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THEATER LOOKS TOWARD FUTURE

The improved Lafayette Theater is ready to wow



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After a year and a half under new management that has brought in a steady stream of national acts, Lafayette Theater is trying to work itself out of an early spring rough patch.

A few bumps in the first part of 2016 caused the venue to seek help from investors and a boost from a renegotiated ticketing deal to deliver it through the end of the summer and book shows through the fall.

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JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER

DARK PAST, BRIGHT FUTURE

Despite early challenges, Jeff senior graduates with top marks, athletic success and scholarship



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Tell me about your grandson, Bob and Sandy Page. They don't say anything. Not immediately.

Instead, they sit at the kitchen table of their Lafayette home and unsuccessfully try to hide their tears in front of a stranger.

"I'm sorry, we're emotional," Sandy said.

They're also unabashedly proud of Colton Page, who on Sunday will be one of 412 Lafayette Jefferson High School class of 2016 graduates. He ranks in the top 20 in his class.

The sun is peering through the door that slides open to the backyard, glaring off Colton's shiny plaques and trophies in the corner of the living room. It's a beautiful day in what has been an extraordinary few months in the Page household.

But there was a period when things weren't so perfect.

When going to his room no longer shielded him from the reality of everyday life in a toxic environment, Colton remembers closing his eyes and wishing he'd never wake up.

He was in seventh grade. "I had a lot of problems with depression when I was in fifth or sixth grade with all that was going on around me," Colton said.

His mother and father were drug addicts and parents by definition only, Colton said. They paid little attention to

JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER

Colton Page does dumbbell incline presses while working out in the weight room May 13, at Lafayette Jeff. A Lilly Scholar, Page will attend Wabash College and play football.

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Pope blesses rules to sack bishops bungling abuse cases. 1B

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FUTURE

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their son, who was gifted with intelligence and uncanny strength — physically and mentally — that would take him far away from this melancholy.

But the mistakes of his parents would not define Colton, who built his reputation with a strong work ethic and reaped all the success it brought.

Making a commitment

Colton Page was about 10 months old the first time Bob and Sandy Page met their grandson.

Their oldest son, Brandon, is Colton's father. The Pages say his battles with drug and alcohol date back before Colton was born. Colton's mother was in prison while he was in the womb, he's been told.

Brandon's distressed parents sought purpose, unable to help their son control his demons.

When Bob and Sandy learned they had a grandchild, they reached out to Brandon, who confirmed it was true. They embraced the joys and challenges of raising another child, as Colton's mother would often drop him off at their home and leave him for weeks at a time, they said. Ideally, it was a situation they wanted, one that would save them during a tough period as much as it saved Colton.

He became their priority.

"The first time I met Colton when he was a baby, I made it a commitment to him that he was going to know he was loved and wanted. That he had a safe place," Sandy said.

On Jan. 28, 2016, they made it official by legally adopting their grandson.

Even four months later, Sandy has to fan her face to fight back tears of joy. Bob turns his head to the left and pushes his mouth against his fist to do the same.

They've raised him essentially since he was a baby.

"I always said, I had a heart attack in 1994 in my main artery in my heart. I probably shouldn't be here today," Bob said. "I had 100 percent blockage, and I didn't know that three years later almost to the day, he was born. Somebody was looking over me. My heart has been great ever since."

Colton has no relationship with his mother and requested she not be a part of this story. Asked if that will ever change, Colton admits it would be a long time before he'd consider it. She's reached out, pleading that she is no longer using drugs. Colton is unsure whether to believe it. Or maybe, he thinks, he's just not ready to.

His relationship with his father is just beginning. Brandon has been in prison for 11 of Colton's 18 years of life, with an arrest record that includes robbery, felony, drug possession and child seduction.

Colton recalls at age 2 or 3, both of his parents going to prison, forcing him to live with his paternal grandparents. By late third grade, they were released.

Bob and Sandy gave them a second chance to raise their son.

"At the beginning, it was pretty good," Colton said. "My dad started using again, and there started being problems after that. He went back to jail when I was in seventh grade, and I was stuck living with my mom and half-sister."

Colton describes his mother as "narcissistic," saying he never felt that she was really there for him despite her role as his guardian.

He started to wish for an escape — to drift away into nothingness during his sleep.

"They were really pretty abusive with each other; I don't know how physical it got," Colton said of the living arrangement with his mother and half-sister after his father went back to jail. "They always yelled at each other, and it was pretty stressful to be around."

By high school, Colton essentially became a full-time resident at Bob and Sandy's house, an arrangement he and his grandparents wished for.

"Pretty much for four years (when living with his mom), I stayed in my room all the time and never talked to anybody outside of school," Colton recalls. "I was thankful to have my grandparents around this whole time. They've been my backbone and kept me doing the right thing."

Brandon was released last year. His towering body can be seen in recent family photos, including Colton's senior night football game last October. Last year, he also went with his son on a recruiting trip to Eastern Michigan. They share a common bond over football and a love for weightlifting.

Even now, they don't see each other a whole lot. Brandon has a steady job, and Colton has been grinding away in the



Colton Page catches his breath after working out in the weight room May 13 at Lafayette Jeff. A Lilly Scholar, Page will attend Wabash College and play football. JOHN TERHUNE/JOURNAL & COURIER



Colton Page, back center, with his family at the Lafayette Jeff senior honors program at The Trails, PHOTO PROVIDED

classroom, weight room and at a part-time job at Dairy Queen.

But Clint Page, Brandon's younger brother, has been a constant in the stands at Colton's football games. His Facebook page contains brag posts about Colton's success, complete with video evidence of pancake blocks during games. A proud uncle, Sandy calls him.

Colton is adamant that he is not one of the most popular kids in school, nor is being classified as such a desire.

Never did he steer down the wrong road. At times, peers enticed him to attend parties. The pressure never sucked him in.

"His idea of partying is he goes with his friends and they get a store-bought pizza, come here and bake it and play cards or Xbox One," Bob said.

Sports of sorts

Bob Page was a member of Lafayette Jeff's mythical 1966 state championship team, before a state baseball tournament existed. The honorable mention all-state outfielder was inducted into the Bronchos baseball Hall of Fame last month.

His sons would carry on the Page name at the school, with Brandon a menacing fullback and linebacker and Clint a 1,000-yard rusher. Both helped lead the

Bronchos to sectional championships.

A 6-year-old Colton was at swim class when his grandmother took him down the hall where all the sectional championship teams at Jeff have pictures pegged to the wall. His ambition ever since has been to see his team's photo on that wall, too.

Colton's introduction to athletics was soccer, but it was short-lived.

"I was a goalie, just always an overweight kid who couldn't move fast," Colton said. "But I enjoyed being involved in something, and I had fun."

Once he joined former Jeff coach Fred Kuttruff's flag football league, he was hooked.

"I was playing soccer until about fourth grade, and that is when I started playing tackle football and fell in love with it," Colton said.

A defensive lineman by default because he said he wasn't good enough to do anything else, Colton grew into the bulky offensive lineman. He was so big that at a game in Zionsville as a seventh-grader, an opposing player asked if he drove to there.

By eighth grade, he weighed 270 pounds.

By sheer strength and size, he dom-

"I was thankful to have my grandparents around this whole time. They've been my backbone and kept me doing the right thing."

COLTON PAGE

inated, tossing around much smaller kids with ease. He lacked physicality because with the difference in body structures, it wasn't required to get the job done.

Sandy calls her grandson her "gentle giant."

"I was always a big teddy bear, but I was so strong it didn't take a whole lot of effort to throw people around," Colton said.

Colton entered a weight room as an eighth-grader and, eager to see how he matched up with high school football players, bench-pressed 155 pounds.

He also groomed himself into a talented wrestler, winning the 275-pounds junior high Indiana High School Wrestling Coaches Association state tournament at New Castle by pinning his opponent in 18 seconds in the finals.

He wrestled through his junior year of high school. The maximum weight class is 285 pounds for high school wrestling. A year ago, he was able to get slim enough to compete but felt weaker because of it. His wrestling suffered to a degree. As a senior, he did not go out for the sport.

Today, Colton stands at 6 feet, 1 inches and weighs in the neighborhood of 340 pounds.

He received Lafayette Jeff's Most Outstanding Lineman award as a sophomore. This fall, he'll play football for NCAA Division III power Wabash College.

About that sectional championship photo.

The Broncho football team was the league bottom feeder that other teams knew could be chalked up as a victory, first for the Hoosier Crossroads Conference. When Jeff moved to the North Central Conference in fall 2014, more wins were supposed to come with it. Instead, Jeff finished 1-9. In three years of high school football, Colton was on Jeff varsity football teams that went a combined 5-25 and had been blown out in the first game of the sectional every year.

Last season was one of change. A new coach and new approach nearly brought that trophy — and team photo — to the hall that honors Jeff's athletic success.

Colton struggled with an ankle injury midseason but was instrumental in helping the Bronchos go 8-3.

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BANGERT

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USA TODAY put up 20 spots across the state with respectable tenderloins.

On that menu are four Greater Lafayette joints: O'Bryan's Nine Irish Brothers in Lafayette and West Lafayette; TC's Restaurant and Tavern in Battle Ground; the Tick Tock Tavern in Lafayette; and Triple XXX Family Restaurant in West Lafayette. Make it five, once you toss in Grindstone Charley's, which has a location in Lafayette.

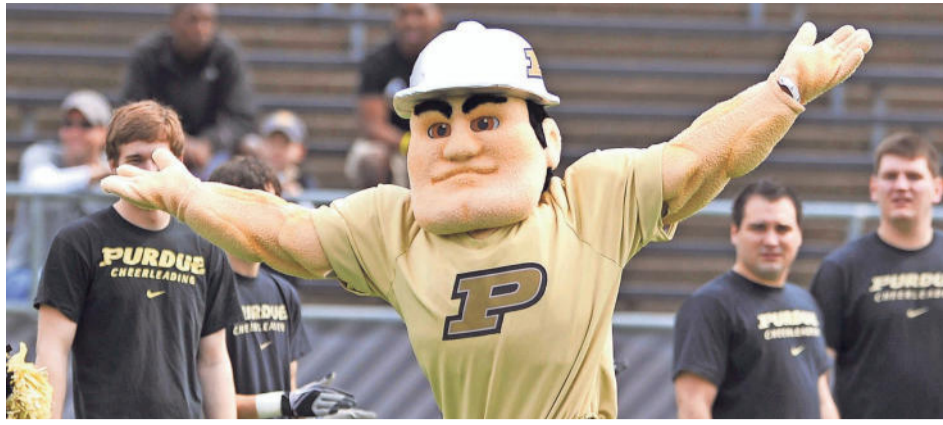
You could make a case that the better vote would be for which deserving tavern, diner or restaurant was left off the list.

I still say the ghost of Riley's Kooler Keg — long since departed from Sixth and Tippecanoe streets in Lafayette — holds the sort of dear memories that can carry off victories long after a place's sweet death. And I love to relive the evening a friend staying with us from Spain wanted to get the full Hoosier experience by hitting the road to find this breaded tenderloin sandwich she'd heard so much about. We didn't actually go too far — 15 minutes out of town to Mulberry, was all — for a South Fork Pub plate we straight-up could barely finish.

You can fill in the blanks on your own un-nominated favorite. When a breaded tenderloin's done right, there is no wrong answer.

Still, that list in front of us has plenty of local flavor. Voting ends at noon Monday — just enough time to put in an order for lunch.

I'll include a link with this column at



J&C FILE PHOTO

The new-look Purdue Pete reacts to the crowd booing him prior to Purdue football's spring game in April 2011 at Ross-Ade Stadium.

jconline.com. (I'd make it a Breaded Tenderloin emoji, if I could. But you get the drift.)

'Live! With Kelly and ... Chris?'

Speaking of fan voting, how about some love for West Lafayette High School and WLFI alum Chris Parente?

Currently a co-host of the "The Everyday Show," a 10 a.m. talk show at Denver's Fox affiliate, Parente's fans are staging a dark-horse run at the seat Michael Strahan abandoned next to Kelly Ripa on "Live! With Kelly and Michael."

Sure, the real money is on the big names who have been rotating in to take test drives. (Anderson Cooper who?) The drive to promote Parente isn't blind to that.

"Just like real relationship, it's time to lower your expectations," or so says

the opening line to an online petition, "Help us Put Chris Parente 'On the Telly with Kelly.'"

It's really not a huge leap. Parente was one of five men who did fill-in gigs for Regis Philbin in 2009, when the show — then called "Live! With Regis and Kelly" — did a nationwide contest called "From Local to Live." At the time, Parente told the J&C that the co-host shot with Ripa "was the fastest hour of my life."

As for now? Parente posted this on Facebook: "Sure, I'm the underdog. But so were Bernie & Trump ... and I've got better hair than both of them."

As of Friday, 4,357 people had signed on. Go to onthetellywithkelly.com to add your name.

Ace vs. Purdue Pete: Separated at birth?

The Lafayette Aviators, the new wood bat collegiate league baseball team in town, named their new mascot Ace. And the dude seemed to get a warm reception for the first two home Prospect League games at Columbian Park's Loeb Stadium. (Count on that reception to go from warm to really, really hot for the guy who has to man that bomber jacket get-up come July and August.)

Then again, everyone's a critic. Some more biting than others, as seen in this call-and-response over Twitter after a guy who goes by @CaptHandlebar noticed a resemblance to another recent mascot unveiling. Think back to the Purdue football spring game, circa 2011, when the athletic department dared to re-imagine Purdue Pete.

The post: "Oh my god! Cabbage Patch Pete was reborn into the (Aviators) mascot."

Say, now that you mention it ... Those eyebrows. That chin. And the dark hair. Hmmm...

The Aviators' response: "We'd like to distance ourselves from the comparison to Cabbage Patch Pete."

Prudent move. For the record, Ace was not immediately booed when he stepped on the field, a la the chorus from the Ross-Ade bleachers for Purdue Pete's ill-fated makeover. But it does raise a question: Whatever happened to the puffy Purdue Pete suit after that one-and-done escapade?

Stew on that conspiracy theory in next week's work traffic. You know you'll have some time to kill.

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BRONCHO

Continued from Page 4A

It was the most enjoyable year of football he ever had.

"It was the first winning season I've had since eighth grade, and even then, we were 6-5 so we weren't spectacular," he said.

In the sectional opener, Jeff upset McCutcheon and faced heavily favored Westfield for the sectional championship.

They lost 45-27.

"He kind of set the tone for the rest of the team and the direction the seniors wanted to take the program," said Pat Shanley, who was the offensive coordinator and since has been promoted to head coach. "He was a foundational component for the kind of year we had."

In the weight room, he smashed school records.

He can squat 630 pounds — equivalent to three baby elephants. His max bench press is nearing 400 pounds, and he can hand clean 280 — a rare feat for someone his size.

By no means is he near a finished product. Colton can tell you that by watching his game film.

But perhaps at Wabash he will be.

Even though he's no longer considered a member of the Broncho football team, Colton is a mainstay in the weight room. It is not a requirement, but Colton is there. Among the 100 or so who keep showing up, he's setting an example for younger Jeff student-athletes that hard work will bring rewards by stacking plates on the bar that validate his super-human strength.

"Colton is not real vocal, but kids follow him just naturally because of his strength and intelligence level," Shanley said. "He is going to benefit from being there full time on campus and working with a strength coach. We think the sky is the limit for him. We are excited to see a kid with his character and integrity have an opportunity to go on, especially at a program as established as Wabash."

Academics first

Sandy Page works in the Jefferson High School cafeteria.

When she heard Colton calling for her, she looked up and lost control of her emotions.

He was holding a plaque.

It read, "Lilly Endowment Community Scholar 2016 Awarded to Colton Page."

Colton always did well academically. He had six non-A grades during four years of high school. Four were B's. Two came in calculus as a junior, a class he retook as a senior and earned an A in each semester. He'll graduate with a 3.97 cumulative GPA and one above 4.0 for his senior year.

Sandy and Bob make it known that they aren't the only grandparents rais-



SAM KING/JOURNAL & COURIER

A shelf in Bob and Sandy Page's living room displays many of Colton Page's awards.

"Colton is not real vocal, but kids follow him just naturally because of his strength and intelligence level."

PAT SHANLEY

Lafayette head coach

ing a child who more often than not made the right decisions, not even in their small Lafayette Jeff community. They also are quick to note that an amazing support staff, whether it be teacher Melissa Colonis working with Colton to make sure he grasps calculus or coaches staying later than scheduled to watch Colton attempt to master athletic skills.

The plaque is the focal point of the shelf in the living room for his awards.

Colton was one of three Jeff recipients of the scholarship, which pays full tuition to an Indiana college of his choice.

Sandy said she never saw the paperwork for it. Colton took care of the entire process independently, from filling out the application to preparing for the interview.

It was a sign of how well he was raised, even in circumstances some would say were not conducive to everything Colton earned.

"The main thing for me was making sure my grandpa didn't feel like he had to

keep working," Colton said. "He is 67 years old and still works at Alcoa. He told me he wanted to pay for my college if I didn't get any scholarships. I really want him to retire soon because he is tired all the time because he works so much."

Bob says he is still at least four years from retirement, the duration of Colton's time in college, but it is a stress reliever, that Lilly Endowment Scholarship.

He gives the credit to his wife.

"She read to him ever since he was little," he said, pointing at Sandy. "She is the reason."

By the time Colton was 3, he was using a computer. By age 4, he could recite the name and number of every NASCAR driver.

His ability to quickly grasp information was a natural carryover once he started school.

"I got into the challenge program when I was in elementary school, and it instilled hard-working values into me when it came to academics," Colton said. "I have always been very future-orient-

ed and have thought about college since fifth grade."

Colton's future is bright. He'd prefer not to talk about certain parts of his past.

But he does, perhaps not entirely.

Things are great now, but they weren't always that way.

Somewhere, there's a young child with all the potential in the world lying in a bed and wishing tomorrow would never come.

And to those, he has a message.

"I know there's a lot of kids out there really struggling with the way things are. They should know there's always somebody there for them, like teachers, they can always have somebody to talk to," Colton said. "Don't let it build up inside of you because that just makes things worse."

"That is something I had a lot of trouble with when I was younger."

"The harder you work, the better your life is going to end up working out for you."