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Leadership changes at Wilmington School Dist. 209-U

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

As the Wilmington School District officially enters its new fiscal year, there's been a change at the helm in the district's administrative offices.

As of July 1, Kevin Feeney is now the District 209-U Superintendent, swapping seats with Dr. Matt Swick who will take over as Assistant Superintendent.

Over the past seven years, the pair have been the top two administrators in the district, with Swick in the superintendent's chair and Feeney serving as the assistant.

But two years ago, the district announced the start of the transition, which was made official as of this week.

"We've been preparing and plan-

ning for this for about two and a half years or so," Swick said. "Our board has been very supportive to keep our leadership team together and allow for a creative and a unique arrangement that will even save the district money, which is the bonus on top of that."

The two positions work together on various issues to keep a school district running. Not a small feat even in a small district like Wilmington, where the cost to operate for one year totals roughly \$20 million.

The assistant superintendent's primary responsibilities include overseeing curriculum and instruction, professional development, and grant writing among other duties.

The superintendent is the main business manager of the district, overseeing the budget, facilities operations, negotiations, and legal issues such as school code and making sure

the district is up to date with requirements.

"There are a lot of different hats you wear in both positions," Feeney said. "With the assistant superintendent, you're dealing with communications and some of the human resource side of things, FOIA requests and a lot of different aspects. Then, when you get into the superintendent's seat, now I will be doing more of the business side of things... Board policies will be a big part of that, the day-to-day operations of the district. So really, overseeing all aspects of the facilities."

The two administrators said the ability to transition into each other's roles, versus looking at an outside hire, helped to make the effort leading up to this point to be fairly seamless. The change has also been somewhat easier thanks to Swick's previous experience. Swick served as Assistant

Superintendent for the district for nine years prior to his appointment to superintendent.

"The nice thing is, we had a two year transition," Feeney said. "I think we've been able to learn throughout this process the different roles and responsibilities, so we're not just jumping into it. And, the fact that Matt had done much of what is in the assistant superintendent's position for nine years prior to becoming superintendent is helpful... The fact that he's been in the superintendent's role for seven years, I can lean on him also for advice and to help me through the transition. I think there is some benefit to that as well."

Swick said district families and staff members will likely not notice much of a change outside of different names on communications coming from the district, especially since it's still the same two administrators in

the top two roles.

"For me personally, I'm excited," Swick said. "Kevin is more than ready. For me, Wilmington is home. So, to have the opportunity to stay here and to work and to work under Kevin's leadership and to be a part of this team is something I'm excited for. For me, it's nothing but positive."

Feeney added that while this transition may be unusual, it's already been successful.

"Along the way it's meant more communication between the two of us, making sure that we're not going to miss anything and that we completely understand the roles and responsibilities of each position," Feeney said. "Being able to do that over a two year process has been helpful... And then to keep moving

SEE SCHOOL, PAGE 2

Let Freedom Rock in Wilmington



A lifetime of volunteering inspires \$5,000 donation

STAFF REPORT

The Women of Wilmington, a small dedicated group who give to community causes, are so inspired by the volunteerism of Sheryl Puracchio that they've donated \$5,000 for the purchase of playground equipment for the inclusive playground project in her honor.

Women of Wilmington chose to honor Puracchio because of her lifetime of service and volunteerism. Her passion is evident.

"I was raised with the belief that if you can improve your world, then you should," Puracchio said. "I tend to jump in with both feet and volunteering keeps me purpose-driven. Community service makes me excited about life, all its possibilities and my experiences have evolved over many years. I have discovered talents I

never knew I had and developed skills that have served me well in my personal as well as professional life."

Puracchio's latest leap into volunteerism is the Build Up Wilmington which started with a group of friends seeking improvements to benefit the community.

"We saw the plans for the inclusive park and decided that would be a great starting point. We felt that Wilmington needed an outdoor family park experience where everyone has a space to play, no matter their abilities, and the entire family could participate. We love the idea of a storybook walk, inclusive playground equipment, pickleball courts, sand volleyball, all with a beautiful pavilion and a handicapped accessible bathroom. So, we began fund rais-

SEE DONATE, PAGE 3



Photos by Eric Fisher

A PERFECT NIGHT—The crowd for the Let Freedom Rock Independence Day Celebration hosted by the City of Wilmington was the largest ever on Friday. Families were eight rows deep along the North Island Park to watch the fireworks show that was about 25 minutes long. There were food vendors including and ice cream truck, activities for children, beer garden and a terrific show put on by the Hairbangers Ball, who has a popular following. The weather cooperated with clear skies and moderate humidity.

Lives turned upside down

Livingston County couple dies in wrong-way crash

BY ANN GILL
Editor

Tragedy struck a young family from Livingston County, a head-on traffic crash claiming the lives of a mother and father who leave four children behind.

For the children who range in age from 12 years to two years, "their lives have been turned upside down at this point," said Jennifer Jones, of Coal City, a witness to the crash that killed Ronald Dube, 35 and his wife, Kelly

Quinlen-Dube, 34, of Emmington.

It was just before 9:50 p.m. on Tuesday, June 27 that the Dubes' GMC Yukon was struck head-on by a wrong-way driver in the southbound lanes of Interstate 55 at the 238 mile marker—Route 129—in Wilmington Township.

The Dubes and three of their children—seven year old twins and a two year old boy—were heading home after visiting family in Plainfield.

The children's physical

SEE CRASH, PAGE 2



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