



Clark Coyle wins Boyle's first state swim title. **Page 9A**

The Advocate Messenger

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Man whose arrest sparked outcry dies

Civil lawsuit over 2024 arrest remains active

By JOSELY LABARRERE
Advocate Messenger

A Danville man whose 2024 arrest drew significant public attention has died, according to his attorney.

John Hardwick, 67, died Feb. 11 at his home with his wife, Cindy, and other family members present, attorney Ephraim Helton said.

Hardwick had been diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia and had lived with the condition for several years. His

diagnosis later became central to questions surrounding his arrest.

The case stems from an October 2024 incident at a Danville Walmart, where Hardwick was accused of shoplifting and being intoxicated. Video from the encounter showed Hardwick being taken to the ground during the arrest, with one officer striking him while two others assisted.

According to Helton, Hard-

wick suffered physical injuries, including bruising and rib injuries, and later experienced post-traumatic stress. The criminal charges filed against him — including alcohol intoxication and shoplifting — were later dismissed with prejudice by a judge. Medical records presented in the case indicated Hardwick was living with dementia and was not under the influence at the time of the incident.

Helton said medical experts

retained by the family addressed how traumatic events can have serious effects on individuals diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia.

The arrest prompted community reaction, including an online petition seeking the removal of the officer involved that collected more than 38,000 signatures. The officer remains employed with the department.

Hardwick and his family filed a civil lawsuit against the officers involved, the Danville

Police Department and the city of Danville. Helton said the family does not expect Hardwick's death to alter the direction of the case.

A mediation hearing is scheduled for March 3. Proceedings in federal court are set for June, while a state court hearing is planned for September.

The family has indicated it intends to continue pursuing the lawsuit following Hardwick's death.

DHS graduate attends Dartmouth on scholarship

Henry Pennington credits Danville schools for preparing him for college, military path

By JOSELY LABARRERE
Advocate Messenger

A 2025 Danville High School graduate has begun his college career at Dartmouth College, where he is enrolled on a Reserve Officers' Training Corps scholarship.

Henry Pennington said the transition has been positive and structured, something he has come to appreciate. As part of his ROTC commitment, Pennington participates in early morning physical training sessions three days a week, along with a military science lab and classroom instruction. During the fall and spring semesters, he also completes one or two field training weekends.

Last fall, that training included a weekend at a National Guard base in Vermont. Upon graduating from Dartmouth, Pennington will be commissioned into the U.S. Army as a second lieutenant.

Although he has not formally declared a major, Pennington is considering studying government with a modification in economics. He said he may pursue a career in consulting



DANVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Henry Pennington (right) is pictured with a friend on campus.

after completing his military service.

Pennington credited Danville Independent Schools with preparing him for college-level expectations. He said Advanced Placement courses at Danville High School helped him develop effective study habits.

"I think the Danville Schools definitely prepared me for going to college, just because Danville has such a diverse student body," Pennington said.

He said he chose Dartmouth after visiting campus and

See **DHS**, 2A

Man arrested in break-ins on Centre's campus

By JOSELY LABARRERE
Advocate Messenger

A Danville man is facing multiple charges after police say he unlawfully entered buildings and stole a vehicle during overnight incidents on the campus of Centre College.

Danville Police were notified Friday, Feb. 20, of suspicious activity that had occurred during the overnight hours on campus. Officers responded and, with assistance from Centre College Public Safety, began investigating the report

and interviewing potential victims.

According to police, the investigation determined that an individual had been on campus and unlawfully entered several buildings and dormitories. During the course of the investigation, authorities also learned that a vehicle had been



Robert Baker

See **MAN**, 2A

DBCAAHS reviews updates, exhibit plans

By JOSELY LABARRERE
Advocate Messenger

The Danville Boyle County African American Historical Society met Feb. 17, with President Michael Hughes calling the meeting to order at approximately 5:20 p.m. Five members were present.

Prior to the formal start of the meeting, members engaged

in discussion about several ongoing initiatives, including the creation of new posters, continued research into the Bate girls' basketball teams of the 1930s and broader planning for the organization's future. The topics reflected the society's continued emphasis on

See **DBCAAHS**, 2A

INDEX

Classifieds 6A Sports 9A
Crossword 5A Sudoku 5A
Deaths 3A



43° | 38°
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OBITS

WILLIAM "LAWRENCE" SPALDING, 76
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