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# THE NEWS SUN

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## Cockroft to be feted at Pacers game

INDIANAPOLIS — East Noble educator Mark Cockroft will be honored as an "Indiana Hero" by the Indiana Pacers during their home game with the Memphis Grizzlies on Dec. 30.

Cockroft will be honored for his work with the Boomerang Backpack program, which sends a backpack filled with food home with needy students each Friday.

## United Way donates to Noble food banks

ALBION — United Way of Noble County recently donated \$1,400 to support five Noble County food banks this Christmas season.

According to a United Way representative, "United Way has a small emergency fund that is set aside to be used in times of desperate need, at the discretion of the board of directors. The board decided to use these available funds to support our area food banks since they are being hit so hard this season."

United Way donated \$280 each to the Calvary United Methodist Food Bank in Avilla, the Helping Hands Food Pantry in Rome City, the Central Noble Food Pantry, the West Noble Food Pantry and the Friendship Food Pantry in Kendallville.

To donate food or money to an area food bank contact the agencies listed above or call the United Way at 636-8929.

## Small fire doused

CROMWELL — A fire in the 11100 block of C.R. 450N was doused before firefighters arrived at the scene, a Cromwell Fire Department source said Friday night.

An LP gas furnace malfunctioned, causing a small fire. Damage was minimal.



## Coming Sunday

### Holiday spirit

Area residents are displaying their festive moods with elaborate displays. See whose houses are all lit up on Sunday's C1.

### ONLINE:

**BLOGS**  
Jenny Kobiela-Mondor's movie reviews can be read at [fwdailynews.com/Jenny](http://fwdailynews.com/Jenny)

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# Angola man killed with ax

## Wife being held after she phones police to report murder of spouse

BY MIKE MARTURELLO  
mikem@kpcnews.net

ANGOLA — An Angola woman sat calmly in jail as she was being arraigned for murdering her husband.

The demeanor of Norma Jean Mote, 44, as she appeared before Magistrate Randy Coffey belied the charge she was facing and the horrible nature of what she allegedly did early Friday in the Angola home she shared with her husband, Kevin Conway Mote, 56, and their



N. Mote

two teenaged sons.

Mote allegedly killed her husband with an ax in the upstairs bedroom of the home in the 900 block of Fox Lake Road. She phoned 911 at about 12:30 a.m.

Friday to report to police that she had killed her husband, court documents said.

Steuben County Coroner Rodney Snyder ruled that Kevin Mote died of trauma to the head, court records said. There was very little detail in the charging documents against Norma Mote.



K. Mote



MIKE MARTURELLO

A Steuben County Sheriff's deputy is stationed outside the home of Kevin and Norma Jean Mote on Friday afternoon. Norma Mote allegedly killed her husband early Friday.

## Ho, Ho, Ho



PHOTOS BY MARK HUNTER

## Santa Claus makes a visit to Prairie Heights

Santa Claus visited with a large group of kindergarten students at Prairie Heights Elementary School Friday morning.

Numerous students were sporting Santa hats of their own for the visit.

Santa Claus gets a hug from Prairie Heights Elementary School student Madison DeLancey, 5,

Friday morning. Students at the school were treated to a visit from Santa, Mrs. Claus and some elves on their last day before the holiday break.

Santa was brought in to school by a carriage provided by Bill Knott of the DeKalb Horseman's Club.



# Students aid EN backpack program

BY MATT GETTS  
mattg@kpcnews.net

KENDALLVILLE — If longtime East Noble educator Mark Cockroft is the heart and mind of the Boomerang Backpack program, then they are the arms and legs.

Alternative School students Erica Spaw, Tessa Dennison and Jared Conley gave a presentation on the program during Wednesday's school board meeting. The trio are responsible for making sure the backpacks are packed and ready to go out to students every Friday.

On a trip back from an

educational seminar in the fall of 2008, Cockroft, East Noble assistant superintendent Ann Linson and East Noble High School assistant principal Vince Beasley were discussing an urban assistance program that had singer/actress Hillary Duff as its spokeswoman.

As the area began to be rocked by the economic downturn, Cockroft tweaked Duff's original model and came up with an idea to pack backpacks for elementary school children in need. The backpacks are filled with food, and then are returned on Monday so

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MATT GETTS

East Noble Alternative School principal John Arnold, left, stands with three of his students who have been instrumental in the success of Mark Cockroft's Boomerang Backpack program at East Noble. Each week, the students help organize the distribution of 360 backpacks filled with food for elementary school students to take home on Fridays. Pictured with Arnold, from left, are Erica Spaw, Tessa Dennison and Jared Conley.

# Jobless rates dip slightly

FROM STAFF REPORTS

INDIANAPOLIS — Unemployment in the four-county area held steady in November, with all counties experiencing a slight dip in the jobless rate, the Indiana Department of Workforce Development reported Friday.

While there was a slight decrease in unemployment, three of the four northeast Indiana counties remained in the top five worst unemployment rates in Indiana.

At 14.3 percent, Noble County was No. 2 in the state, right behind No. 1 Elkhart County at 14.5 percent unemployed. LaGrange County was No. 3 with 14.0 percent unemployed and Steuben County was No. 5 with 12.6 percent unemployed.

DeKalb County was ranked 11th with 12.1 percent unemployed in November.

Indiana's preliminary seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate for November held relatively steady, dropping 0.2 percent to 9.6 percent, the DWD reported. The national unemployment rate also dropped in November 0.2 percent to 10.0 percent.

"Indiana's unemployment rate appears to have reached a plateau these last four months in the mid to upper nine percent range," said Teresa Voors, Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. "It is encouraging to see a slowing of job losses as evidenced by 40 percent fewer initial claims for unemployment when compared to November of

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