



# Villa Grove News



Serving Villa Grove, Camargo and the surrounding areas!

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Pages 10

## Side Tracks

your express route to upcoming VG events

VG SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DAY 11:30 AM DISMISSAL 01/18

VGH GBB LOVC tourney final 01/19 @ ALAH

VGH BBB @ LOVC Tourney(Cumberland) 01/19-01/26

VG Devilettes @ IHSA Sectional (Mascoutah) 1/19

VGJH BBB @ IESA 7th Grade Regional tourney at BH vs Arcola 1/19 at 10:00 am

MLK DAY-NO SCHOOL 1/21

VGJH BBB vs Arthur 1/21 @ 6:00 pm

VGH GBB @ Cumberland 1/21 at 6:00 pm

VGH BBB @ LOVC tourney at Cumberland 1/22 @ 6:00 pm

VGJH VB @ Arcola 1/22 at 6:00 pm

VGH GBB @ GRF 1/22 at 6:00 pm

VG School Board MTG 1/22 @ 6:00 pm

IMEA State Fest @ Peoria 1/23-1/26

VGJH VB @ Okaw Valley 1/24 at 6:00 pm

VGH GBB @ Oblong 1/24 at 6:00 pm

VGH BBB @ LOVC tourney at Cumberland 1/25-time TBA

VG Devilettes @ IHSA State finals 1/25-1/26 (tentative)

VGH BBB @ LOVC Tourney Finals at Arcola 1/26-time TBA

VGJH @ IESA 8th Grade Regional Tourney at BH 1/26-time TBA

If you have an upcoming event that you would like to see featured in Sidetracks, email us at vgnews@mchsi.com or call us at 832-4201

# Dial a Ride is Going Places for the People of Douglas County

By Tony Hooker Staff Writer

The Douglas county board knew they needed to make a change, regarding public transportation.

"We were part of a six county consortium, and not happy with their service," Public Transportation Committee Chair Jim Mikeworth stated.

Their search for alternatives eventually led them to Coles County's Dial A Ride (DAR) program, and for the past three years, they've been providing their valuable service to the residents of Douglas County. I recently had an opportunity to catch up with Kaycie Sanders DAR's Administrative Director, and Cheryl Shutt, the operations director for DAR, to talk about their services.

How many counties does Dial A Ride serve?

(KS) We serve Coles and Douglas counties.

How long has DAR been available?

(KS) It started out as a program just to help seniors, and in 1991 it became public transportation, here in Coles County. We then took Douglas County over on July 1, 2015.

How did you come to be in Douglas County?

(KS) There was a previous service that the County Board wasn't happy with, and so they began to look for other companies. They came to us and asked lots of questions. There was a grant application process and the Board chose Dial A Ride in 2015.

The service is offered through the county, and not through an individual company, so anyone from Newman to the East side of Atwood is

eligible?

Yes. That's right.

Do you run every day?

We run Monday through Friday. Our dispatch office is open 6:30 am until 6:00 pm, and our Douglas County hours are between 8 and 6, with the last ride to end around 5 o'clock.

Let's talk about the logistics of it for a bit. How does someone who wants a ride make arrangements?

(CS) You would call the number (1-800-5005505) and set up a time for when and where you want to be picked up. You do have to have some information when you call, so we can get you into our system. We basically need your name, address and a good phone number, in case we need to call you if something comes up. We need to know where you want to be picked up and dropped off.

So, you do door to door transportation.

(CS) Yes, sir.

(KS) It's called demand response. Basically, they demand and we respond! <laughs>

(VGN) I had this thought in my head that you had bus stops where you would pick them up.

(KS) In Coles County, there's a service that's different, called the Zip line. We still do door to door in Coles County, but then we also go to designated stops at designated times and it's a flat rate, with no reservation required. We don't have that in Douglas County, but we would like to. We've got our brains going, but it's not set in stone, yet. Because Douglas County is so rural and the cities are spread out, it's tricky to figure

something out. Each county is different, but in Douglas County we go to Champaign between 10 am and 2 pm on Mondays and Fridays and on Wednesdays we go to Decatur from 10 am to 2 pm.

(VGN) Say my mom doctors here at Sarah Bush. Would you be able to accommodate her needs? We go between the counties on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Are there restrictions on who you'll pick up?

<In unison> No!

So if someone needs a ride, they call the 800 number and you set it up, regardless of age or financial situation?

If they're five years of age or younger, we do require that they have a guardian with them, for liability.

(CS) Also, if they're seven or younger, they must provide their own car seat.

Let's circle back a bit here, and talk about you guys!

Kaycie, you've told me you're from Mattoon. How long have you been with the agency?

Seven years.

What's your background leading up to your tenure with DAR?

I worked in a grocery store as a deli girl for seven years, and went through college. Started at Lake Land and then earned a bachelor's in Business Administration from Eastern, majoring in marketing. I came here and started dispatching for probably a year and a half before the administrative director's position came open, and I applied.

Cheryl, you've told me you've been here in this position for what, 72 hours? <laughing>

(CS) I started January 25,



Cheryl Shutt and Kaycie Sanders pose with one of their fleet vehicles. Photo by Tony Hooker.

2017 as a driver, and I've been a driver until January 1st, when I took over the director of operations position.

What does a director of Operations do?

I oversee the operation of Dial A Ride.

So, you're the "bus" person, and Kaycie, you're the "business" person?

(KS) We work together. She oversees the drivers and vehicle maintenance as well as the day to day scheduling, and I oversee the dispatch area, and I do a lot of the administrative side. I file for grants and that sort of thing.

Dial A Ride is under the umbrella of the Coles County council on aging?

The Dial a Ride program is the largest program within the Council on Aging.

How many rides do you provide?

Last fiscal year, we provided over 11,000 rides. We do a lot more in Coles County, but we've been here a lot longer.

Cheryl, what is your background?

I served 16 years in the military, working in transportation.

What's your favorite part of the job, Cheryl?

I love working with everyone at Dial A Ride and the lifespan center. I love meeting new people, chatting with them as I'm driving them. I'm a people person.

Do you have regulars?

When I was driving, I did, but I always had new passengers as well. It's never the same.

Do you have any wild stories from your days on the road?

One time a gentleman wanted to bring his mower on the bus to take it to get serviced, but since it had gasoline in it, we wouldn't put it in the bus! <laughs>

How about you, Kaycie? Do you have any memorable stories you would like to share?

I don't really get to see the passengers, but I do get to hear the stories once a month in our board Cont. pg. 3

# Jesse White School Bus Safety Reminder

Safety Alert

As Illinois school children return to school after their holiday break, I am writing to remind the driving public to be alert for children making their way to and from school. Sadly, this year at least eight kids across the U.S. killed by motorists who failed to stop for school buses loading or unloading passengers. Five of those kids were killed over two days in November, including 9-year-old Rochester, Indiana, girl and her 6-year-old twin brothers. It is illegal to pass a school bus whose red stop lights are flashing in all 50- states. A one-day survey of 38 states by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services recorded 84,000 incidents of motor vehicles illegally passing stopped school busses. That was in

just one day. My office has kept a close eye on these studies. As part of our Toby Tire School Bus Safety program, we empathize the dangers of crossing the street, no matter the purpose or time of the day. Our efforts have produced positive results. We lead the nation in the school bus safety and have compiled an enviable record of fatality-free miles covered by our school buses. School bus safety has been a priority of school administrators, teachers, and parents, as well as my office during the 20 years I have served as Secretary of State. We warn children to always look both ways while crossing the street. That means all the time, not while crossing in a school bus loading zone. School bus safety is a responsibility to be shared by everyone in the community, not just

parents and school officials. We all are stakeholders in the safety of our communities' children. I encourage those with school-aged children to take time to remind them of the fundamentals of student transportation safety: 1. Stay away from strangers 2. Always look both ways before crossing the street, even in bus loading zone 3. Maintain decorum on the bus by speaking in normal tones and always staying seated 4. Always stay clear 10-foot "danger zone" that surrounds the bus. We must remain vigilant in our efforts to protect our children and ensure they get to and from school in a safe and responsible manner. We owe our children nothing less.

Jesse White Secretary of State

# VGHS Halls Get New Look



Villa Grove High School students were greeted with new lockers after the Holiday Break. Photo Courtesy Facebook.

# Villa Grove School: Students of the Month



Congratulations to the Villa Grove School November Students of the Month. Picture courtesy of Facebook.

# Signs of the Season

By Jim Balmer



Snowman Spotted on Oak Street in Villa Grove, IL. Photo by Jim Balmer. To comment on any of the photos featured in Signs of the Season email us at vgnews@mchsi.com or send a letter to Villa Grove News PO Box 20, Villa Grove IL 61956. Comments may be published in future editions of the newspapers.