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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2008

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TUESDAY'S WEATHER

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LOCAL

Big Walnut Middle School seventh grade student Abigail Painter, is the winner of this year's Big Walnut Local School District Spelling Bee. Page 5



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SPORTS

Barons fend off Eagles in semi. Page 9

POLL QUESTION

Log on to www.delgazette.com for this week's question:

How important is it to have a school resource officer in our county's schools?

- a) Very important
- b) Somewhat important, but not a priority
- c) Not important

Readers commenting on this question after voting may have their comments printed on the *Gazette's* editorial page Saturday.

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Thank You

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Gazette Matt Emmons

Denny and Sue Snavley keep things running smoothly at Mom Wilson's Country Sausage Mart, a family business that has served residents in and around Delaware County since 1959. The business is located north of Delaware off of U.S. 23.

ROADSIDE SERVICE

▶ County couple keep family business alive with Mom Wilson's Country Sausage Mart

By CONNIE E. CURRY
For the *Gazette*

Motorists traveling north from Delaware on U.S. 23 likely have noticed the eye-catching signs that dot the roadway "Burma Shave"-style about 8 miles from the city. Following the signs will bring you to the parking lot of Mom Wilson's Country Sausage Mart, a

unique business that has served residents in and around Delaware County since 1959.

Sue Snavley, daughter of H.H. and Fern Wilson, runs the business today with her husband, Denny. She grew up in Delaware County, graduating from Buckeye Valley High School.

Much of the money she earned for college came from selling home-grown corn from the family farm. Pictures vali-

date a 9-year-old Sue selling an abundance of corn from a little wagon along U.S. 23, back when it was a two-lane highway. Home-grown pumpkins were also sold at the roadside stand.

While going to college, she met Denny. The two education majors married and took jobs in the North Union School District. Denny eventually

Please see SAUSAGE, Page 3

ELECTION '08

RVOTE ROUNDDUP

REPUBLICAN

Glenn Evans sees work to be done in the Delaware County commissioners' office. He's asking voters to give him another four years in the post to finish it.

Endorsed by the county GOP, Evans is running against Republican challenger Ken O'Brien in the March 4 primary race for county commissioners. The winner of the contest will represent the party in November against the Democrat primary race between Roger VanSickle and Jack Carney-DeBord.



Evans

Evans, 62, retired from his job as owner of Evans Insurance and Financial Services in 2006 to focus on his commissioner duties. During his tenure, the commissioners have helped bring traffic improvements to the U.S. 36/Ohio 37 corridor through an expansion of American Showa, helped establish a Port Authority to attract economic development to the area and are helping to bring a Kroger store to Sunbury through incentive packages.

Please see EVANS, Page 3

Ken O'Brien believes Delaware County taxpayers have not been faring well under the current county commissioners.

The concerns have led the 47-year-old special needs educator to enter the county's political fray as a Republican candidate for the county commissioner seat currently held by Republican Glenn Evans. County voters on March 4 will decide which of the two Republicans will move on to the November general election to face off against the winner of the Democratic primary race between Roger Van Sickle and Jack Carney-DeBord.



O'Brien

"The primary reason I'm running is that I feel Delaware County taxpayers' money could be spent much more wisely than it is now," said O'Brien, who himself helped to manage tax dollars as trustee for Berlin Township, where he resides with his wife and three children. O'Brien's term as trustee expired in December. He decided not to seek re-election in order to pursue the commissioner post.

Please see O'BRIEN, Page 3

Four vying for Evans' county commissioner seat

Profiles by Devon Immelt

DEMOCRAT

Roger VanSickle, a Democratic candidate for Delaware County commissioner vying for the party's nomination in the March 4 primary, is a name with which many Delaware voters are familiar.

In addition to having served as a Delaware Township trustee for 23 years, VanSickle has run for county commissioner on two previous occasions, having lost out to his Republican opponent on each attempt. But the political atmosphere is different this time around. The calls for change are louder, said VanSickle, who points out that two of the current commissioners also lost their initial bids for election.

"A lot of people have encouraged me to run again, people from both political parties," VanSickle said. "They want change. I think they want a county commissioner who works for the citizens, not for a party or special interest. I want to be that person, to be a commissioner who has open communication with all the residents of the county"



VanSickle

Please see VANSICKLE, Page 3

A Delaware attorney who specializes in victims' rights wants to be a Delaware County commissioner.

Jack Carney-DeBord, 51, is one of two Democrats running in the March 4 primary. A win next month against his Democratic opponent, Roger VanSickle, would give Carney-DeBord the right to challenge the Republican nominee in November for the commissioner seat now held by Glenn Evans.



Carney-DeBord

Previously registered as a Republican, Carney-DeBord said he decided to seek political office as a Democrat after becoming disenfranchised by GOP-pushed changes being made within the Ohio Supreme Court.

"There was tort reform that I had real difficulties with as someone who represents the so-called little people," said Carney-DeBord, whose law practice is located in downtown Delaware.

After initially considering running as a candidate for state representative, Carney-DeBord said he decided a more realistic first step into politics would come at the county level, an area he also believes needs change.

Please see CARNEY-DEBORD, Page 3

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CARNEY-DEBORD

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"Basically what it comes down to is, I live here, my wife and kids live here. I want to give something back," said Carney-DeBord, the father of two. His wife, Nan, coaches basketball for Ohio Wesleyan University.

Carney-DeBord said he takes issue with the current county commissioners on several fronts, most of which he said involve a lack of integrity. He became convinced of that after attending a

commissioners' meeting earlier this month. The meeting was attended by Tommy Thompson, a Republican political opponent to Commissioner Jim Ward. Thompson was accompanied by his campaign members, Charlotte Joseph and Walt Abood. Thompson had criticized the county's proposed tax swap and Abood was beginning to speak as well when the political dispute was ended with Commissioner Kris Jordan pounding the board's gavel.

The commissioners have said the gavel was used because the group was attempting to make political statements during a portion of the meet-

ing set aside for public comments. Carney-DeBord saw it differently.

"I was appalled," he said. "It was chaotic. I just couldn't believe it. Right then I went home thinking 'I know I can do a better job.' When you are an attorney, you have a certain level of integrity you must maintain. My goal is to return integrity to the commissioners' office."

When not practicing law, Carney-DeBord spends time volunteering as a coach for area athletic leagues. He holds degrees from Denison University and Eastern Michigan University, and received his law degree from Capital University.

As a Democratic candidate, Carney-DeBord already has come under fire from the county's GOP. The head of the county's Republican Party this month wrote the *Gazette* requesting that Carney-DeBord issue a public apology for referring to illegal immigrants as "wetbacks" during a candidates forum held earlier this month. Carney-DeBord has recanted the slur. He called reporters the morning after the forum to issue an apology.

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Damaging tornadoes reported in South as Midwest struggles with another icy storm

By KATE BRUMBACK
Associated Press Writer

PRATTVILLE, Ala. — Rescue crews searched door-to-door for people trapped in wreckage after a tornado crashed through town, part of a wild weekend of weather that also included rain, snow and flooding in the Midwest.

No fatalities were immediately reported in Prattville, outside Montgomery, but two people were critically injured, said Fire Department official Dallis Johnson.

Twenty-seven people had minor injuries, officials said. About 200 homes were damaged or destroyed. A curfew began as darkness fell Sunday.

A 35-bed mobile hospital unit was set up outside a Kmart to treat victims

with minor to moderate injuries so that hospitals could take those with serious injuries, Dr. Steve Allen said.

Toppled utility poles and storm debris littered the area. Shelters opened at churches, and school buses shuttled storm victims out of the stricken area to the city center.

David Shoupe, 18, assistant manager at Palm Beach Tan, said he and a co-worker barely made it into a laundry room before the roof fell in and the wind tossed shopping carts aloft.

"Soon as we turned the corner, the roof collapsed everywhere except the laundry room," Shoupe said, standing beside his car, which had its front windshield cracked by debris and the other windows shattered.

About 9,000 homes and businesses lost power in Prattville. The torna-

do was part of storms that swept across the South, damaging homes elsewhere in Alabama and in the Florida Panhandle.

A tornado destroyed four homes in Escambia County, Fla. About 60 other homes, businesses and storage buildings were damaged to varying degrees, said county spokeswoman Sonya Daniel.

Residents hustled to clear debris, cover broken windows and spread tarpaulins on roofs. "I expected to hear the roof blow off as bad as that wind was blowing," Willie Chastang, 58, told the Pensacola News Journal.

Across the border in Escambia County, Ala., two houses were destroyed by a possible tornado in rural Dixie, the Weather Service said.

The storm damaged some structures in Covington County, Ala., and

toppled trees, said Jeremie Shaffer, assistant director of the county emergency management agency.

Freezing rain and snow fell across the southern two-thirds of Wisconsin, still weary from a major snowstorm that stranded hundreds of motorists and snarled travel for days.

Numerous crashes were reported, and authorities urged people to stay off roads. The National Weather Service issued a blizzard warning for much of Iowa and Wisconsin, as well as flood warnings in parts of the two states.

The conditions forced shopping malls, libraries and churches to close. Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama postponed or canceled campaign stops ahead of Tuesday's primary.

SAUSAGE

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became principal at North Union Junior High School, but the district was struggling. Due to a failed school tax levy in 1976, North Union schools temporarily closed the doors for a short period of time. Denny and Sue didn't have jobs to go to, and Denny started helping his father-in-law at the store. Sue, who always was involved with the family business, used this unexpected opportunity to increase her involvement and hours with the family business.

"Mom was slowing down and older," Sue said. By 1980, Sue and Denny were there full time.

The third generation business all began on the back porch of the family farm when hog prices were down to 9 cents a pound; times were tough and farming was bad. Henry Dole, known as H.D.

Wilson, raised cattle and pigs. He started selling and bartering beef and pork. His son, Horace Henry, known as H.H. Wilson, worked alongside his dad, butchering and helping sell meat products even during the Depression. When H.D. Wilson passed on in 1952, H.H. Wilson took over the family operation. As the story goes, H.H. said to his wife one day, "Let's sell sausage." And the true retail store became official.

Customers started coming to buy from a small building on the farm. "Fern and H.H. were the best and equal partners with equal power," Denny said.

Times weren't always simple. Work was hard and the business was tested. In 1965, H.H. Wilson was forced to deal with the state for the expansion of U.S. 23. It was inevitable that part of the farm would be taken to make room for the four-lane highway. H.H. was to sign an agreement with the state on April 12, 1965, just one day after a tornado wreaked havoc on the Radnor area.

"I will never forget that Palm Sunday. It was April 11th," Sue said. "The tornado came through. It was devastating. The slaughterhouse and 16 of our buildings and the old home place were wiped out.

About 100 feet away, very near where Mom Wilson's Country Sausage Mart is now, was our home. I was still in high school and my sister was off to college, but we were fortunate the house was not taken. The highway took what was left."

Despite the hardships, the business has stayed in the family. Sam, Sue and Denny's son, has not gone far from home. He and his wife, Jill, and their daughter, Mary Katherine, reside in the house where Sam was raised. Adjacent to the store, a newer home was built after the highway went through, and Denny and Sue live there today.

When H.H. passed away in 1983, Fern continued with the family business, staying involved until her death in 1997.

"Denny and I would suggest buying a piece of equipment to make work a little easier and Mom would say, 'No! You'll lose that old-fashioned style,'" Sue said.

"Fern was the best and still is our boss," Denny said. "Sue is the face to this business now, though. People come in to see Sue. Like her parents, she knows everything there is about this store. I have been fortunate to be a part of it."

Fern and H.H. Wilson would be proud of the way Sue and Denny have held on tight to their family beliefs and business ways. The third generation continues hickory smoking the sausage and using the recipes handed down from H.D. Wilson. Denny has added his own personal touch to the variety of purchases customers make. Sue and Denny have been members of the National and Ohio Association of Meat Processors for 23 years.

"Denny's cracker sausage is one of the most popular products we sell," Sue said. "It comes in a 15-inch casing, is a combo of cooked sausage and cheese and is ready to eat. It is delicious when eaten on a cracker. Denny is content just selling it at the store and has never had an interest in marketing as a wholesale product. The BBQ sauce and mustard are also made special by Mom Wilson's Country Mart."

Customers stop in the store from all over the country. "And Sue remembers every customer," Denny said.

"They come from all over," Sue added. "When Ohio State is playing, we get many of our regulars coming through, and Christmas brings the same familiar faces."

Delaware resident Jill Hoovler is a regular who heads north for the family's traditional ham for Easter and lucky pork and sauerkraut for New Year's Day. "The ham is my favorite," she said. "The house smells so good when it is baking."

Plenty of history is on display inside the store, from old family pictures to the shiny glass cases that display the meats. And there's one special piece of history, a tucked-away note that was written by H.H. Wilson: "The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten."

And as the signs along the highway read, "Open every day, October to May."

"Except Mother's Day," Sue added, "(Sometimes we'll have) a new face come in after traveling Route 23 for years and they finally stop to see what those signs are about."

Sue and Denny are just as grateful for the old customers as they are the new.

"There aren't many left, but we still have customers that come in and say, 'I've been comin' here since the back porch,'" Sue said.

O'BRIEN

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"There are projects that were prioritized in the past that are not being completed. We should be finishing the county jail and the Hayes (county services) building. But it's more than just the jail. The sheriff's office is understaffed, and public safety should be a priority for the commissioners."

Both the jail and Hayes building are projects recommended by the county's former 20/20 Committee, a citizen-based committee that advised and gave recommendations to the commissioners on various facility and infrastructure projects. O'Brien said he feels the commissioners have strayed from the 20/20 Committee's recommendations over the past year, particularly in their decision to lease, then buy, the former Hall's Furniture Store on U.S. 23N. The building is to house the county's board of elections and various other offices.

O'Brien said the commissioners were wrong to pursue construction of both a new courthouse and the lease and subsequent purchase of the Hall's building, since renamed the Frank B. Willis Government Building. Completion of the jail should have come first, he said.

"The Hall's building is inappropriate in location and building structure and does not fit with the 20/20 plan, O'Brien said. "What they've done, in effect, is de-consolidate the county's departments by moving the election board to a totally different area. The board of elections has to interact with the various other offices in the Hayes building. It just doesn't make sense what they've done."

O'Brien also is opposed to Commissioner Jim Ward's proposed tax swap, which would reduce the county's property tax by 0.25 percent but raise the sales tax 0.25 percent.

If elected, O'Brien said in addition to addressing the spending concerns he would work to improve the county's 9-1-1 response times, seek grants for development of an early warning siren system, and make himself accessible to the public in part by attending township trustee meetings.

O'Brien said if elected he plans to take a leave of absence from his teaching job at Worthington Christian Middle School to focus on his commissioner role, a post he said he would like to hold for no more than two terms.

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EVANS

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"I see those as major accomplishments that the county was able to participate in," said Evans, who also served as the county's representative during 9-1-1 consolidation talks with Delaware City.

Looking ahead, Evans said another significant undertaking will be financing the county's planned new courthouse, a project Evans said he supports "but not at the expense of taxpayers."

Another goal, Evans said, is the implement of a conservation initiative. Evans wants to establish a depository in which land owners near the Olentangy River or a tributary could establish voluntary conservation easements through the county's soil and

water district. The program would serve as an alternative to the mandatory conservation easement the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency had proposed last year but withdrew due to economic development and land rights concerns.

Married with two adult children, Evans admits the last year has been a difficult one for his family. Criticism has been leveled at the commissioners on several fronts, the most publicized of which involves the commissioners' decision to lease, then purchase, the former Hall's Furniture store on U.S. 23 N. The building is to become the new home of several county offices, including its election offices.

Evans believes the criticism is politically based. The Hall's

building plans make sense for the county given its space needs, he said. The lease was initiated as a result of requests made by county election officials, Evans said. At the time, the BOE had warned that it would soon run out of storage room in the Hayes County Services building due to the need to purchase electronic voting machines, he said.

Because the Hayes building is intended for office space only, it was decided to search for additional storage space for the elections office, he said. Several

vacant buildings were considered, but the former Hall's building provided the most square footage for the price, he said.

Despite the challenges, Evans said he decided to seek re-election because he enjoys public service and the opportunity to have an impact on people's lives. "I believe the position is one in which you can make a difference," he said. "The work we're trying to do is honorable and good."

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