

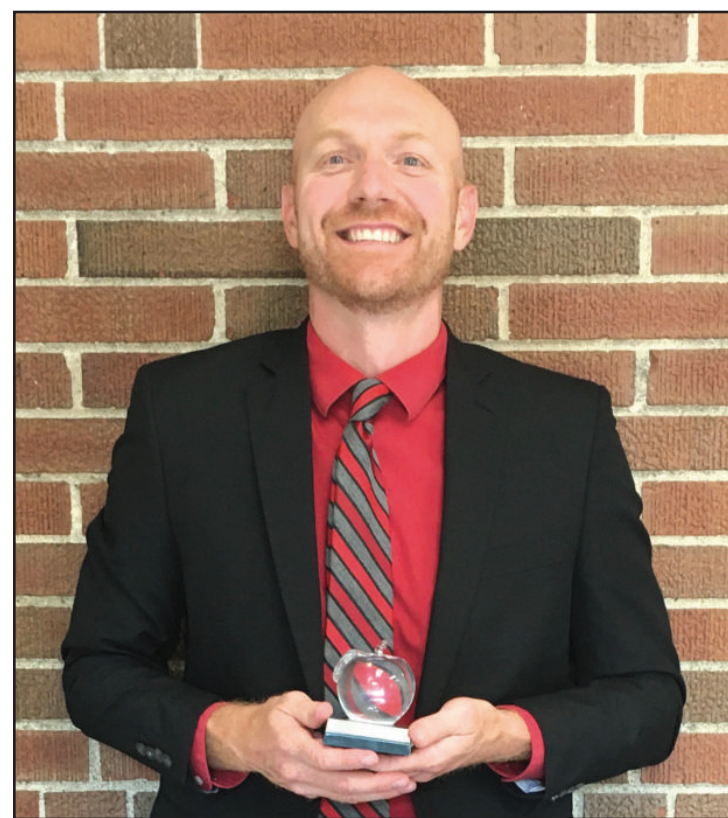


Wednesday, August 11, 2021



Photo: Rachel Ray

2021 Miss Tuscola Queens crowned at the July 31 pageant. Junior Miss Tuscola Ava Whitson, Little Miss Tuscola Isla Harriss, and Miss Tuscola Julia Kerkhoff. Kerkhoff is only the second to win all three Miss Tuscola titles. She was crowned Little Miss in 2008 and Junior Miss in 2016.



Submitted Photo

Ted Walk, Superintendent of Sullivan Schools, received the 2021 Abe Lincoln Region Superintendent Award of Excellence. The Illinois Principals Association Abe Lincoln Region is comprised of Moultrie, Shelby, Macon, Piatt, Christian, De Witt, Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties. Mr. Walk was recognized at the annual Abe Lincoln Region Awards Banquet on August 2, 2021 in Decatur.

## Horizon Health announces Full-Time Cardiologist Dr. Oren

Dr. Oren brings rural experience to build cardiology program

Horizon Health announces the addition of a full-time cardiologist who will develop and lead its cardiology program.

Ron Oren, MD, has been a cardiologist for 28 years. He has worked at various locations throughout the Midwest, including Springfield and Peoria in Illinois. His expertise includes building successful clinical cardiology programs, as well as cardiology training programs.

"Dr. Oren is a well-respected physician with vast experience in rural healthcare," said Ollie Smith, Horizon Health president & CEO. "His knowledge and expertise will serve our patients well."

Dr. Oren added: "I can make a bigger impact in a smaller community like Paris. My goal is to provide high-quality care for those cardiology illnesses and diagnoses that don't require care at a larger tertiary hospital."

Dr. Oren's approach is to keep patients locally while providing the best care possible.

"I understand the hardship of transferring patients out of their community," he said. "There's a significant burden for them and their families, including higher costs and anxiety."

Dr. Oren treats a variety of conditions, including congestive heart failure (CHF), chest pain, arrhythmias (irregular heart beat), and high blood pressure. He offers cardiac testing (echocardiogram), stress testing, and heart rhythm monitoring. He also provides long-term continuum of care with primary care providers. He is specially trained to treat advanced



heart failure, which is the most common reason adults are hospitalized.

"In cardiology, you can make a big impact on someone's day-to-day wellbeing by providing good medical care," he said. "Making small adjustments can make their lives significantly better."

Dr. Oren is board certified in Cardiovascular Diseases and Advanced Heart Failure. He attended Rush Medical College in Chicago and has a bachelor's degree in pre-medicine from Augustana College in Rock Island.

He has spent most of his career in Illinois and Iowa, which includes directorships at the colleges of medicine at the University of Iowa, University of Illinois-Peoria, and Southern Illinois University-Springfield.

Dr. Oren was born in Minnesota and has been a lifelong resident of the upper Midwest.

He has three adult children. He is a Minnesota Vikings fan, enjoys reading mystery novels, and loves trout fishing.

Dr. Oren sees patients in the Paris Clinic. A medical referral is not required. For appointments, call 217-466-4096.

## Masks mandated at schools, day cares, long-term care facilities amid new COVID-19 surge

By Jerry Norwicki  
Capitol News Illinois

Masks will be required at all Illinois long-term care facilities, day cares and Pre-K-12 schools, Gov. JB Pritzker announced Wednesday amid a nationwide surge of COVID-19.

"Every time we think we know where this virus is headed, it changes and it shifts," Pritzker said at a COVID-19 briefing in Chicago. "For example, unlike before, people 29 years old and younger accounted for 12 percent of hospitalizations. All across the nation, we are seeing young people with no underlying conditions now on ventilators. I want to say specifically to young adults: Please do not think that the worst case scenario can't happen to you. It can happen. It is happening. Get vaccinated."

Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike said youth hospitalizations and infections have been rising.

About 5.5 percent of COVID-19 cases were among those who are younger than 10 years of age in January, Ezike said, but that number increased to 15 percent last month. Approximately 13 percent of cases in January were among those 10-19 years old, increasing to 23 percent in July. Hospitalizations for those 20 years old and younger have tripled from 2.5 percent to 7.8 percent in that time span.

"And yes, while most children who get COVID have fewer symptoms than

adults, they absolutely can still get COVID-19 and they can absolutely spread it to others," Ezike said, noting many cases of the virus have spread at youth camps this summer.

The masking requirement extends to indoor but not outdoor activities and sports.

While Pritzker said masks are important in schools, especially for students who are not yet eligible for the vaccine, the best approach to limiting the spread of COVID-19 is getting vaccinated. It's also the best way to limit severe illness and death.

In Illinois, 6.5 million people are fully vaccinated, or 51.2 percent of the population, while 73 percent of the population that is older than 12 years of age has received at least one dose of the vaccine. The state averaged 28,180 vaccine doses administered each day over the past seven days.

Of the millions of fully vaccinated individuals, just 714 have spent time in the hospital with COVID-19, according to IDPH. Since January, 180 vaccinated individuals have died of COVID-19 symptoms, accounting for just 2.58 percent of the COVID-19-related deaths this calendar year. That number increased by 11 from the state's reporting of the numbers last week.

That's about 0.01 percent of vaccinated individuals who have been hospitalized for the virus and 0.003 percent who have died of com-

plications.

"The overwhelming majority of cases, the hospitalizations, the deaths are among those who are not vaccinated," Ezike said. "And the majority of transmission is also among the unvaccinated. ... But the key is that we actually have the tools to turn the tide on the next wave. And that next wave wants to threaten us if we don't avail ourselves of these tools."

Pritzker said there are two routes to enforcing the mask mandate, including civil liability for schools not enforcing the mandate and the removal of recognition status by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The Illinois Department of Public Health also announced Wednesday it is making free COVID-19 testing available to K-12 schools across the state through the SHIELD Illinois saliva-based test developed by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The test can detect the virus and its variants in those with or without symptoms.

The testing would allow close contacts of a COVID-19-positive individual to stay in the classroom as long as they test negative. Funding comes from federal COVID-19 relief packages.

By Oct. 4, all Illinois state employees working in congregate facilities will be required to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

The order covers certain employees at the Departments of Human Services, Veterans' Affairs, Correc-

tions and Juvenile Justice working in congregate facilities, and Pritzker said the state has reached out to the unions representing those employees to work out the details.

Illinois is also requiring universal masking in private long-term care facilities and "strongly encourages owners of private facilities to join the state in adopting vaccination requirements," according to the governor's office.

Pritzker's announcement came as 1,165 people were hospitalized for COVID-19, including 246 in intensive care unit beds and 94 on ventilators as of Tuesday night.

The state's seven-day average case positivity rate for COVID-19 was 4.4 percent as of Wednesday, while the state reported another 18 deaths, a high since June 24. That brought the death toll to 23,476 since the pandemic began with another 2,428 deaths reported with probable links to COVID-19.

Pritzker said the state is "evaluating every day" the trajectory of the virus and other potential mitigations that may be needed. The guidance applies to all schools, public and non-public.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government and distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

## Visit Downtown Mattoon Dine in Restaurants

Bimini Café - Little Mexico - Thai Noodle & Sushi - Luigi's Italian

Hunan Fine Asian Cuisine - Downtown Diner - Burger King