



HUSKIES ARE OFF TO PERFECT START

The Jackson County Central girls' basketball team is unbeaten in its first three games of the season.
Story, B1



JACKSON COUNTY PILOT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2019

129TH YEAR/ISSUE 50

City weighs the cost of kitty control

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Members of the Jackson City Council will decide next week exactly how much kitty control within city limits is worth to them.

At present, the city pays the local Precious Animals Worth Saving organization \$150 per stray cat it removes from the streets of Jackson, with a cap of \$2,000 per year. That covers 13 cats.

The problem with that, said Janice Lepinski, president of PAWS, is the number of cats her organization is pulling off the streets is more than double that.

"Every year, we rescue more cats," she told council members at their meeting last week. "It's been up about 10 percent each year, though this year, the increase is more than normal."

And, while the nonprofit PAWS appreciates the money the city pays for the service,



Dave Cushman

Lepinski said, the \$150 barely covers the cost to vaccinate and spay or neuter the cat. That means PAWS is paying in excess of \$4,000 per year to provide cat control in Jackson, but only recouping less than half of that from the city.

"We would request the cap to be set at \$4,000, or a bit higher," Lepinski said, adding her organization is struggling to cover veterinary bills.

Council member Brandon Finck said the council approved setting the cap at \$2,000 some years ago as that is what the city had been paying former veterinarian David Fell to handle the strays on an annual basis. Lepinski said the service PAWS is providing the city is different than what Fell provided, as PAWS is a no-kill organization. PAWS members also supplement their work for the city by

See **KITTY** on **A3**

If you go...

What: City Council meeting
When: Tuesday, Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m.
Where: Jackson City Hall



Above: Jonathan Hesstine takes a seat on Santa's lap during a Holiday Fest visit Saturday morning at Riverside Elementary School. Right: Kerri Henderson takes center stage at the sold-out Opry Christmas Jackson Style show Saturday afternoon.



A HOLLY, JOLLY HOLIDAY FEST

Photos by Dan Condon and Justin Lessman



Left: Theodore Heinrich proudly shows off the Christmas ornament he made at Santa's workshop Saturday morning. Right: Terry Fife and Sue Anderson share a cuddle while playing Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus at the Jackson Kiwanis Club-sponsored Opry Christmas Jackson Style live musical extravaganza Saturday afternoon. For more Holiday Fest photos, see A10.

Local business plays Santa this holiday season

Less fortunate near and far to get gifts, food

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

Employees at New Fashion Pork in Jackson played Santa last week, wrapping up nearly three-dozen gifts to be sent across the country for kids less fortunate this Christmas.

The bulk of the gifts will go to local and area kids, with 20 of them destined for those in Jackson County, Martin County and Emmet County in Iowa. Another dozen are headed to youngsters in Indiana and Illinois.

"We concentrate our giving in areas in which we

have facilities and employees," said Valerie Smith, controller at New Fashion Pork, who has headed up the local company's gift-giving effort for around a decade. "It's a way for us to give back to our communities."

The gifts were purchased through a combination of funds raised by employees over the course of the past year and matching donations from New Fashion Pork. In addition to helping purchase the gifts, the company also donated \$2,000 in pork certificates to food shelves in Jackson and other surrounding communities and states.

"It's important for us to do our part to ensure everybody has a nice Christmas," Smith said. "It feels good to do."



Ann Henning wraps a gift for a child in need Monday afternoon at New Fashion Pork headquarters in Jackson.

Commissioners give themselves pay hike

Annual salaries increase for third consecutive year

by JUSTIN R. LESSMAN
Publisher

The Jackson County Commissioners have given themselves a pay raise.

Commissioners last week voted to increase their annual salaries by \$500 — from \$19,600 to \$20,100, and from \$20,600 to \$21,100 for the board chair. That equates to an increase of about 2.5 percent.

The raises take effect Jan. 1, 2020.

Jackson County Coordinator Steve Duncan said the raises were discussed during the budgeting process, adding the fiscal year 2020 budget has been prepared to provide for

the salaries as set at last Thursday's commissioner meeting.

This marks the third consecutive year commissioners have increased their own salaries after voting to hold the line in 2016. In 2017, commissioners gave themselves a 2.6 percent salary bump and the commission chair a 3.8 percent increase.

While commissioners gave themselves a raise last week, they did not adjust the per diem rate paid to themselves or their designees for attending meetings of qualifying boards, committees or commissions. That amount remains at \$75 per day.

Both the vote to increase commissioner salaries and the vote to hold the line on per diem passed unanimously.

