



COAL CITY COURANT .com

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2020 | A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER

Classroom makeover

One lucky elementary school teacher wins \$10,000 prize



Courtesy photos

SECOND GRADE STUDENTS in Connie Terrel's class at Coal City Elementary School had big reactions to the makeover their classroom received from the Meemic Foundation and Lakesore Learning.

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

One might say Connie Terrel was on a lucky streak winning not one, but three educational giveaways in a matter of months, the most significant a classroom makeover.

The second grade teacher at Coal City Elementary School regularly submits her name to receive educational tools provided by the Meemic Foundation for the Future of Education.

The non-profit was founded through Meemic Insurance Company to provide financial assistance to public and private schools in order to advance academic excellence.

The foundation provides grants to schools and from time to time supports educational giveaways to educators.

Terrel, a member of the Meemic Foundation Club, and others within the Unit 1 School District often submit their names with the hope of being selected.

Last school year, Terrel entered a drawing to win a robot for her classroom and she won.

A couple of months later she was selected to receive a standup desk from the



BEFORE THE MAKEOVER

foundation and Lakesore Learning, a developer and retailer of educational materials.

Then when the foundation announced late last year that it had teamed up the Lakesore to provide \$10,000 classroom makeovers, Terrel once again applied.

Just after the new year, the teacher learned her classroom was one of 12 across three states to be selected for a customized



AFTER THE MAKEOVER

makeover that included everything from design services to installation.

Elementary school principal Jennifer Kenney said she was excited for the longtime educator, and they were both looking forward to seeing the classroom take on a new look.

Terrel was able work with Lakesore to design the classroom space, a process that

SEE RENOVATION, PAGE 2

All I want for Christmas

Students in Brea Owensby's second grade class at Coal City Elementary School wrote letters to Santa Claus and they shared them with *The Coal City Courant* before sending them to the North Pole. The letters appear as written by the students.

Dear Santa,
This year me and Elliot made gingerbread houses but Elliot made a train. I would reilly want a huverbord. I have ben trieing to be good this year. I got my pickcher took with you and if I fell off a huverbord you siad youwould feel stink stank stunk. You also siad you would feel like you did something rong. Christmas is my favorite holiday. Santa, what is your favorite cookie?
Love, Emily

Dear Santa,
This year I've been so good. For Chistmas I want a iphone 11. How are the reindeer doing? Tell Jangles I love her. Happy Holidays!
Love, Adelia

Dear Santa,
I lover you. How ar the reindeer Santa? I want 17 Mine dras, money, a bike, my Gampa Rod, a puppy, elfclos for Snowflake, a bike helmet, a sled, an ipad. One mor thing! Mrs. Claus, can I have a pikshr of an elf? I will give you milk and cookies, Santa.
Love, Aubree

Dear Santa,
This year I've been so



Photo by Ann Gill

SECOND GRADE STUDENTS in Brea Owensby's calss at Coal City Elementary School are anxiously awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus.

good! Do you know what I want fur Christmas? I know I want a new tablit, and a drawing book. How is Rudolph? I'm going to make the best cookies ever. What is Mrs. Claus doing?

Santa do like hot chocolate? Well I like hot chocolate it is the best. And how are the elves doing too? I'll leave your cookies at the fireplace. I hope you have a great day Santa!

Love, Yelisa
Dear Santa,
This year I hope Santa came to my house this Christmas. I love Christmas I

hope that I get toys Santa. Christmas is my farite Holidas. I hope that evrevon has a good Christmas and my famley.
Love, Brayden

Dear Santa,
I have been a awesome brother. I would like a Harry Potter book collection. I would appreciate if you go me what I wanted. I would also like Tom Riddle's diary. I would also like aquill. I'll make cookies. I wishChristmas eve was today. Merry Christmas!
Love, Jackson

Dear Santa,
I really want glitr so I can make a glitr bath. You tryi it. I saw that you love the chocolate cookies. I hope that I was good this year for Christmas. I really want to see your elfs. I want a Paper book that I can draw in. Have a good Christmas.
Love, Athena

Dear Santa,
I would like amonus app and a tablet. I have been very very very good. Santa, I would like an Alexa, a TV, a PS4, and a new computer for my office P.S. where's roudolph? I'd like a contraption for Christmas and that's all, Santa.
Love, Timothy

Dear Santa,
This year I will want a toy. I canot wait until Christmas moning. I will make you cookies and milk! I would like a hotweel set, a monster truk, a
SEE LETTERS, PAGE 2

Three vying for board seat

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

The Unit 1 Board of Education will welcome a new member next month, and the seat will be filled by an individual who is seeking to be voted in during the April 2021 consolidated election.

At the board's November meeting, Jeff Emerson announced his immediate resignation and encouraged his fellow board members to consider filling his seat with an individual, who by pulling a candidate petition, seeking election in the spring.

Board members considered his suggestion and in early December announced that was the course they would take. The appointment will be made during the Jan. 6 meeting.

Six petitions were handed out by the Grundy County Clerk and Records office. Two of the six were obtained by incumbents—Mary Gill and Shawn Hamilton. When contacted by the district, three of the other four petition holders indicated they would be filing for election and were interested in the appointment.

At a special meeting called to interview the candidates on Dec. 16, the Board of Education heard from Daniel Englehardt, Adam Brnrich and Steve Rogers.

Rogers, a former educator who now runs a video production company, was the first to be questioned by the board.

When asked why he wanted to be a member of the Unit 1 Board, Rogers said his interest came after a community member asked if he'd ever consider seeking election.

From his work in education he feels it's a responsibility to do the best one can for the kids, staff and community as a whole.

Englehardt, a former police officer, was next up and shared that he has the time to serve the district and believes he could be an effective board member based on his ability to work well with others and bring new ideas to the table.

SEE VACANT SEAT, PAGE 2

Grundy receives first doses of vaccine

STAFF REPORT

Grundy County received its first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine over the weekend.

"In coordination with neighboring health departments, hospital systems and the Illinois Department of Public Health, Grundy County was able to receive 100 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine late Saturday evening," Grundy County public health administrator Michelle Pruim reported on Sunday.

The first group of persons to be offered this vaccine will be healthcare personnel.

Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers launched its vaccination plan immediately with plans to use the first

allotment by Monday.

Pruim said additional vaccine is expected to arrive regularly in the weeks and months ahead and plans are being finalized by the health department to provide vaccine to healthcare personnel not affiliated with health systems and to other individuals in priority groups when more vaccine becomes available.

All long-term care facilities in the county will receive vaccine through a federal program called the Pharmacy Partnership Program and distribution is expected to begin next week.

As of Monday, IDPH was reporting the total number of positive cases in the county had reached 3,623, with 36 deaths from COVID-19 complications.

Since Dec. 16, there have been five reported deaths—one male in his 70s,

one male and one female in their 80s, one male in his 90s and a female over 100 years of age.

According to the health department it is following 423 people who have recently tested positive and are in isolation, and each of their close contacts. Residents are encouraged to follow isolation and quarantine guidelines.

Grundy was once again on the state's COVID-19 warning list exceeding targets in four of the eight metrics designed to determine an increase in coronavirus activity including the number of cases, test positivity, tests performed and intensive care unit availability.

The designation comes from statistics reported to the state from Dec. 6-12. During that period the county's

test positivity rate was 17.6%, down from 21.4% one week earlier.

As of Dec. 18, the county's seven day rolling test positivity rate had dropped to 12.7% and 9.7% for the North Central Region which includes Grundy.

The region's rate has shown a gradual decline since Nov. 17 when the rate was at 16.6%.

As of Monday, IDPH was reporting 754 cases have been confirmed within the 60416 zip code since the start of the pandemic in March while 1,469 cases have been verified within the 60450 zip code.

On the eve of the Christmas holiday, state and local health officials encourage residents to stay home and opt for virtual Christmas visits this season.





Photo by Ann Gill

DEAR SANTA—Students in Brea Owensby's second grade class at Coal City Elementary School await the arrival of Santa Claus. The children wrote letters to the jolly old elf and shared them with The Coal City Courant before they were sent to the North Pole. Owensby and her students join the newspaper staff in wishing readers a Merry Christmas. Sending holiday greetings are [from left, row one]: Tim Wegner, Ryker Senodinos, Ryan Housman, Lexi Henderson, Hannah Sinkular, Aubree Dearth, Emma Hamilton, Athena Libner and Drake Aichele. Joining Carter Giordano in row two are Jackson Prium, Rylan Davy, Brayden Brncich, Collin Ness, Yelisabetta Rivera, Adelia Gonzalez, Sienna Ruffatto, Emily Munsell and Jaycob Wilson. Students not pictured are Olivia Vironda, Lee Wren and Xavier Ramirez.

Letters

hotwheel car, and a new stuff animal.
Love, Rylan

Dear Santa,
Christmas is my favorite holiday because I get presents I will leave home made cookies and milk. This Chistmas I whant a camera drone, bike, mopped, and love. What is your favorite cookie?
Love, Hannah

Dear Santa,
For Christmas I want to be a you tuda I would also want a gaming rowr. How is rudof? I'll leve you cookies. tell comet I sed hi!
Love, Ryan

Dear Santa,
I have been ok this year. Can I please have a squshey skates,
Love, Jaycob

Dear Santa,
This year I have been prety good. For Christmas I want a vr headset, books, and clothes. I also want toy cars. I also will give you cookies and milk. I'm exited for Christmas!
Love, Carder

Dear Santa,
This year I really want a dog. I know my mom said no because of Ranger, but I really love Ranger but he dosent like me amy more. I'vereally wanted the new I Phone 11. I really wanted the computer. I will leave milk, cookies and carrets for the reindeer and you.
Love, Sienna

Dear Santa,
I've been a good boy. my sister has been hurting me. but she said sorry. I need my sisterto get presents.I want her to feel the spirit of Christmas.
Love, Xavier

Dear Santa,
I had a relly good year! I know I have been bad some times but I help my step dad a lot outside. I hope I am on the nice list? I hope you, the raindeer, and the elvs are ok. Christmas is my favorite Holiday. This year I would like a lego set, play-doe, a computer, and a new watch.
Love, Emma

Dear Santa,
I want for Chistmas is a coputer! I like my famely and I love Chistmas. I like Chistmas moore and I love to open presets. I love to give presets to my famely. and I hope that Santa has a good Chstmas.
Love, Ryker

Dear Santa,
I have been good! I want or christmas is newtendo. ihone, tenes rakits, tenes dolls and a new bike. I Love Christmas. Christmas is my favet howleday. I whil give you milk and cookes.
Love, Collin

Dear Santa,
I want for Chistmas is a coputer! I like my famely and I love Chistmas. I like Chistmas moore and I love to open presets. I love to give presets to my famely. and I hope that Santa has a good Chstmas.
Love, Ryker

Dear Santa,
I want for Chistmas is a coputer! I like my famely and I love Chistmas. I like Chistmas moore and I love to open presets. I love to give presets to my famely. and I hope that Santa has a good Chstmas.
Love, Ryker

Renovation

occurred pre-pandemic. Everything was set for the renovation, but then schools closed and everything was paused for the pandemic. Since the first design plan was submitted, Kenney said some changes were made to comply with guidelines for social distancing in the classroom. However, when the time comes the items Terrel selected for her room will allow for student to resume collaborative work. After months of waiting for the students new standup desks with rollers, stationary and wobble chairs and storage bags, the school got the call that Lakeshore would be delivering the items and sending in a team set it all up. So on a recent school day, once all of the students had headed home, the crew arrived and renovated the classroom. Once they wrapped up, Terrel put up her holiday decorations and then the school's custodial crew came in to clean and sanitize the room. Kenney said the big reveal came the next morning when Terrel welcomed them in to their fun new learning space. Although the students were aware



Courtesy photo

DOZENS OF BOXES were delivered to Connie Terrel's second grade classroom as a team from Lakeshore Learning arrived to set up the classroom with \$10,000 of educational furniture the teacher received through a grant provided by the Meemic Foundation.

their teacher was selected for the grant, they did not know when the makeover would take place so it came as an early Christmas surprise. The principal reports Terrel is now the envy of everyone in the building. "It turned out very nice, and we are excited for her," Kenney said.

Cop calls

STAFF REPORT

Police activity in the month of November was down 42.8%, a figure marked by a significant decrease in the number of officer-initiated activities. According to its monthly report to members of the Village Board, the Coal City Police Department's data shows officers initiated 185 calls, 264 fewer than the prior month. The report further notes a slight decrease in calls for service—167 compared to 176 in October. Overall, officers logged 352 calls with 225 requiring a report. Breaking down those calls, there were 103 traffic stops with the majority of those handled by two officers—Kevin Jones and Kady Sassenger. Officers handed out 25 traffic citations and responded to nine traffic crashes. The department filed four criminal and one driving under the influence charge. There were also a dozen ordinance violation citations issued last month. At the close of November total officer activity for the year was at 5,272 calls.

CCFPD announces 2021 meeting dates

PUBLIC NOTICE
The Coal City Fire Protection District's Board of Trustees will meet on the Third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 pm. at Coal City Fire Protection District's Station #2 Training Room, 1455 S. Berta Rd., Coal City. In the event a meeting time or place should change, a notice will be placed in the Coal City Courant and at the station prior to the changed meeting.
January 19, 2021
February 16, 2021
March 16, 2021
April 20, 2021
May 18, 2021
June 15, 2021
July 20, 2021
August 17, 2021
September 21, 2021
October 19, 2021
November 16, 2021
December 21, 2021
Published in the Coal City Courant on Dec 23, 2020.

Vacant seat

Brncich was the final candidate to appear before the board and shared that his background working in higher education could make him a good fit for the board seat. He told the board that he would like to be a part of the community and his work at the college level could be a plus for the district as he could provide insight on changes at that level that could be used to enhance what the district is doing here. All three candidates answered about 15 questions drafted by the sitting board. Those questions touched on a

myriad of topics from what makes a good board member, to the candidate's understanding of the district's economic and educational challenges in the years ahead. They also asked the candidates to outline their strengths and weaknesses, what they feel is the role of a board member and their view on how the district has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the close of the interviews the board moved into closed session to discuss the candidates. No action was taken. The board will announce its selection and appoint that

individual when they meet on Jan. 6. Rogers, Englehardt and Brncich all filed their nominating petitions for the consolidated election prior to the Dec. 21 deadline, as have incumbent members Gill and Hamilton.

Attorney Black files Martin estate claim notice

PUBLIC NOTICE
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GRUNDY COUNTY - IN PROBATE No. 2020 P 113
In the Matter of the Estate of Alfred R. Martin, Deceased
CLAIM NOTICE
NOTICE is given to creditors of the death of Alfred R. Martin. Letters of office as Independent Administrator were issued to Deanna Romano, 30W 265 Maple Court, Warrenville, IL 60555, whose attorney is FRANK J. BLACK, BLACK & BLACK, 201 Liberty Street, Suite 211, Morris, Illinois 60450. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Grundy County Courthouse, 111 E. Washington St., Morris, IL 60450, with the representative, or both, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice or, if mailing or delivery of a notice is required by Section 5/18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.
DEANNA ROMANO
INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATOR
Frank J. Black
Black & Black Lawyers
201 Liberty Street
Suite 211
P.O. Box 148
Morris, IL 60450
815-942-0594
Published in the Coal City Courant on Dec. 23 and 30, 2020 and Jan. 6, 2021.

Attorney Black files Lutz estate claim notice

PUBLIC NOTICE
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GRUNDY COUNTY - IN PROBATE No. 2020 P 109
In the Matter of the Estate of Jacquelyn J. Lutz, Deceased
CLAIM NOTICE
NOTICE is given to creditors of the death of Jacquelyn J. Lutz. Letters of office as Independent Co-Executors were issued to Stephen Lutz, 1150 Patterson Dr., Morris, IL 60450 and Michael Lutz, 395 Twilight Dr., Morris, IL 60450, whose attorney is FRANK J. BLACK, BLACK & BLACK, 201 Liberty Street, Suite 211, Morris, Illinois 60450. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Grundy County Courthouse, 111 E. Washington St., Morris, IL 60450, with the representative, or both, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice or, if mailing or delivery of a notice is required by Section 5/18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.
STEPHEN LUTZ
MICHAEL LUTZ
INDEPENDENT CO-EXECUTORS
Frank J. Black
Black & Black Lawyers
201 Liberty Street
Suite 211
P.O. Box 148
Morris, IL 60450
815-942-0594
Published in the Coal City Courant on Dec. 9, 16 and 23, 2020.

Attorney Black files Lutz estate claim notice

PUBLIC NOTICE
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT GRUNDY COUNTY - IN PROBATE No. 2020 P 121
In the Matter of the Estate of Lavern R. Lutz, Deceased
CLAIM NOTICE
NOTICE is given to creditors of the death of Lavern R. Lutz. Letters of office as Independent Co-Executors were issued to Stephen Lutz, 1150 Patterson Dr., Morris, IL 60450 and Michael Lutz, 395 Twilight Dr., Morris, IL 60450, whose attorney is FRANK J. BLACK, BLACK & BLACK, 201 Liberty Street, Suite 211, Morris, Illinois 60450. Claims against the estate may be filed in the Office of the Clerk of the Court at Grundy County Courthouse, 111 E. Washington St., Morris, IL 60450, with the representative, or both, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice or, if mailing or delivery of a notice is required by Section 5/18-3 of the Probate Act of 1975, the date stated in that notice. Any claim not filed on or before that date is barred. Copies of a claim filed with the clerk must be mailed or delivered to the representative and to the attorney within 10 days after it has been filed.
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201 Liberty Street
Suite 211
P.O. Box 148
Morris, IL 60450
815-942-0594
Published in the Coal City Courant on Dec. 23 and 30, 2020 and Jan. 6, 2021.

Coal Bin to dispose of property

PUBLIC NOTICE
LEGAL NOTICE
Notice is hereby given, that pursuant to Section 40 of the Self-Storage Facility Act, State of Illinois, a sale or other disposition of property by COAL BIN STORAGE INC will be held online at www.BID13.com, auction ending on January 6, 2021 1:00 PM, to sell or dispose of the personal property of the following person, Nicholas Grygiel, 797 W. Cermak Rd, Braidwood, IL 60408, Unit A39, to enforce a lien for storage pursuant to the self-storage facility act, in the amount of \$380.00, plus attorney fees & costs.
Published in the Coal City Courant on Dec. 23 and 30, 2020.

Coal Bin to dispose of property

PUBLIC NOTICE
LEGAL NOTICE
Notice is hereby given, that pursuant to Section 40 of the Self-Storage Facility Act, State of Illinois, a sale or other disposition of property by COAL BIN STORAGE INC will be held online at www.BID13.com, auction ending on January 6, 2021 1:00 PM, to sell or dispose of the personal property of the following person, Charles Haltom, 302 N. Lennox, Braceville, IL 60407, Unit G10, to enforce a lien for storage pursuant to the self-storage facility act, in the amount of \$430.00, plus attorney fees & costs.
Published in the Coal City Courant on Dec. 23, and 30, 2020.

Happy Holidays

Tammy Johnson, AAMS®
Financial Advisor

Ryan T Weimer
Financial Advisor

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Deadlines for the Prairie Shopper
Display Advertising: Thursday, 2 p.m.
Classified & Public Notices: Thursday 5 p.m.

Deadline for The Free Press Advocate, Braidwood Journal and Coal City Courant
News and Advertising: Monday, noon

E-mail: News & News Photos: news@fpnusa.com
Ads & Artwork: ads@fpnusa.com

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Eric D. Fisher, publisher
Ann Gill, editor

Heroes & Helpers make Christmas bright for Grundy kids

The non-profit Grundy County Heroes & Helpers, Inc., and local police officers, firefighters, sheriff deputies, and emergency medical service personnel celebrated Christmas with 76 children and their families through the second annual Shop with a Hero on Saturday, Dec. 12. The children were selected through an application process where families had opportunity to share about a hardship from 2020 that was making celebrating Christmas particularly difficult.

"With COVID-19 impacting us this year we had to get creative, we knew we couldn't have our event like last year where we match a hero; police, fire, sheriff, EMS with a child and send them on a shopping spree together," said Heroes & Helpers president Wendy Briley.

"We needed to be able to provide social distancing and space our families out, which I am happy to say with the help of First Christian Church and Pastor Scott Zorn we were able to successfully provide a safe, social distanced event for everyone."

Local heroes and volun-

teers shopped Dec.1 at Walmart in Morris. Each hero was given a list of necessities for the children; coats, clothes, shoes, etc. Items were then wrapped by the heroes and helpers and set aside for the big celebration day. Families were given a time slot to arrive at First Christian Church between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Dec. 12.

Upon arrival, children were assigned a local hero and helper and were invited to greet Santa, Dave DiVincenzo, for a socially distant picture. Santa sat in Santa's house with a plexi-glass window separating them. The children were able to sit in front of him on a Santa's House specially built prop.

The heroes then walked the children to tables of toys laid out by age, the children were able to pick out several toys. Once toys were picked, the children continued through the one way circle to a gift opening station where the children opened a couple of the clothing items previously purchased by the heroes.

The stations were sanitized between children assuring everything was clean and

ready for the next family. The heroes and helpers helped the families to their cars to load up all of their presents and Christmas cheer.

"The most important part of our celebration is giving children an opportunity to meet our county's heroes," said Briley. "We are so grateful and honored for all the heroes and departments throughout the entire county who came through and gave their undivided attention to the children we served this year."

"It brings me a lot of joy to see the kids come through the doors and get to see all the heroes together interacting with the kids," said Sgt. Chris Harseim, of Coal City Police Department. "It is nice to see the community come together to give back to the kids." This is Harseim's second year to participate along with his wife, Britt Harseim who also helped with shopping, wrapping, and celebrating at the event.

Due to an anonymous donor 22 bikes were able to be raffled off. Grundy County Sheriff Ken Briley surprised recipient's and then took photos with the child and their new bike.



GRUNDY COUNTY HEROES & Helpers hosted its second annual Shop with a Local Hero event and recipient Aycen Taylor was assisted at the holiday celebration by Coal City Police Department Sgt. Chris Harseim and his wife, Britt Harseim.



Courtesy photo

ON SATURDAY, DEC. 12, the non-profit Grundy County Heroes & Helpers hosted its second annual Shop with a Local Hero event, a day set aside to bring extra cheer to local children. Participants included [from left, row one]: volunteers Jordie Cory, Tasha Saltzman, recipients Thomas Hernandez, Olivia Farcus, Owen Farcus, JR Hernandez, and volunteer Shannon McConaughy. Standing in row two are Grundy County Heroes & Helper board member Becky Di Vincenzo, Sheriff Ken Briley, Dwight Fire Department Lt. Joshua Jahn, and sheriff's deputy Tony Cheshareck.

Carbon Hill adopts levy seeking \$36,814

STAFF REPORT

It's the season for adopting property tax levies, and the Carbon Hill Village Board did just that when they gathered for the December meeting.

Town officials are seeking \$36,814 in property taxes to support an annual appropriation about \$1.3 million.

Adopted on Dec. 1, the village's levy requests \$17,977 for

general corporate fund purposes that are specifically focused on administrative expenses.

The 2020 levy details the request that looks to collect \$6,000 toward salaries of village officials, \$1,842 for the municipal audit, \$8,399 to cover insurance and a total of \$1,736 for office and miscellaneous costs.

And, \$18,837 for special purposes that include \$4,667

for police protection, \$1,193 going to the water fund and \$10,125 for garbage services. The remaining dollars requested of taxpayers will go toward street lighting, insurance and Social Security.

By statute approved levies must be filed with the county clerk and recorder on or before the last Tuesday in December. Carbon Hill has fulfilled the requirement as its levy was filed with the clerk on Dec. 3.

Coal City signs onto county mitigation plan

BY ANN GILL EDITOR

The village of Coal City will participate in Grundy County's 2020 multi-jurisdictional natural hazards mitigation plan.

The Village Board approved the document that steps the county and the community on what steps to take after natural hazards including severe storms, tornados and drought.

The plan includes projects within the county and each of the 11 communities that participated.

Each of the projects included in the multi-page document are aimed to reduce the impact of natural hazards on citizens, visitors, infrastructure, property and critical facilities.

Coal City has 16 items on its list that include scheduling regular ditch inspections, installation of backup generators, replacement of the North Broadway bridge and storm water conveyance improvements.

Carbon Hill and Diamond also participated in the plan's development. Among the items outlined by the village of Carbon Hill was the development of heating and cooling stations and construction of a storm shelter.

As for the village of

Diamond, regular cleaning and maintenance of catch basins, construction of an underground tornado shelter and the construction of a trunk sewer are part of its project list.

Coal City's Village Administrator Matt Fritz represented Coal City on the county's planning team.

In other matters from the board's Dec. 9 meeting:

- Trustees agreed to make final payment to D Construction for work on the 2020 Street Improvement Plan. The total payment made to the contractor was \$17,515.95 with \$3,072.60 of that being paid out of the town's tax increment financing fund.
- The final payment for the new restroom facility in the Hope Helps playground was authorized to be made to Chamlin & Associates. The final payment was \$50,663.60.
- The village received a grant for the project that came in at total cost of \$153,750. The village engineer noted the village has received 63% of the award to date.
- At the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Board, trustees approved an interior side yard setback variance to allow for the expansion of a detached garage located at 910 S. Illinois St. The requested variance will limit the setback to one 1-

foot utilizing nearly all of the existing setback to expand the garage.

The alteration to the garage is part of larger rear yard improvement that includes the construction of an in-ground swimming pool.

- Trustees granted a corner side yard variance for the construction of a fence at 1035 E. Fifth St.
- The plan is for the fence to stop at the front of a detached garage located on the property that is located 12-feet from the eastern boundary of the property.
- Village officials note the property was subject to an action by the village to eliminate a curb cut adjacent to the railroad crossing as recommended by the federal railroad authority.
- Trustees approved purchase orders totaling \$39,650.14. Included in the bills was a \$2,063.71 payment to Quality Auto Body for repairs to an emergency management agency vehicle, \$3,862 for computer equipment for a police vehicle and \$385 for a pair of noise canceling headphones.
- The meeting scheduled for tonight [Dec. 23] has been canceled, so the board will reconvene in the new year with a meeting set for 7 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 13.

COAL CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY NEWS

Check out our digital services available 24/7 on our website at www.ccpuld.org.

Curbside Pick Up - Monday thru Thursday 9 a.m.-8 p.m., Friday 9 a.m.-6 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information on the procedures for curbside pick up go to our website at www.ccpuld.org.

Thursday, Dec. 24-Library closed in observance of Christmas Eve.

Friday, Dec. 25-Library closed

in observance of Christmas Day.

Saturday, Dec. 26-Library closed in observance of Christmas.

Monday, Dec. 28-Makerspace Mondays - 2-2:15 p.m. Every Monday we will have a different activity for you to create. Supplies are available for pickup curbside or in-library. See someone in Youth Services. Supplies are limited and registration is required.

Teen Canvas Night - 1-2 p.m.

We provide the supplies and you bring the creativity to paint your own masterpiece with Ms. Tricia. Register to receive the Zoom link and canvas to participate in the class.

Wednesday, Dec. 30- Digital Escape Room - Teen - 3:30-3:45 p.m. The Spy Apprentice Digital Escape Room: Travel the world as a Spy Apprentice, solving clues and mysteries. Difficulty: Moderate/ Hard. Registration is required.

First Farmers State Bank to merge with Bank of Pontiac

Bank of Pontiac, headquartered in Pontiac, IL and First Farmers State Bank, headquartered in Minier, IL, announced that First Farmers State Bank will merge into Bank of Pontiac.

The transaction will add banking locations in Minier, Delavan and Bloomington to the footprint of Bank of Pontiac, which presently has offices throughout Livingston County as well as in Coal City. It will bring the assets of Bank

of Pontiac to approximately \$800 million.

"We are excited to team up with First Farmers State Bank," said Bill Kauffman, President and CEO of Bank of Pontiac. "We are committed to the local business community and are confident that this partnership will bring additional strength and opportunities to First Farmers State Bank's market area."

"After more than 145 years, it's time to affiliate with an organization that we trust to continue to care for the banking needs of the communities we love," said Craig Peine, Chairman of First Farmers State Bank. "We believe that the acquisition of First Farmers State Bank by Bank of Pontiac ensures the

continuity and quality of banking services our customers deserve."

"Beyond benefitting our customers, this is a win-win for both our staff and communities," said First Farmers State Bank CEO Brian Schroeder. "As a larger community bank, Bank of Pontiac will open new doors for professional growth and development for our employees. Whether you're talking about making loans, community donations, or simply good corporate citizenship, Bank of Pontiac has an outstanding record of commitment to the communities it serves. We're sure that this will continue to be the case here in Minier, Delavan and Bloomington."

Coal City ICU nurse Allison Giordano recognized

Life-long Coal City resident Allison Giordano has made an extraordinary impact in the Intensive Care Unit at Morris Hospital over the past four years, first as a certified nursing assistant and now as RN. Those who work with her know that even the most critical patients will be in great hands when Giordano is on duty. She picks up extra shifts any time she can, works hard to build relationships with patients' families to keep them at ease, and voluntarily participates in committees as a way to give back to the hospital. Recognized as a great asset to the ICU and to Morris Hospital, Giordano was honored as the hospital's Fire Starter of the Month for November.

Giordano says she feels fortunate to have been hired as a CNA in the Morris Hospital ICU in 2016 and believes the hospital gave her a great opportunity when she stayed in the ICU after receiving her RN degree from Rasmussen College in July 2019.

"I had always been interested in health care and thought working as a CNA was a good step toward becoming an RN," said Giordano. "I like the long term aspect of the ICU setting. Each patient is so different, and the needs of each patient is constantly changing. I like the challenge."



ALISON GIORDANO of Coal City, an ICU nurse, was recognized by Morris Hospital as the Fire Starter of the Month.

started on the unit as a CNA, Clayburn could sense she is the type of person who always wants to learn more.

"Allison has such a great work ethic and always goes above and beyond," said Clayburn. "Out of concern for the patients, she willingly picks up extra hours and even extra roles if there's a need on the unit. She is concerned about others, always wants to be sure we have enough nurses to take care of our patients, and is willing to learn new roles so she can help out wherever she can."

Morris Hospital ICU Charge RN Stephanie Kelly nominated Giordano as Fire Starter of the Month and couldn't give her higher praises.

"As a charge RN, I know that when Allison is working, I have someone behind me wanting and willing to help out in any way she can, even if it means assisting with a code on another unit," said Kelly. "She is a pleasure to work with due to her skill and personality and inspires others to take the extra step."

In early civilizations, fire starters were individuals who had the important job of keeping the flame alive. With over 1,400 employees, Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers is the largest employer in Grundy County.

Morris Hospital ICU Manager Dawn Clayburn said from the time Giordano

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BE ON THE LOOKOUT for Elf boxes in Wilmington stores like the one introducing Brycen Boersma located at The Wine Cafe on Bridge Street.

Drop your change into an elf box while shopping local

Still need a last minute gift? Do your shopping in Wilmington, support the local businesses and you can make a donation to the Christian Help Association.

Over 30 merchants in the Wilmington area are displaying collection boxes with photos of cute little elves. The money collected in these boxes will be donated to the Christian Help Association to help offset the expenses of providing Christmas gifts, foods and toiletries to approximately 250 local families.

As you check out, look for a bright painted box with a photo of a cute elf or two. Deposit your change, or a few dollars or even a check. Boxes will be displayed until January 4.

The three "elves" that receive the most donations win a Chamber of Commerce gift certificate. Monetary

donations can also be mailed to CHA at 635 S. Main St., Wilmington, IL 60481.

So many families have

struggled this year. Any size donation will help make a difference. In a world that has had so much sadness and

darkness; help bring a bright smile to someone.

Cyndi Ragain
CHA volunteer



Grundy Bank lobby in the 1980's celebrating Christmas!

Merry Christmas from Grundy Bank

This has been a trying year for everyone...but we're not going to let the Covid-19 stop our officers, directors and employees from wishing you a very Merry Christmas.

It will be a different Christmas Season for all of us. We hope you're able to enjoy this special time of year with your loved ones and good friends.

Our wish for the New Year is for life to return to normal for all of us worldwide, with renewed hope for good health and much happiness.

Our banks and drive-up facilities will close at noon on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, closing on Christmas Day and New Year's Day so our employees and enjoy this special time of year.

It has been our pleasure to serve you in Morris, Wilmington and the surrounding communities of Grundy and Will counties. We Thank You for choosing Grundy Bank for your banking needs and we look forward to a healthier and more productive year in 2021.



Kevin Olson
President & CEO

Member
FDIC



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Sound-off, continued from page 4

What's it costing?

BRAIDWOOD—Braidwood city officials need to come clean with how much money and time is being spent on fulfilling FOIA requests each month. A monthly report breaking down who submitted what would definitely be beneficial. That way we know just how much money some of these FOIA cheerleaders are costing us.

Getting away with it

DIAMOND—To Sasha M. I am an independent and do not disagree with what you are saying and I am not a Trump supporter but it goes both ways. The Democratic controlled cities who allow their cities to be burned down and allow looters to destroy people's livelihoods when their businesses are destroyed is not a nice thing either. When Trump was elected in 2016 cities burned and stores were looted. I do have to ask why this is not happening now that Biden is elected? I'm not against Biden but why does that side get away with destroying people's livelihoods?

John Chiqua

Election integrity matters

BRAIDWOOD—I watched the Pennsylvania and the Wisconsin hearings. I listened to dozens of eye witnesses tell what they saw take place during ballot counting. Hundreds more signed affidavits under threat of perjury declaring irregularities they saw take place. In many states official poll watchers were ushered out of the rooms, even shoved out the doors. I saw those videos too. Windows were covered over so poll watchers could not even see into the room. Ballot counters cheered and applauded when the poll watchers were sent away. I heard the truck driver say he transported 280,000 ballots wrapped on pallets from New York to Pennsylvania. Later his trailer disappeared. I saw the video from Georgia showing ballot counters pulling rolling suitcases from under a long table draped in black after they had sent the poll watchers home for the night under the guise that they were all leaving. The ballots they removed from the suitcases were put through the machines over and over again. They sent the witnesses home but they forgot about the video running the whole time. In Wisconsin the state Supreme Court voted not to hear the evidence of fraud. Three of the judges declared it was a shame "the court could not be bothered to hear the case." Trump got 11 million more votes this time around than in 2016. Yes he won in a landslide and yes we will keep on fighting to get out the truth. There's a new book coming out next month, "Stolen." We will tell our children and grandchildren the truth about this election. The truth will never die. Chief Justices Roberts and Breyer have been texting each other and saying "we will never let Trump be re-elected." That's why the SCOTUS would not hear any election fraud cases. So much for putting aside personal opinion and partisan beliefs while on the bench.

The Joe influence

SHADOW LAKES—Remember last year when the song "Baby It's Cold Outside" became a big deal for the Me too movement? It was banned on radio stations till Joe Biden was accused and the Me too movement ended. I do.

Some kinda hero

CUSTER PARK—Margo Lane, you forgot to thank Donald Trump for not being honest about Covid-19 in January and every month thereafter. You forgot to thank him for encouraging people not to wear masks or social distancing while at rallies and parading in our streets with guns. You forgot to thank him for putting pressure on the CDC to skew numbers. And you forgot to thank him for the compassion he has shown for the 300,000 plus deaths in our country. Yes, a big thank you for your hero.

Hanging in shame

I am a person born in the 1930s. I grew up loving our country and being proud of it and what it stood for. I am now embarrassed and ashamed by it. I'm not a die-hard Republican or Democrat, but who we now have as president representing our country is so humiliating. I want to hang my head in shame. Hopefully this new year will be better and kinder.

Couldn't do better

SHADOW LAKES—What president do you think would have done this much, this fast

for a vaccine for Covid 19. But yet the Democrats were against him, the medical community which is controlled by Democrats said that oxychlorosene was dangerous but yet it has been used for 55 years with no problems. And that has now been used recently by the medical community. Why did they wait so long? And do you think that Biden would have gotten this done this fast? Or Clinton? No, I don't because they prefer to keep the country locked down. I am for small business, because I was small business and small business employs more people throughout the nation than big businesses. And why is it you can't go to church in a lot of these Democrat controlled states but you can go to Walmart and Target and all the other big stores that are really nonessential. That includes Menards. So tell me, where is the logic? This statement is directed to Gary Weidner and his wife, Gloria and what in the world has Trump done wrong? Even your retirement incomes have increased dramatically until Covid 19 which Nancy Pelosi was in Wuhan China back in November 2019. Dan Hill

Just plain stupid

GARDNER—I don't understand why Kamala Harris and Cuomo of New York refuse to take the vaccine because it came out under President Trump. Is this political or are all you Democrats really stupid?

Hunter who?

WILMINGTON—I didn't vote for Hunter.

A reality check

COAL CITY—If you are past middle age you may remember hearing stories many years ago about finding Japanese soldiers in remote areas of the Pacific who still had their uniforms and weapons and were not aware that World War II had ended. These soldiers remind me of the fanatical Trump supporters who still fly their flags and keep signs in their yards despite the fact that more than 81 million Americans rejected the lies, corruption, incompetence and divisive tactics of the Russian puppet who inhabits the White House. So it's time to stop drinking the koolaid and accept the reality that your hero is going back to the golf course if he avoids prison.

Communism defined

Last week five callers used the word communism incorrectly by equating it with authoritarianism or with a single party dictatorship. So let's define our terms according to the dictionary. Communism: Any economic theory or system based on the ownership of all property by the community as a whole. Socialism: Any of various theories or systems of ownership and operation of the means of production and distribution by the society or the community rather than by private individuals with all members of society or the community sharing in the work and the products. And to those who don't know, a dictionary is a book filled with definitions of words and their usage. So if there are billionaires in Russia and China it would mean everyone is a billionaire and we know that's not true. Ergo, these countries are not communist but like capitalism, most of the wealth is accrued by the elite who don't really believe. Penny Lane




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Feel regal drinking a Crown Royal Flush

The rebirth of classic cocktails over the last decade has led a new generation to appreciate both the cocktails of yesterday and the spirits that fuel these classics. Let's face it, whiskey as a category is probably bigger now than it has ever been.

Bourbon, scotch, and Irish whiskies are basking in the glow of craft cocktail boom, while other whiskies are being excluded. One such whiskey is literally the crown jewel of whiskies from our neighbors to the north, the legendary Crown Royal.

First a brief history lesson. Crown Royal is a specially blended product from the Seagram's line that was created in 1939 to commemorate King George VI and Queen Elizabeth's visit to Canada. This was the first time that a reigning monarch had visited Canada, and Seagram's blended over 50 whiskies for the

Crown formulation and designed the now iconic bottle for the occasion.

Canadians may have forgotten the royal visit, but they remembered the whiskey. The new blend from Seagram's was an instant success. The Crown Royal blend quickly gained popularity in Canada before eventually finding its way to the US in the 1960s.

Shortly after introduction to the US market, Crown became the top selling Canadian whiskey. Sales of Crown Royal were still growing as of 2019, a year in which nearly 7 million cases were sold in the United States alone.

What kind of resources does it take to turn out such a high level of production?



THE SUNDAY COCKTAIL
Brian Rung

The main facility in Manitoba is located on Lake Winnipeg where the distillery process 10,000 bushels of grain each day, along with nearly 1 million gallons of water.

The aging whiskey is then stored in 2 million barrels across 50 unique warehouses, each of which adds a little something different to the complex blend. Some warehouses may store barrels that have been charred, some allow more or less fluctuations in temperature, and so on.

This wide variety of variables used in the aging process gives the distillery nearly endless options when blending. The end result is a high-quality, approachable blended whiskey that doesn't require much (if any dilution) to drink neat.

Think of Crown Royal as what the automotive market refers to as "affordable luxury". It is a quality blend that will stand on its own as a sipping whiskey, but one that can be mixed into a wide variety of cocktails without overpowering the drink.

Crown Royal performs well as a mixer when substituted for other types of whiskey in classic cocktails, and the "Crown and Coke" is one of the most popular mixed drinks on the planet. The Old Fashioned, Manhattan, and Whiskey Sour can all be made with Crown.

In addition to the classics, there are a few cocktails that the brand has shared through their website that are best made with Crown Royal. One such cocktail is the light, sweet, and refreshing Crown Royal Flush.

The Crown Royal Flush is one of two cranberry cocktails promoted by Crown Royal, the other is the Crown Royal Red Snapper. Crown is unique in the whiskey world in that it mixes well with cranberry juice.

Vodka or gin are most commonly paired with cranberry juice, but Crown's light mix of fruit and vanilla notes are a perfect complement to fruit juice and/or fruit

liqueurs.

Other than Crown and cranberry, the Crown Royal Flush calls for peach schnapps. Peach schnapps is the unsung hero of several contemporary cocktails, including the Jolly Rancher and the Fuzzy Navel.

If you have options when shopping for peach schnapps, choose Bol's or DeKuyper. There are a few cheaper options, but the less expensive options are of a lower quality and have a dominant "artificial" taste to them.

In the mixology world, when a drink calls for cranberry, the drink calls for Ocean Spray Cranberry. Ocean Spray Cranberry is found behind nearly every commercial bar around the globe. Make sure that you pick up the standard unsweetened variety, avoid blended and artificially sweetened juices.

Crown Royal Flush preparation is straight forward: shake with ice, strain into glass, serve. The blend of Crown and cranberry is a nice departure from Crown and Coke, or Crown and 7. You probably have a bottle of Crown from last year's Christmas party in your liquor cabinet, why not give this one a

try?

The Crown Royal Flush is built in a shaker, and served in a rocks glass.

Combine in shaker:
1 1/4 oz. Crown Royal
1/4 oz. peach schnapps

3 oz. cranberry juice
Shake with ice, strain into ice-filled rocks glass

Garnish with orange peel
Until next week, enjoy responsibly.



Button worth \$637

ARE YOU the lucky winner? Whoever owns button number 544 in the Wilmington Chamber's 2020 button drawing will receive an early gift. The winning number was drawn Monday and the split the pot winnings are \$637! To claim the award the owner must present the button at the Free Press Advocate office, 111 S. Water St., Wilmington. Button owner 544 has two weeks to claim their prize before a second number will be drawn. Chamber president Steve Evans thanked everyone who purchase a button, noting that the other half of the drawing proceeds will be used for beautification in downtown Wilmington.

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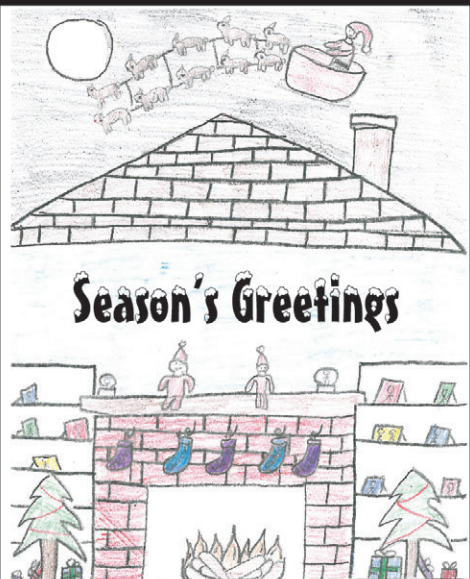
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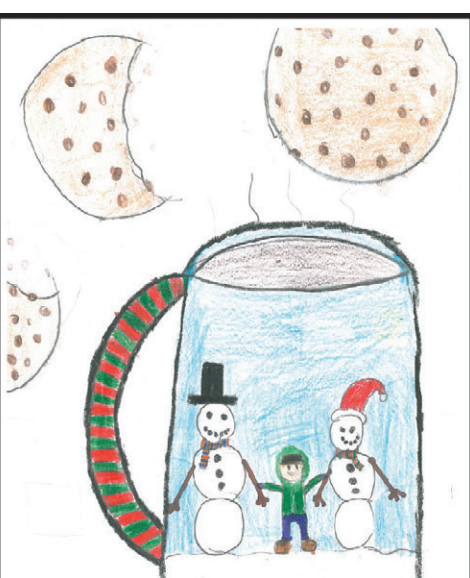
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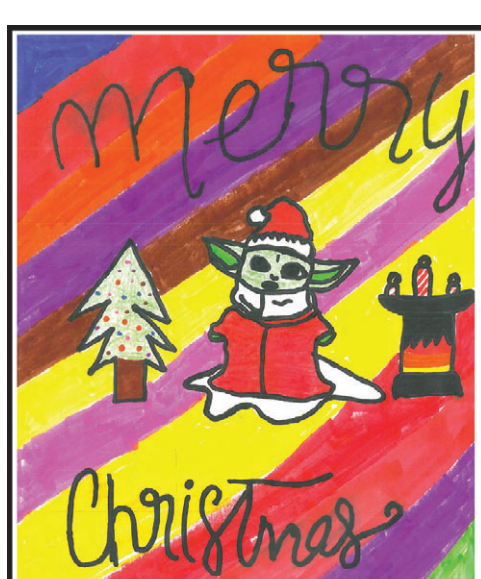


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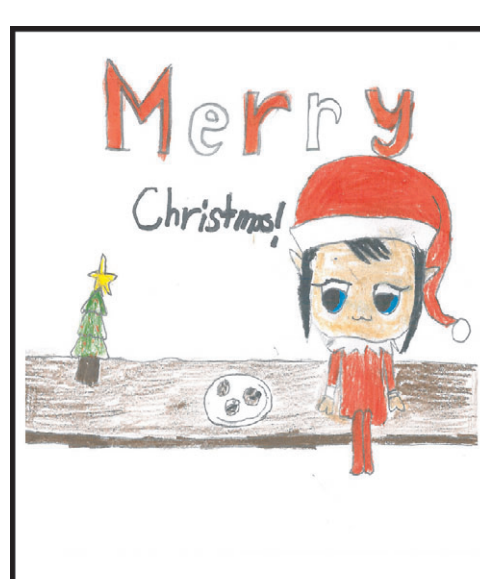


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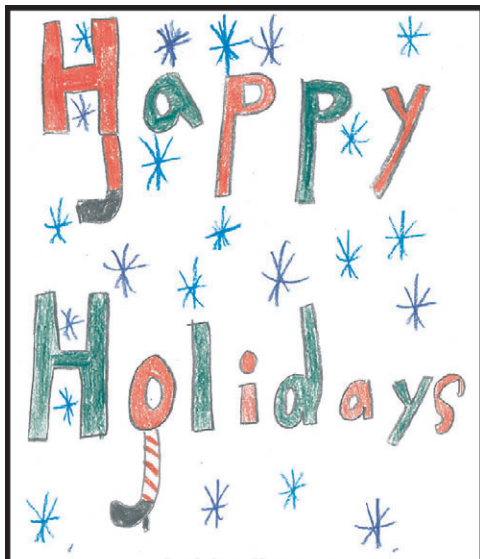


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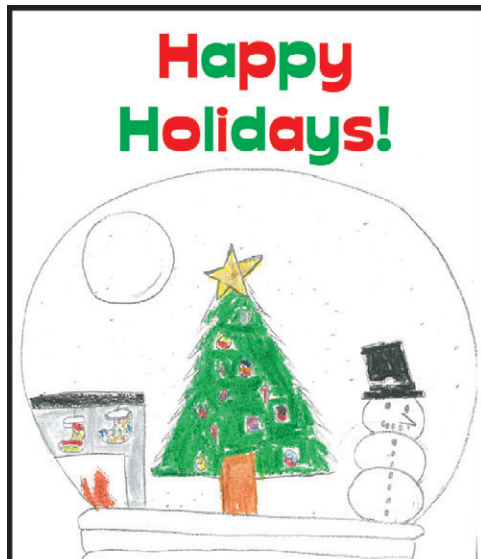


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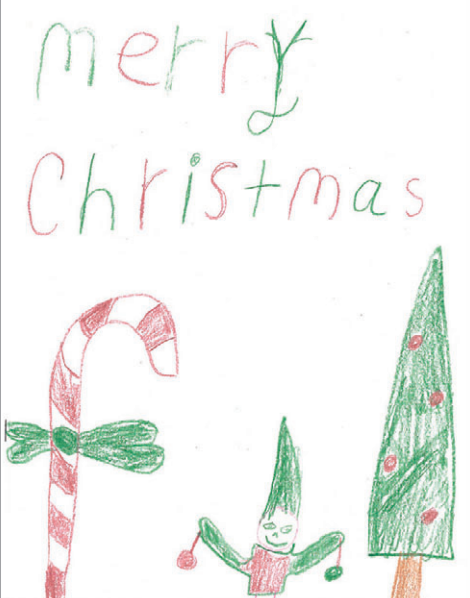
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Don't know what to give a teen? How about giving a good book

BY BRIDGET KNOWLES
 WHS STUDENT REPORTER

Although this year has been challenging, The Wilmington Public Library District and the Wilmington High School Library are both open. Students can now check out books to read over winter break.

Around this time every year, The Wilmington Public Library sees an increase in books checked out over winter vacation which starts Friday. Many people have time off of work and school, which gives them more time to cozy up by the fire and read a good book.

However, due to the pandemic, the library has seen an increase in digital reading. "Any reading of any nature is extremely beneficial," commented Maria Meachum, the public library's director.

Books can be checked out inside the Wilmington Public Library, or can be picked up from their contactless pick up locker. WHS students can also check out books from the WHS library before they leave for winter break.

The WHS librarian, Ms. Turner, and the WHS sophomore english teacher, Ms. Keane, compiled a top 10 list of books they think students would enjoy, to keep their reading over break. Books on this list would also make great Christmas gifts.

- *Throne of Glass* by Sara Maas
- *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard
- *The Program* by Suzanne Young
- *Between Shade of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys
- *They Both Die at the end* by Adam Silvera
- *The Amulet Series* by Kazu Kibuishi
- *Scott Pilgrim Series* by Bryan O'Malley
- *One of Us is Lying* by Karen McManus
- *It* by Stephen King

- *Naruto* by Masahi Kishimoto
- Here are some additional book recommendations from Sue Eckhardt, the youth services manager at the Wilmington Public Library District.
- *The Mortal Instruments Series* by Cassandra Clare

Genre; Contemporary Fantasy, Urban Fantasy
 Book 1: *City of Bones*

Synopsis: In New York City, a seemingly ordinary teenager named Clary Fray (Lily Collins) learns that she is descended from a line of shadowhunters - half-angel warriors who protect humanity from evil forces. After her mother (Lena Headey) disappears, Clary joins forces with a group of shadowhunters and enters Downworld, an alternate realm filled with demons, vampires and a host of other creatures. Clary and her companions must find and protect an ancient cup that holds the key to her mother's future.

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Genre; Historical Fiction, Tragedy
 Synopsis: This exemplary novel of the Jazz Age has been acclaimed by generations of readers. The story is of the fabulously wealthy Jay Gatsby and his new love for the beautiful Daisy Buchanan, of lavish parties on Long Island at a time when The New York Times noted "gin was the national drink and sex the national obsession," it is an exquisitely crafted tale of America in the 1920s.

- *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Series* by Douglas Adams

Genre: Science Fiction, Humorous Fiction
 Synopsis: In this collection of novels, Arthur Dent is introduced to the galaxy at a large when he is rescued by an alien friend seconds before Earth's destruction, and embarks on a series of amazing

adventures, from the mattress swamps of Sqornshellous Zeta to the Restaurant at the End of the Universe.

- *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman

Genre: Adventure, Fantasy, Comedy
 Synopsis: This tale of a handsome farm boy who, aided by a drunken swordsman and a gentle giant, rescues a beautiful princess named Buttercup comes with a slyly humorous, metafictional edge: Goldman claims to have merely abridged an earlier text by one "S Morgenstern" (actually a pseudonym) and peppers his text with clever commentary.

- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon

Genre: Crime Fiction, Fantasy
 Synopsis: Despite his overwhelming fear of interacting with people, Christopher, a mathematically gifted, autistic boy, decides to investigate the murder of a neighbor's dog and uncovers secrets about his mother.

- *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult

Genre: Domestic Fiction, Women's Fiction, Tragedy
 Synopsis: Conceived to provide a bone marrow match for her leukemia-stricken sister, teenage Anna begins to question her moral obligations in light of countless medical procedures, and decides to fight for the right to make decisions about her own body.

- *The Inheritance Cycle* by Christopher paolini

Genre: Science Fiction, Fantasy Fiction, Dystopian Fiction
 Synopsis: The series that began with *Eragon* follows poor farm boy Eragon as he grows into a master swordsman who fights alongside his dragon, Saphira, to help save the Empire from evil and darkness.

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Coloring contest underway for those ages 3-6

Wilmington VFW Post 5422 Auxiliary is sponsoring a patriotic coloring contest for boys and girls ages 3 through 6.

Entry forms to be colored by youngsters from Wilmington and Braidwood can be picked up at the VFW, 557 W. Baltimore St., Wilmington.

Winners of the local contest will be entered into a District competition. The name, age and address of child must be written on the back of each entry.

Deadline to enter is Jan. 15, 2021. For more details call Kathy at 815-823-4324 or 815-926-2651.

Vaccine optimism driving up gas prices

Illinois gas prices have risen 8.7 cents per gallon in the past week, averaging \$2.26/g Monday, according to GasBuddy's daily survey of 4,378 stations.

Gas prices in Illinois are 12.0 cents per gallon higher than a month ago and stand 24.1 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois is priced at \$1.94/g while the most expensive is \$2.83/g, a difference of 89.0 cents per gallon.

The national average price of gasoline has risen 4.8 cents per gallon in the last week, averaging \$2.21/g. The national average is up 9.8 cents per gallon from a month ago and stands 34.5 cents per gallon lower than a year ago.

"The sudden spike in gas prices last week was brought on by a continued rise in the price of oil, which jumped last week to nearly \$50 per barrel, the highest we've seen since March, when prices collapsed

due to COVID-19," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis for GasBuddy.

"While last week's gas price surge isn't likely to repeat this week, it could be a sign of things to come in the year ahead," said De Haan.

"A weakening U.S. dollar and vaccine optimism continued to push oil higher last week, along with stock markets. While some are wrongly pointing to the coming shift in the White House as driving up prices, I can assure motorists that what we're seeing has nothing to do with such a change and everything to do with market optimism that demand will rise, and the weaker dollar which makes oil cheaper to anyone holding non-dollar currencies, putting upward pressure on demand."

GasBuddy's survey updates 288 times every day from the most diverse list of sources covering nearly 150,000 stations nationwide, the most comprehensive and up-to-date in the country.

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Following in his grandfather's footsteps, Brent is the grandson of well respected Pharmacist Tom Hunt. Tom was the owner/operator of Hunt's Pharmacy in Wilmington for over 25 years.

Go with a bar of soap

Here is a tip to reduce waste related to soap and shampoo. Use bars instead of liquids because they are easier to use completely, have less packaging and save the cost of transporting water, since you supply that when you lather them at home.

Soap bars last longer if you allow them to dry between uses. If a soap dish holds water, consider placing a bottle cap under the bar to keep it dry.

State Police bust driver hauling pot

If an Ohio man thought cannabis was now legal in Illinois, he learned real quick that it's not when you're carrying 103 pounds with the intent to sell it.

An Illinois State Police (ISP) District 5 unit conducted a traffic stop in Grundy County Tuesday that resulted in multiple felony charges and the seizure of three firearms (1 stolen), 103 pounds of cannabis and \$20,259 cash.

The State Trooper pulled a passenger vehicle over on Interstate 80 eastbound at milepost 112 just south of Route 47 in Morris after observing a traffic violation. Probable cause to search the vehicle was then established.

A subsequent search of the vehicle resulted in three carryon bags containing 103 pounds of cannabis, three firearms and a fourth bag with \$20,259 cash.

Henry O. Umpierre, 33, of Cleveland, OH was arrested on multiple felony charges including, attempt to manufacture/deliver cannabis-more than 5,000 grams (a Class X felony); Attempt cannabis tracking-More than 5,000 grams (Class 1); Possession of cannabis-more than 5,000 grams (Class 1); Conspire/possession of a weapon by convicted felon (Class 2); Possession of a stolen firearm (Class 2) and Armed violence (Class X).

Umpierre is being lodged at the Grundy County Jail and has been formally charged by the Grundy County State's Attorney.

Umpierre's bond was set at \$150,000 (10% applied). All subjects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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Pritzker could have done the responsible thing to balance the budget

"What if" games are never quite accurate, but I don't think it's a stretch to say that Gov. JB Pritzker had the opportunity and most probably the votes to balance the state budget with an income tax hike during 2019, his "honey-moon" year with the General Assembly.

Instead, the governor came into office and proposed what was essentially a pension payment holiday and other magic budgetary solutions.

I was told in early 2019 by a high-level administration figure with influence over the budget that the Pritzker administration would not take the "easy" route of raising taxes and wanted to instead focus on the "hard" choices.

But hiking the flat tax to balance the budget ahead of a hoped-for 2020 change to the state constitution to allow for a graduated income tax would not have been the "easy" route. A pension holiday was the easiest route he could've possibly taken. There was nothing "hard" about that, except for

convincing legislators that shorting the pension funds was the right thing to do.

Pritzker's budget was eventually saved by an unexpected tax receipt boost in the spring which eliminated the immediate need for a pension holiday, budget cuts or a new revenue infusion.

And then came 2020, the mother of all lousy years.

The international pandemic has punched all states and local governments in the fiscal gut. But the lack of preparedness hit Illinois even harder.

The state's current revenue situation isn't that bad in comparison to last fiscal year, partly because the state income tax filing deadline was moved from April to July, which is in the current fiscal year.



CAPITOL FACTS

Rich Miller

But because the governor's Fair Tax failed, and because the current fiscal year's budget depended upon those new revenues plus a nearly \$5 billion federal bailout from the federal government, the state budget office last month projected a \$3.9 billion deficit for the current fiscal year, which is now almost half over.

The immediate deficit projection has been lowered by \$2 billion because the state is borrowing that money from the Federal Reserve, less than half the \$5 billion it was eligible to receive.

That borrowing leaves the state with a \$1.9 billion or so hole to fill by June 30th, and Gov. Pritzker outlined \$711 million in unilateral cuts last week.

\$75 million of those reductions relies on an agreement

with AFSCME, and the union appeared to reject the notion out of hand. Bruce Rauner's attempt to wipe AFSCME out of existence backfired so badly that the union has been strengthened to the point where even asking for minor concessions is beyond difficult.

The governor pointed to the failure of his Fair Tax proposal as a big reason for the need to make cuts, and AFSCME countered by saying it was also all-in on the graduated income tax. But while Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden lost Sangamon County to President Donald Trump by just 4.3 percentage points (down from Trump's 9-point winning margin in 2016), the Fair Tax lost AFSCME's home-base county by a whopping 26 points.

Heckuva job. We can't go back and change history and it's often maddening to engage in the exercise. But, if the governor had just done the responsible thing in 2019 and used a flat

tax hike to balance the budget when he could've drawn on an almost infinitely deep well of goodwill among his super-majority legislature, we wouldn't be in nearly this mess right now. And he could've then painted the 2020 constitutional amendment vote as a very real and substantial income tax cut for 97 percent of the populace instead of the few dollars he ended up promising.

I'm only writing this now because when I laid out this very scenario in an early 2019 meeting with that high-level Pritzker person who has significant budget influence, I was laughed at and waved off with "We're not taking the easy way out with a tax increase, Rich."

Also, the governor said that he'll need the General Assembly's cooperation to

make more cuts than the \$711 million he outlined. That's not totally true.

Under Rauner, the vast majority of the state's budget was put on auto-pilot, either by statute or by judges. A big chunk of that money falls under various consent decrees entered into by the state. The administration could attempt to change those consent decrees without any help from the legislature.

But doing so would bring enormous heat on the governor because those consent decrees involve things like minimum funding and staffing levels for the state's care of children.

Rich Miller also publishes *Capitol Fax*, a daily political newsletter, and *CapitolFax.com*.

Exelon employees give over \$2.9 million

The communities where Exelon Generation employees live and work will receive more than \$4.4 million to support critical needs, thanks to the nuclear power plant employees and the Exelon Foundation.

The nuclear power plant employees pledged more than \$2.9 million to over 2,000 different charities in their surrounding communities this year. And for every dollar pledged by employees, the Exelon Foundation donated 50 cents to their local United Way, bringing the total donation to more than \$4.4 million.

At Exelon's three area generating stations: Dresden, Braidwood and LaSalle, employees pledged more than \$470,000 to 440 charities during this year's Employee Giving Campaign.

Organizations supported include Special Connections of Grundy County; Grundy Area Pads; Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago; Community Care Center (Braidwood Food Pantry); Kuzma Care Cottage Community; Joliet Area Community Hospice; National

Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); We Care of Grundy County; Midwest Veterans Association; Illinois Valley Food Pantry; Gary Sinise Foundation; and more.

"You can feel that giving back is embedded solidly within the Exelon culture, and employees do that in so many ways - through donations but also by giving their time and talent in the form of labor and volunteerism," said Karen Nall, executive director of the United Way of Grundy County. "It's truly feels like neighbors taking care of neighbors."

"This has been a challenging year for many, and our nuclear power plant employees answered the call for help, giving to charities and causes that mean the most to them," said Bryan Hanson, Exelon chief generation officer. "Our people have strong bonds with the communities that surround our nuclear plants. Their generosity will bring resources to organizations that need them, along with hope and relief for the people who rely on them."

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YOUR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

for the Holidays

Merry Christmas from the dedicated employees who bring you the local newspaper, in print and online, every week. It's been a challenging 9 months for all of us but we are thankful to all of you who still believe in supporting local journalism. May your family be safe and there be peace on earth this holiday season.

The Free Press Newspapers
Coal City Wilmington



Warriors earn citizenship awards



Courtesy photos

COAL CITY MIDDLE School has announced its first semester Citizenship Award recipients. School staff selected one boy and one girl per grade level—both in-person and remote learners—for the award. Recipients are students who displayed CCMS's four C's—Commitment, Compassion, Courage and Communication. Sixth graders earning the honor were [from left] in-person learners Brody D'Orazio and Maisy Franklin. And, remote learners [not pictured] were Savannah Flood and Liam Marquez.



SEVENTH GRADERS HONORED with Coal City Middle School's first semester Citizenship Award were [from left] in-person learners Sydney Larson and Colin Schimandle. And, remote learners [not pictured] Rhylan Brackett and Austin Harding.



FOUR EIGHTH GRADERS at Coal City Middle School were named the first semester Citizenship Award recipients. The honorees were selected by staff based on the school's four C's that include commitment to school and others, compassion by choosing what is right in the face of opposition, courage for behavior driven by respect for one another and communication by using positive words and actions. Eighth grade recipients were [from left] in-person learners Calleigh Vanderwerken and William Johnke and remote learners [not pictured] McKenzie Messina and Owen Quarles.

GAVC Agriscience teacher awarded CASE grant

Elise Hackett, agriscience educator at GAVC, is one of 38 teachers nationwide to be awarded a CASE Implementation Grant sponsored by Corteva Agriscience. This grant will allow Hackett to participate in a professional development institute for Plant Science for the Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) course in the GAVC agriculture program.

CASE is an instructional system that is changing the culture of agriculture programs in the United States through intense teacher professional development; inquiry-based, student-focused lessons; assessment; and certification. CASE equips teachers to elevate student experiences in the agriculture classroom, and prepares stu-

dents for success in college and careers emphasizing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

CASE Director Nancy Trivette looks forward to seeing the impact these funds will have on both new and established CASE programs. "It's a pleasure to once again announce the grantees. It's always great to provide funding through the generous support of Corteva Agriscience™ for implementation of CASE nationwide."

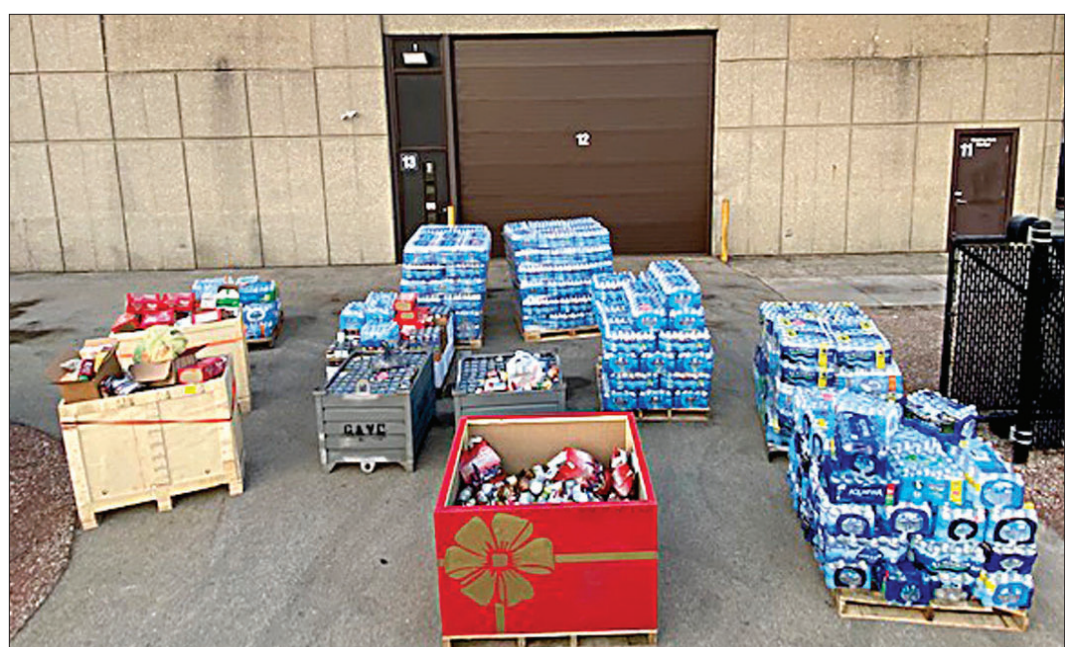
With the goal of supporting workforce development and sparking student interest in enriching lives through agriculture, Corteva Agriscience™ has offered this grant program for the past eight years to public and private schools and universities to assist with the implementation of CASE.

Teachers were able to apply for grants up to \$5,000 for implementing the CASE program in their schools including teacher professional development at a CASE Institute and purchasing classroom equipment and resources.

"Corteva Agriscience is proud to support agricultural educators through CASE. This year it's even more important to provide teachers all the support we can as many are navigating the challenges of teaching a hands-on curriculum in a virtual setting," says Ronda Hamm, Global Academic Relations Manager.

For more information visit case4learning.org, corteva.us, and Ag Program Website.

GAVC students, staff show kindness



Courtesy photos

STUDENTS, FACULTY AND staff at Grundy Area Vocational Center [GAVC] did their part to make the holiday season a bit brighter for Grundy County families in need. Between Dec. 7 and 17, these individuals and a few former students brought in non-perishable food and bottled water as part of the vocational center's Cans for Kindness campaign. On Dec. 15, the center had collected 2,600 items and in the final two days the total donation count had climbed to an impressive 17,011 items. The food and water is being distributed between four charities—Help for Hope in Coal City, the food pantry at the Church of Hope in Gardner, New Beginnings Women's Help Center in Morris, and the Grundy County Health Department's micro pantries. The center had a little fun with the collection in the form of a friendly competition between programs. Welding students came out on top and received individually wrapped cookies for their effort. Rounding out the top five in order of placement were: IIT/CISCO, health occupations, criminal justice [Morris campus], and early childhood [Morris campus].

Kinzinger gives thumbs up to relief bill

After voting in favor of the year-end stimulus package, H.R. 133 - Consolidated Appropriations Act, Congressman Adam Kinzinger (IL-16) released the following statement touting the many wins included for the American people:

"Once again, the American people have been caught in the middle of a political standoff. Still, I'm glad to see so many Republican priorities included in this funding package, and relieved that our Democrat colleagues finally decided to negotiate in good faith on a COVID-19 relief package that we could get passed through Congress and on to the President's desk.

"Despite this package being long overdue, I was proud to vote in its favor because of the many provisions that will positively impact the American people facing the hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding measure includes

many bipartisan wins that take important steps to help provide COVID-19 relief through funding for vaccines, PPP loans, unemployment insurance, and \$13 billion to support the agriculture sector, among other provisions.

"The package also includes spending bills that will protect our energy sector, our environment, our national security and cyber defenses, and our consumers. Several of my own bills have been included in this package like measures increase energy efficiency in the public and private sectors, and provisions to secure our telecom and information networks and their supply chains from foreign threats. The funding package also expands the telehealth grant program authorized under the CARES Act, ends the egregious practice of surprise billing, and funds community health centers (CHCs), and includes many other reforms to protect patients and taxpayers."

A few of the different legislations sponsored by Kinzinger included in the year-end H.R. 133 funding package include:

- H.R. 1430, the Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Support Act - This legislation would reauthorize an existing program that encourages the use of energy efficient technologies by generating electricity and capturing heat (that would otherwise be wasted) to provide useful thermal energy.

- H.R. 2044, the Smart Building Acceleration Act - This bill assists in the building sector of adopting smart building technology to increase energy efficiency by requiring the Department of Energy (DOE) to establish a Federal Smart Building Program.

- H.R. 3079, the Energy Savings Through Public-Private Partnerships Act - The bill requires federal facilities to implement energy and water efficient measures.

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"Support Coal City High School Athletes"

Tucker named to Knox College dean's list

Madeline Tucker, of Morris, has been named to the Knox College dean's list of distinguished students for the 2020 fall term.

To be named to the dean's list, a student must have a grade point average of 3.6 or better on a 4.0 scale.

Tucker, a graduate of Coal City High School, is majoring in neuroscience and psychology at Knox.

Knox College is located in Galesburg, IL.

Krause earns spot on dean's list

More than 200 students were named to the fall 2020 dean's list at Iowa Wesleyan University including Benjamin Krause of Mazon.

To be a part of the IWU's dean's list the individual must have a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

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IESA far short of funds to continue

BY SHAWN LONG
SPORTS WRITER

It's been two weeks since the Illinois Elementary School Association appealed to the public to support a 'Go Fund Me' page to keep the organization operational. If the IESA doesn't get financial help by April, it will be forced to close.

As of Monday the Go Fund Me page reached \$22,200, far short of their \$500,000 goal. While it's not clear what will happen to middle school sports if the IESA dissolves, Coal City Athletic Director Dan Hutchings says it's a waiting game now.

"I haven't been involved in any discussions on that," said Hutchings. "I'm sure that there will be talks after the new year. I'm sure there's going to be some discussion amongst schools."

Hutchings is hopeful that everything will work itself out and they can get things started

back up. "I'm just hoping that we can get going especially to have a track season and get to that point in time. The IESA is very well put together and they do a nice job with everything. We usually get an email at least monthly if not every two weeks from the Executive Director Steve Endsley."

It would definitely be a change to middle school sports if the state lost the IESA. The main focus right now is getting students back to school for full days before anything else. Then, they'll go from there, says Hutchings.

"It would change a few things with state tournaments but it would be a situation that we would decide when faced with that decision. But we haven't had any discussions about it, so I don't know what would happen. The government is making the decisions in what we are and not allowed to do and sports are affected. The No. 1 thing is we've got to get students back in front of teachers for full days. We're academ-

ic institutions. We've got to make sure that we educate our kids. That's important."

What's been the impact of having a statewide organization that puts on state tournaments for 7th and 8th grade athletes? One of the best to experience the workings of the IESA is former middle school baseball coach Jerry McDowell.

He said there is no better influence on aspiring athletes than to watch them advance in a state series and see them achieve their goal. He saw first-hand how winning state or even making it to the state level builds confidence in young teens.

McDowell as led five teams to state, winning three titles. He has nothing but great things to say about how IESA Executive Director Steve Endsley has run things for years.

"We won in 1996 and 1997," said McDowell. "Then, we won it in 2013, got third in '14 and won it again in 15. It just means a lot because a lot of schools don't get involved with IESA or a

regular junior high sports association and you just pick up games and play on your own. The IESA is so well organized and has got everything set right there for you and Endsley has done a great job organizing that."

McDowell has also been a referee for the IESA and says he's loves working for an organization that puts its heart and soul into making everything run smoothly.

"I've been involved with IESA for state baseball and I've reffed the state tournaments for 22 years. Also I've served on the committee for state baseball so he puts a lot into, he puts his heart into it and it's a shame because a lot of people have struggled during this pandemic and hopefully, we can get these vaccines going and get it straightened out and get the kids back on the playing field playing sports again. I'm hoping the IESA can get back to going full speed."

Coaler golf coaches score hole-in-one with dream team picks

BY SHAWN LONG
SPORTS WRITER

The Coal City golf program is entering its 33rd year thanks, in part, to Pat Halloran who took the coaching position back 1987.

Halloran coached for six years at Coal City, leading the team to state in two consecutive seasons, something no team after it has ever done. He held a 60-27 record in that time (1987-1993). That team alone could be a dream team.

Those two consecutive title runs happened four years into the program after getting through the first three years when it seemed players trying out were mostly inexperienced.

"It was a great experience for the students to get that far," said Halloran. "Especially since we only had golf for three or four years prior to that time frame. When we first started golf, we had 35-40 guys tryout and nobody had really played."

The first state qualifying year for the Coalers was in

1991-92 when they were 14-6, falling just outside the top 10 teams. In 1992, Bishop McNamara was the strongest golf team in the state.

A year later the Coalers came back to state but fell just outside placement behind Addison Driscoll and Bloomington Central Catholic.

While Halloran had many memories in the sport, his favorite memory was the overall state experience where the competition was top of the line.

"You're up against schools like Bishop McNamara and other private schools where some of those students had different chances to play in summer tournaments."

When they got past who they were facing, the student-athletes had to work out a few kinks but after that, they were good to go and the tournament was a great experience.

"It was exciting at state. It was kind of nerve wrecking," Halloran said. "Golf is an interesting sport--at that time you couldn't talk to the golfer when

they're out on the course but it was exciting for the students. We definitely had some jitters. Some of the guys had to spend a little extra time on the driving range after the first round trying to work things out but it was a well run tournament so it was a really neat experience."

The school send off before the state tournament was really something he can never forget says Halloran.

"Coach John Cullick, the athletic director, always did a nice job of having donuts and juice in the cafeteria and the other students came to say good luck."

On those teams were some tremendous golfers including Mike Hines, a player ideal for a golf dream team.

Hines was a top golfer on the team that also played basketball for Halloran. Hines was a power stroker.

"He was a big and strong kid," said Halloran. "He could hit the ball a long way."

Dave Halloway
Halloway, captured the first ever state trophy for Coalers state golf.

He was the top golfer from that team as he came back to state as a senior and became the only Coaler to ever medal, placing seventh in 1993-94 season.

He also went to state with those two teams as a freshman and a sophomore. Halloran brought him up because he was talented at such a young age.

"Dave Halloway was an underclassmen on that team. He was one of those kids that had done well in the offseason with local golf professionals like John Keegan over at the Morris Country Club. He was a natural player."

Allen & Adam Wills
The twins were a big part of the state tournament teams. They were very good putters.

"The Wills twins probably showed the biggest improvement in their junior and senior years," added Halloran. "They had really good short game and they were really good around the green. They were really big natural athletes. They played some hockey and other sports that weren't the norm. They were good baseball players and all these guys were multi-sport athletes."

Halloran also selected Brian Cleek, Jim Martis and Todd Berta.

Todd Hansen
Hansen, who played on Halloran's first team was very good because he had experi-

ence. "He had taken an interest in golf prior to us even having a team," Halloran said.

He was one of the lowest scorers of that time. What made it more impressive was where they had to play their home meets.

"He was one of our golfers that could shoot consistently in the 40's. It was kind of difficult starting out. We didn't know what to expect. We didn't have a home course. We played at a variety of places. There was a course out on Essex Road everyone referenced it as the 'Nuclear Nine' and that was our home course."

Dave Sinkular took over the coaching duties in 2004. He stayed in the position 13 seasons, where he led the Coalers to a 135-98 record.

"My first year was the year we won conference and got three kids down to the sectional tournament," said Sinkular. "We also had two to the state tournament."

Cody Scerine
Cody was Sinkular's first pick and he was a great first golfer. Scerine went to state in 2004, placing just outside the top 50 with a score of 82. Scerine's grandpa ran the golf course so Cody was always around the game giving him numerous chances to better his swing.

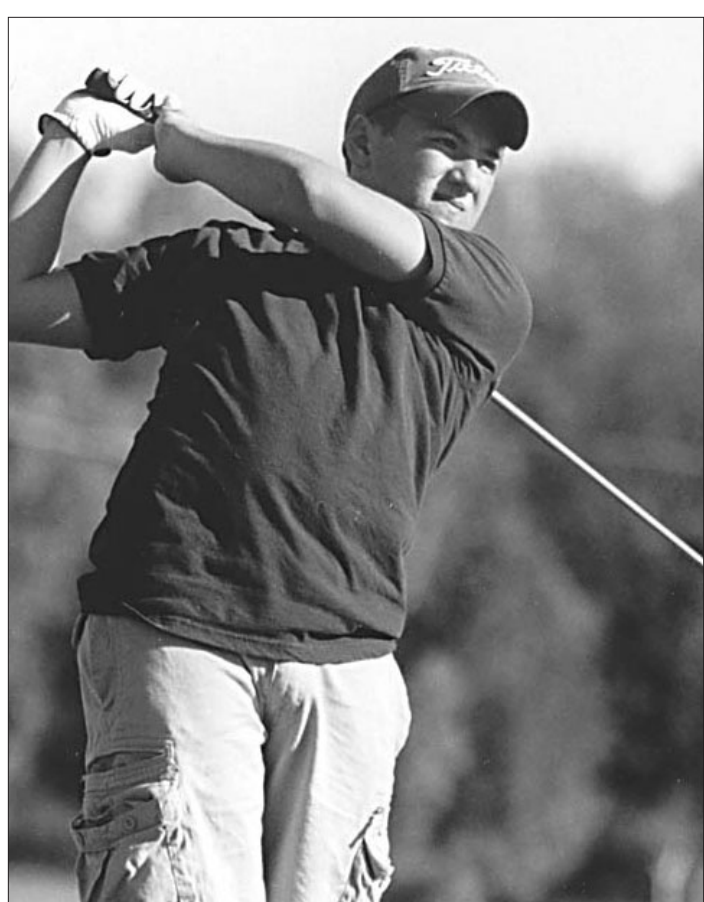
"Cody was just one of those guys that loved to play golf and was always around the game. He ended up getting a degree as a professional course manager."

Brett Smith
Smith was another standout. Smith went to state that same year and ended up scoring an 88. Playing with Scerine really elevated his game says Sinkular.

"Brett Smith was a sophomore when they went down to state and he was on the team where there were kids who really wanted to go down to state and really wanted to do well so that helped him."

Ben Lyons
Lyons was one of the three to make it to the sectional tournament that year. He'd be his third option after Scerine and Smith. Lyons shot an 84 at the Macomb Sectional, missing the state tournament by one stroke in 2004.

Clayton Cash
Sinkular also referenced the 2016-17 season where the golf team had a 17-2 record and Clayton Cash was one of the reasons why. Sinkular notes Clayton averaged 41.



File Photo

COALER BEN LYONS was selected for the golf dream team. Lyons qualified for sectionals in under Dave Sinkular in 2004.



File Photo

CLAYTON CASH was selected for the golf dream team at Coal City High School. Cash was a sectional qualifier in his senior season.

"He was the number one golfer on that team," added Sinkular. "Clayton had been playing golf for years. He played in middle school tournaments so he had a background in it. His family was also big in it as well. Clayton was a kid who could hit the ball pretty far and had a really good long game."

Clayton was one of the two golfers to make it to the sectionals that year. He shot an 88 which was nine strokes behind the leader. He could also putt really well.

Collin Erickson
Erickson was another really good golfer on that 17-2 team. He had good long game.

"Erickson has been in golf his whole life and his dad still is the golf coach at Seneca," commented Sinkular. "He could hit the ball a long way."

Logan Schoen
Logan was another one of his top golfers and he actually bested Cash at the regional, shooting an 85 to join him at the sectional tournament.

"He could hit the ball a long way. It wasn't necessarily his or Collin's number one strength but they used their size to their advantage."

Luke Lyons & Jake Van Duyne

Lyons and Van Duyne were some of his top golfers during the 2010 season. Lyons was like his brother, Ben, they were both good at the short game. Jake could do-it-all

"Jake was a balanced golfer," commented Sinkular. "He did a little bit of everything. He showed potential as a freshman and then took the leadership role and as a senior he was probably the best kid on the team at that point. Luke and his brother Ben hit the ball solid and always knew where it was going. There really wasn't a time where they didn't know what was happening."

Sinkular has many memories in the sport but the best was taking two individuals to the state tournament during his first year coaching the Coalers.

"The kids were great," concluded Sinkular. "It was a well-rounded team. A lot of those guys when we see each other, there's still a warmth to it. They were good kids and it was interesting to be a first year coach and have a team that were that good and had a lot of success."

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