

Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Illinois fully aligns with new CDC masking recommendations

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced on July 27 that it is fully adopting updated Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) masking recommendations to protect against COVID-19 and the Delta variant. CDC recommends that everyone, including fully vaccinated individuals, wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas with substantial and high transmission. CDC is also recommending universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.



While data continues to show the effectiveness of the three COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized in the U.S., including against the Delta variant, we are still seeing the virus rapidly spread among the unvaccinated," said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. "Cases and hospitalizations due to COVID-19 both continue to increase, overwhelmingly among the unvaccinated, but the risk is greater for everyone if we do not stop the on-

going spread of the virus and the Delta variant. We know masking can help prevent transmission of COVID-19 and its variants. Until more people are vaccinated, we join CDC in recommending everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear a mask indoors in areas of substantial and high transmissions, and in K-12 schools."

According to CDC, data show the Delta variant is much more contagious. Delta spreads more than twice as easily from one person to another compared to other strains. According to the CDC, the Delta variant is causing some vaccine breakthrough infections, but even so, most breakthrough infections are mild, and the vac-

cines are preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

Areas of substantial transmission are considered by CDC to be those with 50 to 99 cases per 100,000 people over a 7-day period. Areas of high transmission are considered to be those with more than 100 cases per 100,000 people over a 7-day period. The community level of transmission can be found here <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>.

IDPH will be updating school FAQs and other guidance posted online to reflect the latest CDC Interim Public Health Recommendations for Full Vaccinated People.

Douglas County Board approves website contract with Webfoot

By Jim Allen

The Douglas County Board was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on July 21, 2021 by Chair Don Munson. All members were present. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as were the payments of the county's financial obligations. After the monthly business items were completed, the board began new business.

A resolution to authorize Douglas County to participate in an energy opt-out aggregation program with Good Energy consultants was passed. This provides the county with a stable price for natural gas for a three year period. The contract was up on 7-1-21 but a new contract was not available due to the cancellation of a pipeline from Texas to the East Coast. Due to the uncertainty this created, the contract was delayed until pricing could be verified. The previous contract was for two years whereas this contract is for three years.

The total increase over the five years covered by both contracts will be approximately ten percent.

The Board voted to contract with Webfoot, to design a new web page for the County. The current web page was built by the county and although it has been serviceable, a new web page will make public access easier. Chair Munson has contacted many counties regarding this matter and Webfoot was highly recommended. The department heads of the county were also involved in the decision making and are looking forward to a professionally designed web page.

The contract will be for \$10,000.00 and a monthly maintenance fee of \$295.00.

The Board approved a contract with Leaf It To Us to remove ten trees on the County Jail grounds. The total for removal, cleanup, and stump grinding was \$7,450. After further inspection, another tree was added to the number with costs not

to exceed \$1,000.00. Leaf It To Us gave the county an 18 percent volume discount.

The County also entered into an agreement with Bellwether Consulting to help in determining what projects will qualify for the Federal Funding that the county will receive. The county has received half of the \$3,500,000 promised. Caution must be taken to assure that a program will qualify under the regulations given by the Federal Government. Money spent on an unqualified program would place the County at risk. Bellwether is experienced in the analysis of government regulation and is recognized by the Illinois Association of County Board Members.

The total cost of the contract will be \$20,000.00. The Board authorized \$10,000.00 toward the contract and the second half will be due when the county receives the remainder of the Federal Funding. Chair

See BOARD page 6

Technology resources and financial benefits made available with COVID relief funding will be available to Lake Land College students this fall

Lake Land College is implementing several initiatives to assist students this fall, including financial assistance, a new laptop rental program and new classroom technology.

"We are committed to helping our students succeed by providing access to the resources and technology they need, when they need it," President Josh Bullock said. "The new technology and financial assistance programs made available with CO-

VID-relief funding will be able to break down some barriers for students and allow them to continue on their path to a successful career."

On Monday, July 12, the Lake Land College Board of Trustees approved the purchase of 300 new Dell laptops using Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) governmental funds. The Information Systems and Services team will prepare each of the laptops, and begin-

ning August 16, students can check them out in the Judge Learning Resource Center/Library. The college will also be proposing the implementation of a new help desk at a future Lake Land College Board of Trustees meeting. If approved, the help desk will be available to students during the hours they are using online resources.

Student Trustee Katie Greuel said the students appreciated the Chromebooks that the college made available last year,

but recognized that they had limitations. "I really think the laptops are a great idea. It will be nice for students to be able to complete their school work at home. It will definitely be utilized."

Throughout the past year, the college has used COVID-relief funds to provide financial assistance to students to help cover educational expenses, such as tuition and fees, course materials, technology, food, housing, transportation, or for emergen-

cy costs that arise due to coronavirus such as health care (including mental health care) or child care. Students do not have to repay these grant funds. In addition to the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), the college has additional funding available to assist students through the HEERF funds authorized through the American Rescue Plan.

This fall, Lake Land College will prioritize the

distribution of these funds in three tiers: 1. Students with the most financial need, based on their FAFSA; 2. Students enrolled in programs that have high costs for tools, supplies or tests and 3. Any student with a self-identified area of need.

Students enrolled in the fall as of the 10th day of the semester, will have the opportunity to request funds due to hardships ex-

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Eagle Scout and ALAH senior, Jacob Bettinger building an outdoor structure for students waiting in elements at bus stop in Lovington

Donations still needed to complete project

By Ariana Cherry

Eagle Scout and upcoming senior at ALAH, Jacob Bettinger and his mother would often notice students waiting outside in the elements in Lovington for the bus - especially during frigid cold winters and rainy weather. These were often students who weren't able to wait with their parents or had to walk over to wait. Jacob's mom suggested to him that perhaps it would be ideal if the students had some type of shelter to stand in while they had to wait on the bus.

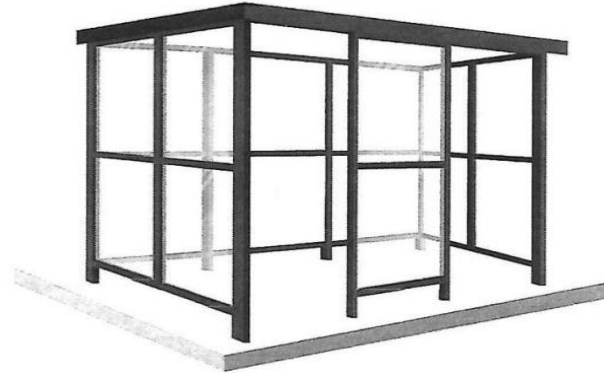
Back in February, Jacob presented his project to the school board. He informed them that the bus stop would measure about 6 foot by 12 feet wide. The plan was to fit about 10-12 students in it. To be more cost effective, he wanted to have it built instead of paying for a pre-built one. Jacob had done some research and found out that pre-built ones cost around \$6,000 and he could build one for

half of that amount. During his presentation, he was hoping to spread the word so that he could gather sponsors, donations and volunteers to help build. Superintendent Shannon Cheek had let him know that he supported the idea.

Presently, Jacob noted that he had been in contact with a company in New York and has started the kit building process. The enclosure will cost \$3,945. The structure will be built on site. He and his father did look into different structure designs, but due to rising costs amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost wasn't all that different. Before assembling the structure, a concrete pad will be needed, which will be a little over \$200.

In the past three weeks, Jacob has received \$825 in donations. Other organizations have pledged as well, and will hopefully double what he has now. Thanks to his mother, she has helped

BUILD YOUR STRUCTURE



YOUR DESIGN

- MATERIAL**
- Aluminum
- BODY CONFIGURATION**
- 2 Open
- ROOF COLOR**
- Medium Bronze

SIZE

- 6'x12'
- ROOF TYPE**
- Flat

create a spreadsheet to track all of the donations and those who contributed to the project. There are still other items that are needed to build the structure though. Some of those items include wood for the framing of the concrete pad (7 ft x 13ft by 6in thick), reinforcing mesh for the concrete and 24 anchors (size 1/4 x 1 7/8 Hilti Kwik HUS-EZ. All of these items can be purchased at Home Depot and Lowes.

It has been decided that the structure will reside at the west edge of the parking lot where the Lovington High School gym once was. Jacob has a goal of having the structure completed by the end of September for the new school year.

If you would like to help donate monetarily to help build and complete Jacob's Eagle Scout Project, they can be sent to P.O. Box 584, Lovington, IL 61937.



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