



## **A Multi-Million Dollar Investment will Transform the International Marketplace Neighborhood**

**SOJOS CAPITAL WILL CREATE A "WINDOW TO THE WORLD"  
AT THE OLD LAFAYETTE SQUARE MALL** *By Carol Mullins | Page 2*



**BUS DRIVERS &  
TEACHERS PROTEST**

**PAGE 7**



**LITTLE FOOD PANTRIES**  
Crafted During FFA Convention

**PAGE 10**



**ALL AMERICAN  
PERSIMMONS**

**PAGE 11**

# PikePulse

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to help build a stronger sense of community by keeping our fingers on the pulse of Pike Township and publishing positive, upbeat, and relevant news.

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- Community development
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*Continued from Page One*

Sojos Capital has started work to transform the old Lafayette Square Mall and surrounding properties into a new mixed-use development. Nestled in the International Marketplace Neighborhood, this project brings major investments, and is expected to create a gateway destination. To say this is big news for the area is an understatement. The project gives hope to so many in Pike Township. At the intersection of innovation and inspiration, this new mall will be called the “Window to the World,” because of the atmosphere and experiences evoked when you visit. The mall building itself will have restaurants with international flavor, bringing them into one area for a self-sustaining macro system, that is a long-term, life-time plan, to encourage retail to flourish. Surrounding areas offer housing for all income levels, with an event center, youth sports, soccer fields, paddle ball facility, bike shop, public safety headquarters, pet hotel, and movie theater.

This is the vision of Fabio de la Cruz, Principal of Sojos Capital. For over 15 years he’s been buying and renovating properties around the former Lafayette Square area in the International Marketplace Neighborhood. The dream is to also create a soccer complex and village where students, residents, players, and visitors from all over the world come. A place to learn, bring your friends, have good food, recreate, relax, and be entertained. This will combine recreation, housing, retail services, public safety, and the arts. Work inside the mall is already underway, and surrounding properties have been purchased. The conversion of the mall, and properties into an event and recreation center will be international in design and draw enthusiasts from all over the world.



Fabio de la Cruz dreams big, acts fast, and has the financing to support his vision.

Not only will there be an international sports facility but infrastructure and services to serve family and participants. He stressed the importance of melding development with the neighborhood and has been reaching out to community organizations and businesses to make sure he understands their needs. Plans will be different from what is expected of a mall. Embracing local business owners as tenants, helping them succeed if they are motivated, and providing

housing near work and play that is affordable and convenient. He values local input and wants to keep that feel while enhancing amenities and reducing vacant areas for new ventures. A combination of old and new, local and regional, and a place to gather for all. The vision for housing includes options for students, attainable living for those employed in the area, medium income, and high end units. This is an international model of bringing housing, jobs, families, recreation, and service resources together to serve the needs of residents while enticing others to

come for the ambiance, and stay for the experience.

The proposed gateway development is right off the interstate making it accessible to downtown, IvyTech, Marion University, Butler University, Martin University, University of Indianapolis, and IUPUI. These institutions will have a great resource for attracting and keeping students from all over the world. Nearby amenities also include the Indianapolis International Airport, Newfields, Eagle Creek Park and Airport, The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The IMS pedestrian connection will be one of the first of many walkways and bike

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paths planned as neighborhoods collaborate for increased tourism. Another trail system is being planned by two community advocates Jeb Bardon and Joan Servaas, both business owners and life-long residents of the northwest side. They have seen the changes over the years and worked hard to get improvements to the area and along Little Eagle Creek. Their passion and ideas were picked up and added to the Sojos proposals. The complete development will entail adding these mobility and green space ideas with planned recreation activities, a pet center, soccer fields, and indoor sports facility. Coming from humble beginnings Fabio wants to help others succeed and matches his passions and the love of soccer with youth empowerment. A charter school called Monarco is planned and has been approved by the city. Fabio said when he looked at the potential for the mall, he knew the key would also be residential housing options with corresponding services, offices, and green spaces to meld neighborhood needs. "This will not be a stand alone development, but knitted into the area, with crossing streets and highways for a comprehensive site plan of over 250 acres and over 120 parcels, all of which we own," said Cruz.

The mall parcel has been a former Air Park, drive-in theater, enclosed retail mall, and most recently, vacant storefronts. It has changed hands numerous times until in the Fall of 2020, Sojos Capital paid \$23.2 million for the 1.2 million square foot space. Fabio says it will create a vibrant, memorable and immersive experience that is knitted together with multi-use development. The housing options range from student and studio, affordable price points and attainable family units. Included will be office space, retail, entertainment venues, and soon to be completed IMPD-NW District Headquarters. As a mix-use development it will bring a much needed boost to the economy. The concept to enhance and expand on the International Marketplace theme goes beyond the mall property and includes Sojos Capital holdings along Lafayette Rd., Georgetown Rd., 38th St., and Pike Plaza. Sojos Capital invested millions in purchasing properties and the work is happening now on phase one of this three phase project. The Windows to the World project also includes an international soccer complex, training facility, residential housing, indoor paddle ball courts, event space, Monarco Academy, movie theater, hotel, restaurants, and dance academy. Knitting this together with current neighbors and business through infrastructure improvement that make it walkable, bikeable, and pedestrian friendly.

Fabio said he loves to travel and imagined

bringing this international flair and spirit into this design concept. During the presentation, we were taken in with the color, layers and movement in the mall gathering spaces, the connectivity concepts and event plans. Fabio said they incorporated colors and movement to evoke the emotions of travel from around the world. Some of the attendees agreed the video presentation reminded them of the Mall of Damascus and Victoria Station. Someone mentioned Las Vegas. Fabio said, "No, it's not like Las Vegas because Vegas is about show, we are about lifestyle, living a good life, and making a place special for families to come and live. Music is also something we want to bring to the area and music embodies emotions, a window to the soul, the colors are the fabrics you wear. Those who come will be touched emotionally by color, sound, and the people they meet." He then said, "We want to focus on shared experiences and feelings. I dream big. This is no small vision. We strive to do it well, do it big and do it best. We will be the best facility in the country! We will be the base center for training youth. A facility like no other. I grew up in Argentina, and soccer is in my blood. Sports offer youth discipline, a way to make friends, a place for families to gather, for the public to join in camaraderie for their team. Sports bring energy, loyalty to the sport, and loyal fans."

With work on some projects currently underway, the community is taking notice. Property owners and residents are excited. Former pockets of neglect, weeds, litter, and run-down storefronts are slowly being removed. What neighbors are saying is, "We see care of space coming back and rumblings of hope that something big is occurring." Jerilyn Lewis, a long-time Pike resident, appreciates Fabio's inclusive vision and said "Our malls and stores should reflect the diversity of the neighborhood and I am excited this plan does just that. I thought about leaving Pike Township, but now am reconsidering." We know that to be a great neighborhood we need to be walkable, bike friendly, with good access points, good streets, and accompanying infrastructure. Several in the audience confirmed the infrastructure needed to be fixed and streets and walkability added to attract an international and visitor friendly destination. Fabio knows the challenges of the area. When asked if tax increment financing, (TIFs), would be used to offset the cost of new infrastructure improvements, Cruz said "Yes, it's a process, and we are working with the city to move these discussions forward. This development will be an economic boost to the regional economy. We will need the city to chip in to help at some point. There are much needed Infrastructure



improvements and I am requesting we can get this TIF incentive passed." Sojos Capital has also successfully raised and closed a qualified Opportunity Zone Fund through investments and due diligence of more than \$6 million on capital improvements to the Lafayette Square Mall building. Sojos Capital projects an additional \$200 million in-

vestment to transform the Window to the World.

Karla Nowlin, owner of nearby Angels of Hope Home Healthcare, had concerns of displacement of fellow business owners. She asked if there would be assistance for nearby tenants that wanted to stay and grow with the development, and not to be displaced



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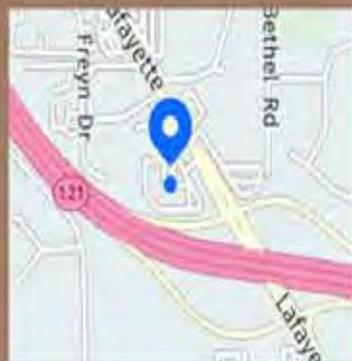
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with higher rents. Fabio reminded her that he is not coming into the neighborhood as a stranger, he has been supporting redevelopment slowly over the last 15 years and is invested in the people. "I'm thinking long-term, I'm an investor, I care about our neighbors and have worked to build good products. I always put a lot into my properties and believe I'm the best in the area. I support the tenants and neighbors and I keep my promises to work with them and help them succeed. Some won't, because they want something else. Our goal is to support local tenants first; people first. If you take care of the people, they spread the word and goodwill follows." It was at this time that Mary Clark, of IMC, passed out surveys to gather input from the business owners. This information will be pulled into planning and discussions. Mary is totally behind Fabio and the Window to the World development. She has discussed his investments in the community over the last 15 years, and knows he takes care of his tenants. She reminded the audience that his improvements are not being planned without public input. Fabio said, "Even though we already own the buildings, have started renovations, and have the cash to complete the project, we want to be part of the community. This is the first of many meetings to share our story and gather input. We know to be successful, it has to be about the neighbors, so you'll come and find yourself here, you'll discover interesting cultural events, dance, music, and food. It's a window to your soul, where you're drawn in by the experiences, and this feeling stays with you and evokes something different." "We have shown our commitment to the community through our investments, with the inclusion of a new 14,000 square-foot IMPD facility, which is in the heart of the new development. We've knit public safety and security into the neighborhood. We are creating gathering spaces the public can use

to bring their family and friends with security and safety as a priority."

Fabio de la Cruz repeated that the concept will serve the community. "When I think about the mall and the development, I don't want it to be too fancy, but a people's place. The Mall will have to be oriented to the neighborhood first. Neighborhoods are the first buy-in. It will be nice, but not pricey, comfortable for families. Companies that are fighting for talent will want to come here. We will have visitors say, "It's nice and something different", but they won't feel it's stuffy or that it's uncomfortable. We don't want to be like Las Vegas. When we say, 'the biggest,' it's not to put on a huge spectacular show, but to put all our ideas into a complete experience that emits a transforming feeling and becomes the place you want to go, it touches your soul."

The mall-to-housing and mixed-use development product has been successful in Lakewood, CO and Annapolis, Maryland. This proven success of these similar concepts has been transformative to those economies and we are hopeful and optimistic about the change in ours. This reimagined use of the former Lafayette Square and surrounding properties could be a centerpiece to the city. Design concepts also call for a large landmark, a visual identifier, signaling you've arrived at someplace special. Fabio suggested a competition for design ideas may occur but hasn't set anything in motion just yet. Sojos Capital plans for additional housing to evolve as the need is identified and to encompass addressing the real estate market trends. We will be affordable, and also offer higher price points. We want a product that doesn't price residents out of the market. The high-end housing may be included when that market emerges as the product is complete. Fabio said the space is there, and we want to provide housing that enhances the neighborhood. The concept speaks to the



international cities' feel, with diversity of people and place, this is what we are building in all our products. Clint Fultz, a nearby business owner asked, "What is the plan for enticing interactions and interest from the international and national community and getting tenants?" Fabio said, "Cities fight for talent. Our team is on the ground now working to engage others who may have an interest in our designs. Housing and office space will be affordable and a great product. We

don't have to create interest, we have to provide the right product, and that's what we're doing. We're building a place where you'll want to come and be part of the experience."

"This is a European model, a window to your soul through shared experiences, where events are key, with excuses to have fun, engage in art, music, dining, to build a great neighborhood with walkable, bikeable, with safe amenities," said Cruz. The timeline and major attraction is visible in the accom-

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panying images. The mall interior decor is bright, the restaurants, shops, gathering areas, and offices are visually stimulating. A small venue, event center, dance studio, performing art, and music will evoke a feeling of warmth. The Youth Academy will be state of the art. The nearby soccer fields and indoor soccer training facility will serve the area. "People will come from all over the world to the training and playing fields. The sports park is the money generator. Bringing teams and talent. Having the school nearby, kids can have the best soccer training facility in the country and a great school. The U.S. could be the center for international soccer because the money is here. We may not have the teams right now but we are moving in that direction. It will be more than a youth sports complex. I imagine the biggest and best neighborhood and will work really hard to get there. I grew up in a third world country and sports brings discipline and allows you a road out of the mundane."

Fabio said that "Phase I will be 70% complete in 2022 and include the properties listed below. IMPD NW District Headquarters, movie theater, International Concert Center (small, 25K square feet), event center, soccer fields, indoor soccer and paddle ball courts, other entertainment venues, mall proper

renovations with international restaurant tenants and a few apartments, and upgrades to surrounding strip mall businesses. Phase II will include the indoor soccer complex and training facilities. Phase III will be Monarca Academy and other amenities that are deemed a good fit. The services and residences will be followed by a 2nd tier of clients, when people want a place to go. As we move past Phase I, the continued use of 20 acres and 120 parcels will reveal better ideas of how the community will use the space and our plans may shift to incorporate input and evaluations." Immediate improvements are already happening. Fabio said he came out of retirement to be part of this project and looks forward to seeing his vision come into reality, along with his continued relationships with the community partners.

Sojos Capital project locations some of which are currently under development are listed below. Maps of the project are included along with concept drawings of the Window to the World.

- Fabio Sports, indoor soccer, paddleball courts, sports academy and a dance studio (renovations expected to be completed by end of 2021)
- International Concert Center (renovations expected to be completed in 2022)



- Trampoline park (renovations expected to be completed in 2022-2023)
- New IMPD Northwest District Headquarters (expected completion February 2022)
- Exterior improvements at 4090 Lafayette Road (expected to be completed in 2022)
- Exterior improvements at 3717 Lafayette Road and 4343 W. 38th Street (expected to be completed in 2022)
- Exterior improvements at 3540 Commercial Drive (expected to be completed in 2022)
- New soccer fields at 5101-5111 W. 38th Street (expected to be completed in 2022)
- Ground-up construction of soccer facility at 5101-5111 W. 38th Street (completion date to be determined)
- New Monarca Academy at 5101-5111 W. 38th Street (expected to be completed in 2023)
- Renovation and reopening of the movie theater at 3898 Lafayette Road (expected to be completed in 2022)



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**TEACHERS, BUS DRIVERS, AND BUS MONITORS ARE LEAVING THE DISTRICT AT AN ALARMING RATE.**

# MSD of Pike Township Bus Drivers and Teachers Protest for Higher Pay

By *Arnita M. Williams*

Several Pike Township school bus drivers, bus monitors, and teachers have invested in the district as taxpayers, residents, and parents of students who attend Pike Township schools.

What appeared to have been a sudden eruption of rallies, protests, sick-outs, and work stoppages since September, was a result of a longstanding labor dispute, which involved bus drivers, teachers, and bus monitors, with grievances they presented to the MSD of Pike Township and Pike school board two years ago.

Amid call-offs, rallies, protests, deadlocked school board meetings, and a mass-exodus of bus drivers, bus monitors, and classroom teachers, some have permanently severed ties with Pike Township schools. Teachers who once settled-in as residents have moved out of the township.

These actions have left high school, middle, and elementary students to pay the price. Remote e-learning days have become more frequent as teacher, bus driver, and bus monitor shortages mount.

With legal proceedings and active contract negotiations in progress as of November 15th, teachers and board members have declined and are abstaining from formal interviews at this time.

However, teachers, bus drivers, and monitors have been vocal in expressing their demands to the Pike Township school administration and the township school board. The mutual demand of each group is higher pay. Then the demands of transportation and teachers follow different paths.

**What teachers want in addition to higher pay...**

- A finalized contract.
- Higher wage increases for experienced teachers.
- Pay in-line with other school districts in Marion County.
- District to commit to \$3.8 million across-the-board for teacher pay increases.

In addition to higher pay, bus drivers and bus monitors want...

- To be paid according to their original bi-weekly pay schedule, and the new

pay schedule of the 15th and 30th of each month eliminated.

- Salaries of drivers and monitors to be comparable to other Marion County school districts.
- Step Increases.

Since permission for use of petitioners' names were not obtained for this article, their names are not published. Only the issues the petitioners brought to the board are quoted to inform Pike Township residents, stakeholders, and business owners of issues of concern, which directly affect the community.

**Timeline of events...**

**September 27th & 28th** – District unable to provide bus services for students due to driver shortages, planned medical leaves, and illnesses.

These unexpected last-minute changes created a ripple effect for parents without emergency childcare. Loving Care (before-and-after care) was also closed, which created a hardship for many families.

**September 27th & 28th** – e-Learning days.

**September 30th** – Bus drivers called-off work, which resulted in driver shortages, along with teacher protests, and an e-Learning day for students.

**October 7th** – Non-productive board meeting with administration regarding pay – a step increase was discussed for bus drivers during this meeting.

**October 14th** – Teachers and supporters rallied outside the Pike administration building.

**October 14th** – Pike school board meeting was held. Teachers, bus monitors, and bus drivers brought their concerns and presented them to the board.

**October 15th** – Students had an e-learning day due to lack of bus service. Bus drivers called out of work in protest of higher pay.

**October 26th** – Collective bargaining meeting with board, Pike Classroom Teachers Association (PCTA), and administrators

**October 28th** – Teachers rallied outside in front of the Pike Township School Administration building prior to the MSD of Pike Township Executive Session.

**October 28th** – School board meeting held an executive session for collective bargaining regarding teachers' salaries. This meeting

was closed to the public.

**November 9th** – School board meeting discussion of strategy regarding collective bargaining.

**The schedule for future school board meetings can be found on the MSD of Pike Township website @ [www.pike.k12.in.us/](http://www.pike.k12.in.us/) board.**

**Grievances:**

**Educator, homeowner, and taxpayer within the district for 22 years:**

"I love Pike Township!" and wonders why she has to continue "begging for teachers to be compensated. Why doesn't the district want to do what's best for the people who are teaching children, day-in, day-out? We deserve to be paid what we are worth. What's the problem?"

**A 27-year veteran teacher with a master's degree, not yet making \$60k annually:**

"As a teacher who makes all other professions possible, I shouldn't have to beg for a pay increase to comfortably support my family. Certified and classified staff deserve a sizeable raise."

**Bus driver:**

"You expect these school bus drivers to do their job, yet you want to change our pay date. We pay too much tax for this mess to be going on."

**Bus driver:**

"If you go down to Burger King, they are making minimum wage, and minimum wage is \$15." At the Pike school board meeting that was held October 7th, "we talked about a step increase on the chart for bus drivers. But when it was presented to us, there was no step increase."

He also mentioned that bus drivers in a couple of other school districts within Marion County are making an hourly wage between \$22 to \$27. Bus monitors make much less, and most are single parents, making \$11, which he stated, "is not sufficient for drivers and monitors to make a living."

**Teacher:**

Another educator shared with the board how the district is losing great teachers. "We lost a good teacher a couple of years ago. She had eight years of experience, two



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master's degrees, and left the district because she couldn't afford to live in Pike and pay daycare in Pike, on a Pike teacher's salary. There's no reason why Pike can't pay people enough to do basic living."

#### Bus Driver for Pike 28 years:

Visibly emotional, this driver shared her plight of not being able to pay her bills. The driver also informed the board that eight drivers walked out during the week of the October 14th school board meeting, and that "more are going to walk out after we come back from fall break. It's hard for us because we are doubling-up on routes."

#### Driver with 5 years of service:

"Somewhere down the line, you people have short-changed people, especially teachers and the drivers." This driver admitted he doesn't think he will drive for five more. "Because the way you guys are going here now, it's robbery."

#### Driver with 6 years of service:

"Our contract states that we are to be paid bi-weekly." He brought this to the school board's attention, since the bus drivers' pay schedule had been changed to the 15th and 30th of each month.

#### Teacher:

"This is about our students. When we shortchange our teachers, staff, and bus drivers, we're shortchanging our students. There's no better use of money than to pay Pike personnel comparable to nearby school districts.

We've lost 30 teachers at the high school, 30 teachers at the middle schools, and 30 at the elementary level. This could easily happen this year."

She's concerned since there hasn't been any change in conditions, which are the same as last year, which has become detrimental to students. "There's a teacher shortage and they will go where they're paid comparably."

#### Concerned Parents with a sophomore student who attends Pike:

Stated that in the past, there were "teachers who were engaged. Administrators who were attentive to issues, and an organization that seemed to be living into its mission."

These parents are concerned that this may have changed. "Issues surrounding teachers' pay and transportation are direct barriers to this mission."

When buses do not operate, the doors to the schools are closed. When teachers are not motivated to engage in the learning process, the opportunities for our students are limited. And when both of those happen, our students are left behind."

#### PCTA President

The president does not condone teachers calling in. "Sure, we may show-up and organize with some signs, but we bargain in good faith."

#### Educator with Pike schools for 12 years:

"I continue to hold-up my end of this working relationship. But there has been a growing lack from Pike. Lack of pay. I get paid \$41 a paycheck, more than someone who just started. Me, us, seasoned teachers, experienced, committed, making pennies more than teachers fresh to the game. While surrounding districts are continuing to pay more, and pay teachers their worth."

#### Teacher:

A very passionate teacher who became emotional at the school board meeting has moved out of Pike. She is no longer "Pike Proud." She has "lost all interest in raising a family here. I will go to where they will pay me, and where they will own their mistakes, rectify them, and have their actions speak louder than their words. I will no longer put-off living my life because of this job. And I am not the only one among us."

#### To stay updated...

According to information posted to the MSD of Pike Township website, "Business meetings are held in public, and visitors are welcome. Executive Sessions are closed to the public."

Board meetings are held at the MSD of Pike Township Administrative Services Center, 6901 Zionsville Road, the second and fourth Thursdays of each month.

Information has been sourced from MSD of Pike Township website video-taped archived board meetings.



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# Little Free Pantries Crafted during the FFA National Convention to Address A Pressing Need in our Community

By Carol M. Mullins

Headquartered in Pike Township, FFA Center hosts a National Convention each October, and accompanying National Days of Service. The convention brings over \$39.8 million annually in economic impact, according to FFA.org. Indianapolis has been home to this largest youth convention in the U.S., from 2006-2012, a short departure and now back again until 2031. With over 67,000 youth in attendance, the Days of Service typically engage thousands of attendees each year, along with community volunteers and service organizations throughout the region. This year, “because of the lingering effects of COVID-19, we decided to move the service project indoors,” said Michele Sullivan, Senior Leader & Local Engagement at FFA. The decision to make small food pantries will address a critical need of food insecurity. Hunger is a hidden need that happens everywhere, and our organization consists of members who are ready to tackle big challenges. In an effort to help fight food insecurity, we are going to be placing these pantries around Indianapolis.” Kristy Meyer, Communications Manager, said “One of the highlights of our convention was watching our students from across the country give back to our community by participating in building the little free pantries. We built more than 100 and plan to share them with the broader Indianapolis area. We’d love to get the word out about the little free pantries, and community members can request a little free pantry by visiting : convention.ffa.org/national-days-of-service and clicking on the Request a Little Free Pantry button.

I was fortunate to volunteer for many years with the National Days of Service and it gave me insight into the organization, and its dedication to educating youth in leadership, service and policy. These students exhibited leadership, enthusiasm, positivity and a hard work ethic which each group brought to the service site. Doing it right, doing it well and taking pride in serving others. FFA is more than agriculture careers, forestry, food safety, and environmentalism, although that’s the focus. The underlying benefit of



participating in programs is about building leaders and character. We teach students about policy making and legislative actions that affect them and to make the change and be the change they want to see in the community by giving back.”

To learn more about FFA and it’s programs visit FFA.org

(photo credits, National FFA Communications Manager, Kristy Meyer submitted)



## THE NATIVE TREE AND THE LEGENDARY DESSERTS By Christy Krieg

# All American Persimmons

Lots of people forage for wild edible plants such as morel mushrooms, but I seek only persimmons! My favorite time to glean is an early fall morning, when the horizontal sun rays strike the fruit and make them glow. They are so beautiful! Just like Easter egg hunts from my childhood, each discovery brings a burst of joy; I love the thrill of this annual hunt.

### ...the thrill of this annual hunt.

Persimmons are harvested only after they've fallen from the tree and onto the ground, which they do when ripe. If harvesting off the ground seems unhygienic to you, please leave them for the rest of us, including the birds, raccoons and opossums.

Traditional lore says persimmons are edible only after first frost, but I typically start collecting in mid to late September and continue foraging until only a few stragglers hang on the branches in November. I store whole fruit in the refrigerator and process in batches using a foley food mill from my grandmother's kitchen! Frozen in jars or bags, the glossy pulp will keep well into the following year.

When I was young, my dad had a tree in Westfield where he would get persimmons, with permission from the landowner. This was a special event: he would never have driven that far to a restaurant in the 1970s!

"My" tree is over 40 feet tall, and is within walking distance. But it's not actually my tree at all. The tree belongs to a neighbor, who generously permits my forays to harvest these carnelian orbs from his yard. In anticipation each summer and to solidify our agreement, I share ripe tomatoes. He is happy to forego persimmons and won't accept any confection made from the pulp – he is "persimmon non grata"!

*Diospyros virginiana* is a tree native to the southern, eastern, and midwestern US. It grows twenty to seventy feet tall. Smaller specimens are found in dry, clay soil, while the tree grows larger in moist, rich soil in full to partial shade. The bark is described as "alligator," for its block-form corky bark, and is therefore easy to identify even in winter months.

Trees don't bear fruit until they are 10-15 years of age. Native persimmon trees are dioecious, meaning you must have both male and female trees in proximity for pollination

and fruiting. Some cultivars are self-pollinating. One tree can easily average 55 pounds of fruit per year, and "my" tree is no slacker.

The fruit, which measure one to two inches in diameter, have a chalky, astringent taste profile when underripe. Ripe fruit are deep orange, and pure gooey goodness. The flavor of the raw fruit has a hint of orange-citrus, but it is otherwise persimmony – you must taste it to understand! Often paired with cinnamon or nutmeg, baked desserts take on a burnt orange to deep brown color.

If you want to purchase local persimmons, try farmer's markets or orchards – you'll typically find it frozen in pints. Commercial persimmons found in the grocery are of a nonnative variety and are the size of a medium apple. Their flavor is less intense, and they are typically firm, sometimes diced and put into salads.

Persimmon pudding is a popular autumn dessert. Traditionally a Thanksgiving treat my grand-parents made, we ate baked persimmon pudding with "hard sauce" – a super thick and overly sweet frosting. Our family's recipe produced brownie-like squares with a dense consistency.

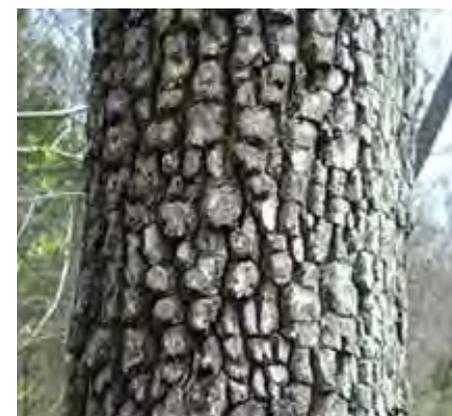
Last year a friend offered me a sample of her family's version; they stir it every 15 minutes while baking to make a more "pudding like" consistency – soft and light! I loved it. One of my favorite newfangled recipes is James Beard's persimmon-bourbon bread with toasted walnuts, and this week I experimented with piping hot persimmon barley flour sticky pudding!

But wait, I forget my place! This is a nature column, not a cooking column!

If you want to have your own tree, you can purchase American persimmon saplings from nurseries which specialize in native trees and shrubs. Or, try growing one from seed, but remember to moist stratify, then soak the seeds for a few days before planting in the Spring.

Small persimmon trees can be transplanted but success is reportedly low due to a deep tap root. I currently have a 75% two-year survival on transplants from a friend's property, but time will tell whether they survive to maturity. I'm hopeful!

Foragers are often hesitant to divulge their sources, and the same is true for "my" tree, but I encourage you to buy pulp locally, hunt for your own persimmon fruit or grow your own tree. Then, you can provide some nostalgic treats for your Thanksgiving guests!



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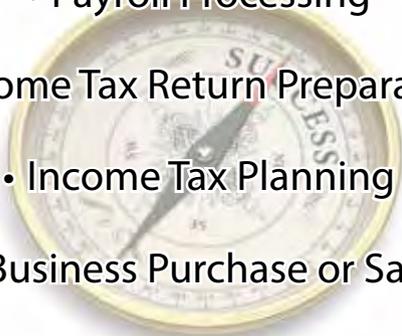
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## NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL DIABETES MONTH

# The ABC's of Diabetes

By The Marion County Public Health Department

November is National Diabetes Month and this year's focus is on prediabetes and preventing diabetes. Prediabetes is a serious health condition that increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The good news is if you have prediabetes, it is possible to reverse the condition by making healthy lifestyle changes. This month communities around the country are teaming up to increase awareness that the power to change course is within reach. Just like any winning team knows, we need a game plan if we are going to succeed.

Approximately 88 million or one in three Americans have prediabetes and most don't even realize it. Take the prediabetes risk test at [DoIHavePrediabetes.org](http://DoIHavePrediabetes.org) to see where you stand. The sooner you know your risk and start making healthy lifestyle changes, the more likely you are to prevent yourself from developing diabetes. These tips can help you manage your risk of diabetes:

- **Start Small** - changing daily habits is hard, but you don't have to change everything at once.
- **Move More** - aim for 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week.
- **Make Healthier Choices** - pick foods that are high in fiber and low in fat and sugar. Drink water.
- **Lose Weight & Maintain** - 5-7% weight loss can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes.
- **Get Support** - regular contact with your health care provider is key.
- **Get Vaccinated** - flu and COVID-19 vaccines can reduce your risk and severity from getting sick.

The National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP) is a nationwide network of organizations aimed at lowering the prevalence of type 2 diabetes in the US. The two goals of the NDPP are 150 minutes of physical activity a week and losing 5-7% of your body weight. For someone who weighs 200 pounds that is only a 10-14-pound weight loss. People who participate in a NDPP can cut their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58% and participants older than 60 years old can cut their risk by 71%. Locally, the YMCA of Indianapolis offers

NDPP. Email [changemylife@indymca.org](mailto:changemylife@indymca.org) for more information.

November 14th is World Diabetes Day and the theme this year is access to diabetes care. Millions of people around the world cannot access the medication, care, and education needed to manage diabetes or prediabetes. Insulin was discovered in 1922 and 100 years later tens of thousands of people with type 1 diabetes who need insulin to survive and more than 30 million people with type 2 diabetes who require insulin to manage their diabetes do not have access to a reliable and affordable supply. World Diabetes Day is a call to action for governments, policymakers, and advocates to increase investment in diabetes care and prevention to make sure everyone with prediabetes and diabetes can get the care they need.

Managing prediabetes and diabetes does require initial and ongoing education and support to handle the day-to-day challenges and improve quality of life. The Marion County Public Health Department offers a free diabetes self-management program online and in-person. Classes are taught by a registered nurse, registered dietitian, and a health educator. Topics include medications, nutrition, physical activity, monitoring and long-term management. These classes are available to anyone with diabetes, prediabetes, friends, and family. To register please visit [marionhealth.org/diabetes](http://marionhealth.org/diabetes) or call 317-221-2104. A recent participant of the ABCs of Diabetes remarked, "I have definitely been utilizing the nutrition information, have already lost 7% of my body weight, and I am working on the 2nd 7% weight loss."

#### Resources:

Marion County Public Health Department Free Diabetes Program – [marionhealth.org/diabetes](http://marionhealth.org/diabetes)

Prediabetes Risk Test – [doihaveprediabetes.org](http://doihaveprediabetes.org)

Find a Diabetes Prevention Program – [www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention)

American Diabetes Association – [diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org)

World Diabetes Day – [worlddiabetesday.org](http://worlddiabetesday.org)



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# Pike Township Educational Foundation

By PTEF

This past month, the Pike Township Educational Foundation was able to award over \$5000 in classroom grants to Pike teachers. Here is a list of the schools and teachers that were awarded money and how they plan to use it! Bobbie Brokaw of Fishback Creek Public Academy will be purchasing handheld GPS units to further engage her students in navigating where they are in their community. Julie Daily at Pike High School is using the money to purchase a paper shredder for her exceptional learners to work on independence, social skills, and to build their resumes. Sarah Doran at Snacks Crossing Elementary School will be purchasing movement props for her music class to engage students in learning through movement and music. Stacy Ferguson at the Nathaniel Jones Early Learning Center will be adding to her

classroom sensory bin to provide her students more opportunities to learn through touch and exploring. Katina Hale at Guion Creek Elementary School will be adding to her Refocus Room. Debbie Huffine at Guion Creek Middle School will be using her money to continue to grow the Robotics Program. Amy Kiger and Jeanie Burnworth at Snacks Crossing Elementary School will be purchasing items that support self-regulation in the classroom. Anastasia Luc at Fishback Creek Public Academy will be purchasing books to help engage more students in their love of reading. Mary Michere of Guion Creek Elementary School will be reimagining the Title 1 resources provided. Kay Murray of Eastbrook Elementary will be adding resources to help children identify their emotions and learn to self-regulate. Kasey Whittacker of New Augusta South will be

providing more sensory solutions to her classroom. Thank you to all of our teachers for working so hard to engage ALL of our students more effectively in their classrooms! Help us kick off our Season of Giving and increase our grant budget today or on Giving Tuesday, November 30. [www.tinyurl.com/give2ptef](http://www.tinyurl.com/give2ptef)



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## THINGS TO REMEMBER THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

# Thanksgiving Safety

By The Pike Township Fire Department

For most, the kitchen is the heart of the home, especially during the holidays. Did you know Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires, followed by Christmas Day and Christmas Eve? As you start preparing your holiday schedule and organizing that large family feast, remember, by following a few simple safety tips you can enjoy time with your loved ones and keep yourself and your family safe from fire.

- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stovetop so you can keep an eye on the food.
- Stay in the home when cooking your turkey, and check on it frequently.
- Keep children away from the stove. The stove will be hot and kids should stay three feet away.
- Keep matches and utility lighters out of the reach of children — up high in a locked cabinet.
- Never leave children alone in room with a lit candle.
- Make sure your smoke alarms are working. Test them by pushing the test button.

### Turkey Fryers

Never use a turkey fryer indoors, in the garage or on a covered patio because of the fire hazard. Never overfill the oil in a tur-

***Never use a turkey fryer indoors, in the garage or on a covered patio.***

key fryer. Many turkey fires occur while the oil is being heated. Units can easily tip over, spilling hot, scalding oil onto anyone or anything nearby, leading to fires, burns or other injuries.

- Completely thaw the turkey.
- Do not overfill the fryer with oil. Before dumping a few gallons of oil into the fryer, test it out with water. Place the turkey inside and then fill it with water until the bird is submerged. Remove the turkey and mark the water line on the fryer so you will know how much oil to put in the fryer.
- Never leave the fryer unattended.
- Keep children and pets well away from the fryer. Remember the oil will remain

dangerously hot for hours.

- Only use the oil recommended by the manufacturer.
- If oil begins to smoke, immediately turn OFF the gas supply.

- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby.
- Never use water to extinguish a grease fire.

### In the event of a cooking fire:

- If it is an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.
- For a stovetop fire, put a lid on it and turn off the elements.
- If the fire is out of control, get everyone out of the house and close the door be-

hind you to help contain it.

- Call 911 or the local emergency number from outside the home.

We hope you have a great Thanksgiving celebration with family and friends. However, always remember fire safety and keeping you safe is our priority. If an incident happens and you do not feel comfortable or unsure of how to handle it, get out and call 911.



**Practice safe cooking this Thanksgiving.**

Home cooking fires happen most often on Thanksgiving. Stand by your pan: if you are cooking at high temperatures, turn off the burner before leaving the kitchen.

U.S. Fire Administration | FEMA | Fire in Communities



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## HIS NAME WASN'T SQUANTO

# A Thanksgiving Story

By Glenn McDonald

His name was Tisquantum and he was a member of the Pawtuxet tribe of coastal Massachusetts.

The English colonists, who got to know him well, could never pronounce his name correctly. They called him Squanto. It's safe to say that apart from him there would be no celebration of a Pilgrim-themed Thanksgiving.

Historians assure us that the familiar story of the 1620 establishment of Plymouth Colony has been, to put it gently, somewhat embellished over the years.

The Mayflower, which was piloted by professional sailors, almost certainly landed in a

sheltered cove, not near the boulder that is currently known as Plymouth Rock. No one aboard seems to have noticed the big rock; no one's journal, at least, makes any mention of it.

The 102 colonists who stepped ashore were glad to leave the North Atlantic behind. It had been a rough voyage, and no one had yet dreamed up Dramamine. They weren't exactly prepared for their new life on the ground, either. Social historian Bill Bryson writes:

"It would be difficult to imagine a group of people more ill-suited to a life in the wilderness. They packed as if they had mis-

understood the purpose of the trip. They found room for sundials and candle snuffers, a drum, a trumpet, and a complete history of Turkey. One William Mullins packed 126 pairs of shoes and thirteen pairs of boots. Yet they failed to bring a single cow or horse, plow or fishing line."

The Pilgrims knew next to nothing about hunting, fishing, clearing property, or growing their own food. Almost half of them died during the first hard winter.

By spring, when the Mayflower set sail again for England, there were only 54 colonists left. Half of those were children. The starvation of the entire colony seemed likely.

That's when Squanto, who was about 30 years old, suddenly appeared near the edge of the forest. He was accompanied by another native American named Samoset. To the everlasting astonishment of the Pilgrims, Samoset and Squanto greeted them. In English. While Samoset knew a little of the colonists' language, Squanto spoke fluently. How was this possible?

As a teenager Squanto had been kidnapped by a passing English ship captain. Taken to England as a kind of show-and-tell object, he quickly learned the English tongue.

During a second transatlantic crossing he was kidnapped again, this time by Spaniards who hoped to sell him into slavery. Some Spanish Franciscan friars learned of Squanto's plight and rescued him from his captors. Under their tutelage he became a Christian.

Ultimately Squanto managed to return to his homeland, only to discover that the vast majority of his fellow tribe members had been wiped out by a plague, probably smallpox. Now – without a family, without a tribe, but trusting that God had a purpose for his life – Squanto offered his assistance to the fledgling colony.

He negotiated peace treaties with other tribes to ensure the colonists' survival. He taught them how to hunt, fish, and plant corn. He introduced the settlers to many of the 2,000 different foods enjoyed at that time by coastal native Americans – a greater cu-

linary variety than the richest European had ever imagined.

---

*The Pilgrims knew next to nothing about hunting, fishing, clearing property, or growing their own food. Almost half of them died during the first hard winter.*

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Of course the most perfect Thanksgiving food, Cool Whip, was still a few centuries away.

We must be cautious whenever we use the word "miracle." Miracles, by definition, are extraordinary intersections of time, place, and provision. They don't happen very often.

But even secular historians use the "m" word when recounting the story of Squanto.

How is it possible that an English-speaking, faith-embracing, servant-hearted native American warrior appeared at just the right moment to preserve Plymouth Colony?

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*How is it possible that an English-speaking, faith-embracing, servant-hearted native American warrior appeared at just the right moment to preserve Plymouth Colony?*

---

His story is a reminder, in the midst of an ongoing pandemic, football games, and yearning for Aunt Edith's sweet potato pie, that there really is Someone to thank.

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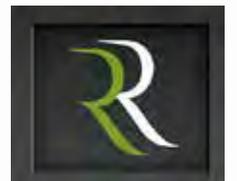
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## Global Gifts: An Indianapolis Hidden Gem

By Sarah Swank

Nestled in Nora Plaza in the North side of Indianapolis lies a hidden gem – a gift shop full of unique gifts and goods, bringing global cultures and crafts from around the world under one roof.

Global Gifts isn't just your average gift shop. Millions of people around the world live below the international poverty line, unable to meet their daily needs or to build for their future, either in educating their children or investing in their own community. At Global Gifts, our mission is to help change that by creating sustainable economic opportunities for marginalized artisans and farmers in nearly 40 countries.

All our products are fair trade, so you can be confident that your purchases have been produced ethically and artisans have been paid a fair wage. We pay artisan partners upfront for our orders, and we only work with vendors and groups who take great care of their artisans.



This holiday season, shop Global Gifts and support local business and while also directly impacting lives and communities around the world. We like to say our products are **gifts you'll feel good about giving!**

You'll find home décor, jewelry, accessories, toys and games, books, coffee, chocolate, and so much more on our shelves – each with a special story

Visit us in person at Nora Plaza or shop online at [GlobalGiftsFT.com](http://GlobalGiftsFT.com). Open Mon-Sat: 10am-8pm; Sun: 12pm-5pm

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR GUIDELINES

Write to:

1. By email: [larry@pikepulse.com](mailto:larry@pikepulse.com) or
2. By letter: Larry Oliver, Editor-In-Chief; *Pike Pulse Newspaper*; 4732 Century Plaza Rd; Indianapolis, IN 46254

What are the guidelines?

- To be published you must include your name, address, daytime phone number, and/or email address. Anonymous letters will not be published.
- Your letter should be fewer than 300 words. I may, however, allow for longer letters, but may have to split your message between publications.
- I am most open to publishing your thoughts about Pike Township issues – positive or negative. I also encourage responses to Pike Pulse articles.
- Please write in a thoughtful and cordial tone. I will probably not respond to or publish letters that attack, ridicule, denounce, or impugn a person's character, or impute immoral or dishonorable attributes to others based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

How are letters selected for publication?

We welcome letters that offer a new perspective or add depth to a discussion of an issue covered in Pike Pulse. The publisher and I will be the final decision makers about what is published.

Are letters edited?

Our editing team will check spelling, punctuation, and grammar. We may check the facts of your statements. An editor's note may be added.

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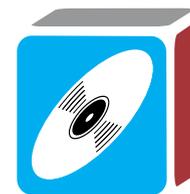
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# News From Nassif Kouton Our Pike Township Mayor's Neighborhood Advocate

If you have a concern about your neighborhood or anything in Pike Township, contact Nassif at: [nassif.kouton@indy.gov](mailto:nassif.kouton@indy.gov) or 317-327-5125, or 317-833-4530 (cell).

## Good for Pike / Bad for Pike



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