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Journal Entries

"Sometimes we're tested, not to show our weaknesses but to show our strengths."

Coaches vs Cancer

The TCHS 10th Annual Coaches vs Cancer event will be 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 15 during the Tuscola boys' basketball game against Central A&M. This year's theme is Box Out Cancer, and all proceeds benefit the American Cancer Society. Shirt order forms are due to the TCHS office by noon Thursday, Jan. 10.

STEP with ERBA

Embarras River Basin Agency, Inc. (ERBA) is accepting applications for the Skills Training Employment Program (STEP) to assist individuals with training for employment opportunities. ERBA will be assisting income eligible individuals who want to obtain a CDL license, CNA certificate, Basic Welding Certificate, or CNC Operator Certificate. This assistance is made possible through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). ERBA serves Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Jasper, Lawrence, and Richland counties. For more information, contact your local county ERBA Outreach office at 217-253-4434 or call 800-252-1152

Save the Date

The 2019 Miss Tuscola Pageant will be 6 p.m. Saturday, March 30 at Tuscola Community High School. Join Faith Hardwick, Reggan Smith, and Bailey Dyer as they crown the new-town royalty during the 58th annual pageant.

Prom Dress Sale

The annual Miss Moultrie Douglas Pageant Prom Dress Sale will be at the Tuscola mall in Store A1100 Jan. 25-27. The pop up store will be open Friday, Jan. 25 from 5-9 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 26 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday, Jan. 27 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Gently used formal dresses can be put into the sale for \$5. Dress owners price the dress, and if it sells you keep the proceeds. Dress drop off will be Jan. 21-23 from 5-7 p.m.

Tuscola MOPS

Tuscola Mothers of Preschoolers will meet 9 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 10 at the Tuscola United Methodist Church. This month the group is talking about sisterhood. Every attendee is invited to bring a friend. Free breakfast and childcare is provided.

Tuscola schools, TPD team up for active shooter drill

The sound of shots fired rang through Tuscola schools Friday, Dec. 21.

Although, of course, rather than a true emergency, the blank rounds fired at the three school buildings were an effort by school administration and the Tuscola police to prepare teachers for the unthinkable.

Tuscola schools superintendent Michael Smith reached out to the Tuscola Police Department to coordinator an active shooter drill during the final teacher institute day before the 2018 holiday break. This was the second

time TPD conducted the drill involving the sound of real gunfire inside the buildings using simulation ammunition or "blanks."

"The first time we did this the teachers were well aware of when and where we would be firing weapons in the schools," said TPD Sgt. Mark Payne. "Mr. Smith added a new twist to the event this year by allowing us a window of when we would arrive and what school. The teachers would all be present in their respective schools and most would be in a place in the school

they would normally be at the time of day we arrived."

A total of 36 rounds were fired in each of the three buildings, said Police Chief Craig Hastings. Three officers moved to opposite ends of each school building to allow the teachers and staff to readily recognize shots fired at close and distant range, Hastings added.

"Not only are teachers and staff exposed to the sounds but also to the odor and smoke of discharged ammunition," Hastings said.

TPD Sgt. Heath Thurston

said three officers participated in the drill this time in order to better recreate the sounds of multiple semi automatic rounds being fired in succession.

"We chose to use the tried and true .38 cal. six shot handguns this year," Hastings added. "Not only are they reliable, but they can be quickly reloaded. By each of us firing in succession with the officer before us we are able to recreate an eighteen round rapid-fire mayhem."

And the effect was loud.

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Crew members from Watco Companies posts a sign along the railroad near the Main Street crossing in Tuscola on Dec. 14. In July, Watco was announced as the winning bidder for CSX Transportation's Decatur and Danville Secondary subdivisions in Illinois and Indiana. The name of the 126.7 miles of rail track is now Decatur & Eastern Illinois Railroad. Watco is based in Pittsburg, Kan.

Photo: Kayleigh Rahn

IHSA issues curve ball for the 2021 gridiron schedule

By Lenny Sementi

In an attempt to stabilize athletic conferences around the state a proposal was initiated early last summer, and on Monday, Dec. 17, the IHSA approved Proposal 23 in its annual by law referendum. That proposal will implement a district scheduling system for football beginning with the 2021 season.

Proposal 23 will replace the prior system that awards a playoff berth to 256 teams including all conference champions and teams with at least six wins during the regular season. The remaining spots are filled by tiebreaker system of which five-win teams are separated by playoff points (opponents win totals).

A press release issued by the IHSA stated Proposal 23 passed

324-307-69 directing the IHSA to implement a football scheduling system for regular-season varsity games that would involve a) A nine-week regular season, b) Playoff classes determined in advance of the season, c) Schools from each class placed into eight geographic groups by the IHSA to play a round robin schedule, d) The remaining games on the schedule to be arranged by individual schools at their discretion e) The top four teams in each of the eight groups qualify for the playoffs, based on games played within the group.

"It is a historic change," said IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson. "The narrow gap in the voting indicates that there are pros and cons that impact our diverse football playing member-

ship in multitude of way. We hope that it will effectively address conference realignment and scheduling concerns, while helping create a long-term sustainability and growth for high school football in the state. The district assigning process will be similar to how schools are assigned to Regionals and Sectionals in other sports and activities."

The eight classes will be assigned for the first time prior to the 2021 season and then will be reassigned every two years thereafter. There were 560 IHSA member schools that played football in 2018. Only 523 of those schools were eligible for the playoffs. To balance the districts the number of schools will need to be 512 in order for schools to get there needed seven-district

games.

Anderson stated, "This is the third time (2009, 2014) that a football district proposal has been brought forward to our membership and each time support has grown. It is based on a concept that other state high school associations have used successfully, and we are committed to doing our part to make it successful here in Illinois. We understand that everyone wants to know what district and class they will be in, but the reality is that we are two years away from being able to tabulate that information."

When asked about the proposal Tuscola Football Coach Andy Romine initial thoughts included: who would be in Tuscola's district, what is our plan for

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Photo: Kayleigh Rahn

At 10:07 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 3, Tuscola Fire Department was dispatched to the 200 block of West Houghton Street for a residential fire. Upon arrival the crew found a fire was showing from the east side of the rental property owned by Tuck Elder. The crew extinguished the fire within 12 minutes. The fire was mostly contained to the kitchen on the east side of the building, according to a report from TFD. The refrigerator, stove top, toaster oven, and washer and dryer among other items in the room were significantly damaged. The tenant reported having a Scentsy warmer in the room where he had left his cat alone while he was across the street talking with neighbors for about an hour. The tenant was able to let the cat out of the home prior to the fire department's arrival. No injuries were reported.



Photo: Kayleigh Rahn

Kenny Hogue and his crew uncovered a piece of Tuscola history as they continue work at Downtown Tuscola's upcoming additions-Irma Lou's Kitchen and Cast Iron Pub. The building that was once home to the Sears Automotive Center (and later several restaurants) will soon be transformed into Irma Lou's Kitchen. The adjacent building will be Cast Iron Pub. Hogue, along with his wife Angela and their son Camden, returned home to Douglas County from the San Francisco Bay Area this summer. Hogue, who has worked as a chef in Chicago, New York City, and San Francisco, has decided to return to Tuscola to open his own restaurant (to be named after his late grandmother Irma Bailey) and pub in his hometown. On Saturday, Jan. 5 the Irma Lou's construction crew uncovered this sign from Sale Street yesterday. Hogue noted that he is unsure what their plans are for the sign, though they likely won't leave it on the facade. They may take the sign down in one piece and work it into the interior decor. Hogue added that he is hopeful Cast Iron Pub may be open by late February.

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