

# THE TIMES

## Orlando hits close to home

Portage man travels to Florida for funeral LOCAL, PAGE A3



## Cubs snap 4-game skid

Hot-hitting rookie Willson Contreras homers in win over Marlins SPORTS, B1



CHANCE OF THUNDERSTORMS 89 • 71 FORECAST, A4

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Krazy Kaplans billboards can be seen Wednesday along Interstate 94 near the Illinois state line. The bold signs are part of a billboard and signage war waged by fireworks dealers across the Region at this time of year.

# Long weekend a business 'boom'

Fireworks shops expecting 20 to 40% boost in sales

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You may have noticed the flashing signs, the hundreds of billboards, the ubiquitous drawing of the straightjacketed Krazy Kaplan clutching a stick of dynamite, and bright colors bursting overhead.

That's right, it's fireworks season in Northwest Indiana.

About 100 stores sell fireworks in Northwest Indiana, many in Lake County near the Illinois state line, according to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

Sales of fireworks in Northwest Indiana have zoomed upward ever since Indiana legalized 1.4G artillery shells — aerial consumer fireworks that look like they could be used in a professional show — for use on private property a decade ago.

And fireworks sales are expected to skyrocket by 20 per-

### Fireworks safety tips

- Only light off fireworks when sober. Have a designated person who isn't drinking light off the fireworks
- Keep water nearby to put out any fires
- Do not use illegal fireworks, like M-80s or professional-grade aerial shells
- Set off fireworks away from buildings and vehicles
- Dampen fireworks after they've been used

Source: Fireworks store owners

cent to 40 percent in Northwest Indiana this year since Independence Day is on a Monday, making it a three-day holiday weekend.

Business also is booming nationally, with national fireworks sales more than doubling to \$755 million last year from \$284 million in 1998, according to the American Pyrotechnic Association.

Sales always take off when the Fourth of July falls on a Monday, lengthening the holiday weekend, said Robert Tomsich, who owns China Lightning Fireworks at 9401 Melton Road, in Gary's Miller neighborhood.

Tomsich, whose store imports fireworks directly from Chinese manufacturers and

puts on a public demonstration every year, said people end up shooting off firecrackers all weekend long, instead of just on the Fourth.

"People go out and buy fireworks on Friday, then they can't wait and shoot them off the next day," he said. "Then they come back and stock up again."

Tomsich gives customers tutorials on how to organize and time full fireworks shows like the professionals do instead of just lighting off firecrackers one by one, since many of his customers spend hundreds of dollars and are looking to entertain everyone on their block.

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# There's always a fireworks shop open

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A growing number of Northwest Indiana fireworks shops are open 24/7, at least for the week leading up to the Fourth of July, raising the question of who's out buying fireworks at 3:30 a.m.?

Often, it's out-of-state residents.

It's no secret that Northwest Indiana's 100 licensed fireworks sellers benefit greatly from bans in nearby states. Fireworks shops are clustered along the state line, and their owners estimate 75 percent to 90 percent of business comes from Illinois, where fireworks sales are forbidden.

They also get business from Michigan, which only allowed fireworks sales a few years ago, and from Wisconsin where a patchwork of local regulations has resulted in limited selection that doesn't include the big aeri-als many backyard pyromaniacs prefer. China Lightning Fireworks at 9401 Melton Road,

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# Markets plummet in wake of Brexit

Dow Jones, S&P see biggest losses since August after EU vote

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Markets Writer

NEW YORK — Stocks plunged in the U.S. and worldwide Friday after Britain voted to leave the European Union. The result stunned investors, who reacted by rushing to the safety of gold and U.S. government bonds as they wondered what will come next for Britain, Europe and the global economy.

U.S. stocks gave up all their gains from earlier in the year. The Dow Jones industrial average tumbled 611.21 points, or 3.4 percent, to 17,399.86. The Standard & Poor's 500 dropped 76.02 points, or 3.6 percent, to 2,037.70. Both indexes took their biggest loss since August. The Nasdaq composite suffered its biggest loss since mid-2011, down 202.06 points, or 4.1 percent, to 4,707.98. Indexes in Europe and Asia took even larger losses.

The British vote brought a massive dose of uncertainty to financial markets, something investors loathe. Traders responded by dumping riskier assets that appeared to have the most to lose from disruptions in financial flows and trade: banks, technology companies and makers of basic materials. More shares were traded than on any day since August 2011, when Standard & Poor's downgraded the credit rating of the U.S. government during a crisis over the budget and the country's debt ceiling.

Britons voted to leave the EU over concerns including immigration and regulation. It's far from clear what that will mean for international trade or for Europe, as the EU, which was formed in the decades following World War II, has never before lost a member state.

"This vote is a step away from free trade," said Bob Doll, chief equity strategist Nuveen Asset Management. "When you add to

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■ **More inside:** Pro-EU Scots, Northern Irish eye UK escape after Brexit vote on **page A9**

# Nation's mayors meet in Indy

The capital city is host for 84th annual U.S. Conference of Mayors

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INDIANAPOLIS — More than 200 mayors of the nation's largest cities, representing some 100 million Americans, are gathered in Indianapolis this weekend trying to hammer out bipartisan solutions for urban challenges.

The 84th annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors opened Friday, just two weeks after a gunman murdered 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, vice president of the mayors' conference, said without Congress stepping in to do something about it, mayors have been forced to take the lead in protecting their residents from domestic terrorism — even without sufficient resources to do so.

"National security, homeland security and public safety in the new world are actually becoming one, and it's incontrovertible that the fighting force, the force that's the tip of the spear, that's on the ground first, is local law enforcement," Landrieu said.

The mayors are backing a 16-point Compact for a Better America that calls for new federal resources to support cities

in their first-responder roles, particularly grants to hire more police officers.

It also urges action on infrastructure improvements, education, immigration reform, clean energy, income inequality and an end to unfunded federal and state mandates, among other issues.

"It's extremely important that we as mayors use our voices, even when subjects are challenging and even though subjects may not be as popular," said Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson.

The former Indiana attorney general is leading the mayors' criminal justice committee during the four-day conference.

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INDIANA DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY PHOTO

Gary Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson suits up to participate in a firefighter training exercise held Friday at the 84th annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

### Coming Sunday

- In the 20 years since casinos came to the Region, they have seen ups and downs. Recent years have brought new competition from Illinois slots and even Native American gaming. Still, those fluctuations haven't kept the casinos from the original pledge to invest in these facilities and bring jobs to Northwest Indiana.
- The Hobart High School Breakfast Club recently hit the streets of downtown Chicago and passed out tote bags at parks, high-traffic areas around Congress Street and stopped at the Pacific Garden Mission Shelter, where the students distributed 80 bags in minutes. It was an eye-opening experience for the teens. Read more in Lifestyle.

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