



## FOR MATTERS BIG & SMALL



Lt. Perry Amos of the Lafayette Police Department talks with a student Tuesday at Jefferson High School. Amos says he usually works at Jefferson one day a week. He's been there since 1992. JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER

### Officers a strong, not silent, presence in LSC halls

By Jessica Contrera  
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Lafayette police Officer Amanda Williamson is more than aware of the national spotlight on school safety. But as she patrols the halls at Jefferson High School, it's not guns or extreme violence she expects to see. In fact, the only tool on her belt she has used in a school is handcuffs.

Williamson is one of 19 officers who will become part-time employees of Lafayette School Corp. at the next school board meeting on Monday. In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook school shooting in December, LSC is considering stationing off-duty police officers at all seven elementary schools.

The district already positions armed officers at Jefferson High School, Tecumseh Jr. High School and Sunnyside Middle School.

Assistant Superintendent John Layton would like to see an officer at the front door of every school building.

"We're waiting to see what happens with the state legislature," Layton said. "There is talk of grant money that would allow us to hire more security staff. If that comes through, we would certainly take advantage of it."

LSC is reviewing its security policy. Layton declined to comment on specifics but said corporation officials are meeting with school administrators, fire departments and police departments to discuss steps that might be taken.

"Having a police officer in our school would be just another layer of safety for the building," said Miami Elementary School Principal Matt Rhoda. "It would also strengthen the relationship between our students' families and the police department."

**LESS PAY, BUT ...**

LSC makes changes to help officers with their taxes. **A6**

Amanda Marshall, the guardian of a kindergartener at Murdock Elementary, thinks the school is safe and doesn't want to see armed police officers there.

"Guns are just scary to kids," Marshall said. "We don't need to make them feel uncomfortable at school."

Andrea Boyer, who works at and sends her two sons to Sunnyside Middle School, said she would prefer different methods of security.

"I know that the procedures at Sunnyside are good," Boyer said. "But I wish that they would get metal detectors. I'm worried about what could come into the schools."

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## 74 to lose Harrison Steel jobs

Attica firm cites fewer orders; 'heavily reliant on mining'

By Hayleigh Colombo  
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Attica manufacturer Harrison Steel Castings Co. will reduce its workforce by more than 12 percent.

The company, which produces carbon and low alloy steel castings for use in the agriculture, energy, military and mining industries, will lay off 74 workers, the Journal & Courier has learned, as a result of a decline in orders and uncertainty in the mining industry.

Human resources director Jana Grimes confirmed the permanent "reduction in force" on Friday afternoon. The affected workers are hourly, full-time employees across the plant. Harrison Steel's workforce is now 510 people.

"We've had a decline in customer orders, and the company has really tried several strategies to avoid doing a reduction in force," Grimes said.

Orders have been cut by about 30 percent, vice president of finance Robert Harrison said, mainly due to a reduction in demand from the mining sector.

Caterpillar, one of Harrison Steel's biggest customers, reported weakened demand in its mining division in 2012.

"We're heavily reliant on mining," Harrison said.

The employees were notified of the cuts on Thursday. Affected employees will be paid

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## 'Very vicious' flu, a brutally quick end for boy, 4

By Dorothy Schneider  
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Braxton Madras was an active 4-year-old. He loved to play, loved to laugh and was "completely obsessed with Spider-Man," said his uncle, Douglas Sorenson.

The blond-haired, bright-eyed Lafayette boy was generally healthy except for some acute asthma, said his mother, Camey Madras. Even last week, when she and her husband were sick, Braxton showed no symptoms. When the whole family went to an urgent care clinic last Friday morning to get checked out, Madras said Braxton was sent away with medication for a slight ear infection.

Braxton played all day Friday and developed only a slight cough before bedtime. Madras gave him a breathing treatment and put him to bed, but he woke up a short time later with severe vomiting. Around midnight his mom took to him to a hospital, where tests and more breathing treatments were done.

He had the flu and pneumonia, Sorenson said.



Braxton Madras

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### COMING TOMORROW

**MANY FOND MEMORIES**

As demolition looms, a look back at a hospital where so many lives began — and changed. Page A1



**Correction**

A Feb. 2 photo caption on Page A1 incorrectly identified the location of a police arrest. It took place at Creasy Lane and Indiana 38 East, not at Cambridge Estates apartments.



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# A rare condition fatal to 6-year-old

Common virus led to severe brain swelling

By Dorothy Schneider  
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Six-year-old Jude Cotter died Tuesday at Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis, but his death was not linked to the flu.

The Lafayette boy developed a rare and sudden condition that doctors believe was linked to the Epstein-Barr virus — one of the most common human viruses and one that often develops into mononucleosis. In Jude's case, the illness spread to his brain and caused viral encephalitis — severe swelling — that ultimately killed him.

"It's something you don't ever imagine happening to a 6-year-old little boy," Karla Cotter, his mother, said Friday.

Cotter said whenever her son became sick it would pass within 24



Jude Cotter

hours or so. He was healthy and happy most of his life. And while Cotter said there's little, if anything, the family or doctors could have done differently in Jude's case, she wants other parents to know he was not contagious and did not present any public health threat.

"I don't think parents need to worry it's going to happen to their kids," Cotter said.

## TSC reassurance

Jude was a kindergartener at Hershey Elementary School. Tippecanoe School Corp. Superintendent Scott Hanback said a schoolwide communication was sent by Principal Linda Fields following Jude's death.

Counselors were available to meet with parents, staff and students, and an administrator from another TSC school has been assum-

ing some administrative tasks to free up Fields to meet with families.

"In case there were any rumors or speculation about the cause of death, the school did issue a statement that basically said we do have a state law that mandates if there's any type of reportable disease we're required to report that to the county health department," Hanback said.

"Should that need have prompted itself, we wanted to assure our parents that they would have been notified by TSC or the school if there was cause for concern."

Despite what's happened, Cotter said she doesn't plan to live in fear of germs or public settings with her other two children — Kane and Tessa.

"We'll still send them to public school. We're not going to live in a bubble," Cotter said.

Her advice for parents: "Just love your kids. Cherish them. You don't know when within a week they could just die."

## FLU

Continued from Page A1

Braxton was flown to IU Health North Hospital in Carmel, where it was discovered that his left lung had collapsed. He needed to go on a ventilator, which required sedation.

"An hourly test was run to make sure the medication was not affecting his brain," Madras said. "Braxton's eye did not dilate the first test, so they stopped the medication, and he shortly started responding and moving his little hands to hold mine, and he was then sedated again."

"The next time they came into the room to do the test, Braxton did not respond. He was given a bunch of tests. This is all a complete blur to me, what happened after that. I know that my baby was pronounced brain-dead."

Braxton Madras died Monday, the youngest of 47 Hoosiers killed by the flu so far this season. He is one of three Tippecanoe County flu victims. Nationally, 59 children have died from the flu this season, according to reports out Friday.

"This flu has taken my only baby, and Braxton is 100 percent one of a kind. I love him more than words can ever explain, and my life is never going to be the same," his mother said Friday. "This illness came upon him very fast, and it was very, very vicious."

Despite the local tragedy, experts say the worst of the flu season should be over in most of the country in two to three weeks. That forecast excludes the West Coast, where the flu arrived later, health officials said Friday.

"People really underestimate the power of the flu," Sorenson said. "It can decimate these little bodies."

Madras said: "It hap-

*"This illness came upon him very fast."*

CAMEY MADRAS,  
mother of Braxton, 4.

pened all too fast. I always took Braxton to the doctor. He always had a flu shot. We constantly washed hands, and I literally sanitized every day with bleach and Lysol."

Sorenson and Madras said medical professionals should be checking patients with extreme caution — especially young children. In Braxton's case, Madras said, the illness came out of nowhere. She encouraged parents to seek medical attention if they suspect their child is sick and even seek another opinion if they are worried the first doctor might have missed something.

Braxton attended preschool at Tippecanoe County Child Care. Executive director Marilyn Redmon called the loss "devastating" for teachers and students who knew Braxton.

"Certainly we've offered counseling to staff and parents, too, who were friends of the family," Redmon said. "We've tried to make any of that available."

Redmon said Tippecanoe County Child Care has stringent policies to isolate and limit the spread of illness. If found to be sick, children are immediately sent home.

"We always, always have precautions of health and safety issues," Redmon said. "Now especially with the flu. Our motto is children, when they come in, they wash their hands. We just are hand-washing all the time."

Dr. Thomas Meyer, an infectious disease physician at IU Health Arnett, said for children young-

er than 5, hygiene is especially important because it can be of a challenge for young children to remember on their own. And if there are many young kids together, he said, it's easier to spread illness from person to person.

However, Meyer said, the number of pediatric deaths from flu has decreased in recent years. This year, well over half of the people hospitalized for the flu were older than 65.

Michael Jung, an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said Friday that flu season is winding down.

"We're not at the end, but we're nearing the end," he said.

Jung predicts two to three more weeks of higher flu activity nationwide, more in the West, and then perhaps four to six weeks of lower activity.

Flu season slammed into the East in late December, almost a month earlier than usual, according to the CDC. The major flu strain circulating in the United States this season, H3N2, appears to be causing more severe illness, especially in the elderly.

The majority of flu-related deaths in the state are of people 65 or older, and 43 of the 47 Hoosiers who died had underlying medical conditions.

Those at highest risk have a weakened immune system because of diseases and conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, AIDS, cancer or lung disease. Pregnant women, people older than 65 and young children also are at a higher risk, he said.

In the 2011-12 season, there were three deaths in the state, and 25 in 2010-11.

Contributing: Mikel Livingston and MaryJane Slaby/J&C reporters, and USA Today

# LSC pays \$22 an hour, not \$35

By Jessica Contrera  
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Lafayette School Corp. will officially hire 19 police officers as part-time employees during Monday's school board meeting. The move is an attempt to attract more police officers to do their off-duty side work in the schools.

Currently, the district pays off-duty officers as contractors at an hourly wage of \$22.

Most other places in Greater Lafayette that hire off-duty officers, such as colleges and malls, pay around \$35 per hour.

"The corporation just can't come up and meet that price. It's not feasible in the budget," said school resource officer Mike McIver, who manages the officers in LSC schools.

By hiring the officers as employees instead of contractors, LSC will not be paying the officers

more. The change will only alter the way the officers are paid, and therefore, their taxes.

As contractors, officers are required to file their taxes as self-employed individuals. That means their taxes aren't taken directly from their paychecks. Instead, they have to pay the taxes back when they file.

Officer Amanda Williamson works at Jefferson High School two days per week to save money for her wedding.

"Because of the way we have to file taxes, I ended up paying back more than \$4,000," Williamson said.

As part-time employees, the officers will have their taxes removed every paycheck, eliminating the burden of a heavy end-of-season tax load. They will also be paid on a bimonthly instead of monthly basis.

The employment option is available to offi-

cers from the Lafayette, West Lafayette, Purdue University and Otterbein police departments. Every officer who currently works in the school more than four hours and less than 29.5 hours is eligible to be hired.

According to McIver, every officer who qualified chose to be hired, but there are still seven spots available.

"That just shows how short we are on the manpower right now," McIver said.

Although working in the schools pays less, Officer Perry Amos said he hopes other officers will understand that there are rewards.

"It's about looking out for the new generation. There are kids here whose parents I was the security guard for. There are parents who say 'please watch over my kid,'" Amos said. "That's just a different kind of pay to me."



"There are kids here whose parents I was the security guard for," Lt. Perry Amos says. "There are parents who say, 'Please watch over my kid.'" JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER

## OFFICERS

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### Current measures

Police officers began protecting LSC parking lots in the mid-'80s. In 1995, they moved into buildings. Today, there are typically six police officers on duty, primarily at Jefferson, Tecumseh and Sunnyside. The officer at Sunnyside spends part of his day checking on the corporation's alternative schools.

Aside from officers, LSC policies help secure every building. Doors remain locked at all times. Visitors must be buzzed into the building by an office worker.

Every school has multiple security cameras. Jefferson has 250.

If there is a threat of gun violence, LSC policy is to instantly go into lockdown. Hallways are cleared, classroom doors are shut, windows are covered and students are moved into one section of the room. There are no color codes or cryptic warning signs; lockdown is the first and only option.

"We want people to know exactly what's happening, even if they have never been in the school before," said school resource officer Mike McIver, who leads the in-school officers. "If you hear 'lockdown,' you're not going to just stand there wondering what's going on."

Officer Perry Amos has been working at Jef-

erson High School since 1992. During those 21 years, he has removed guns from students four times.

One of those incidents occurred when a student brought a loaded handgun to school with the intention of killing his ex-girlfriend. The girl reported to the in-school officers that the student was trying to get her alone. The officers apprehended the armed student before any violence occurred.

"There is no doubt in my mind," McIver said. "If it wasn't for having police officers in the school, it would have been a homicide-suicide situation you would have seen on CNN."

### Officers' role

Despite the raging national debate on school safety following high-profile shootings, the current in-school officers spend most of their time on basic student punishment issues.

It's not to say that drug use, fights and serious offenses don't occur in LSC schools. In-school officers wear bulletproof vests and are armed with a gun, a Taser and pepper spray.

But lost cellphones, arguments between friends, dress code violations and skipped classes are much more commonplace offenses that officers like Williamson deal with.

She spends most of her day walking the halls, checking bathrooms and talking with students.

"I try to interact with the students as much as possible," Williamson

said. "It's good for them to know we're here to make them feel safe or talk about anything going on at home."

In many ways, in-school officers have taken it upon themselves to deal with smaller punishment and safety issues so administrators don't have to. They process disciplinary referrals, talk on the phone with concerned parents and have conferences with disobedient students.

"With the changes in how they have to process teacher evaluations, this year (the administration) was dumped with so much stuff to do. It cut their time to work with the kids in half," said McIver.

As a full-time resource officer, McIver is trained and certified to counsel students and educate employees on safety issues.

"We don't respond with a heavy hand," McIver said. "We're dealing with teenagers. We deal with circumstances as they come and try to lead the students in the right direction."

If LSC decides to place officers at elementary schools, those officers would certainly deal with fewer disciplinary matters. But that doesn't mean they wouldn't be useful, Earhart Elementary Principal Greg Louk said.

"A police officer would be another adult in the building to look out for the kids. Another role model," Louk said. "If the corporation thinks having uniformed officers in the building will help, then I welcome it."