

# Charleston Gazette-Mail

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## Ex-Quarrier Diner chief admits crime

George Martin West pleads guilty to aggravated identity theft from different eatery

By **MARIA YOUNG**  
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**HUNTINGTON** — The man who was managing Charleston's Quarrier Diner when it abruptly closed in November 2017 pleaded guilty Monday to one count of aggravated identity theft related to a popular Huntington restaurant.

George Martin West was indicted by a federal grand jury in December on 23 counts of fraud and two counts of aggravated identity theft stemming from his time as the manager of G.D. Ritz's restaurant. He pleaded guilty to one count of identity theft in a deal that calls for two years of mandatory prison time,

a fine of up to \$250,000 and more than \$14,000 in restitution payments to two victims.

"Two years — I'll take it," said Jason Webb, who owned G.D. Ritz's at the time and claimed West took far more than could be proven in court by skimming bank deposits.

But the victory is bittersweet.

Webb said the fraud and theft West was charged with ultimately forced the closure of his restaurant, a long-held dream into which he had poured funds and labor.

In a signed stipulation of fact, West admitted to the court, "I

SEE **WEST, 10A**

## Senate bill prohibits smoking in vehicles with kids

By **ROGER ADKINS**  
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The West Virginia Senate approved legislation Monday aimed at prohibiting smoking in motor vehicles when a minor 16 years of age or younger is present.

Senate Bill 378, which amends state code to include this restriction, sparked some debate before it was approved 25-8, with one senator not voting or abstaining. The legislation now heads to the House of Delegates.

The bill defines "lit tobacco product" and "motor vehicle," and designates the violation as a secondary misdemeanor, meaning law enforcement would need to identify a primary offense before stopping a vehicle.

Under the proposed law, offenders 18 or older would face a fine of up to \$25 upon conviction. Each offense would be considered singular, regardless of the number of minors present in the vehicle.

Supporters argue that the primary purpose of the bill is to safeguard minors from exposure to second-hand smoke in confined spaces. Health Committee Chairman Sen. Mike Maroney, R-Marshall, emphasized that the bill is more of a public service announcement than a punitive measure.

"It lets people know that, if you smoke in a car, if

SEE **SENATE, 10A**

## NEWS FOR NEWBORNS



CHRIS DORST | Gazette-Mail

Shannon Stewart holds her newborn son, Jake, at CAMC Women and Children's Hospital on Jan. 24. Stewart's doctor had encouraged breastfeeding, but Stewart wanted to do her own research. "I was just trying to figure it out, but I was kind of back and forth in the beginning," she said. "I started Googling."

## Breast-feeding effort hopes to improve health for moms, infants

By **MARIA YOUNG**  
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**L**ONG BEFORE her son, Jake, was born at CAMC Women and Children's Hospital last month, Shannon Stewart carefully weighed the best options for caring for him, including how best to feed him.

Her doctor had encouraged breast-

feeding. But Stewart wanted to do her own research.

Searching for insight, she asked women who breastfeed or have breastfed. They told her, "Well, the connection between you and baby, sometimes maybe there's a bond that maybe somebody didn't have that fed [their baby] formula," Stewart said.

"I was just trying to figure it out, but

I was kind of back and forth in the beginning. I started Googling. And it seemed like breastfeeding outweighed with good things more than formula... and I, of course, want the best for him."

Her doctors are hoping more West Virginia moms will follow Stewart's lead. Despite the benefits,

SEE **BABIES, 10A**

## Monsignor Edward Sadie, whose Charleston priesthood spanned 50 years, dead at 93



Father Edward Sadie

By **RICK STEELHAMMER**  
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Monsignor P. Edward Sadie, who revitalized Catholic schools and enhanced his church's presence in downtown Charleston during his 35-year tenure as rector of Charleston's Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred

Heart, died Sunday at age 93.

The son of Syrian immigrant parents, Sadie was born and raised in Parkersburg, where his Melkite Catholic parents were merchants. While in his mid-teens, he moved to Baltimore to study

for the priesthood, into which he was ordained in 1957 at age 26.

"In seminary, I studied Latin, Greek, German, French, Hebrew and sign language, but they never taught me to type or cook, which would have been more helpful," he joked in a 2017

SEE **SADIE, 12A**

See a page of photos from the '24 W.Va. auto show

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Super Bowl LVIII proved that Kansas City's players are the Chiefs of the NFL. Page 3B



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SEVEN-DAY FORECAST

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TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
 48° 31°	 47° 32°	 58° 32°	 45° 28°	 39° 26°	 48° 26°	 54° 36°
Intervals of clouds and sun	Partial sunshine	Some sun, then clouds, a shower in the afternoon	Cloudy	Times of clouds and sun	Sunny to partly cloudy	Intervals of clouds and sunshine

## BABIES

FROM PAGE 1A

breastfeeding isn't always easy for mother or for child. West Virginia has one of the lowest rates of breastfeeding in the nation. It's something Dr. Elizabeth Copenhaver, a pediatric newborn hospitalist with CAMC, and her colleagues are working to change.

"It's so important," said Copenhaver.

Medical experts from the American Academy of Pediatrics to the World Health Organization agree.

"It has lifelong impact on both the mother and the baby," Copenhaver said. "So, from the baby perspective, they're getting antibodies. You can have differences in IQ. You're bonding with mother. Obesity can be reduced with breastfeeding."

Copenhaver is the hospital's point person for a new initiative, in partnership with nine other hospitals, designed to sharply improve breastfeeding rates in the Mountain State.

With \$6 million in funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Boston Medical Center's Center for Health Equity, Education, and Research (CHEER) program is working to improve breastfeeding rates at 100 hospitals over the next three years. CAMC is in the first group of 10 to be chosen.

The goal is to increase hospital practices consistent with the WHO's 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, which include:

- Training all health care staff.
- Informing all pregnant patients about the benefits



Nicole Bryce holds her newborn son, Roderick, at CAMC Womens and Children's Hospital on Jan. 24.

and process of breastfeeding.

■ Helping mothers start breastfeeding within an hour of birth.

■ Give breastfeeding newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk unless medically necessary.

■ Practice rooming in, which is allowing mothers and newborns to remain together 24 hours per day.

■ Foster breastfeeding support groups and refer new mothers to them upon hospital discharge.

### The 'breastfeeding walk'

That first hour after birth, which doctors call the uninterrupted golden hour, means newborns are immediately placed on their mothers' chests, skin-to-skin, for one hour. That's



Courtesy photo  
Dr. Elizabeth Copenhaver is a pediatric newborn hospitalist with CAMC Womens and Children's Hospital, in Charleston.

about how long it takes for them to do the "breastfeeding walk."

"Babies will come out, you'll put them on the chest and, evolutionary, they know how to find the breast. So they go through nine steps of gradually making their way over and

then start breastfeeding," Copenhaver said.

The process decreases the mother's hemorrhaging after giving birth, helps babies' blood glucose levels and regulates their body temperatures. And in the earliest phase of breastfeeding, mothers produce a thicker, yellow-colored "super milk" called colostrum that is nutrient-dense and full of antibodies and antioxidants.

"Women's bodies are amazing, and babies respond to it appropriately," Copenhaver said. "And so we've got to be OK with not [immediately] knowing all the numbers and just put babies on the chest and they actually do better with vitals and all kinds of things."

### Reasons to not breastfeed

There are reasons new mothers may choose not to breastfeed, though, ranging from their own medical issues or a lack of understanding about the benefits to a lack of support at home and work.

If a new mom has other children to care for, or if she returns to work quickly, she will need a sterile, private room for pumping her breast milk so that it's available for her baby even when she's not.

She'll need a refrigerator for storing it and an employer who supports her taking a break that could be 30 minutes or more for pumping. She'll need to carry pumping supplies and a cooler for transporting the milk.

If she takes a bus to work, it's that much more challenging.

"In West Virginia, we are a heavy Medicaid population," Copenhaver said. "And so, for that, we're a lower socioeconomic group that just traditionally has difficulty succeeding in breastfeeding exclusively."

Nicole Bryce understands the challenges.

"Even in jobs that are not those hourly wages, we find pushback," said Bryce, who is an OB-GYN medical resident at CAMC and a mother of five children, the last born just one month ago.

"And if you're dependent on that job, I can't imagine how difficult it is to walk in to your employer, especially some of these moms that have gotten no maternity leave. So now, they're walking in a week or two after delivery and trying to say, 'Hey, I need to figure out this pump thing.'"

"I'm very lucky," Bryce said. "I come from a family of unbroken breastfeeding. So my mom breastfed, my grandmother breastfed, my great-grandmother. So that meant that I saw my mom breastfeed younger siblings. So it made it much easier for me to figure all that out. When you don't have somebody saying, 'Oh, just give them a bottle. I'm very lucky in that way.'"

She said she's hoping that, a generation or two from now, most new moms in West Virginia will be just as lucky as she and her newborn son, Roderick, have been.

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## WEST

FROM PAGE 1A

took a business bank check from my employer . . . I made the check payable to my then-roommate, James Neal Cleveland in the amount of \$780, and I forged the

signature of the owner of the restaurant, Jason Webb. I knew that I was not entitled to the money and that I was not authorized to write the check."

The money, he said, was to cover the rent payment he owed to Cleveland.

"I told him the money represented reimbursements Jason

Webb owed me, which was not true," West said, admitting that he also stole two checks from Cleveland and used them to pay for two months worth of rent.

In exchange for the guilty plea, prosecutors moved the court to dismiss 23 counts of fraud and one more count of aggravated identity theft.

When his federal sentence is up, prosecutors said West could still be held liable for two misdemeanor check charges totaling \$5,000 stemming from a performance by "American Idol" finalist Bucky Covington at The Quarrier Diner.

The diner, and a downstairs bar, named The ROQ, are under new ownership. The bar is open

while the restaurant is undergoing extensive renovations.

Formal sentencing for West is set for May 28.

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## SENATE

FROM PAGE 1A

you've got parents in their 20s and 30s who smoke in the car with a couple of young kids in the back, you're going to do some permanent damage to their lungs," he said. "And, long after you're gone, they'll still potentially be suffering."

Sen. Tom Takubo, R-Kanawha, a physician and one of the bill's sponsors, likened the experience of unwanted cigarette smoke inhalation to getting a strong whiff of chlorine bleach, emphasizing that children cannot escape a confined space as easily as adults.

"This came from a patient who had a father who smoked heavily in the car," Takubo said. "She had to

climb down in the bottom of the car to put her head underneath the seat."

Like Maroney, Takubo said the bill is meant to bring attention to the issue.

"If anything else, it just brings the discussion to their minds and the forefront, where they might not even realize what they're doing to their child," he said.

Speaking in favor of the legislation, Sen. Mike Woelfel, D-Cabell, called the bill an opportunity to make a meaningful change, in contrast to bills that play to either side's political party but solve no issues.

"We have a bill here that's important, that's going to help children," he said.

There was limited opposition to the legislation. Speaking against the bill, Sen. Michael Azinger, R-Wood, raised concern about fundamental parental rights.

"This bill comes up every year, and I oppose it every year. I know the good intentions of the gentlemen who are pushing the bill. I do have to make the contrast of the fact that the arguments for the bill are essentially emotional arguments," Azinger said. "My argument against the bill

would be that this is a cut at the fundamental rights of parents, parents making decisions over their children, in their vehicle. This is the state going where it has no business going."

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## FIRSTENERGY

FROM PAGE 1A

Monongalia counties, respectively, prior to 2030.

The Akron, Ohio-based utility, which operates principally in five states, said the West Virginia plants are the main source of its Scope 1 emissions, referring to direct emissions that occur from sources that are controlled by an organization.

FirstEnergy also cited energy source concerns, referring in part to a PJM Interconnection report last year that found increasing reliability risks during the transition to a decarbonized electric grid.

The report from PJM, the Mid-Atlantic power grid operator that covers West Virginia, said resource retirements — which can include power plant shutdowns — are outpacing the construction of new resources, partly due to siting and supply chain issues. Renewable energy advocates have said that PJM report inadequately considered the ability of PJM's capacity market to incentivize new resources that replace lost capacity.

### FirstEnergy sticking to 2050 carbon neutrality target

West Virginia Coal Association president Chris Hamilton applauded FirstEnergy's announcement based on what he contended would be economic harm and a potential shortfall of reliable

power caused by the interim emissions reduction target.

Honey May, Sierra Club West Virginia chapter director, panned the move, blaming West Virginia leaders for rejecting opportunities to accelerate decarbonization and instead doubling down on the coal industry.

But May said FirstEnergy shouldn't get a pass.

"The utility continues to do what they know best; pointing fingers at the other guy and not bearing any responsibility," May said. "By not addressing emission reduction head on, utilities like FirstEnergy will continue to create an artificial barrier to renewable energy that would only leave communities forced to choose between keeping their lights on and feeding their family."

In its climate position and strategy published Thursday, FirstEnergy affirmed its goal set in 2020 of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and said it was committed to moving beyond the Harrison and Fort Martin plants by 2050.

FirstEnergy acknowledged identifying 2035 and 2040 as the end-of-useful-life dates for the Fort Martin and Harrison plants, respectively, in past filings with the West Virginia Public Service Commission.

The utility noted it would submit an Integrated Resource Plan to the PSC as required every five years that will analyze market conditions and identify how to supply West Virginia customers

with reliable and cost-effective energy through 2040.

### Estimated coal plant effects included 178 deaths in a year

Harrison Power Station was West Virginia's largest emitter of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2022 among large facilities by a wide margin, emitting over 11.6 million metric tons — 4.2 million more than the next highest large facility, the American Electric Power-controlled John E. Amos Plant in Putnam County.

The Harrison Power Station's 2022 emissions far exceeded its 2012 emissions of 9.4 million metric tons, according to United States Environmental Protection Agency data.

The Fort Martin Power Station emitted more than 4.8 million metric tons, fifth-highest among the state's large facilities, per EPA data.

Harrison Power Station emissions in 2019 resulted in health effects that included an estimated 122 deaths, 1,243 asthma attacks and 29 asthma emergency room visits, according to an analysis of data from a federal health risk assessment tool derived by the Clean Air Task Force, a climate advocacy group. The Harrison plant alone accounted for nearly 40% of all estimated deaths attributed to West Virginia's coal-fired plants for 2019, per the analysis.

The same analysis found Fort Martin Power Station emissions resulted in health effects that included 56 deaths, 570 asthma at-

tacks and 13 asthma emergency room visits.

### Investing in solar

FirstEnergy said in its climate position and strategy it plans to keep advancing its goal of building solar in West Virginia.

Last month, FirstEnergy subsidiary Mon Power launched a solar site next to the Fort Martin plant it says can produce up to 18.9 megawatts of energy per hour. FirstEnergy plans for Mon Power and its other West Virginia-serving subsidiary, Potomac Edison, to generate up to 50 megawatts of renewable energy from that location and four other planned West Virginia sites by 2025.

The PSC approved a request from Mon Power and Potomac Edison in August to build the Fort Martin solar site, a 5.5-megawatt site in Marion County and a 5.8-megawatt site in Berkeley County.

The Harrison and Fort Martin power stations are the last two plants in FirstEnergy's coal generation fleet.

### PSC has ruled with pro-coal bent

FirstEnergy said in its climate position and strategy West Virginia "strongly prefers asset-backed generation from its utilities," causing FirstEnergy to anticipate having to replace the energy from Fort Martin and Harrison.

What resources that will require and the path to carbon neutrality are uncertain, FirstEnergy said, citing poten-

tial environmental regulation for power plants, future technological advancements and resource adequacy concerns about capacity gaps as fossil fuel plants close.

The PSC, chaired by former FirstEnergy lobbyist Charlotte Lane and including longtime former West Virginia Coal Association president Bill Raney as a member, has drawn heavy criticism from renewable energy advocates for favoring coal-fired power.

The PSC did not respond to a request for comment.

West Virginia endured the second-highest rise in average residential electricity price nationwide from 2005 to 2020 as it clung to coal, according to EIA data. West Virginia's 2021 clip of coal-fired generation, 91%, was easily the highest in the country.

West Virginia is one of just three states whose carbon intensity of their economies increased from 2010 to 2021, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration data.

"Only when West Virginia diversifies its energy generation will utilities like FirstEnergy and all West Virginia businesses and citizens be able to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," West Virginia Environmental Council legislative chair Linda Frame said.

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