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Reconfigure the high school

Facility plan puts forth new layout for high school interior

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

Faculty and staff at Coal City High School came up with more than 100 ideas for renovating and improving the building they use every day.

Their lists centered on updating aging spaces, expanding instructional areas, improving accessibility and creating welcoming common spaces and student lounge areas.

The Board of Education has listened and is working with the district architect, Cordogan Clark, to see what can be accomplished.

Based on what was shared during

focus group meetings held this fall with staff, architects put to paper a series of considerations that include the relocation of certain academic departments, renovating educational spaces and enclosing the school's two courtyards with glass roofs.

What's on paper is just that, possible ways of what could be done to improve the building and educational experience for students and staff.

The list of considerations begin with new paint, graphics and furniture, all simple solutions to update the overall look of the building.

Architects then started looking at specific areas of need including creating a buffer between the band and choir rooms, establishing a dedicated space for wrestling and expanding the theatre department's scene shop.

"Then we started talking about the

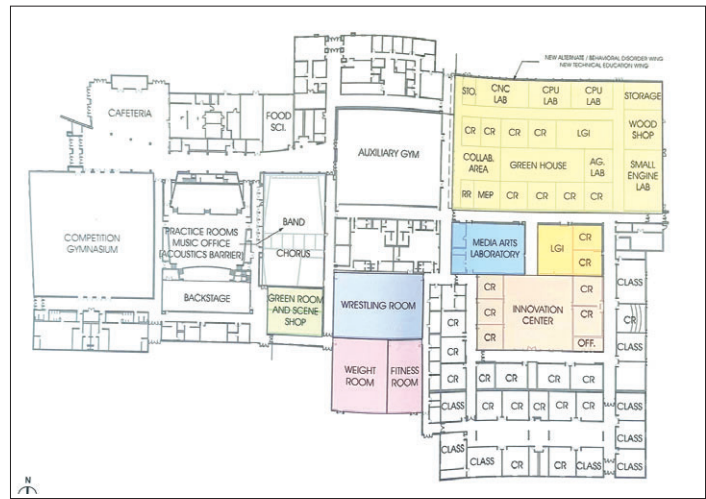
different classes and how we try to make collaborative spaces for the different age groups and how we can break those up differently," said architect Richard Blair.

Among the proposals is a dedicated wrestling space by utilizing the small gymnasium. In turn, the current practice area for wrestling could be turned into a fitness room.

Because of the high number of athletes involved in wrestling the switch has already been made to have practices in the gymnasium. That space is one that is also used for indoor baseball and softball practices.

To meet the needs of the music department—band and choir—the design team has suggested creating a sound buffer between the classrooms with offices and practice rooms.

SEE RECONFIGURE, PAGE 2



BASED ON INPUT from the faculty, staff and administration at Coal City High School, the district's architects have put forth a series of considerations when it comes to the interior spaces within the building. The concepts were developed as part of a district-wide facility improvement plan.



STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS at Coal City Intermediate School join The Coal City Courant in wishing readers a new year filled with good health and happiness. Ready to welcome 2023 are [from left, seated]: Lilly Connor-Mikos, Jeremy Little, Alexis Henderson and Ryan Housman. Kneeling are Brody Bitner, Callie Lehnus and Ryder Porterfield. Standing are Brayden Brncich, Sienna Ruffatto, Matthew Tibble, Ryleigh Kargle and Mackenna Cuddy.

Something to look forward to

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

A new year offers a path to a fresh perspective, opportunity and adventure, an occasion to try something new and take chances.

Lilly Connor-Mikos, a student at Coal City Intermediate School, shared that she is looking forward to accomplishing new goals in the weeks and months ahead.

As 2022 comes to a close, the fourth and fifth grade students at the school are excited for what is ahead in the new year.

Student Ryleigh Kargle said she's thankful for family and friends that she carries with her from year-to-year.

Student Mackenna Cuddy said she is looking forward to meeting new good friends, as is Matthew Tibble who adds

SEE NEW YEAR, PAGE 2

Ballots set for spring elections

Two vying for mayor in Coal City

STAFF REPORT

Coal City voters will be selecting a new mayor during the 2023 consolidated election on Tuesday, April 4.

Incumbent Mayor Terry Halliday did not file for reelection, setting up a two-way race between incumbent trustees Dave Spesia and Ross Bradley.

Voters will also decide who will serve as village trustees, village clerk plus school and library boards.

Spesia was the first of the two to file and therefore will appear at the top of the ballot.

Halliday will leave village government after 20-plus years of service as both a mayor and trustee.

There will be four candidates running for three seats as village trustees. Incumbents Dan Greggain and Dave Togliatti seek reelection while current village clerk Pam Noffsinger has entered the trustee race as has former mayor and trustee Neal Nelson.

Alexis Stone will run unopposed for the four-year position of village clerk.

In the village of Diamond incumbent Addis "Dean" Johnson was the only to file for re-election

for the two commissioner posts. He currently serves as the town's finance commissioner.

Four seats are up for election on Unit 1 Board of Education and four candidates have filed for the four-year terms.

Appearing on the ballot will be Ken P. Miller, current Board president and incumbent board member Quint Harmon, as well as Daniel P. Engelhardt, who previously served a short-term vacancy and Cynthia [Cindy] Klein.

Board members Robert Bianchetta and Chuck Lander will depart the Board following the spring election.

Miller and Harmon filed simultaneously, so a lottery will be held to determine ballot placement. The lottery is scheduled to take place today—Wednesday, Dec. 28—in the office of the Grundy County Clerk and Recorder.

The consolidated election will fill three seats on the Coal City Public Library's Board of Directors—two six-year terms and one unexpired two-year term.

Seeking to serve on the library's board for a full six year term are Deborah Trotter, the current board president, and Betsy Stahler. Renee McLuckie has filed for the unexpired term.



GRUNDY AREA VOCATIONAL Center [GAVC] students enrolled in Jeff Hanley's Criminal Justice II class took part in mock job interviews with a panel of local police chiefs represented by [from left, seated] Chief Alicia Steffes, Morris Police Department; Chief Chris Harseim, Coal City Police Department, and Chief Todd Lyons, Braidwood Police Department.

Interviews part of real life learning

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

As Blake Thompson prepared to walk into a room of police chiefs, a feeling came over him that he can best describe as intense.

As a student in Jeff Hanley's Criminal Justice II class, Thompson sat down for a mock interview with three local police chiefs, the nervousness of the Reed-Custer High School senior and that of his fellow classmates in the Grundy Area Vocational Center [GAVC] program eased as the interview got

underway.

"That was reflected in the interviewers' comments," Hanley said, adding the chiefs noted on many of the students interview sheets that they, "settled in to the interview, after the nerves."

The interviews were scheduled by Hanley and served as part of the students' semester final. Although there was some initial apprehension from the students, they all agree it was a good experience.

Serving on the interview panel were Coal City Police Chief Chris Harseim, Braidwood Police Chief Todd

Lyons and Chief Alicia Steffes from the Morris Police Department.

Each student was given 15 minutes with the police chiefs who read through a series of questions developed by Hanley.

The questions were designed to get to know the students [applicants],

SEE INTERVIEWS, PAGE 2



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Who has button #183?

A winner has yet to come forward to claim the prize money in the Wilmington Chamber's 2022 Christmas parade button drawing. The winning button number in the second round is #183. The payoff in the split-the-pot drawing will be \$410.

The other half of the proceeds will be given to Kuzma Care Cottage, the local food pantry, to help fund the Christmas food drive. Button owners are reminded that if the prize goes unclaimed as of Saturday, Dec. 31 a new number will be drawn.

For a Gin lover, try this classic Martini

It's the most wonderful time of the year...unless you do not care for eggnog, Mulled Wine, or Hot Whiskey. Any cocktail is a holiday cocktail if you choose to consume it at your holiday party, and I choose classic Martinis when Jolly Old Saint Nick takes to the skies.



THE SUNDAY COCKTAIL
Brian Rung

both ideal for mixing. If you are brand new to Martinis and are looking to add a Martini gin to your home bar, pick up a bottle of B e e f e a t e r, Tanqueray no. 10, or Bombay Sapphire. All three are approachable gins that can be used in nearly any gin cocktail.

ring in small glasses. There is a proper way to hold a bar spoon, and a proper way to stir. Consult YouTube or your local bartender for some pointers on proper stirring technique. How long should a Martini be stirred to achieve optimal dilution? The proper way to stir a Martini is not a question of how long, it is matter of how many revolutions. The magic number is 21 times. Martinis, as well as Manhattans are stirred with ice 21 times (21 revolutions) to achieve optimal dilution. I'm not sure who figured it out, but "stir 21 times" seems to work well and is the number taught in bartending schools.



most popular garnish among the Martini faithful. It's more about flavor than appearance when using olives (or olive brine) in a Martini, but presentation absolutely matters.

If you're going to decorate the house and load up the playlist with Sinatra's Christmas Album, might as well have a proper Martini in hand. Only two ingredients are needed to turn out a world class Martini, the rest comes down to preparation and presentation.

You will also need a bottle of dry vermouth, reach for Noilly Prat or Martini brand dry vermouth if you have the option. Remember, vermouth will begin to spoil quickly upon opening. Refrigerate any unused vermouth, discard after a few days.

In addition to just the right amount of dilution, stirring with ice 21 times ensures that the drink will hit the glass at the proper temperature. The proper temperature for a Martini is arctic. As cold, and as clear as possible.

There are a few unwritten rules of cocktail garnishing that come into play here. First, when it comes to olives and cherries, always garnish in odd numbers. The typical olive Martini garnish is 1 or 3 skewered olives, never 2.

For starters, we are going to need gin and vermouth. Martinis are made with gin and dry vermouth, period. Martinis are not pink or blue, and if you make it with vodka it is a Vodka Martini. At some point during the "Mad Men" era of the 1950s it became macho or manly to order a Martini with as little dry vermouth as possible, with some even going as far as skipping the vermouth altogether.

The biggest mistake aspiring mixologists make when it comes to Martinis is in the preparation, specifically the dilution, or lack thereof. A balanced Martini requires dilution and while the drink may be diluted through shaking, stirring is the preferred. Stirring a Martini with ice is the easiest way to add the perfect amount of dilution, plus if you have a host of small bar spoons on hand you can taste the drink before straining into the glass to ensure that everything is just right.

When it comes to the Martini garnish, the two most popular options are olives and the lemon twist. Neither garnish is more "correct" than the other, and it all boils down to personal preference. A lemon twist will be more of an aromatic addition as the oils from the lemon twist settle on top of the glass. Be sure to actually "twist" the twist of lemon over the top of the glass to express the oils on to the drink before dropping the twist.

Also, keep in mind that olives are always skewered when used as a garnish, not merely dropped in the drink. Cherries are typically dropped in when used as a garnish, olives are skewered. Many, if not most Martini fans will remove the skewer and eat the olives after a few sips.

If you skip the dry vermouth you do not have a Martini, you have a glass of gin. Nothing wrong with the sipping gin, but gin alone is not a Martini.

The mixing glass does not have to be fancy, although Martini aficionados tend to keep nicer barware on hand for drink preparation. I use a pint glass, a basic bar spoon, and a Hawthorne strainer to prepare Martinis, and it gets the job done.

When it comes to the Martini garnish, the two most popular options are olives and the lemon twist. Neither garnish is more "correct" than the other, and it all boils down to personal preference.

If you are making a "dirty" Martini with added olive brine, start small with the brine. Never pour olive brine directly into the drink, use your smallest bar spoon to add the olive brine until it's just right.

What kind of gin is best for a Martini?

A bar spoon is a must in any home bar. Bar spoons have long handles and small ends which are ideal for stir-

ringing in small glasses. There is a proper way to hold a bar spoon, and a proper way to stir. Consult YouTube or your local bartender for some pointers on proper stirring technique.

The classic Martini is built in a mixing glass, served in a chilled cocktail glass. Combine in mixing glass: 2 1/4 oz. gin 3/4 oz. dry vermouth Stir with ice Strain into chilled glass Garnish with lemon twist Until next week, enjoy responsibly.

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Gas prices may rise after Winter blast

Even though gasoline prices across Illinois fell 11.7 cents per gallon last week, the arctic blast that shutdown much of the nation could trigger a price increase. "While the national average declined for the seventh straight week, with oil prices rallying, it remains to be seen if we will manage another week of gasoline price declines. We're still waiting for the national average to fall below \$3 per gallon, something that is suddenly a bit less likely given the extreme cold weather, interrupting refining operations in the south, curbing gasoline production and potentially driving prices up slightly," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum

analysis at GasBuddy. Gas in Wilmington was \$2.58/g Monday at one Lorenzo Rd. station. In town the next lowest price was \$2.99/g with rewards program and \$3.39/g at others. Braidwood stations were charging \$2.99/g and \$3.01/g on Monday while in Coal City prices were \$3.28/g to \$3.48/g. "While some of the nation's lowest priced gas stations will probably be forced to raise prices slightly, with some declines still happening in the West Coast, there remains a chance, albeit smaller one, that we could still see the national average fall below \$3 per gallon. With the New Year on

the doorstep, however, the biggest question motorists have remains what will happen in 2023 - a question GasBuddy's annual Fuel Outlook will answer later this week." Prices in Illinois are 66.8 cents per gallon lower than a month ago and stand 20.2 cents per gallon lower than a year ago. The national average price of diesel has fallen 8.6 cents in the last week and stands at \$4.68 per gallon. According to GasBuddy price reports, the cheapest station in Illinois was priced at \$2.59/g while the most expensive was \$4.99/g, a difference of \$2.40/g.

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New year to bring new laws in Illinois

BY PETER HANCOCK
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — By now, almost everyone in Illinois has heard that Jan. 1 will mark the beginning of a significant change in the state's criminal justice system — the elimination of cash bail.

It's an issue that dominated the 2022 campaigns and has been both praised and criticized on editorial pages in newspapers across the state. It essentially means that starting Jan. 1, the decision as to whether a criminal suspect should be held in jail while awaiting trial will be based on public safety and the likelihood the suspect will flee rather than their financial ability to post bond.

And while that criminal justice reform has received widespread attention, it is by no means the only new law that will take effect when the calendar turns over to 2023.

For most people who work a minimum wage job, the new year will bring a pay raise to \$13 per hour, a \$1 increase over the current wage. That's the result of a law Gov. JB Pritzker signed in 2019, his first major legislative victory after being sworn into office a month earlier. The law will eventually raise the wage to \$15 an hour on Jan. 1, 2025.

The new \$13 hourly rate does not apply to all minimum wage earners. People who receive tips at work will see their base wage rise to \$7.80 an hour. And people younger than 18 who work fewer than 650 hours per year will see their wage go up to \$10.50 an hour.

The higher wage will probably come as welcome news for those who drive a car to and from work. That's because the new year will also bring higher motor fuel taxes.

The same year Pritzker signed the minimum wage bill, he also signed a multi-year, \$45 billion transportation and capital improvements bill known as "Rebuild Illinois," which is funded in part with higher motor fuel taxes that are scheduled to increase with inflation each year.

The adjustment in the tax rate is supposed to take effect on July 1 of each year, the first day of the state's fiscal year. But last spring, in the face of rising inflation and healthy state revenues, lawmakers authorized a six-month delay in the scheduled increase, putting it off until Jan. 1.

As a result, starting Jan. 1, the motor fuel tax people pay at the pump will go up 3.1 cents per gallon, and then it will increase again when the next regular adjustment date

comes around on July 1, 2023.

Criminal law

Several new criminal laws will go into effect Jan. 1, including three that deal with sex offenses.

One of those prevents people who solicit sex from a minor or a person with a severe or profound intellectual disability from asserting a defense that they simply did not know the person was underage or intellectually disabled. House Bill 4593, signed into law May 27, puts the burden of proof on the defendant.

Another new law changes the definition of when a person is "unable to give knowing consent." Under current law, a person cannot give knowing consent when the accused person "administers any intoxicating or anesthetic substance or any controlled substance" that causes the victim to lose consciousness of the nature of the act.

House Bill 5441, signed June 16, broadens that definition to include when the victim has taken any intoxicating or controlled substance causing them to lose consciousness of the nature of the act, even if the substances were administered by someone else.

Another bill expands certain employment restrictions that apply to convicted child sex offenders. Currently, they are prohibited from being employed by, or even being present at, child day care centers, schools that provide before- and after-school programs for children or any facility that provides programs or services exclusively for people under age 18.

Senate Bill 3019, signed May 27, expands that to prohibit convicted child sex offenders from working at carnivals, amusement enterprises, county fairs and the State Fair when people under age 18 are present.

Carjacking

Three new laws taking effect Jan. 1 are intended to address a spike in carjackings around the state. All were signed on May 26.

House Bill 601 expands the crime of possession of burglary tools to include possession, with the intention to enter and steal a vehicle, of devices to unlock or start a vehicle without the key to that vehicle, or devices that capture or duplicate a signal from a key fob to unlock or start the vehicle.

House Bill 3699 expands an existing state council charged with providing grants and financial support to law enforcement agencies to aid in identifying, apprehending and prosecuting carjackers and

recover stolen vehicles.

And, House Bill 3772 ensures that victims of carjackings are not liable for costs and fines associated with impounding a vehicle that was stolen or hijacked, provided the owner files a police report in a timely manner.

Education

To address a shortage of substitute teachers throughout the state, House Bill 4798, signed April 27, allows students enrolled in approved teacher training programs who have earned at least 90 credit hours to obtain a substitute teaching license. Before, applicants had to hold a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution of higher education.

House Bill 4716, signed May 27, calls on the Illinois State Board of Education to adopt "rigorous learning standards" for classroom and laboratory phases of driver education programs for novice teen drivers. Those will include, at a minimum, the Novice Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards developed by the Association of National Stakeholders in Traffic Safety Education in association with the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.

Higher education

In an effort to get more people to pursue careers in human services, Senate Bill 3925, signed June 10, establishes a student loan repayment program. Subject to appropriations, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission will award loan repayment grants to qualified individuals with an associate degree or higher who works for a human services agency that contracts with or is grant-funded by a state agency that provides "direct or indirect services that ensure that individuals have essential elements to build and maintain physical, emotional, and economic well-being at every phase of life."

Awards can be made for a maximum of four years. Maximum amounts are \$3,000 per year for someone with an associate degree, \$15,000 per year for a person with a bachelor's degree and \$25,000 per year for a person with a master's degree or higher, with a \$5,000 per-year add-on if the applicant holds certain professional licenses.

Meanwhile, students currently enrolled in any program at a public university or community college will have access to trained individuals who can help them apply for federal, state or local assistance based on their financial need. House Bill 4201, signed June 7,

requires those institutions to designate a "benefits navigator" to help students identify and determine their eligibility for various benefit programs.

Alzheimer's care

Senate Bill 3707, signed May 27, requires all employees and people who work for agencies that contract with the Illinois Department on Aging who provide direct services to individuals participating in its Community Care Program to receive at least two hours of training in Alzheimer's disease and dementia, as well as safety risks, communication and behavior associated with the disease.

Hunting

Starting Jan. 1, deer hunters in Illinois will have a new option for the type of firearm they use. House Bill 4386, signed May 27, authorizes the use of single-shot centerfire rifles — guns that can fire only a single round of ammunition that contains primer in the center of the cartridge and not in the rim of the cartridge. Before, only shotguns, handguns and muzzleloading rifles were allowed.

State symbols

Illinois will have two new official state symbols effective Jan. 1. House Bill 4821 establishes the eastern milksnake as the official state snake. That was an initiative of Gentry Heiple, a snake enthusiast and Carterville Junior High School seventh grader. And, House Bill 4261 establishes dolostone as the official state rock. That was an initiative of a group of students from Pleasantdale Middle School and Maplebrook Elementary School.

Vehicles

People who own vehicles that were manufactured in Illinois will be able to apply for a slight break on their registration fees starting Jan. 1. Senate Bill 3609 allows those drivers to apply for a one-time \$25 rebate, "if the vehicle is manufactured in this state and the application for title is made no more than one year after the month in which the vehicle was manufactured."

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Study looks favorably on Illinois' ability to handle its waste

BY KEVIN BESSLER
THE CENTER SQUARE

A new study gives Illinois high marks for managing waste.

The website LawnStarter compared 50 states based on over 30 metrics, including their waste-reducing policies, infrastructure, waste production and recycling rates.

Editor-in-Chief Jeff Herman said Illinois fared well in their rankings.

"Illinois landed at No. 11 in the group and recycling is where it landed best, but there is also another thing, in the production waste that is recycled and Illinois is No. 3 in that, so there are a lot of good things going on in Illinois in terms of recycling," Herman said.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's, Americans throw away up to 63 pounds of garbage a week, almost double the usual

amount.

This week is the busiest waste hauling periods of the year.

"We've been getting all those online boxes for things we've ordered shopping wise. What do we do? Do we trash those boxes or do we recycle them? That's a question to ask."

Size matters when it comes to waste management. For America's two smallest states by land area, that's the biggest challenge. Their borders aren't expanding, but their trash problems are.

Once again, Rhode Island and Delaware ranked among the bottom five states in landfill waste volume.

States in upper latitudes claimed none of the top 10 spots. According to the study, the top three states for waste management are Connecticut, California and Vermont.

The worst states for waste management are Alaska, Nevada and Montana.

Wilmington CHA Holiday Distribution was a huge success!

227 Families received a full grocery cart of food, including a ham, toiletries, household paper products, a blanket, coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and a new book & toys for all the children.

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SAFE-T Act update will allow the arrest of trespassers

Illinois House Deputy Majority Leader Jehan Gordon-Booth (D-Peoria) headed up her chamber's efforts to amend the controversial SAFE-T Act this year. The day before the bill came up for a vote, I asked her what were, in her opinion, the largest misconceptions about the 2021 social justice reform law.



Rich Miller

interpreted the same way by everybody, by all parties." So, changes were made that now make it explicitly clear that arrests can be made.

I also asked Gordon-Booth to reflect a bit on the opposition to the new law. She said she'd witnessed some major national backlashes throughout her life, so the fact that people would try to gin up another one on this law didn't surprise her.

She said she had no illusions "that the SAFE-T Act was going to be used as a tool to fear-monger, to try to get Illinoisans to believe that somehow those of us that are elected officials, many of us who live and represent communities that are also plagued by the violence that we all find abhorrent, many of us also being crime victims. I wasn't surprised that they used the fear tactic and used the SAFE-T Act as the tool to try to drive the fear." But, she said, "It still punches you in the gut when you see it play out."

Even so, Gordon-Booth said, "We knew that we put together a strong body of work that we could stand behind, stand on and not run from," adding, "it's a great feeling to know that those fear-mongering tactics did not work."

The tactics may not have

worked politically, but Rep. Maurice West (D-Rockford) wrote a powerful op-ed for the Rockford Register Star about how SAFE-T Act misinformation caused harm.

Rep. West, the "only Black legislator in the northern Illinois region," wrote in his op-ed that the misinformation spread about the legislation, "strategically led people down a path to think of dark-skinned people being let out of jail to destroy our community. Once that bell is rung," he wrote, "you can't un-ring it."

And that, he wrote, is why he is having trouble accepting an attempted walk-back from his local Republican State's Attorney J. Hanley, who was recently quoted as saying he regretted helping spread that misinformation, which West claimed, "led to confusion and anger in our community and threats to me and my family personally."

"Because of this misinformation," Rep. West, a church pastor, wrote, "my faith was questioned, my life threatened, and the N-word was used so expressively and easily by some. All while my fellow local elected leaders, on both sides of the aisle, threw me under the bus for their political survival."

I reached out to West to talk to him directly about his experiences. He said much of the harassment involved calls to his legislative office, "with a quick hang-up after using racist remarks."

The one that really shook

up West and his family was, "a guy who called our office looking to see if the 'N-word' was there," West said. "My office assistant tries to calm him down and tell him that I wasn't there, but she's willing to talk to him about the legislation. He calls her a lying c**t and said he doesn't believe her and he's coming to the office regardless." Rep. West said he shut the office down for the day.

Legislators' home addresses are easily accessible online, and because the harassment and threats cause his family so much angst and fear, West said he is now "working on legislation to hide the personal address of each candidate, and the only way to see it is to request copies of the petitions and leave your address as well."

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

Coal City United Methodist Church to host soup supper

Coal City United Methodist Church, located at 6805 E. McArdle Road in Coal City, will hold a Hallelujah Soup Supper on Saturday, Jan. 7, from 4 to 6:30 p.m.

They will be serving their delicious homemade chicken noodle soup & chili. Each meal includes your choice of soup, a

sandwich, crackers, a beverage, ice cream & dessert. Carry-outs are available.

The cost is \$12 for ages 13 & older; \$5 for children ages 3-12 and children age 2 & under eat free. All proceeds will go to the church's building fund. Tickets will be sold at the door.

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Invasive black carp's spread threatening Illinois waterways

BY KEVIN BESSLER
THE CENTER SQUARE

Illinois waterways are being invaded by another invasive species that could threaten the ecosystem.

Black carp, which are native to east Asia, were first imported into the U.S. to control snails in fish farms where fish are bred. How they escaped is unknown.

Some states ban possession of black carp, and importation of black carp into the U.S. has been prohibited since their 2007 listing as an injurious species under the Lacey Act.

Black carp can grow quickly and reach more than 3 feet long. A fisherman once caught a 115-pound black carp near East Cape Girardeau, Illinois, near the Illinois-Missouri border. The fish was then sent to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale for study.

"When an invasive species becomes established, eradication can be difficult, but it can also be challenging to collect robust information during the onset and early stages when abundance is typically low," said Gregory Whittledge, a professor with the Center for Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Aquatic Sciences at SIU and the lead author of the study.

"This research includes the largest sample size and is the most robust analysis of wild black carp in the Mississippi River basin, helping inform those making decisions to curtail further expansion."

Black carp have been observed in several locations, but exact species abundance and distribution isn't currently known because the probability of catching them in the large rivers they inhabit is low.

"While prior studies have indicated that wild black carp

might be established in parts of the Mississippi River basin, this is the most comprehensive study and the first research to provide strong evidence that they are present and sustaining on their own," said Patrick Kroboth, a research fish biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey and co-author on the study.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources thinks black carp have moved up the Illinois River as far as central Illinois.

A silver carp was removed from Lake Calumet in August, triggering a closer search for the species in the area. Lake Calumet is only seven miles from Lake Michigan. If the invasive carp enter the Great Lakes, they have the ability to dominate the food chain and cause major disruptions to the ecosystem.

Apply now for assistance in paying heating bill

Low-income families can apply for state assistance on their natural gas, propane and electricity bills.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, has \$300 million available. Families can apply by visiting helpillinoisfamilies.com or by calling 1-833-711-0374. Information on other state assistance programs can be found on that website as well.

LIHEAP provides one-

time payments directly to energy service providers on behalf of recipients.

Families who earn up to two times the federal poverty level are eligible for LIHEAP. That works out to a 30-day gross income below \$2,265 for a one-person household, \$3,052 for a 2-person home, \$3,838 for a three-person home, \$4,625 for four people, \$5,412 for five people and \$6,198 for six people.

The level of assistance

received is needs-based, and last year's LIHEAP recipients received an average of \$1,330 per household, according to the governor's office.

Grundy County residents seeking assistance can call Kendall-Grundy Community Action at 815-941-3262 and Will County residents can obtain information through the Will County Center for Community Concerns at wccc.net or by calling 815-722-3262.

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Drawing by Brooklyn Long

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December 7, 2022

RE: Notice of Semi-Retirement

To my clients and friends:

After 40 years in a rewarding career that allowed me to help and counsel thousands of clients on their legal matters, I am announcing my retirement from the full time practice of law while I am still healthy and able to properly finish business at hand. Starting Jan. 1, 2023, I will be semi-retired, handling limited estate planning and real estate legal matters through Meents Law, P.C. coordinated by my partner, Frank Meents and other attorneys in the law firm. All my client files and records will be retained and kept under my supervision through Meents Law, P.C.

Over the past four decades I've had the privilege and honor to represent many entities and individuals during some of the best events in their lives such as buying or selling a home, starting new business or standing before a judge to help a couple adopt a newborn child. Other clients experienced tragic events such as the death of a family member, work accidents or personal injuries arising from a motor vehicle accident. Every day of my law practice was handling different challenges dealing with many personalities and fact situations that kept my career interesting. I appreciate all the business and clients for the support they provided so I could live in Wilmington and raise my family.

It has been my great pleasure and sincere honor to represent you as clients, and many of you are, and have remained, my friends over the years. I tried to provide each client with honest and diligent representation to the best of my ability. I hope your contact and experience with me met your expectations.

My health continues to be good as does that of my wife, Theresa, but we never know for certain how much sand is left in our individual hourglass. I hope to travel and spend more time with my children, grandchildren and friends. I have many activities and hobbies I still want to participate in and accomplish. There are many books to be read, places to see and community events to attend. I also plan on volunteering for charitable causes and to pass on my knowledge and experience to the Associates at Meents Law, P.C. I know I have an excellent partner, Frank Meents, who has the skills, compassion and ethics to uphold the legal standards I followed in building my practice. May you have the same confidence in Meents Law, P.C. as you had with me.

Very truly yours,
Jeffrey Fisher
Attorney at Law

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Crawford inspires young athletes to work hard

The GSWB Varsity Club had Brady Crawford as a guest speaker prior to Christmas break. Crawford is a 2020 graduate of Coal City High School where he lettered in football, basketball and track. Crawford said playing sports helped teach him values and gave him his hard work ethic.

While a Coaler, he was also involved in the National Honor Society, Coalers with Character, and Future Business Leaders of America. At CCHS, Crawford helped guide a team to a Regional title in basketball and his football team made it to the state semi-finals before falling to eventual champion Richmond-Burton.

Crawford is a Junior at the University of Sioux Falls (SD), where he is majoring in Exercise Science with a minor in Education. He joined the Cougars because it made him feel at home with the family atmosphere even though it is eight hours away.

He faced many challenges his freshman year, but overcame them to become even stronger. Due to Covid, there



INSPIRATION FOR ALL - Coal City standout Brady Crawford (center), who now plays football at the University of Sioux Falls (SD), joins members of the GSWB Varsity Club after his recent presentation.

Courtesy photo

was no football in his first season at Sioux Falls. He had to form new relationships with

teammates, professors, and coaches. He was now a small fish in

a large pond and had to prove himself again which was very stressful. He liked the idea of

meeting new people and teammates while learning about their backgrounds.

He also had to make time to juggle his academics along with his demanding football schedule on a daily basis. He told the group he keeps a calendar with his week's activities to stay organized.

Crawford shared with the group that each day he has football activities for about 8 hours consisting of practices, weights, meetings, study tables, etc. He explained that the workouts in college were much more intense than in high school.

He has taken advantage of long bus trips and getting to know other players better. On game day, he loves the amount of fans and the atmosphere surrounding the field.

This season he earned all-conference honors but most enjoyed winning against their rival and going 8-3.

When Crawford told the group his most memorable moment was winning a big game as opposed to being selected all-conference, it spoke volumes. He went on to say it's what you want for your team, not yourself.



Photo by Amy Walker

ON THE GO for the Lady Coalers is Makenzie Henline who had 11 rebounds and five steals against Plano.



Lady Coalers in action

Photo by Amy Walker

SCORING FOR THE Lady Coalers against Plano on Dec. 19 is Paige Walker who chipped in four points.

Schmitt honored



Photo by Amy Walker

COAL CITY ATHLETIC DIRECTOR Dan Hutchings (left) presents photos and the game ball to girls basketball coach to Brad Schmitt who recently coached his 300th victory.

Coalers ready to rumble

Photo by Eric Fisher

WRESTLING AT 120 for Coal City is Aidan Kenney. Kenney and his Coaler teammates will be heading to Springfield this week to take part in the annual Abe's Rumble. The two day tournament starts Thursday, Dec. 29 and wraps up on Friday, Dec. 30 at the Bank of Springfield Center [BOC].



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