term “assemblage” is sometimes used to describe this style and technique.” ■

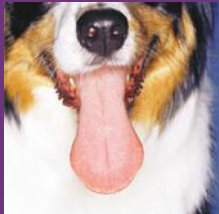


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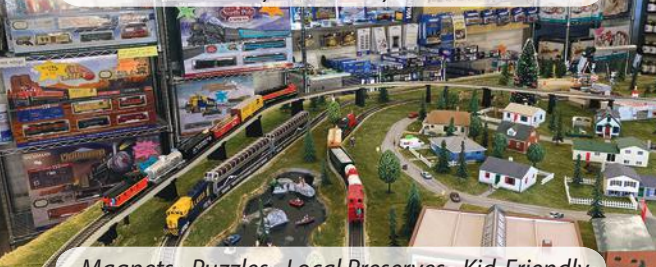
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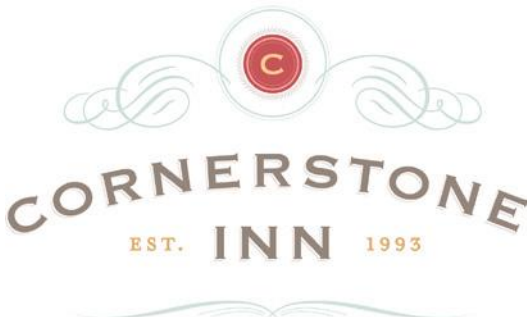
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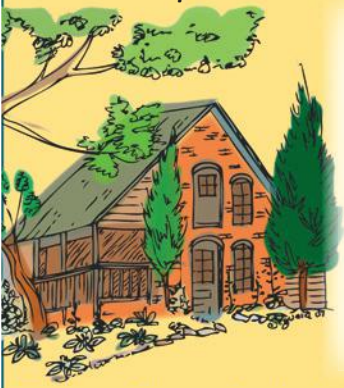
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Musings



~by Mark Blackwell

Most folks have probably noticed that we are experiencing blatant holiday creep. I have seen Fourth of July fireworks stands in business before Memorial Day. Kids are hardly out of school for the summer before stores start touting “Back to School” sales and then they are back in the classroom before Labor Day, signaling the time to put up Halloween displays.

It shouldn't be too surprising then, that I was recently visited by the “Ghost of Brown County Christmas Past.” He wasn't much like a Charles Dickens Christmas ghost. In fact, he bore a noticeable resemblance to the spirit of Brown County itself, Abe Martin.

I was relaxing in my backyard, basking in the glow of a warm evening sunset, in sort of an altered state of consciousness—not quite dozing but not quite awake—when I sensed a presence hovering over my left shoulder. And I heard a voice that spoke to me in a rustic dialect that was familiar but one that I had not heard for a while.

I said, “Abe? Is that you?” The voice answered, “Yep. Wuz ya ‘spectin’ sum buddy else?” I told him I wasn't ‘spectin’ anybody at all. Then I asked what he was doing in my backyard. I hadn't heard much from him since I moved from my little cabin home on the ridge.

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The Ghost of Christmas Past



Abe said he hadn't been around because he had a little trouble locating me, and that it was “sum travelin’ ta git to where ya hed relocated to.”

“Well, just how did ya find me?” I asked. And Abe said he latched on to my daydreams and just followed the tracks of my nostalgia.

Abe said he could sense that I was lost in a reverie of Christmases past, and he thought I could use a guide. I was okay with that because, when you get right down to it, there is no better pathfinder to Brown County's past. He started off by asking. “Do ya ‘member back ‘bout aught six and you wuz throwin’ a Christmas party?” I did remember.

It was a jolly time, if I do say so, myself. The cabin was appropriately decorated. The missus had laid out a feast of pies and cookies and such. There were libations to lubricate the holiday spirit. And there was music.

I was a member of a string band back then and had made friends with other local musicians. One of those friends attended that particular shindig. His name was Slat's Klug.

Some of you, I'm sure, remember him. He was a fellow who showed up in Brown County close to the same time that I did and brought a considerable amount of talent with him.

Slats was a multi-instrumentalist. He played the accordion, piano, harmonica, guitar, and probably a few others. Besides playing all those instruments, Slats had a wonderful singing voice, and you can hear him on any of the eight or so CDs that he produced, almost all of them with a Brown County focus. And another of his prodigious talents was that of songwriter.

I have known some singer songwriters but none better than Slats.

Nobody I know could arrange songs any better. Using Brown County as inspiration, he produced a compilation of songs that capture its scenery, history, and characters. Two of the CDs that stand out for me are his Christmas albums.

Back in the early "aughts" of this century, Slats produced *A Brown County Christmas: The Holidays in the Hills* and *A Brown County Christmas Volume Two*. These albums contain songs that Slats wrote such as "Christmas in a Cabin," "The Happy Eyes of Morning," "Slow Sleigh Ride," "Mary, Did You Know," and one of my favorites, "Me and Thirty Dirty Chickens Lickin' Corn."

Slats didn't produce any solo albums, they were all "Slats Klug and Friends," and Slats' friends were the best local talent in the area.

Beyond these outstanding Christmas albums, Slats gave Brown County something else: memories of the annual holiday shows he put together at the Brown County Inn. I believe there were about six of them, and they were amazing.

Sometime after Thanksgiving, Slats and a dozen or more of his friends would get together to give a live presentation of the Christmas albums, tell stories and jokes, and generally have a raucous good time.

One of the highlights of these shows would occur when the band struck up a song the Slats wrote for his album *My Brown County Home* called "Blood Alley Women." As soon as that song was announced there would be a whoop from the audience and all the women would jump up and hit the dance floor.

Those are good memories.

I have a hard time accepting that those days are 20-plus years in the past. Slats is gone now, but I still think about him with his sly smiles and good sense of humor. And I will always associate him with memories of Brown County Christmases past. ■

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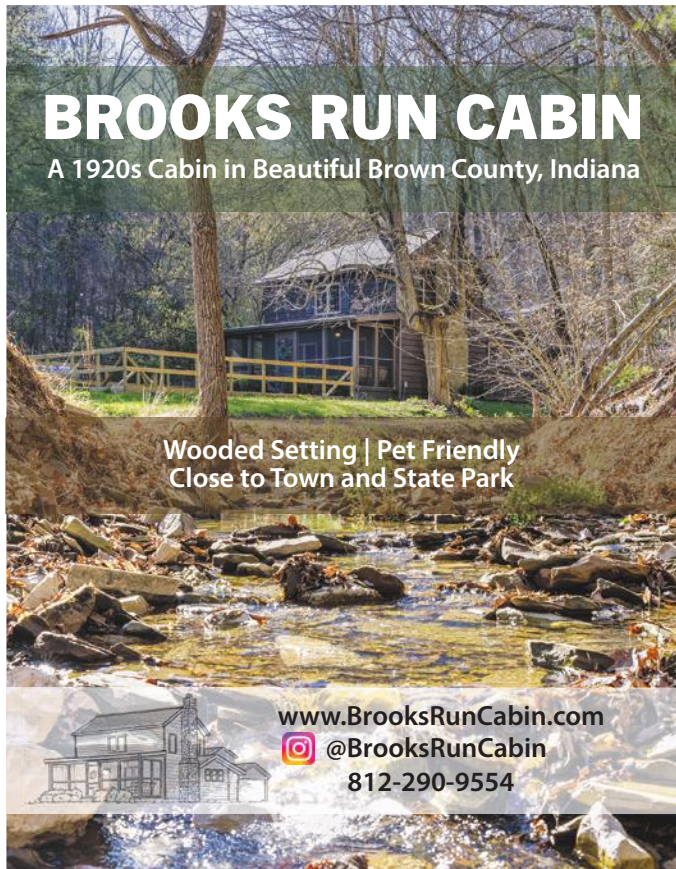
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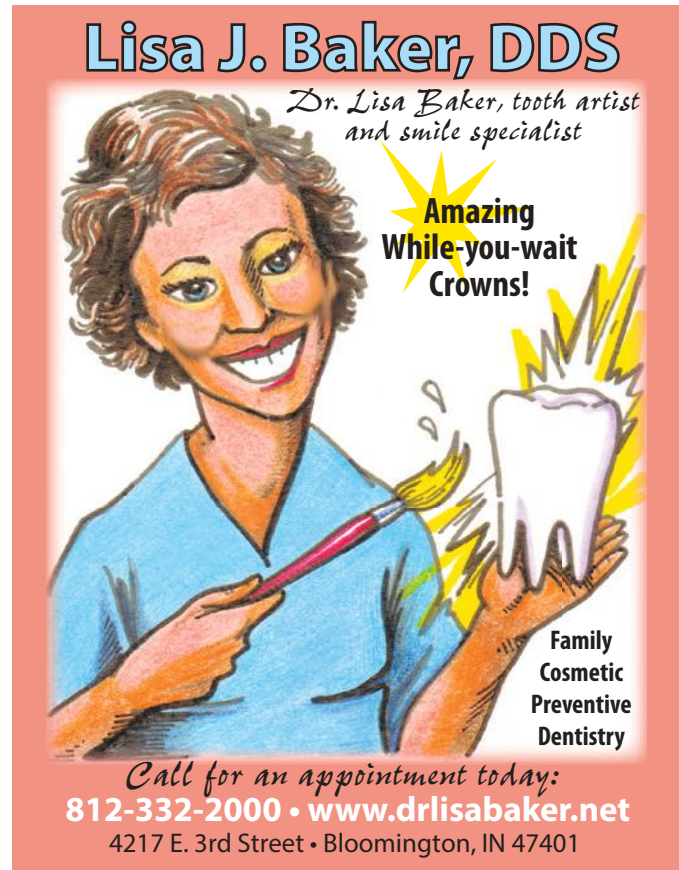


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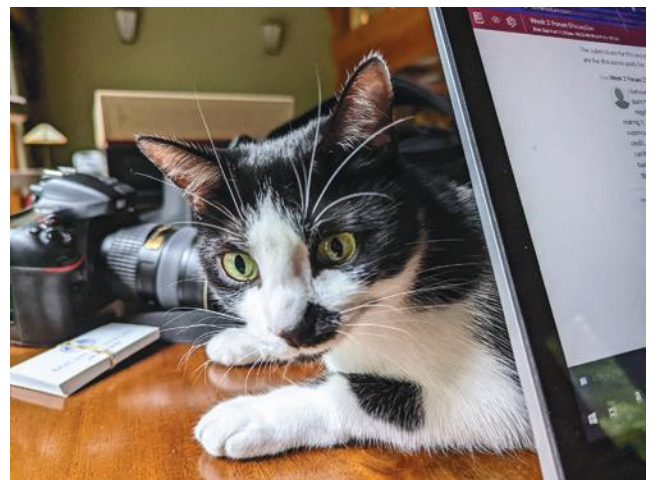
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photos by Michele Wedel





Calendar

The schedule can change. Please check before making a trip.

Brown County Playhouse

Nov. 1 The Woomblies Rock Orchestra
SOLD OUT!
Nov. 7 The Big 80s
Nov. 8 Best of Times: Styx Tribute
Nov. 13 Adam Ezra Group w/ Jenn Cristy
Nov. 14 Tastes Like Chicken
Nov. 15 Brown Co. Songwriter
Showdown 2025 Finals
Nov. 16 FREE EVENT
The Addict's Wake
Nov. 20 SENIOR MOVIE SERIES
A Dog's Purpose
Nov. 21 Phil Pierle and the Enablers
Nov. 22 FCR w/ Carolyn Dutton
Nov. 28 Jingle Bell Rockin' Tribute Band
Dec. 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20
LIVE THEATRE "It's a Wonderful Life"
Most shows at 7:30
70 S. Van Buren Street • 812-988-6555
www.browncountyplayhouse.org

Brown County Music Center

Nov. 7 TUSK: The Fleetwood Mac Tribute
Nov. 8 Lee Greenwood
Nov. 9 The Doo Wop Project
Nov. 13 Shaun Cassidy
Nov. 14 Queensrÿche
Nov. 15 Blackberry Smoke
Nov. 16 Sevendust: Southside
Double-Wide Tour
Nov. 21 Darryl Worley & Mark Wills
Nov. 22 Hairball
Nov. 28 Béla Fleck & The Flecktones
Dec. 4 Old Crow Medicine Show's
Holiday Hootenanny
Dec. 5 Chris Young
Dec. 7 Blue October
Dec. 9 Jane Lynch's
"A Swingin' Little Christmas"
Dec. 10 RAIN - Beatles Christmas Tribute
Dec. 11 Ricky Skaggs &
Kentucky Thunder Christmas
Dec. 12 Three Dog Night
Dec. 14 Allen Stone & Ripe
Dec. 18 Sara Evans
Dec. 21 Olde English Christmas with
Herman's Hermits Peter Noone

Jan. 16 Trampled by Turtles
Jan. 29 Chris Janson
Jan. 31 Colin Mochrie & Brad Sherwood
Feb. 6 Yacht Rock Revue
Feb. 19 Eli Young Band & LANCO
Feb. 16 Masters of Illusion
Mar. 11 Pauly Shore
Apr. 22 Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band
812-988-5323
www.browncountymusiccenter.com

Brown County Inn

Open Mic Nights Wed. 6:00-9:00
Hill Folk Music Series Thurs. 7:00-9:00
Fri. & Sat. Live Music 8:00-11:00
Nov. 1 Davey & The Midnights
Nov. 5 Open Mic
Nov. 6 Caitlin "Sparks" Spangler
Nov. 7 Sean Lamb & Janet Miller
Nov. 8 BA Blues
Nov. 12 Open Mic
Nov. 13 Ken Hayes
Nov. 14 Big Dog
Nov. 15 Austin James Trio
Nov. 19 Open Mic
Nov. 20 Jason Blankenship
Nov. 21 Gene Fugate
Nov. 22 Amanda Webb Band
NO MUSIC Nov. 26 & 27
Nov. 28 John Ford
Nov. 29 Banister Bluegrass Band
Dec. 3 Open Mic
Dec. 4 Maria Devigili
Dec. 5 M Squared Duo
Dec. 6 Frank Dean & Friends
Dec. 10 Open Mic
Dec. 11 Bel & The Bad Wolfe
Dec. 12 Keith Beatty
Dec. 13 Davis & Devitt
Dec. 17 Open Mic
Dec. 18 Jon & Sarah Giddens
Dec. 19 Jan Bell
Dec. 20 Flick N Rainwater
NO MUSIC Dec. 24-Dec. 27
Dec. 31 M Squared Project
51 State Road 46 East • 812-988-2291
www.browncountyinn.com

Country Heritage Winery

Music Fri. & Sat. 6:00-9:00
Nov. 1 Clearwater Band
Nov. 7 Gene Fugate-songwriter
showcase in the round
Nov. 8 Dylan Raymond
Nov. 14 Steve Fulton
Nov. 15 Conner Berry
Nov. 21 Amanda & Brian Webb
Nov. 22 Justyn Underwood
Nov. 28 Ruben Guthrie
Nov. 29 Paul Bertsch Trio
Dec. 5 Karaoke
Dec. 6 Steve Coner
Dec. 12 Hubie Ashcraft & Missy Burgess
Dec. 13 Dylan Raymond
Dec. 19 Michael Reed
Dec. 20 Rusted String Swindlers
Dec. 26 Karaoke
Dec. 27 Frank Jones Trio
225 S. Van Buren Street • 812-988-8500
www.countryheritagewinery.com

19th Hole Sports Bar

Music Fri. 7:00-10:00 & Sat. 8:00-11:00
Nov. 1 Rich Hardesty
Nov. 7 John Ryan
Nov. 8 John Deckard karaoke
Nov. 14 Gene Fugate
Nov. 15 Two for the Show
Nov. 21 Clearwater Band
Nov. 22 Pokey Valley
Nov. 28 Homemade Jam Band
Nov. 29 Common Ground
Dec. 5 John Ryan
Dec. 6 Deadeye Drifters
Dec. 12 Gene Fugate
Dec. 13 The Vanguards
Dec. 19 Clearwater Band
Dec. 20 Homemade Jam
Dec. 26 Doug Dillman
Dec. 27 Zion Crossroads
Dec. 31 New Years Eve Party w/
DJ Jordan Roberts 8:00-1:00am
2359 East State Road 46
812-988-4323 www.saltcreekgolf.com

Email calendar details to ourbrowncounty@outlook.com
Also tag/msg OUR BROWN COUNTY FB page so we can share posts

Nashville House

Nov. 1 Doug Dillman 6:00-9:00
Nov. 2 Amanda Webb 1:00-4:00
Nov. 7 Travers Marks 5:00-8:00
Nov. 8 Ruben Guthrie 5:00-8:00
Nov. 14 Dave Sisson 5:00-8:00
Nov. 15 Sweet Pea 5:00-8:00
Dec. 5 Doug Dillman 5:00-8:00
Dec. 6 Ruben Guthrie 1:00-4:00
15 S. Van Buren Street 812-988-4554
www.nashvillehousebc.com

Ferguson House Beer Garden

Nov. 1 Austin James 1:00-4:00
Amanda Webb 6:00-9:00
Nov. 2 Gene Fugate 1:00-4:00
Nov. 7 Dave Sisson 5:00-8:00
Nov. 8 Rich Hardesty 1:00-4:00
Sweet Pea 5:00-8:00
Nov. 9 Travers Marks 1:00-4:00
Nov. 14 Zach Bengé 5:00-8:00
Nov. 15 Alex 5:00-8:00
Nov. 16 Buck Knawe 1:00-4:00
Dec. 5 Ruben Guthrie 5:00-8:00
Dec. 6 Sweet Pea 1:00-4:00
Doug Dillman 5:00-8:00
Dec. 7 Austin James 1:00-4:00
Antique Alley 78 Franklin Street
812-988-4042

Hard Truth Distilling Co.

Nov. 1 Sweet Mash Monster Bash
Les Masters Band
Black Water Revival
Check website for additional info.
418 Old State Road 46 • 812-720-4840
www.hardtruth.com

Story Inn

Activities at Story Still Tavern & Grill
Wed. Bingo | Fri. Love Shack Karaoke
Sat. Music in the afternoon
Check social media for more info.
6404 State Road 135 • 812-988-2273
www.storyinn.com

St. Agnes Christmas and Craft Bazaar

Nov. 7 & 8 St. Agnes Catholic Church
Fri. 9:00-5:00; Sat. 9:00-4:30
1008 McLary Road, Nashville
Christmas ornaments/decor, gifts,
figurines, collectibles, artisan goods,
sewn products, puzzles, wreaths.

Annual Chocolate Walk

Nov. 8, Downtown Nashville 10:00-5:00
THIS YEAR'S EVENT SOLD OUT

Hilly Half Marathon

Nov. 15, 9:00 am-2:00 pm
Half Marathon 9:00 | 10K 9:15
5K 9:30-Electronic bib timing
Brought to you by Brown Co. YMCA
Brown County State Park

Tree Lighting Ceremony

Nov. 28, Starting at 5:00 | lighting at 6:00
Brown Co. History Center
Music, homemade cookies, hot chocolate,
and tea. Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus.
90 E Gould St, Nashville

The Seasons Holiday Art & Craft Show

Nov. 28 & 29, Seasons Conference Center
Fri. 10:00-5:00, Sat. 10:00-4:00
Juried show featuring arts and crafts made
by area artisans celebrating 40 Years.

Santa Visits

Brown Co. History Center
90 E Gould St, Nashville
Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 13 | Noon to 4:00

ALSO:

Brunch with Santa | Hard Truth
Dec. 13, 11:00 am-1:00 pm
Breakfast with Santa | Abe Martin Lodge
Dec. 14 & 21, 8:00 am-11:00 am

Santa Train

Dec. 5, Santa arrives in Helmsburg by train
on the Indiana Railroad around 8:00. Board
the train and visit with Santa and Mrs.
Claus. Christmas and cartoon characters.
Helmsburg Road in Helmsburg near the fire
station and general store.

48th Children's Fund Benefit Auction

Dec. 5, Brown County Inn, 6:00
Proceeds provide clothing for Brown
Co. children in need. Features donated
art, crafts, antiques, merchant items, gift
certificates, and food. Merchandise can be
dropped off at Out of the Ordinary, or call
812-320-2601 for pickup. Cash donations
can be made at PNC Bank in Nashville.

Winter Wonderland

Dec. 5, 6, 12, 13 | 6:00-8:00
Jackson Twp Fire Dept.
A walk thru bright lights, Christmas music,
and characters. Santa on hand for pictures.
4831 Helmsburg Road in Helmsburg.
Donations welcomed.

Stuff a Stocking Event

Dec. 6 | Downtown Nashville | 11:00-5:00
Children receive a stocking and collect
treats from Nashville merchants. Presented
by Brown Co. Community Foundation
Event sells out fast for 250 tickets.
Tickets Advance \$30, day of show \$35
209 N. Van Buren St. Nashville
BCCF lower level office
browncountygives.org 812-988-4882

Christmas Light Parade and Toy Drive

Dec. 6 | Downtown Nashville | 6:30
Salvation Army toy collection drive.
Bring a new toy to share some joy.
Adorned with Christmas lights, floats,
vehicles, and people travel along the streets
of the village.

Continued on 42

CALENDAR continued from 41

Christkindl Market

Dec. 6 & 7 | Coachlight Square

Sat. 10:00 am–6:00 | Sun. 10 am–4:00

Vendors selling arts, crafts, and food.

browncountychristkindlmarket.com

Entertainment at two Nashville

locations: Coachlight Square on

Washington St. and the Village Green

Pavilion at Jefferson and Main Streets.

DEC. 6 ENTERTAINMENT

Coachlight Square:

11:00 am Amanda Webb

12:00 Circle City Stompers

1:00 The Hungry Five

2:00 Another Round

3:00 Die Fledermauschen

Tanzgruppe

4:00 Indy Polkamotion

Village Green Pavilion:

10:00 am Hot Tub Strangers

10:40 am Christopher Kelly

11:20 am Lilly Rose Music

12:00 The Chump Duo

1:00 Brown Co. High School Choir

1:40 Heaven's Harmony

2:20 Christy Crandall & Sharla June

3:00 Buck Knawe

3:40 Marla Jo Ham

4:20 Joe Shelton

5:00 Sharienne Whetstine

5:40 Seth Makin & Friends

DEC. 7 ENTERTAINMENT

Coachlight Square:

11:00 am Albert Nolting

12:00 Motion Arts Dance

Academy

1:00 Tuba Jim

2:00 Woodridge Music

Academy Choir

3:00 Bryce Mullins

Village Green Pavilion:

10:00 am Sons of I Am

10:40 am David Obermeyer

11:20 am TBD

12:00 Taylor Hernly

12:40 Don & Jenny Sue Whetstine

1:20 Big John & Marguerite

2:00 Paul Bertsch

2:40 TBD

3:20 Hillbilly Uke & Wall

Uplands Winter Wine Market

Dec. 6 | Brown Co. Art Gallery | 12:00-5:00

Holiday winery experience featuring

Indiana Upland wineries. Wine tasting

and goodies and of course, art for sale.

Corner of Main St. & Artist Dr.

812-988-4609

Reindeer Romp

Dec. 6, starts 1:00 | 8K run / 5K run/walk

Brought to you by Brown Co. YMCA

Late registration & packet pick up

Dec. 5, Noon-3:00 at the Y

Race Day Dec. 6, 11:00-12:45

Brown Co State Park Nature Center

Steele's Country Christmas

Dec. 7, Noon-4:00 | T.C. Steele State

Historic Site. Open house in the Large

Studio and House of the Singing Winds

decorated for the holiday season. Live

music, holiday crafts, cookies, and cider.

4220 T.C. Steele Rd. 812-988-2785



STUFF A STOCKING AND LIGHT PARADE FOR CHARITIES

DECEMBER 6



STUFF A STOCKING

The Brown County Community Foundation will present the 11th Stuff a Stocking event, where children follow a map and take stockings provided by the Foundation to Nashville merchants in order to gather treats, ornaments, toys and more.

Just 250 tickets will be sold. Online presale tickets are \$30 and will be available for purchase until 5 p.m. on Dec. 5 by visiting browncountygives.org/stuff-a-stocking.

Will Call tickets may be picked up at the BCCF office's lower level 209 N. Van Buren St. (across from Hotel Nashville and next to Grand Wood Suites) Dec. 6 from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. A limited number of Day-of-Event tickets will be sold at the office for \$35.

All proceeds from this event will go to non-profit organizations that benefit and support children in the Brown County community.

CHRISTMAS LIGHT PARADE

The Salvation Army Brown County Christmas Light Parade and Toy Drive, a cherished community tradition, will begin at 6:30 p.m.

Experience the sights and sounds of the holiday season as festive floats and vehicles adorned with Christmas lights glide through the heart of Nashville. Spectators who line the streets will be treated to performances, music, and appearances by beloved holiday characters. The spirit of the season fills the air as families gather to share in the warmth and magic of this festive event.

Parade organizers encourage all participants and attendees to bring new, unwrapped toys to donate to The Salvation Army Toy Shoppe and spread a little joy to those less fortunate this Christmas.

For more information on these upcoming holiday traditions, visit:

browncountygives.org/stuff-a-stocking and centralusa.salvationarmy.org/browncounty/events/christmas-light-parade/

Brown County Music Center

Nov. 7	TUSK: The Classic Fleetwood Mac Tribute	Dec. 10	RAIN - A Beatles Christmas Tribute
Nov. 8	Lee Greenwood	Dec. 11	Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder Christmas
Nov. 9	The Doo Wop Project	Dec. 12	Three Dog Night
Nov. 13	Shaun Cassidy	Dec. 14	Allen Stone & Ripe
Nov. 14	Queensrÿche	Dec. 18	Sara Evans
Nov. 15	Blackberry Smoke	Dec. 21	An Olde English Christmas with Herman's Hermits Starring Peter Noone
Nov. 16	Sevendust: Southside Double-Wide Tour	Jan. 16	Trampled by Turtles
Nov. 21	Darryl Worley & Mark Wills	Jan. 29	Chris Janson
Nov. 22	Hairball	Jan. 31	Colin Mochrie & Brad Sherwood
Nov. 28	Béla Fleck & The Flecktones	Feb. 6	Yacht Rock Revue
Dec. 4	Old Crow Medicine Show's Holiday Hootenanny	Feb. 19	Eli Young Band & LANCO
Dec. 5	Chris Young	Feb. 26	Masters of Illusion
Dec. 7	Blue October	Mar. 11	Pauly Shore
Dec. 9	Jane Lynch's A Swingin' Little Christmas	Apr. 22	Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band

For additional shows and tickets visit: www.BrownCountyMusicCenter.com



IT'S A Wonderful LIFE



DEC 5, 6, 12, 13, 19, & 20 | 7:30pm
DEC 7 & 14 | 2:30pm

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BASED ON THE FILM BY FRANK CAPRA. BASED ON THE STORY 'THE GREATEST GIFT' BY PHILIP VAN DOREN STERN.
THIS PRODUCTION IS PRESENTED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE GREATEST GIFT CORPORATION.

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Nov 1 • SOLD OUT!

The Woomblies
Rock Orchestra

Nov 7 • The Big 80s

Nov 8 • Best of Times:
A Tribute to STYX

Nov 13 • Adam Ezra
Group with special
guest Jenn Cristy

Nov 14 • Tastes Like
Chicken

Nov 15 • Brown County
Songwriter Showdown
– Finals

Nov 16 • FREE EVENT

The Addict's Wake:
Law Enforcement Film

Nov 20 • SENIOR MOVIE SERIES A Dog's Purpose

Nov 21 • Phil Pierle
and the Enablers

Nov 22 • FCR
with special guest
Carolyn Dutton

Nov 28 • Jingle Bell
Rockin' Tribute Band

Dec 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14,
19, & 20 • LIVE THEATRE
It's a Wonderful Life

And many more great shows lined up for 2026!



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PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

812.988.6555 | BrownCountyPlayhouse.org
Showtimes, tickets & schedule online



Christmas in Brown County

Brown County is a great place to spend time during the Christmas Season. We have the charm of a small community, and yet we offer shopping, entertainment, recreation, and dining that rival the big cities. You can share traditions, escape into nature, or find new ways to experience the holidays.

SHOPPING

Looking for something special for that someone special?

There are boutiques with colorful clothes; jewelry stores; specialty shops selling spices, cheese, olive oil, fudge and other candies; plus, gift stores featuring collectibles and items from all over the world.

Popular spots for kids of all ages are the toy store in the big blue Victorian building on the main drag, the toy train store in Antique Alley, and the rock shop on the north end of town.

Potters, jewelers, painters, woodworkers, sculptors, and other crafters sell their wares in galleries and shops.

The Seasons Holiday Art & Craft Show

Held Thanksgiving weekend, Nov. 28 and 29 at the Seasons Event Center, this show features juried works by area artisans. The Nashville tradition is celebrating its 40th anniversary with offerings of jewelry, soaps, paintings, baskets, ornaments, wreaths, woodworking, and more.

ENTERTAINMENT

The Brown County Playhouse and the Brown County Music Center, have lined up a variety of acts for November and December. The Brown County Playhouse is presenting "It's a Wonderful Life" during the month of December performed by Theatre Brown County.

TREE LIGHTING NOV. 28

The Brown County History Center at 90 E. Gould St. kicks off the Christmas Season in downtown Nashville. Festivities begin at 5 p.m. and the tree is lit at 6 p.m.. Santa and Mrs. Claus are there for the kids in the Log Cabin Room.

Cookies, hot chocolate, and tea will be served and live music will be played.

Mr. and Mrs. Claus will also be there from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, Nov. 29, Dec. 6, and Dec. 13.

CHILDREN'S FUND BENEFIT AUCTION DEC. 5

The Brown County Inn will host the 48th Children's Fund Auction, raising money to buy clothes for local children in need. It features donated art, crafts, antiques, merchant items, food, gift certificates, and tickets for activities like Holiday World, or Cincinnati Reds games. Auction starts at 6 p.m. and goes until all is sold. Merchandise can be dropped off at Out of the Ordinary. For pickup call 812-320-2601. Cash donations can be made at PNC Bank in Nashville.

SANTA TRAIN DEC. 5

Santa Claus arrives by the Indiana Railroad train in Helmsburg around 8 p.m. Kids line up to visit Santa and Mrs. Claus on the train and see characters from favorite movies and cartoons.



DECEMBER 6 & 7
Saturday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.



The 5th Annual Christkindl Market will take place at Coachlight Square in Nashville, bringing a market full of one-of-a-kind gifts, family-friendly entertainment, and Christmas spirit.

Christkindl Market is an annual celebration of Christmas during Advent. Initially held in Germany, these popular holiday markets are now held worldwide.

This year *The Nutcracker Nosh* expands the market into select Nashville restaurants with offerings of guest German holiday Lebensmittel (that's German for food!).

The market features vendors showcasing unique art, food, curated gifts, and local treasures along with festive decorations, live music, Santa and Mrs. Claus, and a market angel.

Music will be performed in two Nashville locations: at the market location in Coachlight Square at the south end of town, and also at the Town of Nashville's Village Green Pavilion at the intersection of Jefferson and Main Streets next to Brozinni Pizzeria.

For more visit browncountychristkindlmarket.com or contact Lisa Hall at lhall@glorygirlproduction.com.

A Longtime Nashville Tradition



The Seasons Holiday Art & Craft Show

Juried Show Featuring Local and Regional Fine Arts & Crafts

November 28, 29 • 2025

Friday 10 to 5, Saturday 10 to 4

*Celebrating our 40th Anniversary by offering a wide variety
from artists and crafters who continue to share their traditional work,
as well as some new faces and new designs*

Free Admission • Free Parking • Handicapped Accessible
Breakfast and Lunch Available

The Seasons Event Center - 560 SR 46 East Nashville, IN
seasonsartandcraftshow.com

Rafters
FOOD & SPIRITS

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BROWN COUNTY MUSIC CENTER
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- Create your own water bottle
- Seasonal Items
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TRIBUTE BANDS NOSTALGIA IS TRENDING

~by Brian Blair

Some ticket buyers attend concerts these days initially with ample skepticism. Then, at some point during the show, fans often close their eyes when nostalgia hits just the right note.

And suddenly, concertgoers are knee-deep into yesterday with the Beatles, finding satisfaction with the Rolling Stones, or reveling in their song with Elton John.

Or so it certainly seems that way in the moment. Such is the visceral emotion of tribute bands, wherein imitation is the sincerest form of flattery—and a growing trend nationwide and beyond in throwback entertainment.

"Yes, some of the popularity is nostalgia," said Carolyn McCutcheon, executive director of Nashville's Brown County Playhouse, which books about 20 percent of its calendar with tribute acts that nearly sell out the venue's 375 seats. "Some of it is that the bands or the artists are no longer together or even [alive] here. Or maybe they are no longer touring, or maybe it's because tickets to see their actual show are just too expensive for some."

McCutcheon mentioned that the expense element makes the Playhouse a solid value for those seeking to reminisce, since tickets for most such concerts range from \$20 to \$25—a far cry from the triple-digit box office price of many a classic touring act such as the Eagles.

Online sites credit Carl "Cheesie" Nelson with being the first to capitalize on the concept with an Elvis Presley impersonation in 1954. Many of today's acts are just as current, mimicking



*Best of Times—Styx tribute band
appearing at the Playhouse Nov. 8. (courtesy photo)*



*Rain—Beatles tribute band
appearing at the Music Center Dec. 10. (courtesy photo)*

major artists ranging from Taylor Swift to Bruno Mars—and sometimes facing a bit of criticism that they are stifling fresh originality in the industry. In Brown County, including at the Brown County Music Center, the more classic pop, rock, and country tribute performers are most in tune with concertgoers.

Killer Queen, highlighting the music of the late Freddie Mercury and his group from the 1970s and 1980s, has been one of the hottest such shows in the past three years, once attracting an estimated 1,300 people (the average for the top tier acts) in the music center's

2,000-seat venue. Braden Buehler, operations and engagement manager, mentioned that many of the throwback acts are doing far more than copying a vocal or visage.

In fact, an Elton John tribute show, "Rocket Man," that played there recently, especially impressed Buehler.

"It featured one of the most intricate stage setups that I've seen in quite a while," Buehler said. "The overall production level and quality was right up there with almost anything else I have seen here [at the center]. It looked more like a stage for musical theater."

Overall, he sees tribute shows as "a great way to keep alive all the great music people continue to love."

Truth be told, people love more than the music and memories. Nationally touring singer and keyboardist Joe Hite performed last year at the Brown County Music Center as Barry Manilow in a show billed as "Daybreak: The Music and Passion of Barry Manilow." Women often cry and hug him after concerts. It hardly hurts that Hite looks amazingly like a 1970s/1980s Manilow even without his stage wig.

"I'm getting a ton of residual Barry love that he long ago earned for me," Hite said.

As much as bands often work to imitate everything from artist coifs to costumes, fans seem to enjoy a detour along their road of recollections. Buehler recalled that when Get the Lead Out, a Led Zeppelin tribute group, played in July at the music center, the crowd especially came to life when the band surprisingly ripped into a raucous AC/DC tune.

"I think the creative versatility of many of the tribute acts is quite underrated," Buehler said.

McCutcheon added that groups' overall musicianship and substantial talent often is a pleasant surprise to concertgoers perhaps new to the tribute genre.

"Sometimes, people don't always immediately realize and understand the level of excellence of many of these performers," she said.

She highlighted the work at the Playhouse in March of Chris Collins as John Denver, complete with Denver's well-known storytelling style in between songs at his concerts. Plus, Collins, decked in the appropriate eyewear, looks substantially like a 1970s Denver ready for a Rocky Mountain high time with fans.

"Overall, it makes for a very intimate experience for the audience," McCutcheon said.

So, pop goes the sentimentality, as fans turn back the clock on musical memories. ■



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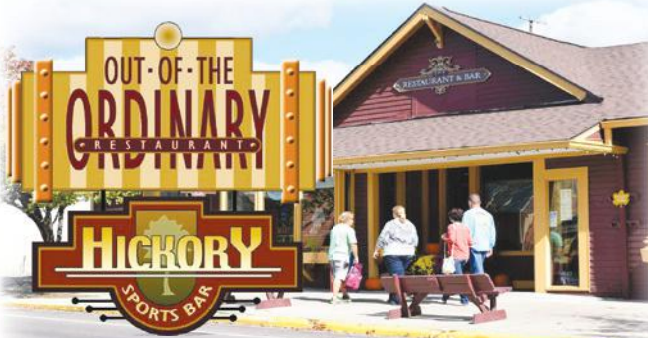
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CHRISTMAS PAGEANTRY

~by Jeff Tryon

The old white wooden church is gone now, but when I was growing up in Brown County, my family attended Unity Baptist up on Spearsville Road. When Christmas rolled around, the traditional holiday observances included a Christmas pageant of some sort performed by the youth of the church.

I can still recall these earliest forays into the dramatic arts, clad in a bathrobe costume with a towel for a headpiece, nervously clutching the small strip of paper with my one line on it.

"Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

We were baby boomers, and there were plenty of kids to go around, so each kid would only get to say one line of the roughly 20 Bible verses containing the Christmas story. Usually, you got one Bible verse, but if it was a



particularly long verse, it might be split among more than one performer.

Parents sat on the edge of their pew, hoping and praying that their child would not be the one to forget the lines or, heaven forbid, decide to improvise.

Probably my earliest memory of being on stage was standing there in the semi-dark in the front of the church with everyone in the congregation looking at me and someone on the front row whispering to me—I assume, prompting me with the line I was supposed to have memorized. It's all different when you're standing up there in front of everybody.

These productions were not exactly artistic triumphs, but each parent got to see their child shine in the glow of the classic nativity scene: a stable with Mary, Joseph, a doll in a manger, shepherds, angels, and wise men.

I now know that this is a little Christmas misunderstanding which we indulge in for the





sake of yard displays, Christmas cards, and children's holiday church plays. In fact, a close reading of the Gospel of Matthew reveals that by the time the wise men arrived on the scene, the shepherds and angels were long gone. Joseph and Mary were living in a house, and the child was probably about two years old.

When I was in Brown County High School, I was interested in theater and had the opportunity to appear in several plays plus do all kinds of stage technical work. I was bitten by the drama bug, and went on to appear in several community theater productions when I was in my 20s.

My rough plan was to end up as a rich and famous Hollywood actor, but, alas....

When I undertook the pastoral ministry in middle age, I enjoyed my forays into church theatrical production, staging plays and pageants for Easter and Christmas.

I love it when they bring straw into a church for the nativity—that smell of “new-mown hay” mixing with the familiar churchy smell of candle wax and old hymnals.

Over the years, I've collected or created scripts, tricks, and tips for staging these classic tableaux. I hope to some day put them all together into a book.

Usually Christmas pageants of small churches are pretty bare-bones; but one year, my wife and I attended the annual Christmas dinner and pageant up

in Russellville, and it was amazing. They had an orchestra, two choirs, full staging with lights, and fancy costumes. They even featured a live baby playing the lead role. Most impressive.

I really love the Christmas season, and I try to enjoy all the various facets and happenings of the holiday.

There are certain moments during the season that can draw the spirit of Christmas into your heart.

For some it's the opening of presents, the flurry of wrapping paper and ribbon and squeals of delight or smiles of satisfaction. Some people revel in the quiet joy of Christmas Eve, or the gathering of family around the holiday table. Some enjoy the hustle and bustle of scouring the shops and stores, trying to locate the perfect gift for their closest loved ones.

For many years that moment for me was when the angels made their appearance in the church Christmas pageant—little girls in white smocks and angel's wings.

Their little voices would say, “Fear not for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,

Continued on 56






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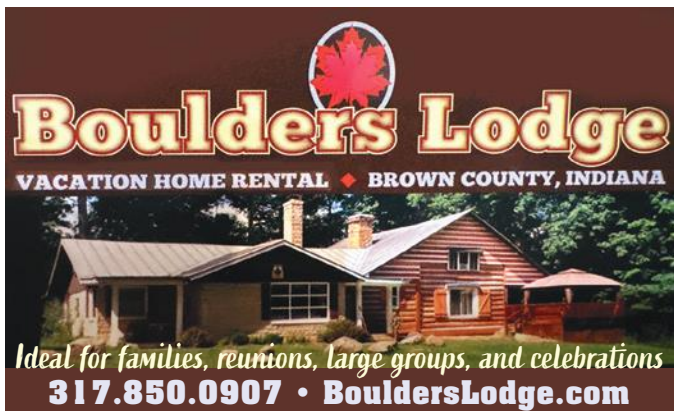
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PAGEANTRY continued from 55

which shall be to all people."

And then it was Christmas in my heart.

Now, I am an old pastor, and I serve a small, rural congregation where mostly everyone is my age. There are no children.

When Christmas Eve rolls around, by tradition, the whole community gathers at the Baptist church and we hold a candlelight service.

We sing those old Christmas hymns: "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear," "The First Noel," and "Silent Night."

And we pass the holy flame from the cluster of Advent candles at the front of the church from person to person—a hundred little lights twinkling in the darkness.

And I read from the opening chapter of the Gospel of John, about how a new light was coming into the world and that light was the light of love and caring and human kindness. And in that light was the life of men.

"And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." ■



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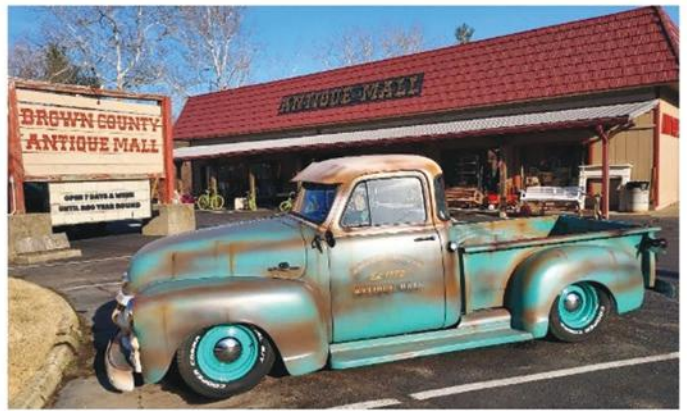
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Field Notes

Connections



~by Jim Eagleman



Fall brings a big change to the plant world. It is time to promote more of their own kind. They do this by producing flowers that mature and produce seeds. Seeds can be in the form of pods, nuts, or “stick-tights,” and the packaging is crafted to ensure seeds get distributed. Wind, water, and burs caught on animal fur, aid in the distribution.

Some fruits stand out against changing color leaves called foliar flags, signaling migrating birds to stop and feed. Studying the need for birds to replenish energy expended during long flights helps us learn what routes they take and where plants grow. It’s been theorized by biologists that plants can extend their range by being attractive to moving birds who distribute seeds along the way. The study of migration isn’t just to learn more about bird behavior, it can help us understand the important role of plants, how they survive, and how they move.

Studies have also revealed that the amount of sugar or fat in fruit supplied to birds varies at different times of the year.

In summer, when birds are on the nest, they are sedentary and use short distance flights to feed. While incubating, a task requiring lots of energy, they feed on multi-seeded fruits that have a greater chance to germinate locally. These plants grow in ideal habitats where birds have chosen to rear their young. Short flights are powered by the sugars in the fruits we also enjoy, such as raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries.

In contrast, when long-distance fuel is required, it’s the single-seeded fruits, high in lipids and maturing later in the year, that are available enroute: dogwood, spicebush, multi-flora rose hips, sassafras drupes, and pokeberries, to name a few. These plants have been shown to extend their range, from historic reports.

Do bird requirements for fuel cause plants to produce food at a time it’s needed? Possibly. This is called a “selective pressure,” where food choice can cause a plant to change. Over time, it results in plants responding to the wildlife community that exploit them.

Our pokeberry plant grew well over summer and in late fall as I write this. It leans against the screened-in porch. A recent, cold rain collapsed branches, and the plant is now a mass of thick stems, some with clusters of purple berries still attached. This example of a fatty fruit that ripens in late summer-early fall matures just in time for the robins,

thrashers, and sometimes waxwings to devour. Nothing seems to go to waste with plants that have matured all summer. If they didn't produce any recognizable fruit, nut, or berry, then the plant itself will decompose adding to the forest floor's layer of leaf litter. It's a good place for hollow stems to slowly rot as the caterpillar chrysalis will overwinter there, a home to next summer's butterflies and moths.

A professor once told us promising graduates that if somewhere along the line we failed to take our fair share of botany classes, we would be at a great disadvantage. "Any good biologist is also a good botanist," he said. If we were to work with any natural resource, anywhere, in any climate or location, it would be our awareness of plants that would help us know more about the environment.

One summer, my wife Kay filmed the two versions of hydrangea growing outside our window. On her phone she captured visits by solitary bees to each type, a wild version I transplanted from the woods, and a domestic type purchased from a nursery. Side by side, the two plants were nearly identical to us; but to the bees, there was definitely a preference for nectar. If we are to increase native pollinators by growing native plants, then it is clear the nursery version, nearly identical except by the nectar, isn't a useful food. We really aren't helping. Going wild is the mantra we hear more and more, and a check of the plant's native source is important.

Each fall I look at the oaks and hickories to see their production, or lack of it. The mast, as it's collectively called, includes fruits and varies every year. Bumper crops of acorns and hickory nuts occur in between years of almost no production. It's not predictable, but rodents, woodpeckers, and mast consumers like mice and chipmunks, can determine this before fall actually arrives. It is not always a sure thing, but a plentiful mast production can result in a larger wildlife population. Nature isn't always in sync, though. We often see large amounts of food and few consumers—and vice versa.

The more we understand the connection between vegetation and wildlife, the better we can act as responsible stewards. Native plants are vital to the wildlife community, and all are a joy to watch every season. ■

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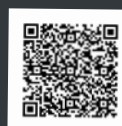
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SONGWRITER

~story and photos by Mandi Rainwater

Four talented singer-songwriters will take the stage at the Brown County Playhouse on November 15, 2025, to compete in the finals for the Songwriter Showdown. The annual competition, organized by the Brown County Music Association and Rainwater Studios with support from the Indiana Donor Network, spotlights rising original artists.

The winner receives \$1,500. If they produce an album within the coming year, they also get a robust album release package that includes 500 pressed CDs designed by Brenton Marketing, professional photography by Tom Preston, and a Facebook marketing campaign managed by Dave Watson. The winner will also open the 2026 Amplify Nashville concert at the Brown County Music Center and open for a future touring act at the Brown County Playhouse.

Here's a closer look at this year's finalists.

DAVID SISSON

David Sisson's roots stretch deep in the hills and hollers of Brown County. His great-grandparents raised 18 children here, and he's a proud graduate of Brown County High School.

Sisson's music is best described as authentic roots Americana with bluegrass undertones. His sound is inspired in large part by local legend Frank Jones, who gave him his first guitar lessons. "Frank has been super generous with his knowledge and time over the years," Sisson says.

Sisson has written around 30 original songs, many of which are collaborations with Sam Love. If he takes home the prize, he hopes to finish and release a full-length solo debut album.

"For me, my main goal is to just get my album out there where people can enjoy it," he says.

You can find David Sisson on Facebook and hear more of his work on the Rainwater Studios YouTube channel.

STEVE HICKMAN

A familiar face in the Brown County music scene, Steve Hickman's raw, soulful country is gritty and genuine. His gravelly voice and lived-in lyrics carry hard-earned wisdom.

Hickman is a prolific songwriter with thousands of songs penned and about 30 that regularly appear in his setlists. Hickman frequently plays in and around Brown County, both solo and with his band Hickman and The Hard Knocks.

With the support of his fans, Hickman placed in the 2024 Showdown finals and tied for the win in Rainwater Studios' Take the Stage competition in 2023.

Meet the



DAVID SISSON



STEVE HICKMAN

SHOWDOWN

Finalists



JON CORY BROOKS



SAMI RIGGS

After a tree destroyed his home earlier this year, the community rallied behind Hickman, raising funds to help him rebuild. If he wins the Showdown, he plans to use part of the prize to cover ongoing expenses associated with that project. Hickman also has his sights set on a future album.

Follow Steve Hickman on Facebook, and find his album *Moral Dilemma* on Spotify, iTunes, and Amazon.

JON CORY BROOKS

Jon Cory Brooks spent most of his life out west in Colorado and Wyoming, but relocated in 2024 to Owen County, Indiana. He brings an alternative country sound with folk influences to the stage. Brooks started playing guitar at 13 and began writing songs in his 20s. He placed in the top 10 in a statewide songwriting competition in Wyoming.

Brooks recorded a lo-fi EP in 2023 on a reel-to-reel at a friend's house, embracing a vintage tone that captures the authenticity of his songwriting. If he wins the Showdown, Brooks plans to make full use of the prize package to release a new album.

You can find Jon Cory Brooks and his band West Fork Revival on Instagram. His EP *TV Cowboy* is available on all streaming platforms.

SAMI RIGGS

Sami Riggs faithfully makes the trek from Dry Ridge, Kentucky, to compete in the Songwriter Showdown. Originally a last-minute alternate stepping in for another competitor, Riggs quickly established her place as one of the most popular songwriters on the stage, delivering a catchy blend of country-folk and acoustic pop, rooted in storytelling.

Riggs began performing publicly at the age of 12, alongside her guitar teacher, and was booking solo shows by 15. In high school and college, she began finding her voice as a songwriter.

Today, she has over 20 original songs in her repertoire. Riggs released a three-song EP in August.

"If I win," she says, "I'd definitely reinvest it into recording some of my stuff that's unreleased." Some of her fan favorites from the Showdown, like "Blue Collar" and "Break the Cycle" are still unrecorded.

Learn more about Sami Riggs at SamiRiggs.com and follow her on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok.

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The winner is determined solely by audience voting. Come support these talented songwriters and cast your ballot for the winner of the Songwriter Showdown. For tickets, browncountyplayhouse.org 812-988-6555. ■

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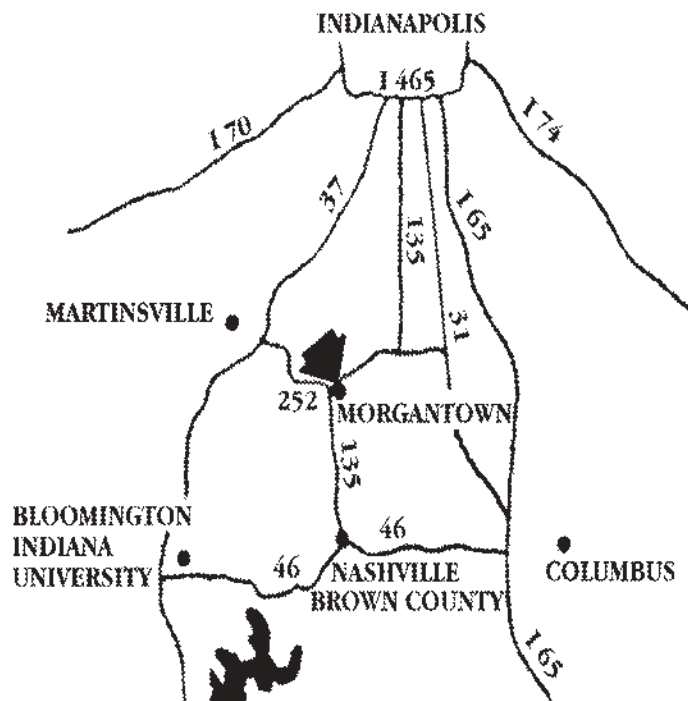
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