

METRO

Columbus schools see 5,202 major incidents

Assaults, sex offenses among them

Megan Henry
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

Columbus City Schools had a total of 5,202 fights, assaults, sexual offenses, guns brought to school or other “major incidents” during the first three months of this school year.

Tops among the “major incident” reports at Columbus City Schools in the first three months of the 2022-2023 school year were 3,389 fights and threats, according to public records requested by The Dispatch in December and recently released.

Columbus City Schools defines “major incidents” as any situation that re-

quires support from an outside responding agency, such as the Columbus police and fire divisions, that occur at a school during the school day. It doesn’t include after-school fights, such as the one last October that resulted in the shooting death of Lovely Kendricks, an East High School student, during a fight in Franklin Park across Broad Street from the school.

Districtwide from Aug. 29 to Nov. 30 there were 1,128 physical assaults; 188

incidents of sexual misconduct; 176 incidents of drug use, possession or sale; 163 incidents of vandalism; 95 incidents of dangerous weapons not including firearms, and 57 incidents of sexual offenses.

There also were 16 incidents of false alarms and bomb threats, 15 incidents of arson and explosives and seven incidents of alcoholic beverage use,

See **SCHOOLS**, Page 3B

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

‘They refused to take no for an answer’



Marchers, from left: Joyce Clemons Kittrell, Myra Cumberland Phillips, Teresa Williams, Carolyn Steward Goins, Eleanor Curtis Cumberland and Virginia Steward Harewood stand in Hillsboro in 2022. Two of them hold medals of honor bestowed on the group by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine. They travel around the community, hoping to keep alive their mothers’ legacy of bravery and tenacity. SHELLEE FISHER PHOTOGRAPHY AND DESIGN

Marchers in Ohio advocated for school integration

Danae King Columbus Dispatch | USA TODAY NETWORK

When Virginia Harewood was marching along the streets of Hillsboro, Ohio, at age 8, she didn’t realize her steps were making her a part of history. • Harewood, now 77, was among the 19 women and 37 children who marched a mile across the southwest Ohio town to the white-only Webster Elementary School every day from September 1954 to April 1956. They had hopes of influencing the school board to integrate the city’s elementary schools. • The town’s school board was one of many across the nation that stalled on integration following the May 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, which outlawed racial segregation in schools.

See **MARCHERS**, Page 2B



Sixteen Black children accompanied by four mothers carry signs demonstrating their feelings as they walk to Webster Elementary School in Hillsboro on April 3, 1956, after the U.S. Supreme Court ordered immediate integration at the school the day before. The children were turned away again as they had been every day for two years. The school board said that it was awaiting official notification of the Supreme Court’s decision before taking any action. BETTMANN ARCHIVE

Ohioans left state to access abortions

Report shows travel to Michigan, Illinois

Haley BeMiller
State Bureau
USA TODAY NETWORK

Mia found out she was pregnant in mid-August last year, weeks after she had taken Plan B to prevent just that.

An undocumented immigrant and student, Mia supports her family financially and knew she wouldn’t be able to manage a pregnancy while trying to finish school.

She scheduled an appointment with an Ohio abortion provider, who told her she wouldn’t be able to get the procedure in-state.

The U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* weeks prior in their ruling on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, prompting Ohio officials to reinstate the ban on abortions when cardiac activity can be detected. That’s usually about six weeks into a pregnancy.

See **ABORTION**, Page 3B

Suit: Train released 1.1M pounds of vinyl chloride

Benjamin Duer
Canton Repository
USA TODAY NETWORK

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio – A new federal lawsuit against Norfolk Southern over the East Palestine train derailment alleges that 1.1 million pounds of vinyl chloride were released into the environment.

The lawsuit was filed Wednesday by the national law firm Morgan & Morgan in U.S. District Court’s Northern District of Ohio, one of six suits the railroad company is facing.

Authorities and Norfolk Southern have not publicly stated how much vinyl chloride was released following the Feb. 3 train derailment and ensuing controlled burn of chemicals on several cars.

See **TRAIN**, Page 2B

VITAL STATISTICS

BLOOD DRIVES

The American Red Cross has an ongoing need for donors of all blood types. Donors can call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or go to redcross-blood.org to schedule an appointment.

American Red Cross, 995 E. Broad St., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Carriage Place Blood Donation Center, 4820 Sawmill Road 12:15-7:15 p.m.

McConnell Heart Health Center, 3773 Olentangy River Road 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Polaris Blood Donation Center, 1327 Cameron Ave., Lewis Center, 12:15-7:15 p.m.

St. Peter Church, 6899 Smoky Row Road 1-7 p.m.

Stone Ridge Blood Donation Center, 337 Stoneridge Lane, Gahanna, 12:15-7:15 p.m.

Westbelt Blood Donation Center, 4327 Equity Drive 1-7 p.m.

Versiti Blood Center of Ohio has an ongoing need for donors of all blood types. Donors can call 1-800-485-6594 or go to www.versiti.org/ohio to schedule an appointment.

OSU Outpatient Care Upper Arlington, 1800 Zollinger Road, Conference Room, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.



A Feb. 4 drone photo shows portions of a Norfolk Southern Railroad freight train that derailed the previous night in East Palestine. GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

Train

Continued from Page 1B

The law firm based its calculation on the total volume of five 25,800-gallon DOT 105J300W tank cars carrying 8.6 pounds per gallon of vinyl chloride.

The suit claims "Norfolk Southern blew holes in its vinyl chloride cars, and dumped 1,109,400 pounds of cancer-causing vinyl chloride directly into the environment," while trying to extinguish fires. The firm claims that Norfolk Southern released more vinyl chloride into the environment in one week than all industrial emitters combined did in 2021.

Vinyl chloride is a gas used to make polyvinyl chloride hard plastic resin in plastic products and is associated with an increased risk of liver cancer and other cancers, according to the federal government's National Cancer Institute.

Officials warned the controlled burn of cars containing the gas would send toxic gas phosgene and hydrogen chloride into the air.

Attorney Rene Rocha with Morgan & Morgan described the amount of vinyl chloride released into the environment as "pretty shocking."

The railroad company declined to comment on the latest lawsuit.

However, Alan Shaw, president and chief executive officer for Norfolk Southern, released a statement Thursday addressing the community.

"When I visited East Palestine last week, you told me how the train derailment has upended your lives and how concerned you are about the safety of your air, water, and land," Shaw stated. "Our work is underway. Crews are cleaning the site thoroughly, responsibly, and safely."

In his statement, he concluded: "I know there are still a lot of questions without answers. I know you're tired. I know you're worried. We will not let you down."

Attorney John Morgan accused the railroad company of choosing a cheaper and less safe option following the derailment to contain the hazardous materials, which created a chemical burn pit.

"I'm not sure Norfolk Southern could have come up with a worse plan to address this disaster," Morgan said.

"Residents exposed to vinyl chloride may already be undergoing DNA mutations that could linger for years or even decades before manifesting as terrible and deadly cancers," he added. "The lawsuit alleges that Norfolk Southern made it worse by essentially blasting the town with chemicals as they focused on restoring train service and protecting their shareholders."

Reach Benjamin Duer at 330-580-8567 or ben.duer@cantonrep.com.

Follow on Twitter @bduerREP

HOLIDAY CLOSURES

Today is Presidents Day. Because of the holiday:

- Federal, state, county and local government offices will be closed.
- Post offices will be closed, and there will be no regular mail delivery.
- Parking on Columbus streets with pay kiosks, app signs or meters will be free, but parking restrictions for delivery and valet zones and commuter hours will remain in force, so observe signs.

• There will be no trash collection in Columbus on Monday. The color collection schedule for trash will rotate forward one weekday and remain there until the next holiday, which will be Memorial Day, May 29. For those not on the color schedule, trash collection day will rotate one day forward with Friday collection on Saturday.

• Curbside recycling and yard-waste collection in Columbus will be on a regular schedule.

• Columbus City Schools and many other public school districts will be closed on Monday.

• Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College will be open on Monday.

• Columbus Metropolitan Library branches will be closed Monday for a staff development day.

• Central Ohio Transit Authority will operate on a regular schedule on Monday.

Crime Stoppers needs information in local online dating extortion scam

Bethany Bruner

Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

Central Ohio Crime Stoppers is warning area residents about an increase in reports of extortion schemes involving "catfishing" unsuspecting victims online.

A cash reward is being offered for information leading to the arrest and indictment of the person or people responsible.

Catfishing is a term used to describe a person who pretends to be another person online, utilizing false information and photographs to perpetuate

the deception.

Crime Stoppers said there has been a "significant increase" in reports of victims, usually males, who agree to meet someone they believe to be a female. The victims have met this person on social media or through an online dating application.

The suspect pretends to be a female and could send explicit photographs to the victim, with the victim sending similar types of images to the suspect in return.

"The suspect then threatens to distribute the photos of the victim to his friends and family and demands money, usually in the form of untraceable gift

cards," Crime Stoppers said.

Some of the victims have sent money prior to reporting the extortion to police.

Crime Stoppers urges those online to use caution when communicating with unknown people, especially with this growing trend.

Anyone with information is asked to call Central Ohio Crime Stoppers at 614-461-TIPS, use the free P3 Tips mobile application or provide information online at www.stopcrime.org. All tips to Crime Stoppers are anonymous and a special coding system is used to provide the reward.

bbruner@dispatch.com
[@bethany_bruner](https://twitter.com/bethany_bruner)

Marchers

Continued from Page 1B

The marching — and the subsequent court case five of the mothers launched against the school board — represents an early role for Ohio in the civil rights movement that's not widely known, according to Melvin Barnes, Jr., a program officer at Ohio Humanities, a Columbus-based nonprofit and affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

"They're on the forefront of the understanding of the traditional civil rights movement," Barnes said of the Hillsboro marchers. "You don't have to look to the South to see how this movement is shaping up. ... Some of the first events were in our own backyard in Ohio."

The civil rights movement's beginnings are traditionally marked by Martin Luther King Jr.'s Montgomery bus boycott, which began in December 1955, Barnes said.

The women of Hillsboro, a city about 35 miles west of Chillicothe, were marching long before the boycott began, Barnes noted, which is one reason why Ohio Humanities took interest in the story.

The nonprofit worked with the Highland County Historical Society and some of the children who marched to update and rerelease a 2017 documentary called "The Lincoln School Story: The Battle for School Integration in Ohio" on the march and court case last year. The 20-minute film can be viewed for free at ohiohumanities.org. The nonprofit also included an article, "Marching On," about the women and children's efforts in its annual magazine, Lumen, which can be read at ohiohumanities.org/lumen.

Although the Hillsboro story started to resurface in the early 2000s, Barnes said it may not be as well known as other civil rights movement events for a few reasons: It was a Northern story when the country's attention was on the South; it was an action led by women; and it wasn't in a major urban center.

Barnes said one of the significant things about the march is that it was sustained action.

"These women decided to make a change in their community and they refused to take no for an answer," he said.

When the first Brown v. Board of Education decision came down, there was little guidance and it was unclear that desegregation and integration were immediately supposed to happen, Barnes said.

"What it really came down to was all these concerned citizens in small towns throughout the entire country who were going to have to force this change, and these mothers were a key component of that," he said.

In May 1955, a second Brown v. Board decision made it clear that desegregation should happen "with all deliberate speed."

So five Hillsboro mothers, including Harewood's mother, Elsie Steward Young, sued with the help of the National Association for the Advance-



The five plaintiffs, together with their attorneys, in a precedent-shattering action for a northern state, in which they instituted action in federal district court for a temporary and permanent injunction enjoining the Hillsboro Board of Education from barring their children from white elementary schools in September 1954. Front row, left to right: Elsie Steward, Roxie Clemons, Zella Cumberland and Gertrude Clemons, all plaintiffs. Back row, left to right: Attorney Russell L. Carter, of Dayton; plaintiff Norma Rollins, and attorneys Constance Baker Motley and James H. McGee, of Dayton. HARVEY EUGENE SMITH, ASSOCIATED PRESS



Several mothers accompany Black school children to Webster Elementary School in an attempt to demand that the youngsters be admitted. BETTMANN, BETTMANN ARCHIVE

ment of Colored People (NAACP) and the case went all the way to the Supreme Court.

Thurgood Marshall, a civil rights lawyer who used the courts to fight segregation and Jim Crow laws before he became the first Black Supreme Court justice, was an attorney on the case after he argued Brown v. Board of Education. Constance Baker Motley was also an attorney on the case and later was the first Black woman to become a federal judge.

The Supreme Court didn't hear the Hillsboro School board's appeal, meaning it agreed with a lower court's decision that the schools must integrate.

The case, Clemons v. Board of Education of Hillsboro, was groundbreaking, Barnes said. It has been cited more than 100 times and was used across the nation as other communities pushed for desegregation, he added.

"It's really a special case and it lit a path for the rest of the country," he said.

"These mothers, they took a very firm stance," Barnes said. "This was at a time when taking a stance like this was not a safe thing to do."

Some of them lost their jobs, others were threatened with imprisonment, he said. But they held fast in hopes that their children could be taught in a safe

environment with quality textbooks and other resources. Lincoln School, the only one for Black students there, had been burned in a fire and then repaired, causing some to question its structural integrity. There were also pages missing from the few textbooks available to students there.

Although they didn't understand the significance of marching then, Harewood and Myra Phillips, another marcher, do now, and they say their involvement has changed their lives.

Phillips, 74, began marching at 6 years old and remembers playing with other children along the way.

Her mother, Zella Mae Cumberland, was one of the five women in the lawsuit and, in the documentary, Phillips says her mother was fearless.

"She was always ready to fight for us," she said.

"I'm proud of them," she said in an interview with The Dispatch. "They all worked together. They persevered."

Being a part of the effort to get into safer schools with more resources caused her to study hard and do her best, she said.

She also instills that discipline and work ethic in her children and grandchildren.

"One of my grandkids said, 'I got my algebra grade up to a B.' I said, 'About time,'" Phillips said. "Them grades got to come up."

Marching taught them the importance of education, Phillips and Harewood said.

Kati Burwinkel, an executive producer on the documentary and a volunteer at the Highland County Historical Society, said he's been working with the women to tell their story for years.

"What you learn from this is that everybody has it within them to change history."

dking@dispatch.com
[@DanaeKing](https://twitter.com/DanaeKing)