

THE PIONEER NEWS

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Serious crimes in Hillview result in indictments

HILLVIEW – The most serious of indictments handed down recently by the Bullitt County Grand Jury involved cases all centered in one northern city.

The grand jury issued indictments in major crimes allegedly occurring in the city of Hillview.

Heritier Shema was indicted on the felony charges of sodomy and rape, as well as a pair of misdemeanors for unlawful transaction with a minor.

According to the indictment, on Jan. 11, 2026, Shema allegedly had deviate sexual intercourse with a

person who was physically helpless and incapable of consent. He restrained the victim from her parents or guardians.

He also allegedly secured alcohol for two minors on the same date. The most serious offense is a Class B felony, which is punishable by 10-20 years in prison.

The case was investigated by Det. Chris Boone of the Hillview Police Department.

In a related case, Jacques Nkurunziza was charged with kidnapping, rape, promoting use of a minor by electronic means and

two counts of unlawful transactions with a minor.

The indictment alleges that on Jan. 11, 2026, Nkurunziza took an adult and restrained her so that she could not see her parents or guardians.

He also allegedly had sexual intercourse with a person who was incapable of resisting due to intoxicants.

The defendant also used a computer device to procure a minor to participate in illegal activity.

And he helped to purchase alcohol for two minors.

The most serious offense is a Class B felony, punishable by 10-20 years in prison.

Boone also investigated this case. Other indictments:

*Joel A Gonzalez Manso – charged with two counts of rape, one count of strangulation, three counts of sodomy, assault and four violations of an EPO/DVO.

The indictment alleges that on Feb. 25, 2026, the suspect placed his hands around the neck of a female to cut off her breathing. He also forced the woman to have deviate sexual intercourse and

assaulted her.

On Dec. 24, 2025, he allegedly forced her to have sexual intercourse.

And again on Dec. 31, 2025, the alleged act occurred once again.

On Jan. 5, 2026, there was an allegation of deviate sexual intercourse, which also occurred on Feb. 14, 2026.

On four occasions in February, he allegedly made improper phone calls to the victim during his stay in the detention center.

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A new park two centuries in the making

STEPHEN THOMAS
THE PIONEER NEWS

BELMONT — “This dream has come true!”

The Iron Furnace in Belmont has been a community fixture since the 1840's and now the community can officially visit it. The surrounding area has been cleared and cleaned, with a new entrance, allowing visitors to see a large piece of local history in a park-like setting.

A special ceremony took place to commemorate the new Historic Belmont Iron Furnace County Park with various luminaries in attendance. The guest speakers included Dr. Greg Kuhns, whose family owned the property.

“This dream has come true,” Kuhns announced to start the ceremony, thanking Bullitt County judge/executive Jerry Summers and local historian David Strange “for making this park a reality.”

Kuhns credited Bullitt County parks director Kim Foster for her efforts in working with all the vendors to complete the project.

“(Foster) has done an incredible job,” he said.

Kuhns also thanked Foster and Bullitt County History Museum director Sheri Hatter for signage, as well as Bernheim Forest for placing informational kiosks in the park.

Strange also thanked Foster, along with the Bullitt County Road Department staff and director Robert Watkins, as well as Bernheim Forest and the History Museum.

“They all did so much good work,” he said.

Strange mentioned reading about a conversation he had with current Bullitt County Tourism director Troy Beam and former director Elaine Wilson going back to 1994 that involved trying to clean up the furnace area as a park for visitors.

“We’re gonna have a park built,” Strange read from the 1994 conversation.

Bullitt County Chamber of Commerce CEO Anita Stump mentioned visiting the location in 2009 during a Leadership Bullitt County course.

“It didn’t look anything like this,” said Stump. “We talked about doing something to it then. This is gorgeous.”

According to Strange, the 33-foot tall stone structure was built in 1844 and renovated in 1853. The furnace was used to heat iron for industrial uses at the time.

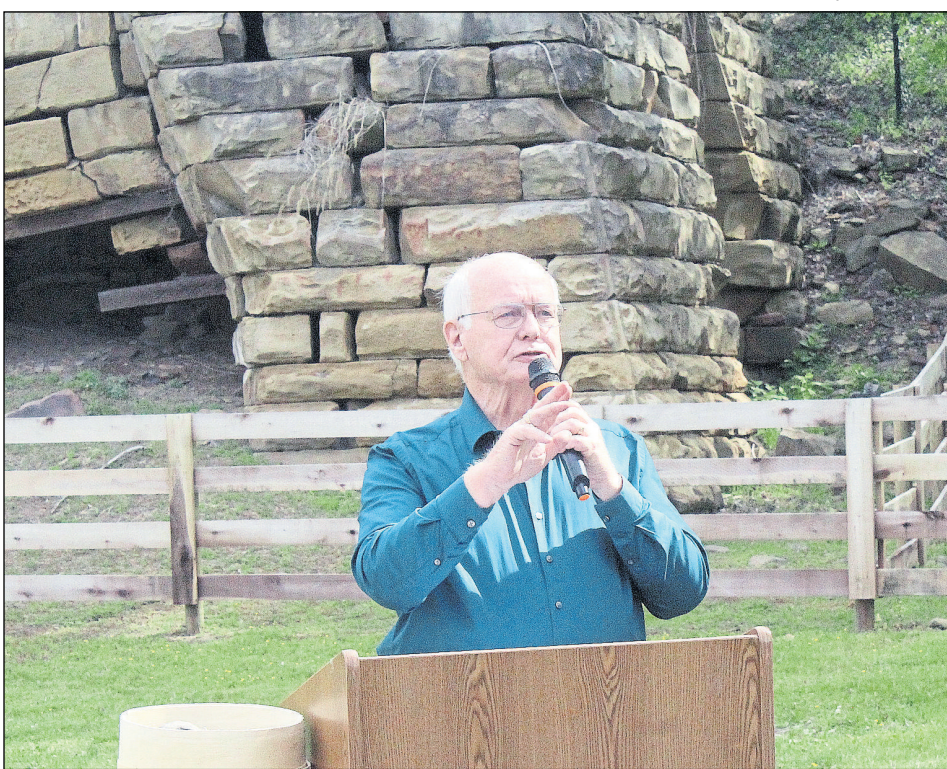
“This area would’ve been



Stephen Thomas



Stephen Thomas



Stephen Thomas

Local historian David Strange discussed the history of the Belmont Iron Furnace

an industrial wasteland then,” said Strange. “In a year it would use 300 to 500 acres of trees, and the county had

three. You wouldn’t find hardly a stick. Black smoke belching out, and there were no filters... this was a filthy

place.”

Strange pointed out iron

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Balance & Beyond provides nourishment for the mind

STEPHEN THOMAS
THE PIONEER NEWS

SHEPHERDSVILLE — There are good people and organizations in Bullitt County who do what they can to help individuals dealing with mental crises.

That emphasis includes assistance to young adults and children dealing with various sorts of mental health challenges.

It was important to provide a day of connection, wellness, and community in the form of Balance & Beyond: A Mental Health Jam, scheduled for April 25 at the Bullitt County Public Library’s Central Branch.

Bullitt County Health Department health educator Ashley Barr said this year’s theme was targeting youth mental health, focusing emphasis on important related issues including bullying, cyberbullying, and suicide pacts.

“Our youth are very much in a mental crisis right now,” Barr said. “Suicide is the second biggest cause of death among youth.”

According to Barr, life stress and trauma, along with major life events, take their toll on younger individuals and add to personal strain.

“We want to break down the stigma, the social and environmental factors, like asking someone for help,” said Barr. “Many are feeling alone and overwhelmed.”

Balance & Beyond features workshops and seminars focusing on both physical activities and mental health, including a youth mental health panel.

Rosie Riddle, a registered nurse with the health department, will host the panel. Barr said Riddle earned a Masters Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

Joining Riddle will be Ashley Eskridge, a Youth Services Center coordinator for Hebron and Zoneton Middle Schools, and Jake Richardson, a youth personal support specialist with Seven Counties Services.

Also participating in the panel is Emma Johnson, a Bullitt East senior, member of the Bullitt County Youth Council, and a member of the Bullitt County Partners in Prevention’s Very Important Partner (VIP) Poster program.

Barr said the panel will provide shared experiences and discuss guided

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Third time's a charm for Wine, Whiskey, Ale Fest

STEPHEN THOMAS
THE PIONEER NEWS

SHEPHERDSVILLE — The City of Shepherdsville continues to celebrate its significant location along the Wine, Whiskey and Ale Trail.

The third annual Wine, Whiskey, and Ale Fest is scheduled for Saturday, April 25, in Downtown Shepherdsville, presented by the city with the Shepherdsville/Bullitt County Tourist and Convention Commission.

City community planner Amber Odle said she first thought of the festival idea as a way to promote the trail. “Tourism was doing the Trail, so let’s add on a festival,” she said.

Originally held at the city park, last year’s event relocated due to Salt River flood waters. Odle said the city received positive feedback for the new downtown location, at 150

Frank E. Simon Ave., between the Shepherdsville Community Center and the Bullitt County Judicial Center.

There will be breweries, distilleries, and wineries from the trail represented at the festival, where patrons have an opportunity to sample their products.

Tasting arm bands must be purchased to sample. The bands are available pre-sale for \$15, plus service fees, at events.ticketleap.com/events/optionsunlimited, or \$20 at the event.

For patrons not sampling but wanting to still eat and drink, a different wristband

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