



The JOURNAL

Serving Tuscola, Villa Grove, and surrounding communities.

Volume 15, Issue 13 | Wednesday, April 1, 2020 | thetuscolajournal.com

Journal Entries

"To be a good citizen, it's important to be able to put yourself in other people's shoes and see the big picture. If everything you see is rooted in your own identity, that becomes difficult or impossible."

-Eli Pariser

Journal Office

In compliance with the Illinois Department of Public Health and adopting the policies set by the State of Illinois, our office is temporarily closed to the public. Our office continues to be staffed. To contact us, please call 217-253-5086, email us at kendra@thetuscolajournal.com or office@thetuscolajournal.com, Facebook message, or use the drop box by the front door.

Lock-in Rate Extended

The deadline to lock-in your current Journal subscription rate has been extended until April 8. Please call our office, or drop off or mail a check to extend.

Tuscola Tourism Information

As local businesses adjust hours and offer new solutions, we're keeping track so you can continue to support them. Stay tuned to our website on curbside pick-up and delivery options at restaurants, business hour changes, and additional community related info. We currently have information listed for restaurants, local businesses, banks, and churches. Please check back frequently as we will continue to update daily. tuscola.org/covid-19-information

Residents are also encouraged to join our community email list at Tuscola.org (sign-up form located at the bottom of the page) We hope to keep residents informed that do not utilize social media.

SAMS Food Pantry

The SAMS Food Pantry, located inside the Methodist Church in Tuscola, will continue to serve residents of Douglas County from 8 to 10 a.m. on Wednesday and Friday. Please use the main driveway at the church and stay in your car, a volunteer will come out to assist you. Please do not block the gravel parkway on the north side of the church.

Rural Grace Food Pantry Open

The Rural Grace Food Pantry in Murdock will be open to surrounding residents on Friday from 3 to 6 p.m. Please contact Ted at 217-850-3405 if you have questions.

Tuscola Public Library Closed

The Tuscola Public Library will be closed until March 31 as the situation allows. Please keep all the items you have regardless of due date for the duration of the shelter-in-place: do not put them in the book drop. There will be no fines or other fees. Please stay safe and healthy. Updates will be posted on the Tuscola Public Library Facebook page.

Tuscola Museum Closed

For the safety of our visitors, staff, and volunteers, the museum is closed to the public and volunteers until March 30th. We will keep you informed of any updates or changes to this date.

TFD Birthday Wishes

The Tuscola Fire Department is trying to make birthdays brighter for our local kids during the COVID-19 outbreak. TFD is offering to send a fire truck with its lights on to help celebrate children's birthdays during the Shelter in Place order.

If your child has an upcoming birthday in the next several weeks/months, schedule a visit by emailing Fire Chief, Brian Moody at brian.moody@tuscola.org.

Please include "TFD Birthday" in the subject line.

Postponed Events

- McTeacher Night
- Kiwanis Fish Fry
- Miss Tuscola Pageant
- Miss Maddy's Dance Recital
- NW Dine to Donate at Texas Roadhouse
- Tuscola Museum Annual Meeting
- Tuscola FFA Banquet

Canceled Events

- ERBA Money-Saving Workshop
- Tuscola Easter Egg Hunt

\$150



Thanks to the Tuscola Fire Department, Tuscola resident and Air Force Veteran Gordon Adams celebrated his birthday in style on March 28.



Photos: Rachel Ray

TCHS graduate Dick Gallagher joins Tri-County Journal

By Kendra Hennis

The Tri-County Journal is lucky to have a new addition in next week's edition. Former Tuscolian Dick Gallagher, author of *A Bo James Story*, will be including his short story in our newspaper. Here is some information about Gallagher and his story in anticipation for next week.

You mentioned growing up in Tuscola, did you graduate from TCHS? If yes, what year?

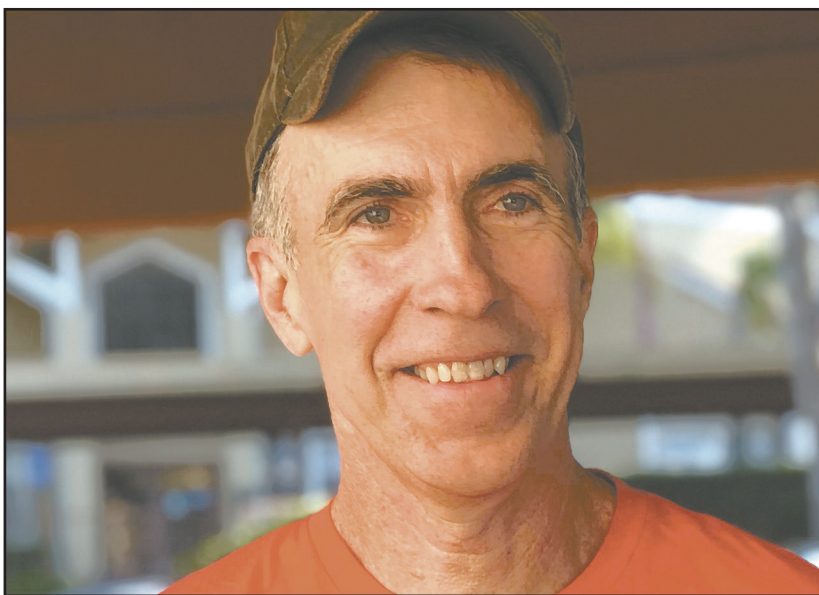
I grew up in a family of seven (five kids, mom and dad) in the 700 block of N. Center Street, and graduated TCHS in 1978.

What did you do after leaving Tuscola?

I headed to the University of Illinois and graduated with a degree in Accountancy in 1982. The thought of seeing a different part of the country came to me via an invitation from a college friend who was living in Greeley, Colorado, so I headed west and spent the next 34 years in various accounting and auditing positions.

What inspired you to write this book?

The idea for the book came



after I completed reading a James Bond novel, and I was laughing about how that character was impossibly good at everything. I thought it would be fun to create a more down-to-earth such hero, also good at everything, but in a small town kind of way. I wrote the first chapter the night I finished the Bond novel, using that character as the inspiration for my hero's name.

The setting of the story is in a rural area, do you feel like anything else in the story is influenced by growing up in Tuscola?

Like a lot of folks, the older I get, the more nostalgic I become, and so I used memories of Tuscola and various businesses of Tuscola in the story. Some of the street names come from some of my former teachers, and I must give a tip of the hat to Floriene

Barber, my seventh grade homeroom teacher, who encouraged creative writing and who seemed to like my sense of humor. And of course, my love for classic cars shows up in *A Bo James Story*, and in *Bo James Returns*.

Do you have anything you would like added for the readers of the Journal and Tri-County?

Things readers might get a kick out of in the story are the poorly disguised references to musicians, TV shows, movies, and books that were part of my life in the 1960's and 1970's and beyond. The names of several of the characters were borrowed from classmates, but any character flaws are purely of my own invention. I look back now with much respect and appreciation for all the people who helped to shape my youth, and I am very thankful to have grown up in the small town of Tuscola at a time when neighborhood kids and dogs could roam free, and some of the best times were spent chatting with neighbors on front porches before wandering home to supper.

Villa Grove schools planning for unprecedented times

By Tony Hooker

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted all aspects of life.

Here in Villa Grove, our school, the heart and soul of our town, has been impacted profoundly, and so it seemed like a perfect time to check in with the administrative team of Sara Jones and Bobby Beck, the high school and elementary school principals, who with superintendent Norm Tracy's decision to re-retire after coming in to help the district in a time of need, are in the unprecedented position of having to try to hire his replacement while sheltering in place, along with continuing the largest capital project in the past fifty years with the new gym and classroom construction project in addition to overseeing a switch to home/online schooling for the entire student body.

Is the construction project proceeding as scheduled?

<SJ> Yes it is!

How has this social distancing gone, as a district?

<SJ> We got word probably a week prior that the school could potentially close, so Mr. Tracy called me and Bobby in and said "Hey, why don't you prep your teachers and get them ready for two weeks of work."

<BB> It was Tuesday, because we met with staff, and that's when the NCAA and the NBA cancelled, so we came back on Wednesday and knew that it was going to be a thing, so I sent out an email to staff saying to put together what they could into a packet.

What is the process then? Are the kids attending school virtually?

<SJ> My junior high and high school kids all have Chromebooks and most of our students have internet access, so they're working through Google classroom. Each teacher has set up things for them to do. The first few weeks are set up for review, but a few of our classes, especially our upper level classes are continuing to go ahead, working on the things they'll need for college. Those



tend to be smaller groups.

<BB> The State of Illinois has declared these days as "Act of God" days, so they're not counted as instruction days, so there are some districts that aren't doing anything right now. As an administration team felt like it was important that our students stay actively engaged in learning. In the elementary school, we don't have Chromebooks, so starting March 30, with the state not determining if those days will be declared remote learning days, we aren't sure what the material has to look like. Our teachers are putting together learning packets for the next two weeks, and we'll pass those out on Monday. We've sent out an email to our parents about that. It's really hard for some of our students who don't have internet capabilities to learn on their own, but our teachers are trying to reach out to our parents through email and we're looking at things like google meet to be able to at least video chat with parents and students about questions.

What sort of accommodations would you like you to share about those folks who don't have internet access?

Everything should be able to be done at home without the internet. Our teachers are making some resources available online because it is a great resource for those students who can access it.

<SJ> Those students who don't have internet access will have the same things available in a hard copy. I want to say that 100 percent of the pre-k through eighth grade students picked up

their packets the first round. Kudos to the parents and grandparents who came in and picked up their packets on the first Monday. The high school kids came in and picked up their books. I'd say at least 80 percent of those kids have come in and picked up their materials. I've been sending out emails and we've had a good percentage of our kids checking those. The teachers are checking those emails, they're still working but they're working from home.

Are there any really innovative things that your teachers are doing that you would like to highlight?

<SJ> I know that Ms Wertz is doing virtual labs. All of the elementary teachers are doing a great job of reading their in class book every day like they would normally. Bobby's been doing a good job of doing announcements every day, and his teachers have been reading a book and I know the kids have loved that.

<BB> I know a lot of our teachers are using classDojo to keep in touch. Kelly Vail is continuing to read to her class. Katie Smith is using Dojo also. I think a lot of our teachers are using technology to reach out to our students. I know there are a lot of programs out there to get our students access to the internet, but I'm just not sure how available they are in the Villa Grove area.

<SJ> I know that a few teachers are recording themselves doing things and then sending out the videos. There have been lots of discussions on Google Classroom. Classes like Sociology and

Psychology are more discussion oriented anyway, so there's been a lot of that.

<BB> The elementary isn't set up for Google Classroom yet, but all of our students have email addresses that we've created, but not all of them are activated. But if this were to continue, I might activate those email addresses for the younger grades and then let the parents know how to access those accounts if we would have to go to the Google Classroom format.

<SJ> We have had a few complaints that because everyone everywhere is streaming right now, that it's slow. We're also trying to give the kids time to decompress from all of this because this is pretty overwhelming emotionally for everyone. I wish the sun would come back out, because that seems to help everyone's mood. We've talked about it in meetings that although we want academics to be important, we also want to take care of them emotionally. As you can imagine, the seniors are having a hard time.

<BB> Amber Osborne, our elementary school counselor, is providing a lot of resources on her district web page and sending them out to our teachers to send to their students. How to stay socially engaged, and how to deal with stress during these times. You can get to her page by going to the elementary section on our school web page. Vg302.org.

You're continuing the early

See VILLA GROVE page 8