



Coming back

Indiana Tough Mudder to return in August

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NEWS
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TELEVISED HEARINGS

Insurrection panel investigators to make findings public

THE REPUBLIC

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LOCAL NEWS

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Nominations are being sought for The Republic's 40th Annual Woman of the Year.

The newspaper recognizes one woman from Bartholomew County for her unselfish contributions toward creating a vital community and high quality of life with an emphasis on long-term activity, hands-on work and diverse involvement.

Deadline for nominations is Feb. 1.

To submit a nomination, go to therepublic.com/woman-of-the-year-nomination/ or pick up a submission form at The Republic, 2980 N. National Road, Suite A, Columbus, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information: 812-379-5655.

SHARE YOUR NEWS

The Republic publishes a significant amount of reader-submitted news each week, including Around Town contributions, Take Your Best Shot photos and family milestones, as well as upcoming events open to the public.

Submitting news and information for publication has never been easier.

Go to therepublic.com and hover your cursor over the "contact us" tab, which will bring up a drop-down menu.

Then go to the "submissions" link and choose your category. Click on that and complete the required steps, then watch for your item in an upcoming edition.

MILESTONES

Check out family milestones each Sunday in The Republic. You can download forms to submit your own family milestones online at therepublic.com.

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JOIN US ON FACEBOOK, FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

Keep up with the news and happenings in Bartholomew County communities through The Republic's Facebook and Twitter pages.

[facebook.com/therepublicnews](https://www.facebook.com/therepublicnews)

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OBITUARIES A7

Columbus

Marilu Carr
John Piper Jr.
Susan Simpson
Scott Taskey

Edinburgh

Kristin Muncy

Franklin

Linda Stockdale

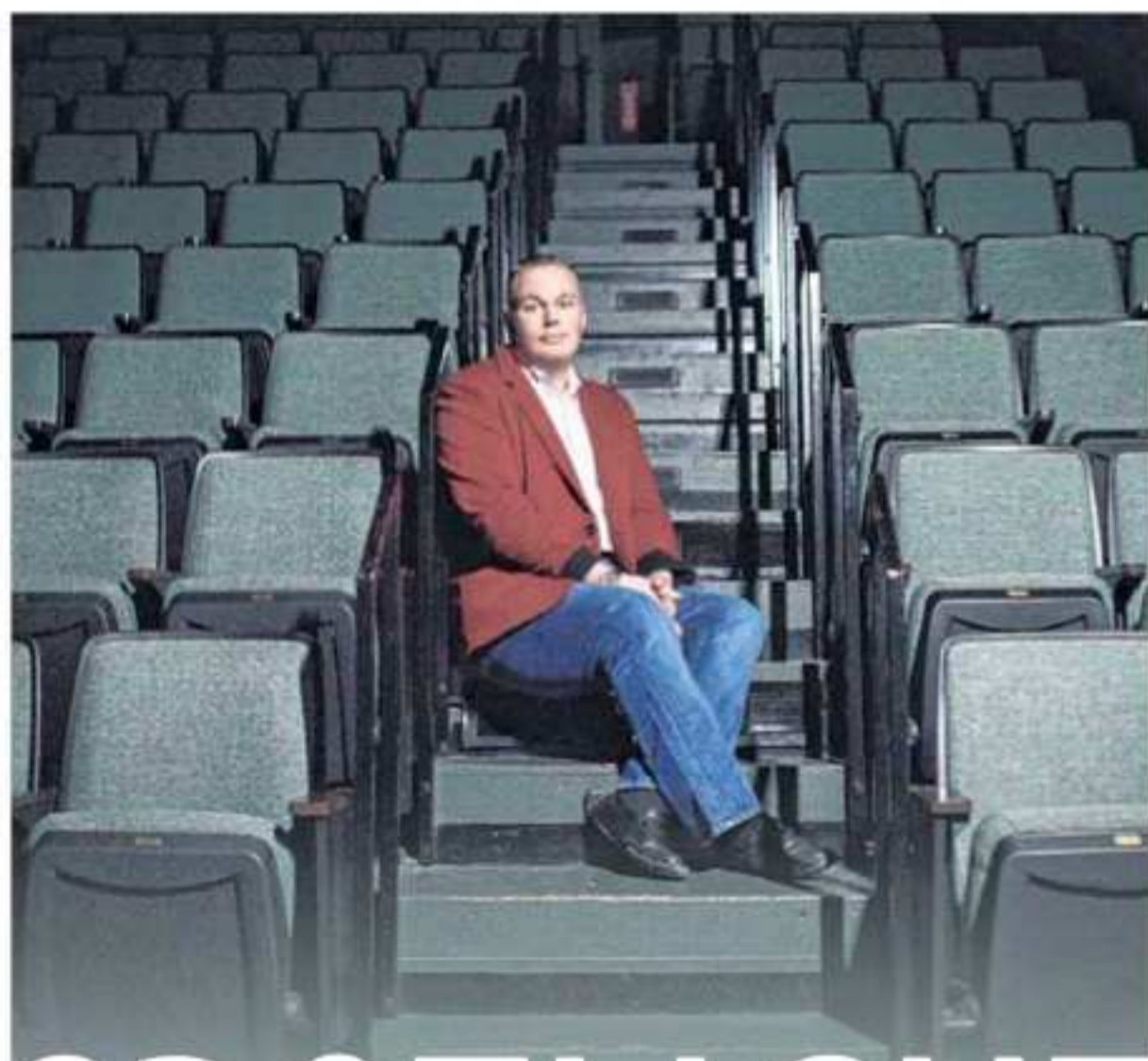
Hartsville

Tricia Anthony

DAILY



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SPOTLIGHT ON A THEATER LEGEND

Former city resident earns national attention for production of album paying tribute to famed composer, lyricist Sondheim

By BRIAN BLAIR
bblair@therepublic.com

PHIL Geoffrey Bond remembers his first exposure to the work of Stephen Sondheim. He couldn't possibly forget.

At age 15 on Nov. 7, 1990, he caught a PBS's Great Performances presentation of the Sondheim production of "A Little Night Music," watching on his 19-inch TV in his bedroom at his Columbus home.

It actually marked a big dawning.

"I had no idea that a musical story could be told that way — with wit and humor and pathos and that music," he said. "I had never heard anything like that before. I fell in love."

His love for all things Sondheim has just resulted in the release of the first volume of a three-volume, six-disc set "Sondheim Unplugged: The NYC



Sessions" that he produced in New York City.

The project, fueled by the legendary composer's recent death, is garnering national publicity in places such as broadwayworld.com and in a story at forbes.com. In fact, a critic at broadwayworld.com called the effort "a landmark collection destined to be a major contribution to the canon of Sondheim recordings."

The 46-year-old Bond's company, Above Deck Entertainment, partnered with Yellow Sound Label to make the recordings happen. They feature 70

vocalists and more than 120 of Sondheim's songs backed only by piano.

The idea was a natural outgrowth of the monthly cabaret series "Sondheim Unplugged" that Bond had orchestrated for the past 11 years, with most of that time with sellout crowds at New York City's Feinstein's/54 Below (and also in other locales such as London, England). The popular presentations have highlighted Broadway and cabaret's most esteemed vocalists performing Sondheim's music. Amid a hectic schedule of marketing the new album and more, the 1993 Columbus East High School graduate took time to answer a few questions by email from his White Oak Manor home in Garrison, New York.

"I'm not surprised at the reaction at all," Bond said, joking that he was sounding egotistical.

(SEE THEATER PAGE A4)

Pictured from top: Former Columbus resident Phil Geoffrey Bond has earned national publicity recently for his production of the three-volume release "Sondheim Unplugged: The NYC Sessions." // The cover of the first release in the six-disc set. *Submitted photos*

BLUEGRASS JAMBOREE

Concert event making return

Monthly events resume Saturday at Donner Center

By BRIAN BLAIR
bblair@therepublic.com

Sure, there are great tunes rollicking through the free monthly Columbus Bluegrass Jamboree at Donner Center in Columbus.

But the gatherings probably are as much about tight friendships as tight harmonies.

Jackie Combest, one of the originators of the get-togethers, offered that view. The next jamboree, open to all, is from 5 to 9 p.m. Saturday.

"It's kind of like a ball team, really," Combest said. "Most of these bluegrass bands are pretty close with each other."

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the gatherings attracted more than 250 people, including musicians and mere toe-tappers alike. Since venues have reopened, numbers have been in the 100-plus range.

Each date opens with a public jam session from 4 to 5 p.m. — a time in which everyone from the apprentice to the accomplished can play together.

Afterward, normally a series of groups each perform for one hour. Groups confirmed at press time are High Sierra of Bloomington; Highway 46 of Bedford; and the Left Field String Band of Shoals.

Guitarist Combest performs with the trio Highway 46. He mentioned that there still are several bluegrass groups consisting of all family members, such as the Shoals ensemble.

"I think that's because it's just such down-home music, and so many of these groups start out as at-home entertainment," Combest said.

(SEE CONCERT PAGE A4)

About the event

WHAT: Monthly Columbus Bluegrass Jamboree

WHEN: 5 to 9 p.m. for group entertainment, 4 to 5 p.m. for open jam session

WHERE: Donner Center, 739 22nd St. in Columbus

COST: Free

MASKS: Required inside

Man suspected in 2-year-old's death seeks bail reduction

STAFF REPORTS

A local man who faces felony charges involving the death of his 2-year-old daughter is asking for a bail reduction.

Jeremy Sweet, 39, of 1415 N. County Road 850E, is charged with a Level 1 felony neglect of a dependent resulting in death, accused of intentionally placing his daughter Emma, 2, in a situation that endangered her life

and health and resulted in her death.

He is being held in the Bartholomew County Jail in lieu of \$1.2 million bond (or 10% cash) since his arrest Thanksgiving Day weekend.

Sweet is seeking to have his bond reduced at a hearing at 9:15 a.m. Tuesday in



J. SWEET

Bartholomew Superior Court 1 before Judge James Worton.

Sweet has told multiple versions about what happened regarding the death of his daughter, Emma, whose body was found in a debris field in the East Fork White River at 11 a.m. Nov. 28 by a firefighter searching from the riverbank.

Public defender Aaron Edwards has been appointed to represent Sweet in court.

Sweet also is facing a Level 6 felony charge of possession of a hypodermic syringe, which investigators said was found on his person by paramedics when he was taken to Columbus Regional Hospital on Nov. 26. CRH paramedics located a syringe and an empty corner cut baggie (drug paraphernalia) on Sweet's person, the probable cause affidavit states.

(SEE BAIL PAGE A4)

Illinois' law ending immigration detention in 2022 hits snag

By SOPHIA TAREN
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — An Illinois law aimed at ending federal immigration detention in the New Year has hit another legal snag, delaying a change immigrant rights activists had celebrated as historic.

Local governments in Illinois cannot enter into new federal agreements allowing jails to house immigrant detainees and must end old ones in 2022 under the law signed in August by Gov. J.B. Pritzker. Other states including Maryland and New Jersey have enacted similar laws.

Three Illinois counties with such federal agreements faced a Jan. 1 deadline to end contracts. While one in downstate Illinois complied last year, two others are involved in a federal lawsuit challenging the law. The case was dismissed last month, but a federal judge on Thursday granted an extension while an appeal is considered. Authorities in McHenry and Kankakee counties now have until Jan. 13.

Immigrant rights activists have celebrated the law for months, saying incarcerating people awaiting immigration proceedings is inhumane and costly. But others, including authorities in McHenry and Kankakee counties, argue they'll lose revenue and that ending contracts creates new complications such as moving detainees away from family.

"This decision will have absolutely no impact on these detainees being released," Kankakee County Sheriff Mike Downey said in a statement after the lawsuit's

dismissal. "In fact, they will undoubtedly be transferred to other states, all the while forcing families of these detainees to travel much farther to visit their loved ones, all due to typical partisan Illinois politics in Springfield."

In far southern Illinois, the Pulaski County Detention Center cleared out immigrant detainees during Labor Day weekend. Most of the roughly 50 detainees were transferred to either the two other Illinois facilities or Kansas.

Initially three were released, but more followed in the coming days during a process in which detainees were allowed to submit evidence on their cases. Fifteen total detainees were released, according to court documents.

"I was very happy. I was even crying. I felt like this was a miracle," said Angel, an immigrant from Honduras who declined to give his last name out of concern for his pending immigration case. The father of four said he left Honduras to escape gang violence.

He was detained for about a month after police found him asleep in a parked car after he had been drinking. He was turned over to immigration authorities. After his release from Pulaski during the Labor Day weekend, he was reunited with family in Indiana, according to Diana Rashid, an attorney with the Chicago-based National Immigrant Justice Center.

Leaders in McHenry and Kankakee counties sued in September over the Illinois law, calling it overreach. Together both counties have the capacity for nearly 400

detainees, though each one currently has far fewer, largely due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Prior to Thursday's stay, McHenry, which currently houses about 65 detainees, had planned to notify ICE on Jan. 1 that it would wind down its month-to-month contract and transfer or release detainees within 30 days, or by January's end, according to Peter Austin, county administrator. After the stay, McHenry county officials said they plan to do so after the extension, which means detainees would be released or transferred next month.

The contract brings in roughly \$10 million annually, a significant source of money and jobs for the northern Illinois county along the Wisconsin border with a roughly \$200 million annual budget. The county jail has housed immigrant detainees since 2003.

Kankakee County, which has a similar contract and has detained immigrants at the Jerome Combs Detention Center since 2016, was also anticipating a revenue loss. The jail is roughly 65 miles from Chicago. In a December statement, Kankakee County Board Chairman Andy Wheeler said the county would appeal "as far as we can, up to and including the U.S. Supreme Court."

County leaders including the sheriff declined interview requests or didn't return requests for comment. ICE also declined to provide details.

Meanwhile, a county jail in neighboring Indiana was preparing to potentially house additional detainees transferred from Illinois.



PHOTO PROVIDED

The Left Field String Band is among performers set for Saturday's Columbus Bluegrass Jamboree.

CONCERT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

The jam sessions are popular.

"The great thing about jam sessions is that there's really no firm rules," Combest said. "You don't have to be so good, because literally everybody is welcome to sit in. And if you're not officially a member in a group, it's a great chance to learn to play with

other people."

Ample room is made for pickers still learning and making their share of mistakes.

"People might look at them and say, 'Hey, why don't you try it again,'" he said.

Combest recalled seeing a struggling, young banjo player at the gatherings about five years ago. He said that young man is now "one of the best banjo pickers in all of southern Indiana."

BAIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Sweet also faces a habitual offender enhancement that stems from a 2007 conviction of operating an illegal drug lab, as well as a March 2016 conviction of dealing in methamphetamine, according to court records.

If convicted of all charges, Sweet could be sentenced to more than 62 years in prison with the habitual offender enhancement.

The father and daughter were last seen at about 3:30 p.m. Nov. 24 in Sweet's black Ford F-150. They were reported missing Nov. 25 by family members, which was Thanksgiving Day. At 6 a.m. Nov. 26, Jeremy Sweet was found shirtless with the windows open in his pickup truck by duck hunters, who had spotted his submerged pickup truck in 3 to 5 feet of water in the river.

An extensive river and ground search ensued for Emma, who was found by a firefighter walking the riverbank about 2½ miles downstream from where the truck was found by the duck hunters.

Sweet gave detectives multiple versions of what happened and how the truck got into the river, over a 15- to 20-foot embankment.

At the scene, Sweet initially told investigators, who knew when questioning him that Emma was missing, that he dropped her off at "Casey's," but then he eventually said that he had unbuckled Emma from her car seat after they were in the river, according to the probable cause affidavit.

Sweet then told investigators he placed her on the hood or roof of the vehicle before "losing her" at some point, the affidavit states.

Investigators then interviewed Sweet at Columbus Regional Hospital, where Sweet told them that he "got lost" on a dirt road and the truck got stuck. Sweet told detectives that as he was trying to move the truck, it went over the embankment and into the river, the affidavit states.

"Jeremy said that water was coming inside the truck, so he put Emma on the hood or roof of the truck. Jeremy said that he and Emma fell into the water and he climbed back up on top of the truck. He said that Emma's coat was wet, so he took it off of her. He claimed that they were both on top of the truck



E. SWEET

overnight and the last time he saw Emma, she was on top of the truck yelling for her Mom. Jeremy said that he held her for awhile, but he later put her on top of the roof of the truck by herself because they fell into the water earlier when they were both on the roof. Jeremy said he woke up at some point and Emma was gone," the affidavit states.

Detectives spoke with a Jodi Miller, who they believe is the last person known to have been with Jeremy and Emma Sweet before they were reported missing by Sweet's wife and Emma's mother, Linsey Sweet, the affidavit states. Miller said she was at the Shelbyville casino with Jeremy Sweet and Greg Lawson in the early morning hours of Nov. 24 and arrived at Jeremy's house later in the morning, according to the affidavit.

They picked up Emma because Linsey Sweet had to go to work and they all went to Miller's house. Sweet gave Miller a ride to work at Vernet Corp. because her car was broken down, the affidavit states. Miller told investigators that Sweet dropped her off at around 3:30 p.m. Nov. 24 and that Emma was fine when the father and daughter left, which was the last time she saw them.

In a followup interview on Nov. 27, Sweet told detectives that he had used methamphetamine and marijuana before going to the Shelbyville casino, the affidavit states.

Sweet said after he dropped Miller off, he took a wrong turn and ended up driving around in some fields, eventually driving on top of an embankment where he could see the river, the affidavit states. He said the truck got stuck, so he began rocking the vehicle using the forward and reverse gears, but went too far forward and ended up in the water, which happened about 45 minutes after dropping Miller off on Nov. 24, the affidavit states.

In this version, Sweet said he and Emma got on top of the roof of the vehicle and fell into the water a couple of times, the affidavit states. Sweet said he removed Emma's coat because it was soaking wet, but then fell asleep sometime during the evening of Nov. 24, and when he woke up, Emma and her coat were gone, according to the affidavit.

He later told detectives that Emma fell into the water with him on the morning of Nov. 25, and he fell asleep and woke up the night of Nov. 25 and Emma and her coat were gone, according to the affidavit.



THEATER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

"There are whole societies dedicated to Steve and his work throughout the world. People love Sondheim."

"He's perhaps the most beloved and revered theatrical figure of our lifetime."

"So no. While I'm thrilled and flattered that our project is being happily embraced by many, I'm not at all surprised. It's simply a testament to Steve."

He mailed the famed composer the first release in November. He received a gracious thank-you letter from Sondheim Nov. 26. He read the note 15 minutes before the national news reported Sondheim's death at age 91.

He aims to eventually frame that letter and others he's received from Sondheim, whom he also personally met and found to be gracious. Though the stage star had a standing invitation to attend the "Sondheim Unplugged" shows, he never made it.

"He was very considerate of our company of actors and was concerned about making them nervous," Bond said. "He was like that."

Bond's significant arts success began with work in local troupes such as Mill Race Players and Columbus Theatre Arts Guild. In fact, he recalled with pride even operating a spotlight for the latter's performance



Pictured from top: Phil Geoffrey Bond is shown at one of the monthly shows of the Sondheim Unplugged series at Feinstein's/54 Below in New York City. // Broadway performer Telly Leung, who performed in Columbus in September 2020, is among artists included on "Sondheim Unplugged: The NYC Sessions." SUBMITTED PHOTOS

of "Side By Side By Sondheim" years ago.

"I was really lucky to have that exposure so early," Bond said. "A few years back, the producers of that show were in New York City and came to see 'Sondheim Unplugged.' I got to thank them personally."

Local residents are hardly surprised by Bond's success or the recent attention. In his teen years locally, he was driving change almost before he could drive. He organized Arts For AIDS performance fundraisers to support Indianapolis' Damien Center, treating HIV and AIDS patients.

Columbus resident and ex-opera performer Julianna Jerome-Drerup remembers that she and Bond pined for huge arts success even while

they were friends in middle school.

"We dreamed and schemed and plotted how we were going to the big city with each of us leaving our mark," Jerome-Drerup said. "I ended up on the other side of the country (in opera), and he ended up in New York doing just what he set out to do."

Jerome-Drerup mentioned that one of Bond's greatest strengths is forging relationships in arts circles and keeping those relationships heartfelt and sincere in what she said can be a pretentious performance world.

"Phil has never ever been a superficial guy," Jerome-Drerup said. Former Columbus East performing arts administrator Nancy Kessler has remained in touch with Bond, and is

Further notes

WHO: Phil Geoffrey Bond

AGE: 46

LIVES: With partner Richard Peri in Garrison, New York north of New York City.

BORN: Detroit suburb of Northville.

CAME TO COLUMBUS: With his family at age 5.

HIGH SCHOOL: 1993 Columbus East graduate.

COLLEGE: New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, dual bachelor's of fine arts degrees in acting and dramatic writing.

FAVORITE SONDHEIM PRODUCTION: "Sunday in the Park with George."

FAVORITE SONDHEIM SONG: "Move On"

impressed with his career trajectory.

"Phil has never wavered from his love for the theater and has embraced the talents and diversity that theatre offers," Kessler said. "I have enjoyed following his many successes and look forward to where his next journey will be."

Bond figures that journey always will include some part of Sondheim.

"Sondheim's work is like peeling an onion," he said. "There is ALWAYS another layer. All of these years later, I'm still discovering new things."

And now, more of the world is, in some way, discovering the passion of Phil Geoffrey Bond.