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The Salem Democrat

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Work underway on \$15.2 million water plant

By BECKY KILLIAN
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Heavy equipment operators moved dirt and surveyors measured the ground as officials held a ceremony marking the start of construction on the new Salem water plant.

The symbolic groundbreaking ceremony, held Monday, June 3, was attended by more than 30 people including local, state, and federal officials.

Salem Mayor Troy Merry credited a partnership that consolidated ideas gleaned from many "brilliant minds" for the project, which will update the city's 51-year-old Lake John Hay Water Treatment Plant.

"I would like to personally thank you for the teamwork," Merry said. "It took every-



A symbolic groundbreaking ceremony was held Monday for the project. Shown from left are Congressman Troy Hollingsworth, Salem Mayor Troy Merry, Salem Common Council President Justin Green, Salem Clerk-Treasurer Sally Hattabaugh, Indiana Bond Bank Executive Director Mark Wuellner, and USDA Rural Development Community Programs Southern District Director Craig McGowan.



The ceremonial groundbreaking for the City of Salem's \$15.2 million water plant project was held against a backdrop of bustling activity. Heavy equipment operators were moving earth and workers were marking the ground while officials lauded the project to update the aged facility.

Staff Photos by Becky Killian

body working together to get this project done." Merry also thanked State Rep. Steve Davison (R-Dis. 73) and State Senator Erin

See WATER PLANT - Page A-6



Cancer survivor Amy Abner speaks about her experience with battling colon cancer.

Krystal Dixon battled uterine cancer after years of undiagnosed symptoms and she urges people to advocate for themselves when they feel something may be wrong.

Whitney Grace Reckelhoff, 2, checks out the bling at one of the Relay team tables.

Staff Photos by Kate Wehlann

A spirit of HOPE

By KATE WEHLANN
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Participants at Relay For Life have a vision. They dream of a world in the future where cancer is a thing of the past.

There were some big changes for Relay For Life this year. For the first year, it was hosted outside of Salem, at West Washington's football field. Instead of being held overnight, it started Saturday morning and ended Saturday night (with fireworks). The mission, however, remained the same — give hope, raise

funds for research and for the benefit of cancer fighters in the community, and to support and celebrate cancer fighters and their caregivers.

To support and celebrate people like Krystal Dixon.

For two or three years, her menstrual cycles were irregular, heavy and unusually uncomfortable. She first noticed irregular periods when she was 13 and her mother took her to the gynecologist, who gave her birth control pills to attempt to regulate her cycle but it didn't work and no further investigation was done.

She learned the hard way not having health insurance could have that effect.

"When you don't have insurance, they're going to do as little as they can for you," she said.

Dixon said her periods could last weeks at a time and she became anemic. She would pass out at work from the pain. She endured several miscarriages and still, doctors didn't investigate the cause. It was pain on top of pain on top of devastation.

In 2015, after a normal pap smear, she was at a loss for a solution and she begged her doctor to

send her to a specialist. She went to the Norton Cancer Institute in Louisville where finally, she received an answer, but it didn't provide much relief.

Stage 3 uterine cancer. At only 27 years old.

She was overwhelmed and scared, but Dixon threw herself into her fight. She had a biopsy and began treatments as soon as she could. She started with pills and then Lupron shots, but her body rejected them. Throughout 2016, she endured four surgeries.

See A SPIRIT OF HOPE - Page A-6

Pursuit ends in arrest, numerous charges

By STEPHANIE TAYLOR FERRIELL
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A May 28th incident involved the sheriff's son being followed, an unlicensed driver who said she refused to stop for law enforcement because she was being threatened and shots being fired from a CO2 powered BB gun.

The pursuit, in which the fleeing driver reached speeds of 80 mph, ended in less than half an hour with a male subject in the car jumping out and running into the woods.

He was later located, arrested and charged with arson, auto theft, criminal mischief (loss of at least \$750, but less than \$50,000), theft (loss of at least \$750, but less than \$50,000; property is a firearm or subject has a prior theft or criminal conversion charge), unauthorized entry of a motor vehicle in commission of a crime, intimidation with a deadly weapon and resisting law enforcement.

Hollen's aunt, Jennifer R. Robinson, 38, 3602 W. Mt. Zion Rd., Salem, was identified as the driver. She was charged with felony charges of operating a motor vehicle as a habitual traffic violator and resisting law enforcement using a vehicle. The report says she is currently on probation.

Sheriff Brent Miller wrote in his report that he was standing in his yard when his son pulled in just before 11:30 p.m. A vehicle behind him stopped and someone started yelling from the car. When Miller yelled "Hey," the vehicle pulled away. Miller followed the car, which had false and fictitious



JACOB HOLLEN



JENNIFER ROBINSON

See PURSUIT ENDS - Page A-3



Jon and Sandy Green take the survivor lap together, hand-in-hand. The survivor lap is for those who have fought cancer and who have been caregivers to those fighters.

By Dixon, 9, splashes down into the dunk tank at Relay For Life.

Relay For Life walkers lap around the track during the annual event on Saturday, June 1.

Education

Salem student headed to journalism camp, WVHS students get a taste of the work world, A-7.



Deaths

Jarvis Hudson, 74
Kathy Jackson, 51
Cecil Cumberland, 48
Doris McClure, 85
Ronnie Stewart Jr., 50
See page A-3.

Sports

-WW football standout commits to IU.
-Meet this week's Scholar Athlete.
-Big rigs headed to Salem this weekend.
See Sports, A-2.

Don't miss...

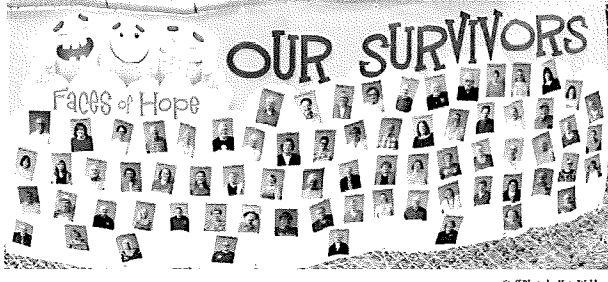
-Airport runway discussed; Memorial Day dispute ends in arrest, A-5.
-Mystery Photo, A-8.

Inside

Sports.....A-2
Deaths.....A-3
Archives.....A-5
Education.....A-7
Marketplace.....A-9
Insurance Info.....A-13

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Photos of survivors are displayed on the fence near the survivor lounge at Relay For Life on Saturday. Staff Photo by Kate Wohlson

...A spirit of HOPE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

She did everything she could to avoid having to make a choice between two options: trying chemotherapy and radiation and risking not surviving in spite of them, or a full hysterectomy. The cancer hadn't spread past her reproductive system. A hysterectomy was her best chance. That didn't mean it was easy and it took two or three weeks to make her choice. She went forward with the hysterectomy.

"It was a hard decision to make," she said. "Either way, I wouldn't be able to have kids ... I felt like my life had ended. For me and most women, one thing you look forward to is having children and finding out that's not going to happen for you and your world just stops. If you're with somebody, you have to tell that person. I went through a depression with it. I didn't know if my husband would leave me because I couldn't give him kids. It just sucked."

Her husband, Kentrel, was devastated as well as the news.

"We wanted to start our family," said Dixon. "We have Ivy (almost 10, Kentrel's daughter from a previous relationship) and she's such a blessing and I thank God for her every day, but it's nothing like your own. It was hard to get through."

Following the hysterectomy, doctors declared Dixon cancer-free and she began her recovery. It took three months to recover from the hysterectomy and she was able to continue with her life, free from the pain she endured every month during her periods.

"It felt like I was in a new body," she said. "It really did. I had the pain from the surgery, but the cramping I used to have was gone. To be pain-free was the best decision I made."

She entered her fight flanked by her support system and they remained by her side as she made her way back to health — her mother, her husband and daughter, and others who never gave up and kept her going.

"They were there whenever I needed them and let me know everything was going to be OK," said Dixon. "My Grandma Jean was there for me the whole way, my Aunt Donna. I always knew I had somebody I could turn to and talk to."

The type of cancer Dixon had wasn't new to her family. Her Aunt Donna had also

"I've met so many people here I just treasure."

—Stacey Gilbert

experienced a brush with it, while it was in early, precancerous stages.

Dixon was familiar with Relay For Life. Her grandmother was good friends with De Davis, one of the event organizers, so she had been to a few of the events. Surviving cancer herself made her much more active in Relay. This year, she was one of three women carrying the survivor lap banner.

"It's overwhelming to see there's people who actually do care and who take time out of their lives to come and donate and just be there for one another," she said. "People who have been where you are will understand you better than your closest family member ever will."

Dixon said after battling cancer, she pays closer attention to her life and to what's happening in her body and is more willing to advocate for herself and her loved ones and encourages others to do the same.

"If you think something is wrong, speak up," she said. "Don't just take the doctor's word for it. My situation could have been handled years ago. If you think something is wrong, voice your opinion. Please. Always get a second opinion."

Being a part of the Cancer Club is terrible and devastating and absolutely no one wants to join. That's why Relay organizers want to replace it with something better — The Relay Family.

"We work really hard for this to be like a family," said organizer Stacey Gilbert. "It's a Relay Family and I really like that. I liked it in a way when it's just our Relay family and it was more intimate at first."

"The dynamic has changed and the speaker at the survivor dinner (DeBert Wray) hit the nail on the head when they said, 'Once you're touched by cancer, whether it's you or a loved one, everyone touched by cancer becomes a family,' said Stacey's cousin and fellow organizer, Brad Gilbert. "It's not about genetics. It's about supporting each other and caring about each other and that fighting spirit."

Brad said, because of cancer's unfortunate indiscriminate nature, events like Relay bring people together who

would have never otherwise met or ever interacted. "You might meet and think you don't have much in common, but then you realize you have so much in common," he said.

"I've met so many people here I just treasure," said Stacey. "Dana Nicholson was one of them. She was such a blessing to my life. She's one of my heroes. She passed away — beat cancer and had a heart attack. God needed her."

Big changes have happened at Relay this year, including a change in venue from Salem to Campbellsburg. Brad said Nicholson, who passed away right before the 2018 Relay For Life, is "on our side up there. She always wanted to be at West Washington —" he said.

"And here we are," said Stacey.

The final lap to close the event was dedicated to Nicholson's memory.

"It's been great as far as teams," said organizer Stacey. "...It's our first year. We're staying positive. This is our maiden voyage ... Change is the only constant."

"It's previously been more of an evening thing," said Brad. "Looking around the track, it is mainly teams, but there are a lot of people here. It was great to see, for our kickoff this morning, a lot of folks and their team pride."

Another change is switching from it being an overnight event to just one day.

"When you think about it, you walk all night, through that darkness, and then the morning comes and you've survived," said Stacey. "You get that extra oomph to push you on."

"We still have that with our one-day event," said Brad. "It's hot and you're struggling to get through and you're pushing on and we have the dedication ceremony to bring everybody back up and focus on hope."

Everyone's going to leave here smiling and happy. The struggles can wait until tomorrow. We need a day where everyone focuses on happiness and our mission and when you look around the track and you have the survivors and the caretakers and the people who may not ever have been touched

... Water plant

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Salem Common Council President Justin Green said the project will increase the plant's capacity, quality, and reliability — which will help spur economic development, housing, and business development.

"This is a great day, something we should all be proud of," Green said.

The construction portion of the project was awarded to Mitchell & Stank Construction Company during a special called city council meeting in April. The company bid \$10 million and construction is expected to take about 20 months.

The entire project cost is \$15.2 million. Merry said the city refinanced \$1.9 million and received a two percent 40-year loan from the United States Department of Agriculture to pay for the work.

Merry thanked the water utility's customers for understanding the need to implement a rate increase to help pay for the project.

Water customers saw their monthly bills increase from about \$12 to \$19, with Merry noting that amount is still below that of other communities.

"Our residents are equal partners in this initiative, and we are grateful for their buy-in and appreciation for the need to rebuild our aging

plant and make it current and modern for the benefit of the city and the county as a whole," Merry said.

The plant is designed to pump 3 million gallons of water a day to more than 17,000 customers. Green said.

A special town hall meeting was held in February 2017 to share the results of a water study conducted by Westler Engineering. Officials and the public were told the equipment used to treat and deliver water had aged well beyond its usable lifespan. Also, the system's equipment and structures were corroded, suffered electrical problems and lacked security.

It was also noted the plant used Windows 95 as its operating system and that about 33 percent of the water pumped from the lake is lost due either to leaks or meter issues.

Fifty years is considered the useful life for most water treatment equipment. Although buildings can be expected to last about 75 years, the computer software requires updates about every 10 years.

Diabetes Support Group meets at 1 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month at St. Vincent Salem Hospital's cafeteria.

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Opening Concert:
The Ponders

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(limited number)

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For more info call
Ed 615-947-5330, Jon 812-595-8527 or Pastor Dennis 812-569-2003

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