

Wednesday, September 29, 2021

Regional Office of Education #11 to help seek new school bus drivers

Regional Office of Education #11 is working to help area schools deal with many challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, including how to safely get children to and from school.

ROE #11 is hosting a series of school bus training courses for those who want to become bus drivers. All new school bus drivers must complete the eight hour initial training before applying for their school bus driver permit.

Training courses will be available at the Regional Office of Education #11 office in Charleston:

- * Wednesday and Thursday, Oct. 13-14, from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. (both

evenings required)

- * Saturday, Nov. 20 from 8:30 to 5 p.m.
- * Saturday, Dec. 11 from 8:30 to 5 p.m.
- * Saturday, Jan. 15, from 8:30 to 5 p.m.

Training courses cost \$10 to attend. Anyone interested should contact Katie O'Dell: 217-348-0151 or kodell@roe11.org.

ROE #11 Regional Superintendent Kyle Thompson said the ROE's role to help train and ensure school bus drivers are ready for the road has always been important but the office is making a special push for participants this year because of the challenging times schools are facing.

There is a statewide bus driver shortage af-



fecting schools large and small, and state regulations for bus drivers will be much more comprehensive beginning early next year.

"School bus drivers are the unsung heroes of our school systems. I know from experience how many men and women have given up a portion of their mornings and afternoons throughout the school year to ensure our kids are safe, and the great rewards they get from it," Thompson said. "We encourage anyone thinking about a job where they can make a difference in kids' lives to attend our training session. Our schools need safe, qualified bus drivers and we need them now."

First Farmers Bank & Trust donates to Horizon Health Meals on Wheels

A generous contribution to the Horizon Health Foundation of East Central Illinois will provide much-needed food and nutrition assistance to area residents.

First Farmers Bank & Trust recently donated \$3,500 to Horizon Health's Meals on Wheels program. Meals on Wheels provides freshly prepared meals to homebound individuals

who face transportation, mobility, or health-related issues.

"This gift will help ensure that our friends and neighbors have access to quality food and nutrition when other resources may not be readily available," said Randi Bohannon, foundation executive director. "We are extremely grateful to First Farmers Bank & Trust for supporting our

organization and the community as a whole."

The demand for meals has tripled over the past year, Bohannon said. In January 2021 alone, Meals on Wheels volunteers delivered 2,331 meals. Before the pandemic, they delivered about 780 meals a month.

"When the pandemic began, many people found themselves more vulnerable and in need of

urgent support," Bohannon said. "Even with COVID, there was never a thought of putting Meals on Wheels on hold. The Horizon Health nutritional services staff, which prepares the meals, and the community volunteers who deliver them, have really stepped up to ensure residents are cared for."

About Meals on Wheels

The program provides nutritious meals at an affordable price. Each meal cost \$3 and consists of an entrée, vegetable, potato/starch, salad, dessert, bread, margarine, and juice or milk. Meals are delivered seven days a week, excluding holidays. Meals also can be picked up at Horizon Health by friends or family members.

Financial assistance

is available to those who cannot afford meals. For more information about the Meals on Wheels program, call one of the phone numbers below:

Sign up to receive or deliver meals: 217-466-4326

Request assistance to pay for meals: 217-466-4298

Make a donation to Meals on Wheels: 217-465-1234



Submitted photo
First Farmers Bank & Trust recently donated \$3,500 to Horizon Health's Meals on Wheels program. Pictured (left to right) are bank employees Lydia Laughlin; Kaylah Vest; Sheri Hackett; Randi Bohannon, executive director of the Horizon Health Foundation of East Central Illinois; and Tessa Hutson, First Farmers Bank & Trust branch manager, Paris.

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