

Santa to leave an impression on mail

By RICH DAVIS

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This year's Santa Claus, Ind., "picture postmark" becomes available Saturday.

While some customers drive hundreds of miles to get the cancellation in person (even stamp it themselves), most mail their stamped and addressed Christmas cards to the post office at the north end of Kriss Kringle shopping center.

This year's postmark featuring Santa was drawn by Marii Marley Jahn, who graduated from Heritage Hills High School last May and is now attending Purdue University.

According to Postmaster Marian Balbach, here's what you need to do if you're funneling

your holiday mail through the tiny post office 40 miles east of Evansville.

Package your mail in a sturdy envelop or box and mail it to:

Postmaster
Santa Claus Station
Santa Claus, IN 47579-9998

You must request the picture postmark.

Allow at least a 2-by-4-inch space in the stamp area for the postmark and be sure your cards or letters have postage on them before bringing or mailing them to the post office.

There is no charge for postmarking, but there is a limit of 50 postmarks per person per day Saturday through Dec. 24.

In order to ensure a good postmark imprint, do not enclose bulky items in your holiday mail. For example, no reindeer food, snow or glitter.

Between now and Dec. 20, Balbach expects 500,000 pieces of mail to come through her post office — about 10,000 of them letters to Santa from children, which are answered by a volunteer group known as Santa's Elves.

During the rest of the year, the post office averages around 13,000 pieces of mail per month.

Besides the picture postmark and Santa letters, the town's other big event in December is the annual Christmas in Santa Claus Festival Dec. 8-9, highlighted by a parade, horse-drawn sleigh ride and free 15-mile tour through 12 holiday-themed and lighted neighborhoods in Christmas Lake Village, where many of the town's residents live.

For more information, call (888) 444-9252 or visit www.LegendaryPlaces.org/Christmas



Courtesy of Spencer County Visitors Bureau

Children wishing to write to Santa should address their letters to:

Santa Claus
P.O. Box 1
Santa Claus, IN 47579
Parents should check that a legible return address is included.

Project will boost youth sports

Goebel Soccer Complex cited for helping tourism

By JIMMY NESBITT

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The Evansville Convention & Visitors Bureau will unveil a youth sports-related project this morning designed to boost tourism in the city.

Executive Director Marilee Fowler said Monday she could not be more specific about the project, adding: "We learned a great deal when we built ... the Goebel Soccer Complex and what that has brought to Evansville with youth sports. So it's in that same direction."

Several architectural renderings will be presented at 8:30 a.m. at the Pagoda, Fowler said. The project is a result of a forum called Destination Evansville, which was started three years ago to determine what new project the city should pursue to increase tourism.

The project will be paid for using money generated by the city's innkeeper tax, which was increased by two percentage points in September and is expected to generate \$1.5 million in 2008, Fowler said. Mayor Jonathan Weinzapfel has reviewed the architectural renderings and supports the project, she said.

Fowler said the bureau will also make an announcement about Mesker Park Zoo & Botanic Garden's Amazonia exhibit. The zoo needs about \$500,000 to finish the exhibit, and Fowler said the bureau will commit some money from the innkeepers tax to the exhibit.

Forum offers health care reform ideas

By MARK WILSON

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Not everybody agreed with the recommendations for reforming Indiana's health care system presented at a public discussion Monday night, but most agreed something needed to be done fast.

About two dozen people gathered in a room at the University Center at the University of Southern Indiana to hear the recommendations of an academic study group that will be presented to the Indiana Legislature in 2009.

Among the recommendations are:

- Mandating all Indiana residents have a minimum level of health insurance or face personal income tax penalties for noncompliance. The group would recommend developing measures to ensure that coverage is affordable for low-income individuals and families.

- Employers would be required to either provide affordable health coverage meeting the minimum required benefits or to pay a tax that would help pay for a state-funded health insurance plan.

- Individuals would have the option to buy into those state-funded plans. Patients also would assume some of the cost through a tiered system of copayments tied to their income level.

- Health care providers would also be assessed a tax and specialty hospitals that do not contribute to basic health care needs

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Woman arraigned in Thanksgiving fatality



GAVIN LESNICK / Courier & Press

Posey County sheriff's deputies escort Melinda Lindauer out of the Posey County Courthouse on Monday after she was arraigned in the shooting death of 29-year-old Nicole Stroud on Thanksgiving Day.



Nicole Stroud

More shooting details released in court files

By GAVIN LESNICK

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Memorial contributions may be made to a trust fund set up at Fifth Third Bank for Stroud's 11-month-old daughter, Jenna.

MOUNT VERNON, Ind. — A Wadesville, Ind., woman accused of fatally shooting an Evansville resident who was trying to coax a dog out of the woman's yard was arraigned Monday during a brief hearing.

Melinda Lindauer, 41, is charged in Posey County Circuit Court with involuntary manslaughter, reckless homicide and criminal recklessness in the Thanksgiving Day shooting

death of 29-year-old Nicole Stroud.

Lindauer spoke briefly during the hearing, answering affirmatively a handful of routine questions posed by Posey Circuit Judge James Redwine.

Citing the continuing investigation into the alleged crimes, Lindauer's attorney, Nick Hermann, and Posey County Prosecutor Jodi Uebelhack agreed to set the next hearing date for Jan. 8.

Redwine read Lindauer the charges against her, including the possible punishments. For the manslaughter and reckless homicide

counts, it ranges from two to eight years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The criminal recklessness count carries a possible sentence of six months to three years in prison, also with a \$10,000 fine.

Lindauer, who wore an orange jail jumpsuit and had her hands and feet cuffed during the 10 minute hearing, was flanked by seven supporters in an otherwise empty courtroom. The arraignment started an hour before visitation for Stroud's funeral began

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Case of child neglect death begins

By JOHN MARTIN

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A Patoka, Ind., woman facing charges in connection with the death of her baby shortly after his birth made an initial court appearance Monday.

Vanessa Robinson, 22, is charged with neglect of a dependent causing death, a Class A felony carrying a range of 20 to 50 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine for conviction. She was arrested Nov. 15 at her father's residence in Fort Branch, Ind., and is in the Gibson County Jail.

Robinson will be represented by attorney Ivan Arnaez of Evansville. She remains in the Gibson

County Jail on a \$100,000 surety bond.

Gibson County Prosecutor Robert Kreig said he will oppose any defense request to lower that bond when Robinson is due back in court at 1 p.m. Dec. 4.

Indiana State Police said their investigation began March 15. Robinson had been admitted to Good Samaritan Hospital in Vincennes, Ind., three days earlier with abdominal pain.

Found baby in a box

Doctors determined that Robinson had recently given birth. After undergoing surgery, she reportedly told detectives she may have miscarried at the Patoka home she shared with her

mother, boyfriend and another child.

Police said they obtained a warrant, searched the home and found a deceased male infant in a cardboard box in the basement. An autopsy performed on the infant found no identifiable cause of death.

A pathologist noted that "because of the possibility of fatal complications during birth, it cannot be determined with certainty that this infant was born alive." But he also noted, "The gestational development and lack of identifiable cause of death suggest this infant could have been born alive."

Dr. Mary M. Davis did an investigation of the autopsy and reportedly found evidence the baby was born alive, but was later suffocated.