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Deana Bagshaw tends to the garden Wednesday in the Pioneer Village at Spring Mill State Park.

RICH JANZARUK | TIMES-MAIL

Playing at the park

Spring Mill State Park resumes full activities

By Derrek Tipton
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MITCHELL — With Spring Mill State Park getting back in the swing of things this weekend, there are plenty of distractions, new and old, on the horizon for the park.

This weekend, the park served as a water station for the Dogwood Pedal ride, hosted an antique tractor show and held an Earth Day celebration.

But next month, Spring Mill is bringing an activity visitors haven't seen in almost 20 years, according to Property Manager Mark Young.

"Memorial Day weekend, the boat rental will be back," Young said. "And we're going to have a couple rowboats available to rent, some paddle boats, canoes and kayaks. It will be located near our interpretive center where it used to be, for anyone who remembers the old rentals."

"We've seen a lot of folks bringing in their old kayaks."

SEE PARK | PAGE A4

Park's new assistant property manager brings aquatic background

By Derrek Tipton
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MITCHELL — A property management position wasn't Jess Beck's original intent, but life works in mysterious ways.

After serving a stint as assistant property manager at Harmonie State Park, as well as pool and beach director for Indiana's state parks, she's now becoming acquainted with her new role as assistant property manager at Spring Mill State Park.

"I had visited the park a few

times in the past," Beck said. "Last summer, when I was the beach and pool supervisor for the state parks, I came to check on their pools and lifeguards, and I stayed on the campgrounds one of the nights. It's crazy—one of the first things I noticed the most was how small the park is, acreage-wise, and how big it feels when you're driving around. ...It's incredible to have this much in such a small place. I'm impressed."

Beck, who is from Fort Wayne, graduated from Ball State University with an advertising degree in

2012. Education-wise, she said, she didn't have experience in property management, but she loved being outside regardless.

"Growing up, I was a huge sports fanatic," she said. "I loved soccer and track, so I was running and exercising outside a lot."

Eventually, she found herself as beach and pool director for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Prior to being director, she was in the water often, with time spent on the dive team in high school, and being an aquatics coordinator at a YMCA,

among other things.

"I got involved through aquatics, but being in an aquatics management position wasn't my original intent," Beck said. "With the position, it was great getting to go around and see all the pools we have. It was a unique exposure."

Mark Young, property manager at Spring Mill, said Beck "brings a strong aquatic background."

"So, you know she'll be able to keep the swimming pool at its highest standard our guests expect from us," Young said. "And

with assistant property managers, we are training to become property managers."

And Beck does have a prior connection to Spring Mill. Harmonie's current property manager, Jon Winne, was previously assistant property manager at Spring Mill.

"He would often talk about his experience here," Beck said. "When (it) came to light this position would be open, I decided to go for it. I based a lot off the

SEE MANAGER | PAGE A4

LEGISLATURE 2017

Senate bill on solar energy becomes hot topic for local legislators

By Derrek Tipton
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SALEM — The use of solar panels was on the minds of a few folks Saturday at the Third House session at Paoli Town Hall.

With the Indiana General Assembly adjourning in the early Saturday morning hours, only a third of Third House legislators attended. State Rep. Lloyd Arnold, R-Leavenworth of District 74, fielded questions from a small room of attendees.

State Rep. Steve Davisson, R-Salem, and state Sen. Erin Houchin, R-Salem, were not in attendance.

Senate Bill 309, which deals with changing the incentives for solar energy users, was a popular topic of the day. Many critics say the bill harms folks who participate in net metering by reducing the financial credit received on their utility bill. Some supporters, such as

More on state Legislature

STATE

Find out what bills were passed early Saturday morning | PAGE A8

the bill author Sen. Brandt Hershman, R-Buck Creek, say it just reduces lucrative subsidies for solar and wind energy.

The credit system would change in 2022.

Attendee Debbie Turner said the bill "isn't forward thinking."

"But it feels very much like it's backwards thinking and it's a very defensive move," Turner said. "You've got a lot of private individuals willing to step up and invest in an industry like that ... but now there's roadblocks to that."

Arnold, who supported the bill, said he doesn't see it as a punishment for anyone who currently has solar. He said those who don't have solar have to

deal with higher costs because of the incentives.

"Solar, I think it's a great alternative source of energy, but it is being subsidized," Arnold said. "What currently happens is if I have solar and I produce too much power to stay within my house, then ... I will put that power back into the grid. The problem is, someone still has to pay for that infrastructure, the lines, the poles, all those things. ... But if you already have (solar) on your home, you're pretty much grandfathered in

for the next 20 years, it's not going to change for you. And if you, in the next five years, decide you want solar on

SEE HOUSE | PAGE A7



State Rep. Lloyd Arnold, R-Leavenworth of District 74, supports Senate Bill 309, which deals with changing the incentives for solar energy users.

TODAY'S WEATHER | BACK PAGE

68 43



Inside today

LOCAL

Black Key Bulls win Men's Little 500 race

| PAGE A7



INDEX

Attractions	D1-8	Local & State	A1-8	Racing	B5
Classifieds	C1-12	Lotteries	A2	Relationships	E6-7
Crossword	C6	Miss Manners	E6	Sports	B1-7
Dear Abby	E7	Nation & World	E1,4	Super Quiz	E7
Families	F1-6	Obituaries	A2	Television	D2
Horoscopes	E7	Opinion	E4-5	Weather	A8

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