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Moody on The Market

Pat Moody

St. Joseph elected hear another earful on public parking plan

With paid parking planned for part of downtown St. Joseph starting this summer, city commissioners have heard an earful from residents both in support of and opposed to the plan. At their regular meeting on Monday, it was mostly the latter as a group of downtown business owners who met last week to draft a letter of opposition came out to voice their frustrations.

Lisa Miller of Forever Clean Soapworks read that letter, making several requests of commissioners.

"Number one, parking passes to all businesses, owners and their employees for the duration of the paid parking," Miller said. "Parking passes for all downtown and local residences, including new residences, for the duration of the paid parking."

Miller also asked that Pleasant Street not be blocked off for the summer to allow for additional spaces.

The meeting wasn't always cordial. Complaints ranged from safety concerns about pedestrians having to cross Main Street to get from the free parking on the east side to the west side to worries that St. Joe's small town character is being lost.

Although Monday's turnout was intended as a show of force from those against the parking plan, there were some residents present who support it. They included DDA Chair Tom Gawlik, who said a lot of careful study went into the plan.

'I appreciate the emotions are obviously very high at this juncture, understandably," Gawlik said. "So let's give this an opportunity to work, give it a few months, give it this year, and let's see what happens."

Rick Molitar of The Market said the plan isn't the result of some evil plot, but an effort to address longstanding parking issues downtown. Some insisted the downtown will see a drop in visitors and its businesses will die.

The public comments continued for over an hour as the May 15 start date approaches and pay stations are installed around the downtown.



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Anna Murphy

Continued on page 7

President & CEO, United Way of Southwest Michigan

United Way's Annual Celebration Held as a Tribute to People and Impact

Nearly 300 donors, volunteers, and community partners filled Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center Grand Upton Hall on Thursday, April 24, for United Way of Southwest

Michigan's Annual Celebration, an evening that looked back on 2024 and honored the people who made last year's impact possible. During

my opening remarks, I reminded guests that the money we raise is indeed important, but the night was really about the work of our impact partners, volunteers, and companies, and their willingness to "live united" for neighbors across Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties.

Continued on page 2

Inserts & Promotions

• Ace Hardware • Family Fare • Dollar General • In & Around St. Joseph • Jets Pizza • Martins Super Markets National SAVE Coupons • Rural King • Renewal By Andersen Inserts may vary by zip code

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Murphy Continued from cover

Among the recognition and appreciation given during the evening was focused on our volunteers. The Margaret B. Upton Volunteer Leadership Award-Berrien County's lifetimeachievement honor for community servicewent to Rick Freridge, whose vision and elbow grease have transformed the St. Joseph-Lincoln Senior Service Center grounds and inspired scores of volunteers at Habitat for Humanity, Sarett Nature Center, and beyond. The Frederick S. Upton Foundation will donate \$5,000 to a charity of his choice. Other finalists for the award included Sue Willming, and Joy Darlene Hawkins and Jolita Allene Smith, affectionately known as "The Twins."

Leigh Goyings, who has spent more than three decades guiding Helping Hands of Cass County, championing the Cass County CROP Hunger Walk, and preserving Edwardsburg's history, accepted the Judge Susan L. Dobrich Volunteer Leadership Award, which allows her to direct a \$5,000 grant to a Cass County nonprofit thanks to the McLoughlin Family Foundation. Other finalists for the award included Tim Hulett, Roseann Marchetti, and Carl Ross.

Workplace campaign champions were also celebrated. Indiana Michigan Power's Cook Nuclear Plant earned the organizational Live United Award for combining a generous employee pledge drive with raffles, T-shirt sales, and a charity golf outing. The individual Live United Award went to Whirlpool Corporation's Eduardo Lopez, whose steady leadership keeps the company's popular appliance sales running smoothly and profitably for United Way. United Federal Credit Union took home the Whirlpool Community Commitment Award for pairing a sizeable pledge increase with robust volunteer turnout, and Kinexus Group captured the David J. Weichhand Award for weaving trivia contests, chili cook-offs, and even an escape-room challenge into its creative campaign.

We were also lucky enough to enjoy remarks from John Farden, Executive Vice President of Global Network Advancement & Operations at United Way Worldwide. John spoke about his role in unifying communities using the power of United Way's influence and connections to make sure people and organizations have the support they need. He also spoke about the immense network of aligned United Way organizations across the state, country, and world, that lift up each other with resources and support, so our local United Ways can be focused more on our community work.

A big thank you to the sponsors who made our Celebration possible—Corewell Health as Platinum Sponsor; Michigan Works! Berrien-Cass-Van Buren, Silver Beach Pizza, and Whirlpool Corporation as Series Sponsors; and an array of Gold, Silver, Bronze, and in-kind partners including Sturgis Bank, Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber, Honor Credit Union, Kruggel Lawton CPA, BluCat Consulting, and The Purpose Partners.

United Way of Southwest Michigan keeps every dollar donated in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties to help fund more than 70 programs at over 45 partner agencies while also operating signature initiatives such as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program (VITA), 2-1-1, and Volunteer United. We would love for you to see the wonderful work being done and the recap of our Celebration at **uwsm.org/celebration-2025**. Thank you for supporting United Way!

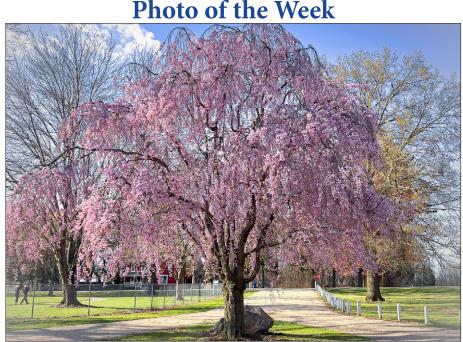


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It's Blossomtime Just in time for next Saturday's Blossomtime Grand Floral Parade. **Photo by Chris Loose-Randall**

Please email your favorite photo with a brief description to **<u>Photos@MailMaxOnline.com</u>** Photos must be horizontal orientation to be considered for Photo of the Week.





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Tyler **Allen** Comfort

Boss Services

Advisor

Should Homeowners Trust Google Reviews for Hiring Home Service Companies?

In today's digital age, homeowners looking to hire a contractor, plumber, or remodeling service often turn to Google reviews. With just a few clicks, they can browse star ratings, read customer testimonials, and compare different businesses. While Google reviews can be a helpful resource, they also come with potential pitfalls. Understanding the advantages and drawbacks of relying on online reviews can help homeowners make informed hiring decisions.

The Pros of Using Google Reviews

 Easy Access to Customer Feedback Google reviews offer a quick way to gauge customer satisfaction. A highly rated home service company with numerous positive reviews is likely to provide quality work Reviews often highlight key aspects of a business, such as professionalism, punctuality, and workmanship.

2. Wide Range of Opinions

Unlike testimonials on a company's website (which are usually handpicked), Google reviews provide a mix of experiences from different customers. This diversity helps homeowners get a balanced perspective before hiring.

3. Transparency and Credibility

Homeowners can look for businesses with a large number of detailed reviews rather than just a handful of short, vague comments. Companies with consistently high ratings over time are usually more trustworthy.

4. Photos and Responses from Businesses

Many reviewers upload photos of completed work, giving potential customers a realistic view of a company's capabilities. Additionally, how a business responds to negative reviews can speak volumes about its customer service. A polite and professional response to criticism often indicates a company that values its customers.

5. Updated Information on Service Quality

Google reviews are continuously updated, meaning homeowners can read about recent experiences instead of relying on outdated word-of-mouth recommendations. The Cons of Using Google Reviews 1. Fake or Misleading Reviews

One of the biggest concerns with Google reviews is the presence of fake reviews – both positive and negative. Some businesses pay for fake five-star reviews to boost their reputation, while competitors or disgruntled individuals may leave unjustified negative reviews. It can be difficult to differentiate between genuine and fraudulent feedback.

2. Bias and Emotional Responses

People are more likely to leave reviews when they have either an exceptionally good or bad experience. This can skew the perception of a company, making it appear better or worse than it truly is. A business with a 4.5-star rating might actually provide the same level of service as one with a 4.0-star rating, but with fewer extreme reviews.

3. Reviews May Not Reflect the Full Picture

A contractor with a handful of bad reviews might still do excellent work. Sometimes, negative reviews stem from miscommunication or unrealistic customer expectations. Conversely, a company with glowing reviews might have hidden issues that aren't reflected in its online reputation. **4. Over-Reliance on Star Ratings**

Many homeowners glance at the overall star rating

without reading individual reviews. However, a company with a lower rating might still be a better fit depending on the specific needs of the project.

How to Use Google Reviews Wisely

To make the most of Google reviews while avoiding common pitfalls, homeowners should:

Read multiple reviews, both positive and negative, to get a well-rounded view.

Look for detailed reviews that mention specific aspects of service.

 Check for patterns—consistent complaints may signal a red flag.
Consider how businesses respond to negative

feedback.

• Use Google reviews as one of many research tools. Also, check with friends, family, or professional organizations like the Better Business Bureau.

Final Thoughts

Google reviews can be a powerful tool for homeowners searching for trustworthy home service companies. However, they should not be the only factor in making a decision. By combining online research with other vetting methods, homeowners can confidently choose the right professionals for their needs.

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Regional Director, SMR Chamber

April Showers Bring May Events

As we wrap up the month of April and welcome in May, we've seen an increase in the number of events on our calendar! With seven ribbon cuttings planned between now and mid-June, Business After Hours, and super fun NextGen Young Professionals events, we are welcoming in summer by staying busy!

I mentioned it a few weeks ago but if you don't have **May 8th's Business After Hours** at the **Krasl Art Center** (KAC) on your calendar, you need to add it! We'll be there from **5:00 - 7:00 p.m.** Come for drinks, light snacks, networking, and of course get early details on this year's Krasl Art Fair!

At 6:00 p.m., KAC will unveil the **63rd Annual Krasl Art Fair on the Bluff** commemorative design. The 2025 event, presented by **1st Source Bank Wealth Advisory Services**, welcomes 172 artists from around the country to Southwest Michigan on **July 12 and 13, 2025**, and has been ranked as one of the top fairs for artists in the country. The commemorative design is incorporated into the atmosphere and branding of the weekend-long event.

This year's artists and first-time participants of the Krasl Art Fair on the Bluff are **Dennis and Christina Jacobs of Arsenal Handicraft in Madison Heights, MI**. Their artwork creates pieces of art that not only tell a story but take you on a journey through space and nature. Every piece displays their finely tuned ability to tap into each of our own desires to set off into the wild. For a preview of their work, visit<u>arse-</u> nalhandicraft.com.

In addition to networking and the commemorative design unveiling, guests will have access to 2025 Art Fair merchandise and be able to purchase Collectors' Experience packages.

The Art Fair is a suggested donation event. Donations can be made at the entrances to the event. To learn more visit **krasl.org/art-fair/tickets/**. Next, we have an exciting celebration with our good friend **Amy Underwood**, owner of **Health Elevated** as we celebrate the relocation of her practice with a ribbon cutting and open house! It all happens on **Wednesday, May 14th, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.** with the ribbon cutting happening at 11:30 a.m. at her new office at **616 Main St. in downtown St. Joseph**.

Founded in 2021, Health Elevated is a concierge pelvic health practice dedicated to empowering women through personalized care and education about pelvic health issues. The practice has rapidly grown by providing comprehensive evaluations and tailored treatment options that address the root causes of pelvic floor dysfunction. Whether it's postpartum recovery, menopause-related changes, or other concerns like painful sex, bladder leakage, or chronic pain, Health Elevated helps women regain confidence and control over their bodies.

Come meet Amy Underwood, tour the beautiful new space, and learn how Health Elevated is making a difference in women's health right here in St. Joseph!

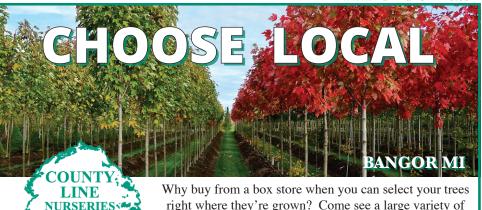
Can't make it to the ribbon-cutting ceremony? Stop by until 5:30pm to meet Amy and check out the brand-new office! You can all visit **healthelevatedpllc.com** or call 269-262-1403.

Finally, our NextGen Young Professionals have a "pawsome" time planned for you and, you guessed it, your four-legged friends! May 14 is National Dog Moms Day, but we're celebrating Dog Dads, Dog Aunts, Dog BFFs, and anyone who loves pups. Bring your dog, a photo of your dog, or just show up ready to celebrate at Transient Artisan Ales from 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.!

Crafts & Beverages including: photo mosaics, sticker books, bookmark coloring, and DIY friendship bracelet bar - because matching with your dog is always a good idea.

Dog & Human Treats will be available – plus a drink ticket is included AND... one lucky attendee will take home a prize tied to **Transient's Buckley Day** – the bottle release celebrating their brewpup – happening **May 18**!

Learn more about these and other events at **smrchamber.com**! Connect with me directly at sspoonholtz@smrchamber. <u>com</u> or 269-932-4040. See you around Southwest Michigan!



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2nd Grade	15
3rd Grade	10
4th Grade	10
5th Grade	4
6th Grade	1
7th Grade	0
8th Grade	2
9th Grade	1
10th Grade	1
11th Grade	0
12th Grade	1

Schools of Choice applications may be downloaded from the district website or picked up in the Superintendent's Office located at 9964 Gast Road, Bridgman, Monday through Friday between the hours of 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.

You may return the completed application via US Mail addressed to the attention of "Schools of Choice." Please call Administration Office at 269-466-0271 for more information. Application deadline is May 30, 2025.

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Margaritas

Moody Continued from page 7

ment units directly adjacent to the Lookout Point apartment complex in St. Joseph. This expansion, anticipated to be completed by summer 2026, will provide medical residents additional options for housing during their residency training. We anticipate these apartment units will support continued recruitment efforts to bring new providers to our area."

Agreement formally reached for St. Joe Today to take over lighthouse tours

St. Joseph City Commissioners have approved an agreement with St. Joseph Today for the organization to take over management of lighthouse tours this summer.

For many years, the tours were operated by the Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, but with the Heritage scaling down operations, the torch has been passed on.

The agreement with St. Joseph Today approved by commissioners this week is the same agreement the city had with the Heritage. It allows St. Joe Today to keep all revenues generated by the tours so it can recoup costs.

Commissioner Tess Ulrey said Monday it takes a lot of people to be able to offer these tours each summer.

"And I do want to stress that a lot of this lighthouse tour labor is really being owned by a very dedicated group of community volunteers," Ulrey said. "So I think that the structure that we have within this agreement is great. It's a way for us to give back to St. Joseph Today, too, who is putting a lot of the legwork in. But I definitely want to highlight the fact that those volunteers are just owning this for love of the lighthouse."

Ulrey said under the arrangement, St. Joseph Today will operate lighthouse tours each Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. It'll be free for anyone to enter the lighthouse, and \$5 to go up to the top.

In 2023, more than 6,900 people took lighthouse tours in St. Joseph, generating about \$16,000 in revenue. In 2024, there were more than 7,000 visitors with about \$17,800 in sales. The tours this year are expected to start on Saturday, June 7.

Following move, Benton Harbor Soup

Kitchen reopening The Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen has been busy, working to complete its move this week into a new location.

As Moody on the Market previously reported, in March, the kitchen reached a deal to purchase the former Lark's Bar-B-Que building at 174 West Main Street. Soup Kitchen Board President K.C. Gast said within just about eight weeks, the kitchen managed to secure a new building and move in.

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Just prior to the planned opening on Benton Harbor's Main Street, Gast said, "We're moving the last of our stuff into the former Lark's building, and we will be serving sandwiches out the door as we did during COVID on May 1."

Gast said a whole convoy of volunteers helped move the operation to the Lark's property.

"People have just been so willing to help out with everything, with the building. It's just amazing, and nothing happens by chance."

Gast said it'll take a few months for the Berrien County Health Department to approve the new kitchen, so they'll only be serving sandwiches out the door sometime this summer. Once the health department approval is obtained, they can start serving hot food again.

Gast promised the new Soup Kitchen will "look like a first-rate diner" that closes at 1 p.m. each day so it fits in with the atmosphere on Main Street.

Gast said it takes about 1,000 volunteers per year to run the Soup Kitchen. The group reports dishing out about 40,000 to 50,000 meals per year.

> Pat Moody Publisher, MoodyOnTheMarket.com moody@wsjm.com (269) 925-1111



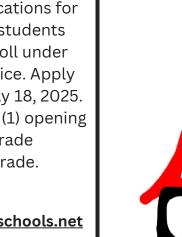


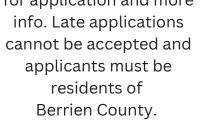
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* MUST QUALIFY ** RESIDENCY RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY *BASED UPON REBATES THROUGH 04/30/2025





Locks, Rear Back-Up Camera, 6.7 Cummins DIESEL Engine, Remote Keyless Entry, Black Tubular Side Steps, Baybridge 16 Foot Box Truck, and Much

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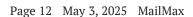
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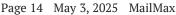
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Page 16 May 3, 2025 MailMax



Every Eye

"Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him." Revelation 1:7

We don't know what eventually happened to the Roman soldiers in charge of Jesus' crucifixion. Perhaps some died quelling a forgotten riot or fighting a forgotten battle. Perhaps some of them died from injury or disease. Or, for all we know, all of them lived long and healthy lives, enjoyed their military retirement and died in their sleep at a ripe, old age.

But there is one thing we do know. Every one of them will see Jesus again.

"Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him," the Bible says. No matter that they are long dead. No matter that their bodies crumbled into dust centuries ago. They will see Jesus again. They, and everyone else who has ever lived on this earth.

Have you ever thought about that? Everyone is going to see Jesus. Everyone. The checkout girl at the grocery store. The man who maintains the copier at your office. The administrator at the nursing home. The comedian on late-night TV. The boy who's mowing your lawn this summer. The lead singer for your favorite band. The doctor who performed your mom's knee replacement. Everyone is going to see Jesus. Whether they want to or not.

This simple fact keeps things real for us. Our Savior is real. Our forgiveness through faith in him is real. Eternal life is real.

It also gives us a sense of urgency. Our living Lord is coming back. When he does, the time for coming to faith in him is over.

Look around you. Every eye you see will one day look on the face of Jesus. Prepare them for that moment. You know what to do.

Prayer: Living Savior, one day you will return. While there is still time, empower me to share your gospel with those around me. Amen

Submitted by Pastor Josh Bishop Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Joseph Originated by: www.What AboutJesus.com





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Ramsey Financial Expert The Ramsey Show

Dave Says Medical Emergencies Come First

Dear Dave.

I recently experienced a medical emergency and unexpected hospital stay. I'm about halfway through Baby Step 2, and I'm paying off my debts using the debt snowball system. I have good insurance, but should I put Baby Step 2 on hold for now due to all the hospital bills?

Gerard

Dear Gerard,

That's exactly what you should do. I'm sorry to hear about your health issues, but at the same time, I hope you'll make sure you're only pressing the pause button on Baby Step 2. I'm talking about temporarily stopping the debt snowball and making only minimum payments on all non-mortgage debt for now. Can you manage that?

Things like this can be expensive, but they're part of life. At the same time, taking care of these kinds of issues doesn't have to mean giving up on gaining control of your finances. Emergency issues, especially medical emergencies, come first. Then, go back and pick up where you left off when things are better, and finish knocking out your other debt by restarting your debt snowball. After that, I've got a feeling you'll have the motivation to fully fund your emergency fund in Baby

or Loren Gerber 269-921-0754

Step 3 all the way up to three to six months of expenses.

God bless you, friend. Keep your head up, and take good care of yourself while you're recovering. You can do this! – Dave

Pay it Off, Young Lady!

Dear Dave, I'm 28, and I make around \$75,000 a year. My only debt right now is a car payment. I still owe \$15,000 on the vehicle, and currently I have \$30,000 in savings and a 401(k) through my employer. I love my job, but my income can fluctuate from month to month. Do you think I should pay off the car, or hang on to all my savings?

Erin Dear Erin,

Debt is a bad thing to have in your life, even with a good income. It's an especially bad thing when your income can vary from paycheck to paycheck. It's sounds like you're in pretty good shape financially, except for that car note. It's like an anchor weighing your finances down.

If you paid off the car, you'd still have \$15,000 sitting in your savings account. And with your income, plus the money you'd free up by no longer having a car payment, you could rebuild your savings in a flash.

You know where I'm going with this, don't you? Pay off that car, young lady! – Dave

* Dave Ramsey is an eight-time national bestselling author, personal finance expert and host of The Ramsey Show. He has appeared on Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Today, Fox News, CNN, Fox Business and many more. Since 1992, Dave has helped people take control of their money, build wealth and enhance their lives. He also serves as CEO for Ramsey Solutions.





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Flori-dazing Flori-days at Flori-Dis, Part Flori-Deux

Last week's column bid fond farewells to Disney World attractions that are being retired, such as "Grand Avenue," home to Muppetvision, to be reimagineered into a Monsters Inc. area.

(Brief but related tangent: All over every park we visited, scads of people were wearing Monsters Inc. caps, shirts, backpacks, etc. Monsters Inc. is definitely having a moment!) Anway, back to the topic of this columns, which was...? Oh, yeah, NEW attractions – or at least new-ish, or new to me, No. 3 son, and my wife.

Gotta start with Hollywood Studios' Galaxy's Edge area, featuring Star Wars Star Wars Star Wars! We took our first spins on the Rise of the Rebellion, and it's a blast, with immersive video and motion features. It ain't merely 3D. . .it's 4D baby!

I do wonder if Disney "cast members" enjoy being assigned to this ride. They're dressed as jack-booted First Order functionaries. They CAN'T smile, and only speak in stern monotones, saying things like "Keep moving," and "Your mission has failed," and mocking the way riders are dressed.

We teleport now to Disney's Animal Kingdom, to the waaaaay exciting Flight of Passage, set in Pandora, the planet of the Na'vi from the "Avatar" movies. This ride is NOT new (we rode it in 2019, fer goshsakes). Nevertheless, I'll mention a couple things in the ride's queue that struck me as nueue – sorry, "new" – because I don't recall them from six years agueue – uh, ago.

The queue is wonderfully detailed and elaborate, especially when the line snakes through the laboratories where avatars are generated. At one point, you pass the work cubicle of Jake Sully, the male lead in the movies. And he's got a couple every "earthbound" tchotchkes on display: A schedule of "softball practices," and an autographed softball. I took a quick but crummy picture with my phone but could only make out one signature: Rachel Smith. I wonder if that's the Rachel Smith I went to high school with?

During the Flight of Passage pre-show, you watch a video featuring "Dr. Jackie Ogden" from the Pandora Conservation Initiative. This character is a tribute to a real-life Dr. Jackie Ogden – she worked for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts

www.MailMaxOnline.com for 19 years, most notably as VP of Animals, Science, and Environment. I wonder if that's the Jackie Ogden I went to high school with?

We now hyper-transport to Epcot, where we had our first taste of the Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind ride. Whoo-eeeee, what a rush, that's all I can say! I hate hate hate roller coasters, but I did this one twice, and only screamed like a colicky 9-month old baby three, maybe four times. Okay, maybe seventeen times.

The ride follows the VERY typical Disney ride "script": You take an innocuous pleasure journey wherein everything goes HORRIBLY WRONG. But it's the first Disney ride wherein things go HORRIBLY WRONG to an excellent 1980s pop-rock soundtrack. Listen for "September," by Earth Wind and Fire; "One Way or Another," Blondie; "I Ran (So Far Away)," A Flock of Seagulls, and "Disco Inferno," the Trammps.

Let me clarify – you'll hear these songs just fine...as long as you're not sitting next to me screaming like a colicky 9-month old baby.

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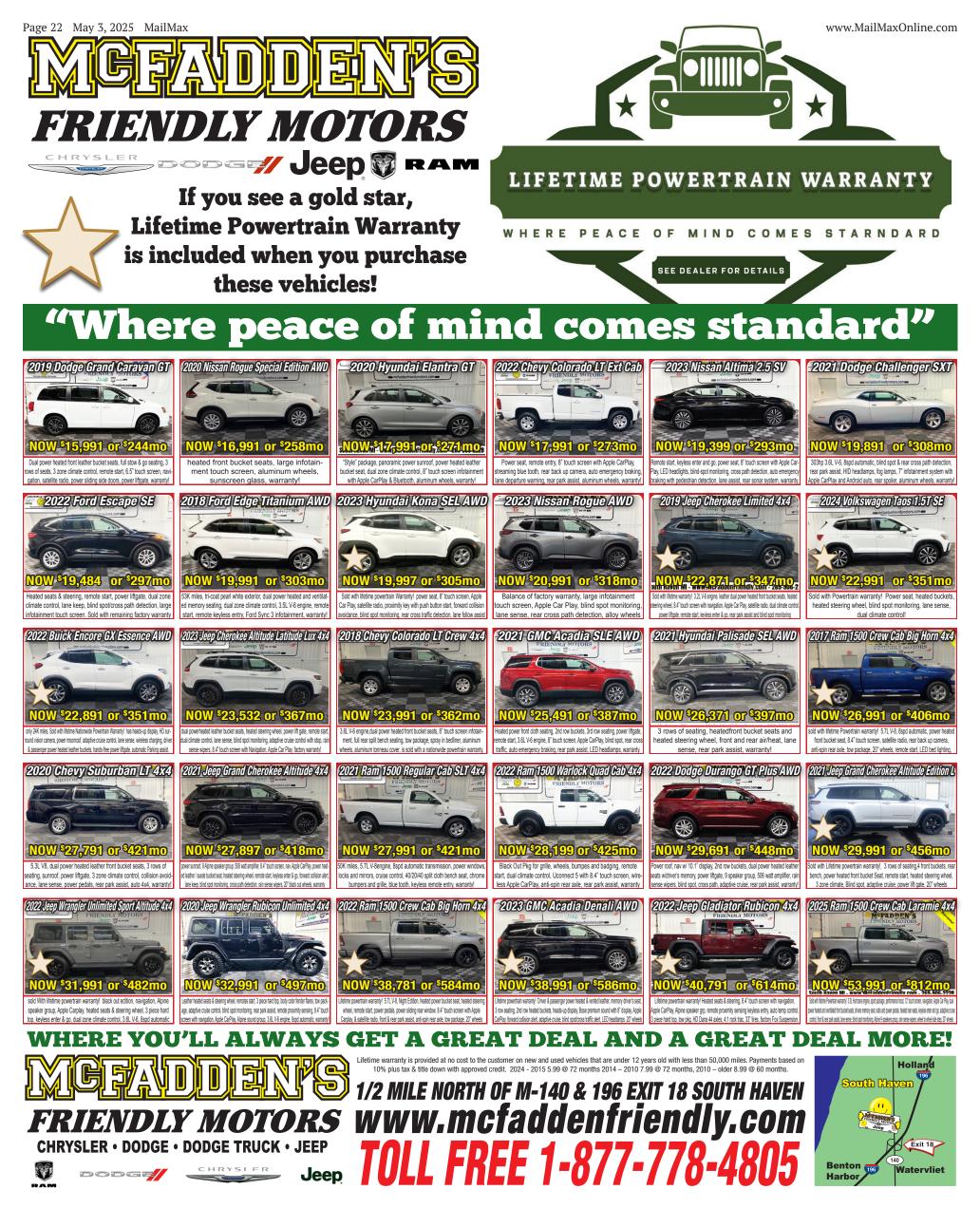
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