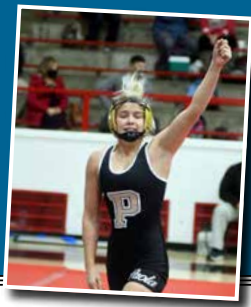


Paola, Osawatome to host Easter egg hunts Saturday, April 3 | Page A2



See which athletes were named to the Tri-County Spotlight Girls Wrestling Team | Page B1



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# THE MIAMI COUNTY REPUBLIC

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## 'It takes a village' Sheriff, Lakemary, Baehr Foundation collaborate on autism initiative



DOUG CARDER / THE MIAMI COUNTY REPUBLIC

Amy Kuhn, speech-language pathologist with Lakemary Center, talks about some of the tools Miami County Sheriff's Office personnel can use to communicate with a person with autism. Sheriff's patrol vehicles will now be equipped with backpacks filled with autism sensory tools.

**BY DOUG CARDER**  
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Bryce Carter has been helping the county's public safety agencies for over three years as the Public Safety ITS director for the Miami County Sheriff's Office.

Carter, who has a degree from Northwest Vista College in San Antonio, Texas, is a technology whiz who Capt. Matt Kelly said will always be one of the smartest people in the room.

Bryce Carter also has non-verbal autism.

"I feel people should know that nonverbal autism does not define intelligence, independence, life, and communication," Carter wrote in an email. "Everybody in the world is different, but just because somebody is nonverbal does not mean they have nothing to say."

The sheriff's office is launching a program April 1 to



This Miami County Sheriff's Office autism awareness patch will be placed on every patrol vehicle equipped with autism sensory tools.

coincide with national Autism Awareness Month that will equip all of the agency's patrol vehicles with backpacks filled with autism sensory items to help personnel better communicate with people who have autism.

The sheriff's office has partnered with Lakemary Center and has received a \$2,504 grant from the Baehr Foundation, managed through First Option Bank, to make the program a reality, Kelly said.

Lakemary Center, of Paola, serves children and adults with developmental disabilities.

Kelly came up with the idea for the program after learning more about Carter's autism and reading about a fire department that utilizes autism sensory tools.

"I saw an article about a fire department in Ohio that had these bags on their fire trucks," Kelly said. "When they would respond to calls that have people with autism, whether it be kids or adults, they had these tools to help communicate with them and keep them calm — whatever the case may be — because the spectrum is so wide that autism affects people in different ways."

Lakemary supplied 20 backpacks to the sheriff's office at no cost, and recommended what autism sensory items to put in the backpacks. The Baehr Foundation grant

AUTISM/Page A6



DOUG CARDER / THE MIAMI COUNTY REPUBLIC

Bryce Carter, Public Safety ITS director for the Miami County Sheriff's Office, put on a presentation for sheriff's office personnel and Lakemary staff about the challenges he has faced with nonverbal autism and encouraged everyone to embrace and accept differences.



GENE MORRIS / STAFF PHOTO

The revamped Midway Drive-in features a recently renovated concession stand. Community members got to check it out during a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 26.

## Revamped Midway Drive-in reopens

**BY BRIAN MCCAULEY**  
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Osawatome couple Michael and Heather Wood have poured a lot of time and money into rejuvenating the Midway Drive-in, and they hope all their hard work is about to pay off.

The Midway Drive-in, located on 327th Street "midway" between Paola and Osawatome, is one of only a handful of drive-in movie theaters left in Kansas.

The Woods purchased the drive-in last year and announced plans to keep it in operation while also using the location for other events, such as swap meets.

Those additional events can take place thanks to Miami County commissioners, who late last year approved a rezoning request that changed the zoning of the property from Countryside (CS) to Commercial (C-2).

The Paola and Osawatome chambers of commerce hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the drive-in, Friday, March 26. Those who attended got to check out the recently renovated concession stand and enjoy a drink and some jumbo popcorn.

The first swap meet took place the next morning, Saturday, March 27. Vendors paid \$20 at the gate per stall, and patrons paid \$3 at the gate to shop.

MIDWAY/Page A3

## City to adopt electric bill repayment plan

**BY DOUG CARDER**  
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OSAWATOMIE — The Osawatome City Council on April 8 is expected to approve a finalized repayment calendar for a \$700,000, low-interest loan from the state to address a spike in costs the city's electric utility incurred during a mid-February cold snap.

The prolonged deep freeze caused price spikes in electric and natural gas utilities across the Midwest.

The city of Osawatome received around \$700,000 in charges for a two-week period of severe weather, which is roughly the cost of six to eight months during a regular year, City Manager Mike Scanlon said.

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