

Marion, Mississinewa plan virtual graduations

With the COVID-19 pandemic shutting down all schools in Indiana for the rest of the academic year, typical events, such as graduation, have been postponed.

However, several Grant County schools have begun to make plans so that the Class of 2020 can be honored once the virus is contained.

According to a press release put out by Director of Communications Patricia Gibson, Marion High School will be holding two separate ceremonies – one that is virtual and another that is more traditional.

"MHS asked members of

the Class of 2020 to weigh in on options for their graduation, since the traditional ceremony has been canceled due to COVID-19 distancing guidelines," Gibson stated. "About half the class indicated a preference, and the majority of those votes were for a virtual graduation in May and a second in-person ceremony in September."

As of now, the virtual graduation ceremony is scheduled for May 31 and the traditional, in-person ceremony is tentatively set for September 20. More details will be provided in the weeks to come.

Mississinewa will also

hold a virtual graduation on May 31, where they will announce students and show a picture of them in their cap and gown, according to Mississinewa Athletic Director Chanse Young. Mississinewa is also looking for a way to have the class gather once the ban is lifted. While nothing is set in stone yet, the idea is to have an event connected with their homecoming weekend this coming fall.

As of this writing, Eastbrook, Madison-Grant, and Oak Hill have not made any announcements regarding their graduation proceedings.

T-shirt sale to help with funds during pandemic

With the city of Marion, and all of Grant County attempting to navigate one of the most unprecedented times in human history, multiple local organizations are doing their part to support the community through this difficult time.

Earlier this past week, Kylie Jackson from the Marion-Grant County Chamber of Commerce, Shelly Jones from the Community Foundation, and Rob Wilson, president of Hoosier Jiffy Print, collaborated to create a T-shirt fundraiser to help support United Way, the Community Foundation, and multiple businesses throughout the county who have been struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I hope that this fundraiser saves a business or fills a need in the community," Wilson said. "Another small business that may be struggling, maybe this money can be used for that, or maybe a group of people who are in desperate need of some financial assistance."

Hoosier Jiffy Print will be selling gray, short-sleeve T-shirts in a multitude of sizes with the words "Grant County #INThisTogether" printed across the front. From each T-shirt sold, five dollars will stay in Grant County to be allocated to all of those aforementioned groups.

The fundraiser will con-



clude at the end of the month, and as of this writing, \$280 has been raised thus far. Wilson hopes to raise at least \$1,000, but no goal was officially set.

"We are going until the end of the month," Wilson said. "We put a timer on [the website] to get people to act now instead of later."

For those looking to purchase a T-shirt, visit hjpparel.com/grant_county_together/shop/home or give call Hoosier Jiffy Print at 765-664-3162 to place an order.

The novel coronavirus has affected every aspect of life

in Grant County over the last month.

But in times of trouble and strife, humans have a knack of banding together. With this fundraiser, the Chamber, the Community Foundation, and Hoosier Jiffy Print have all but proven that fact.

"There are so many small businesses and so many people [affected] by this virus," Wilson said. "We need to be together to make sure everybody is taken care of, mentally and physically. This is a way of supporting each other in Grant County."

Lockdown! What can we do?

When I think about different books of the bible I am usually drawn to a key chapter or key verse. There are always thoughts to cling to as we read through God's Word.

As I sit here at my desk early in the morning, I feel somewhat out of sync. I can't go to the hospital, I can't go to the nursing home, or make home visits. A large part of the ministry that God has given me is one-on-one personal visits. I love to visit people and really get to know them.

There is no doubt that the feelings I have are shared by each of you. Lockdown! What a terrible thought. We are not supposed to go anywhere, just stay at home. Just a little thought, gasoline was \$1.26 a gallon a week ago in Merrillville, but we can't go anywhere!

Now, you know I am not a gloom and doom person, and I have ample reason to write the previous thoughts. Drastic times call for drastic measures. We must learn to be creative. We must learn to turn these times into opportunities. During Jesus' earthly ministry, He said many powerful things to His disciples that apply to each and every one of us today. We know from reading the Gospels that the disciples had many stressful times because of uncertainties, and the realization that they were not in control of anything. In John's Gospel, chapter 15, Jesus began to teach His followers about the Vine and the branches. Much like all of the teach-



ings of Jesus, He had a way of getting their attention and bringing them back to reality. Jesus said, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard of my Father I have made known unto you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever ye shall ask in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John 15:15-17).

What is Jesus saying to us in this passage? There are too many principles to share them all today, but let me pull out just a couple:

1. This journey we are on is not about us, it is about Him. We are not in control. He knows exactly where we are and what we are experiencing (Read I Corinthians 10:13). We are going to

overcome this situation.

2. If Jesus has called us, what should we do? Well, you can do as our pastoral staff have done. Pick up the phone and start calling your friends, family, and brothers and sisters in Christ. You would be amazed how many times I have heard, "Pastor, it is so good to hear your voice." Now, that tells you people are going stir crazy if they enjoy a call from me! You can also e-mail, text, or even send a card.

3. We can pray for those who are struggling. My prayer life has definitely changed through all of this. Pray for all of the caregivers in the medical field. They are on the front lines, risking their own lives to help others.

4. We can all keep the faith. "For we walk by faith, and not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). My faith is stronger today than it was a month ago because my relationship with Jesus is better.

In closing today, let me give us all an assignment. As our outside reading, read II Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

The Rev. Tom Mansbarger is senior pastor at Grace Community Church. He offers free counseling. Reach him at 765-517-1187 or

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and both Gibson and his staff are ready to continue faithfully serving their residents despite the circumstances.

"Our staff there are prepared," Gibson said. "We have plenty of personal protective equipment, we are well staffed, we have great leadership, and we are following all of the direction that is given to us by the local Grant County Department of Health, the Indiana Department of Health, and the CDC guidelines. Our staff is trained for this and prepared for this."

April Evans, Marion General Hospital's representative stated that to date, MGH has collected 325 specimens for COVID-19 testing. Of those tested, less than 10 percent of those individuals have tested positive for the virus. Of that 10 percent, 30 percent have required ventilator support.

"We are pleased with the improvement in test result

turnaround times," Evans said. "We are now seeing test results in less than three days."

Furthermore, the hospital is using technology to their benefit. Through the use of the FaceTime application on the iPad, which allows for video calling, nurses and support staff are able to communicate and work with their patients without needlessly putting themselves at risk, as well as cut down on the use of their PPE.

"We have successfully utilized FaceTime with our patients to help select their meals, checking in on them with our nursing secretaries, and then to address any questions or concerns they have," Evans said.

Patients and staff have both found this to be very beneficial, and FaceTime will continue to be used frequently throughout the remainder of the crisis.

Lastly, Rick Farrant from

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Northeast Indiana Work gave up an update on Grant County's unemployment status.

In the three weeks between the middle of March and April 4, 2,280 people applied for unemployment in Grant County. On the weekend of March 28 alone, 1,191 people filed for unemployment. Manufacturing and food service, along with retail, have suffered the biggest hits, which is consistent with every county in northeastern Indiana, according to Farrant.

However, on the Northeast Indiana Works website, <https://www.neinworks.org/>, there is a list of businesses that are hiring, including Culvers, Café Valley, Meijer, Marion Utilities, and many more, so Farrant encouraged those whose jobs have been affected by COVID-19 that there are jobs still available.

**STAY SAFE
STAY HOME
STAY HEALTHY**