

## Our towns

# Sevastopol



Lisa Shidler/The Journal Gazette

Sevastopol residents Angle and Lee Swihart are fixing up the old Vandermark Hotel, the town's 1881 landmark. They plan to sell the property when renovations are complete.

## Sleepy Sevastopol overflows with kindness, charm

By Lisa Shidler

The Journal Gazette

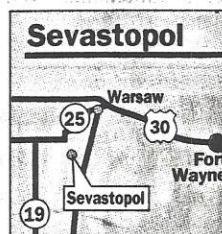
SEVASTOPOL — When Jack and Juda Burke's white colonial house burst into flames after a lightning strike in 1983, they felt helpless.

They couldn't even call 911. The storm had disrupted telephone lines throughout town.

So, they went to neighbors for help.

One neighbor drove to the fire department in Mentone. Weeks later, neighbors were still bringing meals to the family, which had taken up temporary residence in a mobile home.

It is common for neighbors to help one another in this quaint Kosciusko County community bordered by small hills, evergreens and fields of corn.



A motorist driving briskly along county roads 1000 West or 700 South could easily miss the dozen or so houses — many decorated with pumpkins this October — that make up Sevastopol.

But the passer-by would also miss the charm of the town, which has nary a business.

The repaired Burke home, one of many decorated for fall, has a string of pumpkin lights bordering the front door, accented by the house's two large white pillars.

The back yard is home to more decorations — a large pumpkin with white lights around it and a white ghost that flutters lightly in the wind.

The Burkes, who have lived in Sevastopol since 1962, raised their family here, and their

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article about Sevastopol, he didn't hesitate to call Martha Rose, a longtime friend and neighbor. She knew it was him on the line — just by his voice.

That's what Martha Rose likes best about the community — the congenial atmosphere.

"It's kind of like a big family. We can all see each other's houses," she said.

Several years ago, the couple's 12-year-old son was riding his bike to football practice — an unusual occurrence, because the Roses don't usually let their children ride bikes on county roads on account of the traffic.

While he was still on the grass in front of their house, Martha Rose called to him to come back and put on a shirt. Then she heard a car coming.

Before she could react, she saw the car veer off the road and hit her son.

She ran to him and, within minutes, mother and son were surrounded by concerned neighbors.

Fortunately, her son needed just a few stitches to his forehead.

The Roses have lived in Sevastopol since 1967, and Martha Rose enjoys learning facts about the town and her house's history.

She has found pieces of her 120-year-old house's history that tell her a smidgen about the town's rich past.

The Roses discovered a stone in their house that had engraved on it the initials GWL, a horse and two rifles. The story goes that their house and the 40-acre farm around it was once sold in exchange for a horse and two rifles. To this day, the Roses don't know what the initials GWL stand for.

People come to their house periodically and tell stories that have been passed down from the town's heyday, about 100 years ago.

At the time, the town was filled with businesses.

There was a gas station, drug store, church, school, doctors, furniture store, shoe manufacturer, undertaker and a cemetery.

They are all gone now, even the cemetery. Martha Rose doesn't even know where the cemetery was.

One landmark that remains — the Vandermark Hotel — is being remodeled into a house.

Angie and Lee Swihart and their three children live in the four-bedroom house built in 1881 by John Vandermark, an early town resident.

The outside still has old white brick and green shutters. But the inside is undergoing a transformation.

The white walls are freshly painted. The bottom

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## Profile: Sevastopol

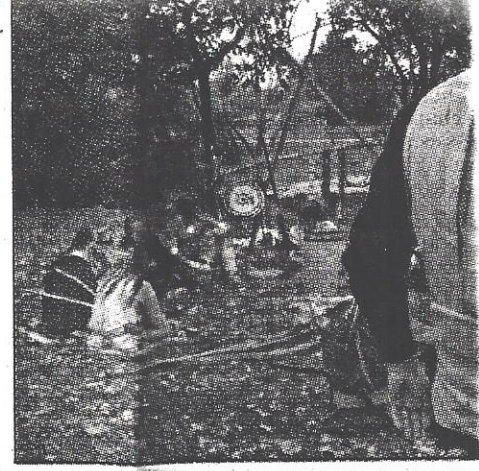
**Government:** Unincorporated  
**Population:** 45  
**Founded:** 1856  
**Landmark:** Vandermark Hotel

"Our towns" is a continuing series focusing on area towns. It appears in The Journal Gazette periodically on Sundays.



Cathie Rowand/The Journal Gazette

**Black Dog, known as Jim Hart in Loami, Ill., holds still for a still.**



**Assistant director Frank Haney, left, camera angle of a scene involving Ottawa**

# Idealistic, but realistic?

## Week Without Violence can't solve problem

**By Ellen Y. Chang and Kimberly Pupillo**  
The Journal Gazette

Michael Craig was shot seven times in the back and the arm.

Another man was stabbed three times in the left side of his chest, and a pre-school-age boy's leg was broken by a relative after he wouldn't take a nap.

All this occurred during the YWCA's Week Without Violence in Allen County.

The organization's goal was to raise awareness of violence around the community and steps to decrease it.

The campaign, while idealistic, may not be realistic.

Becky Hill, executive director of the YWCA, said the goal of the program is to focus on the reasons why violence occurs.

The organization noted the irony YWCA's focus compared with last year's violent acts of crime, Hill said. "We like to see an end to it, but we know it's realistic," she said.

"We don't want to take violence granted."

The Week Without Violence kicked off Oct. 19 with a Service of Remembrance commemorating men and women who died violently in Allen County and concluded Monday with Youth Sports, Recreation and Day.

So far this year, there have been 32 violent acts in Allen County, compared with 15 in 1996.

The YWCA also presented Hope to local organizations, commending

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# Schools enlist law to curb smoking

**By Jennifer Dawn Gibson**  
The Journal Gazette

DECATUR — A revised no-smoking policy in North Adams schools could cost students up to \$500 if they are caught smoking more than once on school property.

School board members for the North Adams Community School Corporation made the revisions earlier this month to reflect changes in Indiana's tobacco laws.

Superintendent James Compton said school administrators will report students to the county prosecutor on second or third offenses, in addition to carrying out already established school punishment.

"We'll see how it works — or if it works," Compton said. "You just try and use every tool you can."

Compton said school officials began discussing revisions to the no-smoking policy after receiving a letter from Attorney General Jeff Modisett and Superintendent of Instruction Suellen Reed outlining changes made to the state's tobacco law this year.

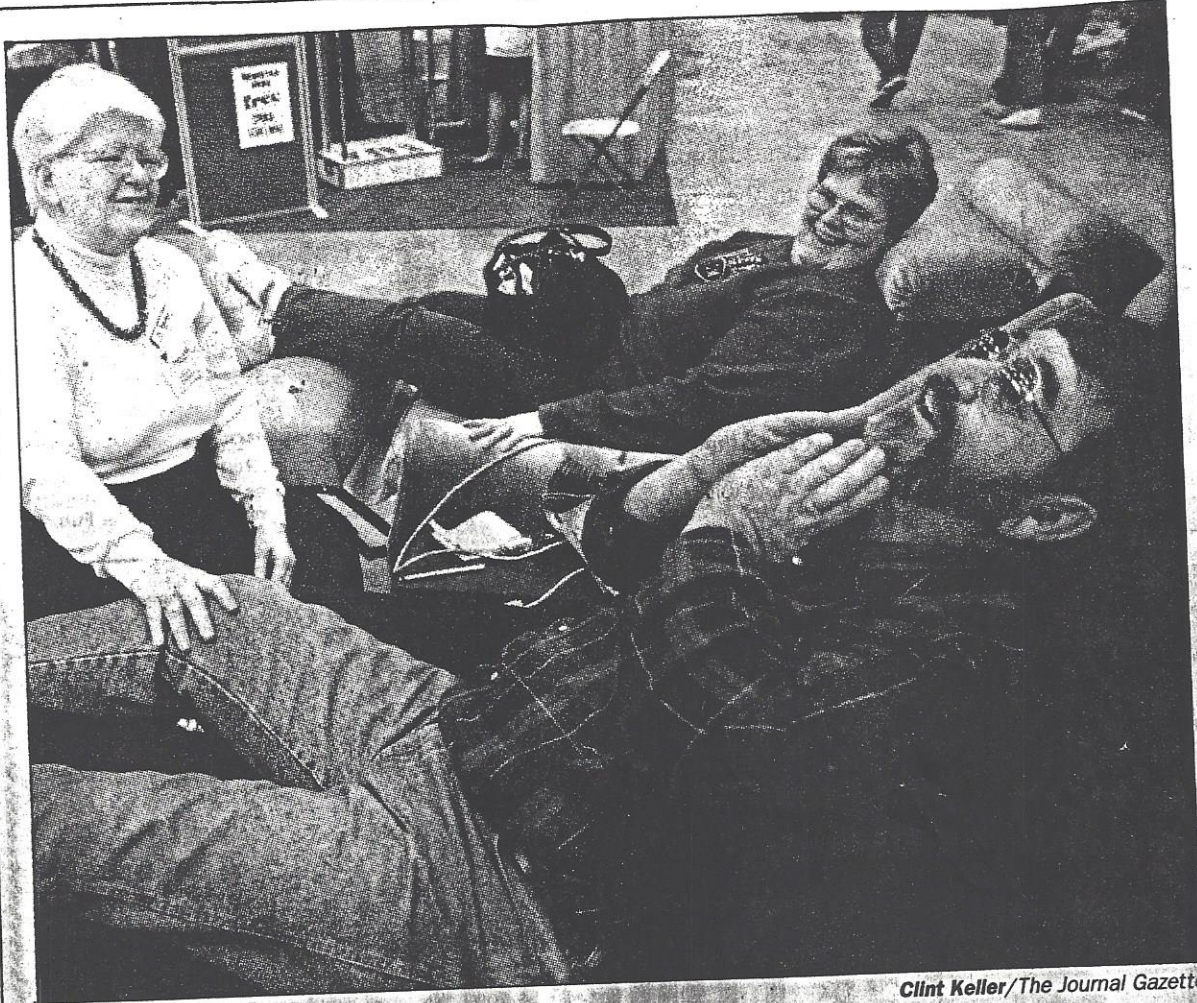
State law now prohibits anyone younger than 18 from purchasing, accepting or possessing tobacco. Previously, people younger than 18 were prohibited simply from chasing tobacco.

Adams County Prosecutor Dan Sigler said the joint effort between school and government officials may help discourage teenagers from smoking.

"We're going to work together to do that," Sigler said. "We need to breathe

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Clint Keller/The Journal Gazette

## All the comforts of home

Wabash resident Larry Brewer and his wife, Karen, recline Saturday at the Fall Home Show in the Memorial Coliseum as Lois Copeland, left, of the Heavenly Health Center, explains the Cyclo-Massage system under Brewer's right knee. The Home show continues through today with a wide range of demonstrations and displays of appeal to homeowners and homemakers.

## Our towns

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of one wall has a teal sponge pattern that mirrors waves in an ocean.  
 Angie Swihart will be starting soon on the upstairs, where she sees an occasional mouse.  
 "It hasn't been mouse-proofed

yet," she said.  
 The Swiharts plan to sell the house when they are finished with the renovations.  
 But for now, Angie Swihart enjoys living across the street from her parents in the town where she grew up.  
 And the Swihart's yard is busy every fall when the community uses

it for the annual Sevastopol Days.  
 To help build community pride, Larry and Joyce Evans and Martha and John Rose started the annual event in 1991.  
 It draws 55 to 75 people each year.  
 The event, conducted the first weekend in September, is a pitch-in. Everyone brings a dish.

### CORRECTION

IN OUR OCTOBER 26TH ADVERTISEMENT WE INCORRECTLY PICTURED THE ELECTRIC RANGE #93571. THIS RANGE FEATURES VISIBLE ELECTRIC COIL BURNERS AND NOT THE SMOOTH GLASS TOP AS SHOWN. WE APOLOGIZE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE THIS

*Grabill Welcomes...*  
**MARCIA ADAMS**  
**Tuesday, October 28th**  
**4 PM - 6 PM**  
 at  
*Home of Elias Puff Restaurant*

No Leaves To Rake

Maintenance

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# Jake and the Sevastopol Rocket

A Great Dane helped this little village become a real boomtown!

By Keith Taylor  
Chico, Vista, California

THE TINY Indiana hamlet of Sevastopol, where I grew up during the Depression, had a population of 52. My family knew them all, because we owned the only grocery store in town.

Things were usually pretty quiet in Sevastopol, even on the Fourth of July. But on Independence Day in 1929, there was a burst of excitement that no witness will ever forget.

I was 9 years old then, and my 14-year-old brother, Norm, had somehow acquired a giant skyrocket. We felt so superior

*Ignoring our shouts, Jake bounded over to sniff the hissing fuse.*

as we showed that monster to the neighborhood kids—for once, we'd celebrate the Fourth with a *real* bang.

When the big day arrived, we waited for darkness with mounting excitement. (It takes a *long* time for darkness to come on the Fourth of July—especially when you're a 9-year-old boy.)

Of course, Mom was a bit apprehensive about this skyrocket business—she was afraid Norm might blow off his hand or set fire to the store or something. But even she couldn't resist the excitement of a real fireworks display, right in the middle of downtown Sevastopol!

At last, darkness arrived. Norm placed an empty soda bottle case in the middle of Sevastopol's only intersection and leaned the skyrocket against it facing east, since there were no houses in that direction.

Everyone was warned to stand clear as he lit the fuse and ran like crazy.

Just then, our big Great Dane, "Jake", roused himself from his latest nap and lumbered out to investigate all the activity. Seeing the fuse sputtering, Jake was intrigued.

Ignoring our shouts of "No!" and "Git!", Jake bounded over to sniff at the hissing fuse... and knocked the skyrocket over! It was pointed directly at our neighbor's house!

Before anyone could right it, the sky-

rocket ignited with a loud *whoosh* and sputtered up

Main Street. Jake took off chasing after it like a mischievous young puppy, bellowing all the way!

Refreshed by his nap, that long-legged dog kept pace with the rocket and would have grabbed it if he hadn't been barking so much. It's a good thing he *didn't* grab it—when the skyrocket reached our neighbor's front yard, it exploded with a tremendous *BOOM!*

## An Awesome Display

Jake slammed on the brakes, reversed his course, and headed it toward home!

The pyrotechnical display in that yard was truly awesome. Red, white and blue balls of flame shot into the air, on a bank of smoke and burst with reverberating *bangs*. Each *bang* seemed to inspire Jake to greater speeds—in the dim light he looked like a speeding brown greyhound. Clearing the intersection in a blur, he sped toward the store and safety.

Jake didn't bother scratching at the screen door—he just ran right through it and headed straight for my room in back, where we found him under my bed, whimpering like a little baby.

Fortunately, no one was hurt and no damage was done. I have survived over 50 Fourth of Julys since, and during them, countless millions of people must have watched fireworks displays.

Still, with the exception of my family and a few lucky Sevastopolians, I'll bet few have ever seen a Great Dane chase—and nearly catch—a skyrocket!



Archive Photo/Martin S...

"DOG DAYS OF SUMMER" got new meaning for reader, thanks to memories of family pet.



## Sevastopol Founded 117 Years Ago

Once upon a time, 117 years ago in fact, a town was platted in the southeast section of Kosciusko county and its founders had great expectations for it. The new town was given the name Sevastopol, supposedly commemorating a famous battle of the Crimean war which had occurred that year.

John Tucker was the original owner of the land the town was laid out by him, George W. White and John Mollenhour. Two years later a post office was established at the home of William Dunlap, who was named postmaster, and A. J. Whittenberger and his brother, Thomas, had opened a general store.

Twenty-five years later Sevastopol boasted of a hotel, two dry goods stores, a hardware, two groceries, an undertaker and furniture dealer, a boot and shoe manufacturer, a blacksmith shop, a wagonmaker, a steam flouring mill, steam sawmill and a drug store.

The drug store was owned by Dr. A. M. Towl, who located in Sevastopol in 1856 and for 30 years was the leading physician in that part of the country.

According to local historians, Sevastopol was for years "a very prosperous place and her merchants had a large trade."

Then towns which had railroad service began to draw business away from Sevastopol and the once prosperous community

the interurban line could not revive it, for the tracks of the Winona line passed a half mile west of the town.

Today Sevastopol is just a scattering of a dozen or so houses at the intersection of county roads 700 South and 1000 West. In the picture above, the house on the right with the mansard roof has a date 1881 on its front wall. Farther south on the same side of the street is the old Franklin township district one schoolhouse, now a grain elevator.