



Pool Star
St. Jude Pool Party returns
Story Page 6



Tower Power
Souvenirs on sale now
Photo Page 3



Playhouse
Brothers in Arms original
Story Page 7

DELIVERING
THE NEWS
OF MASON
COUNTY
SINCE 1849

HAVANA, ILLINOIS
Wednesday
July 7, 2021
#27 \$1.25



See More Photos Online
www.masoncountymagazine.com

DEMOCRAT
Mason County's Oldest Business - Est. 1849

Second Saturday concert to feature The Deep Hollow

Family-friendly concert at the Riverfront Park stage



An estimated 225 music enthusiasts attended the opening event of the Riverfront Concert Series in Havana in June and there will be room for even more to attend Concert No. 2 on Saturday, July 10 when The Deep Hollow takes the Riverfront Park Stage at the top of the hill overlooking the Illinois River.

The event is hosted by Edward David Anderson and the two-hour show will start at 6 p.m.

The Deep Hollow is a Folk/Americana band from Springfield. It was started by singer Elizabeth Eckert and singer/guitarist Micah Walk, the duo soon became a trio with the addition of singer/guitarist Dave Littrell.

The three songwriters quickly found that their disparate influences in pop, folk, country,

classic rock and more, easily gelled into a stripped-down, harmony-laden ode to classic Americana.

The Deep Hollow has released two critically acclaimed albums, reached #3 on the Folk DJ Charts and won American Songwriter Magazine's 30th Anniversary Song Contest.

With the help of Dan Griffin, the power to the stage has been increased for the Havana Park District which has wanted a more permanent and more powerful electricity supply for programs here.

The location is perfect for catching breezes off the river and the hundred-year old

Cottonwoods provide all the shade the park needs for these shows.

Benches provide a lot of seating around the stage, but those interested in the concert are encouraged to bring a lawn chair or blanket and enjoy the harmonies and hooks of The Deep Hollow.

The Riverfront Concerts are free and family friendly and have been made possible by financial support from CASS-COMM, Community Foundation of Central Illinois, Two Rivers Arts Council and the Illinois Arts Council Agency through federal funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Park District feeling financial pressure from Vistra and city

BY WENDY MARTIN

The year 2020 was a very stressful one for Grace Mott. It was the year she came on board to lead the Havana Park District just as a pandemic was unfolding.

But 2021 isn't looking even a spec better.

The Park District is feeling financial pressure from both Vistra, owners of the Havana Power Plant, and the City of Havana.

Vistra is demanding that the Park District and others accept a drastically reduced amount in real estate taxes for the shuttered power plant on the Illinois River.

And then the second shoe fell when they learned the city was delaying distribution of TIF funds another year.

"It's a big bummer. We received a certified letter from the City of Havana. They found a way to extend the TIF another year," Mott said. "We were really needing that money."

It had been expected that the city would close out their original Tax Increment Financing District this year, and that the Park District and other taxing bodies would start receiving all of their share of real estate taxes for properties in the TIF district.

For the 35-year life of the TIF the parks, township, schools and hospital have continued to

"It's a big bummer...the City of Havana... found a way to extend the TIF another year. We were really needing that money."

receive the same amount in property taxes as what they received in 1986.

Any increase, or 'increment' in taxes for any property in the district was all funneled to the city to help pay for TIF development.

For at least the past 5 years the city has been taking in \$800,000 to \$1 million a year from the TIF.

It had been expected that starting this year that money would have been distributed – based on tax rates – to the other taxing districts that are part of the TIF district.

"There was no notice," Mott said. "I thought we were going to get more money to help us through the power plant."

The certified letter from the city said they were amending the date of the termination of the TIF to no later than December 31, 2022 "in order to use the real estate taxes levied in the 35th year."

As it is, negotiations with Vistra have not been smooth.

Their original offer to all Mason County taxing bodies involved was they would pay 50% of their taxes the first year, 40% the second year, and 30% the third.

In an effort to made the decline follow a lower angle the counter offer was 10% a year over eight years down to 20% of the 2019 taxes.

The Vistra response was an offer of 60% the first year, 40% the second year and 25% the third year.

Vistra has been able to pressure the county and others by pointing to a tax case in another county where the assessor refused to lower the assessment and several years later when the case was finally decided in court, all of the taxing bodies had to reimburse the company for years' worth of real estate taxes.

"I'm going to continue to be

See PRESSURE Page 3

'Power' plays are bottom line items for Havana D126

Waiting for state actions on Vistra and solar application

BY WENDY MARTIN

Like other Havana area taxing bodies, Havana School District 126 is on tenterhooks waiting to see how the closure of the Havana Power Plant by Vistra is going to affect the district's bot-

tom line. It is expected to depend largely on state government.

Meanwhile, finalizing and executing an agreement for solar energy with EnPower is expected to have a much more positive impact, but it also depends in the end on the state.

Vistra

The school district stands to lose more tax revenue than any other affected taxing body. Their income from real estate taxes produced by the plant had been close to three-quarters of a million dollars.

It had been hoped that the General Assembly would pass legislation clarifying how taxes would be stepped down, but the legislation was never called for a

vote.

"I think it will be the number one priority in the fall session," Superintendent Matt Plater told the school board.

He noted that Vistra has already filed an appeal when the County Assessor did not change the valuation of the plant after it closed. Their appeal was denied.

The next step will be to go to court where they could ask the entire facility to be valued at just 8% of what it had been when it was in operation. Or the number could be 60%, as discussed in previous negotiations.

"They (Vistra) are walking a tightrope, manipulating all of this in the background," Plater told the board.

"They want our support for leg-

islation because of subsidies to help them pay for battery storage by tacking a charge onto everyone's bills," he continued. "That's good for us because the battery storage is in our community if it happens, but other places will have a new tax added to their bill."

Plater is anxious for the fall veto session to come. "They want us to put pressure on our legislators, trying to get this passed. But it would look bad for them to give us only 8% of what they used to pay," he said.

"There are so many moving parts."

EnPower

A 25-year agreement with solar energy provider EnPower

Solutions was expected to save the school district \$900,000 over the life of the agreement with savings expected from locking in low utility rates.

The agreement was originally

approved in March with a solar array on the property the school district owns catty-corner from New Central on Pearl Street, and a three-acre array opposite Blue

See POWER Page 3

New owners announced for The Lodge

Ownership by Health Department was unique in the State of Illinois

Tutera Senior Living & Health Care, a Kansas City-based senior health care provider, announced it has purchased The Lodge at Manito. Located on eight acres, the facility provides assisted living and memory care – the first and only dedicated memory care community in the Manito area.

Over the past 38 years, Tutera has developed expertise in providing senior living experiences for individuals living with memory loss through its THRIVE in the Courtyard memory care program, which will be available to the residents of Manito.

"The Lodge at Manito has an exceptional reputation in the area for providing quality care and services," said Randy Bloom, president and chief operating officer of Tutera. "We are excited by the opportunity to combine our years of senior living experience to an existing, well-operated community to achieve superior outcomes."

The Lodge was opened in 2017 by the Mason County Health Department, which was the first of its kind in the state – no other health department in Illinois owns an assisted living property. Tutera and the health department will have a collaborative relationship that will benefit the

residents of The Lodge at Manito.

"We did the groundwork to get The Lodge at Manito up and running; now it's time to build off the health department's success and bring in an expert like Tutera who knows senior living," said Curt Jibben, public health officer of the Mason County Health Department.

He added, "Tutera's brand and values align perfectly with The Lodge at Manito, and we're excited for this partnership to further our mutual goal of providing the best care to the older population in Mason County."

The Lodge organization will adopt Tutera's YOUNITE philosophy – a way to get to know residents on a personal level to provide a unique and one-of-a-kind experience where needs are properly met. Because of YOUNITE, The Lodge at Manito will offer team members, services, amenities and culture that

work together to support residents' independence and honor their individuality.

"At Tutera, we understand that each 'community' is different, and as a result, we must understand what opportunities exist on a community-by-community basis," said Bloom. "Tutera provides many resources to the community team, including systems, processes and programs to engage both the residents and

See THE LODGE Page 3

9 new Covid cases reported this week

New hospitalization announced

BY WENDY MARTIN

Two minors and three females in their 20s were among the nine new cases of Covid-19 that have been diagnosed in the four days between Tuesday, June 29 and Friday, July 2.

The other four cases are a female in her 30s and another in her 40s, and one male each in his 50s and 60s.

One person has been reported hospitalized.

The Delta variant of the

virus has become the dominant strain in England and other countries, and is on the rise in the United States.

The majority of new cases of the virus are occurring among unvaccinated persons.

It has been reported that the Delta variety causes more severe symptoms than other variations of the virus.

Mason County has seen an uptick in the number of residents getting vaccinations.

Residents may sign up online to be vaccinated at the Mason County Health Department by visiting their Facebook page.

You do not have to have a Facebook account to do this.

Or residents may call the Health Department at (309) 210-0110 for assistance.

Mason County COVID-19

Vaccine Administration Data

Vaccination Data as of 6/28/2021

Total Administered Doses 10,527	Increase over past week 105	% of County Vaccinated 39.79%
Number Fully Vaccinated 5,398	Increase over past week 64	County Population 13,565