



Tuscola Review

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Pandemic project

The year 2019 is attached to the name, yet here we are, already into 2022 and still ... COVID-19 continues to directly affect almost every aspect of our lives. Time inexorably moves on as we look at navigating (who would have guessed) year THREE of an historic global pandemic.

How are we doing it? In what ways has the process changed over time? What have the impacts been to our families, workplaces, schools, health, social interactions? What have we learned along the way? Finding, gathering, and documenting the answers to those questions is at the very heart of a project to capture this seminal moment in Douglas County history while it's still happening in real time.

Douglas County Health Department is looking for submissions from people of all walks of life – students, senior citizens, teachers, administrators, parents, athletes, small and large business owners, employees, consumers, healthcare workers, private citizens. We all have stories to tell, observations to relate, opinions to offer on this shared experience.

What should your submissions include? Entirely up to you, including the format. Journal entries, letters to your kids/grandkids, photos, stories, video clips, oral or video interviews, random collections of thoughts and memories, physical objects ... any of these would be good. Did you have COVID? If so, what was it like for you? Did you take up a hobby during quarantine or isolation, perhaps start a new family tradition? Tell us about--better yet show examples of--those. Make this your project; we'll just serve as the custodian.

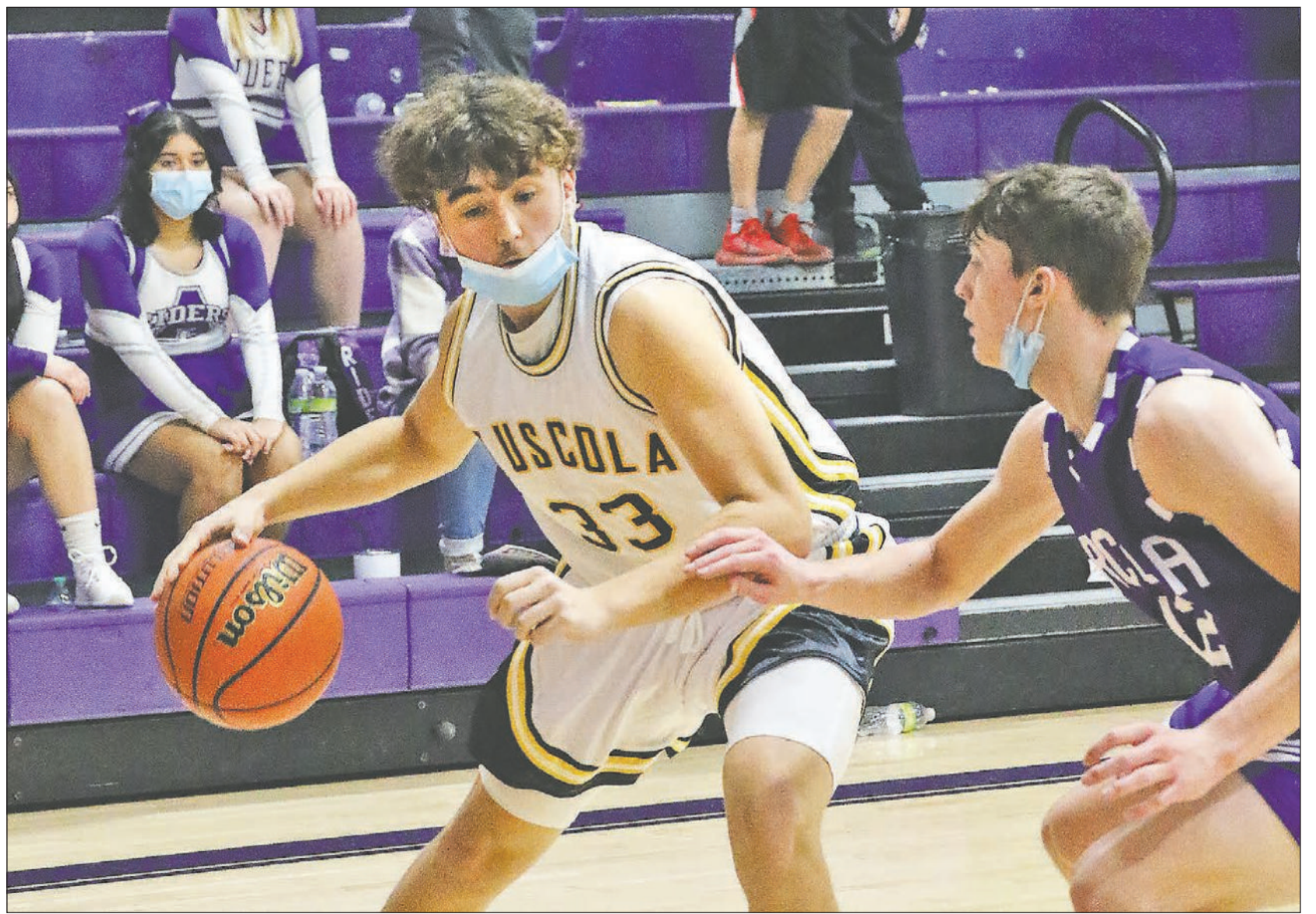
We'll be sharing your submissions periodically, so stay tuned and stay healthy. Can't wait to see what you have to offer!

Submissions can be sent to Colleen Lehmann in the following ways:

Email colleen.lehmann@douglascountytill.com

Mail or drop off to DCHD at Tuscola Factory Outlets/Building J600/Tuscola, IL 61953

Questions? Call Colleen at 217-253-4137 ext. 1229 (M-Th. 8-4:30 p.m.)



THOMAS BROWN (33) DRIBBLES the ball with his right hand as Arcola's Tanner Thomas defends for the Purple Riders. Photo by Nancy Rairden.

Carle to build 12,000-sq. ft. medical clinic south of mall

The Tuscola City Council, on Dec. 27, 2021, accepted an offer of \$280,000 for three lots south of the outlet mall from Carle Health. The healthcare company plans to build a 12,000-square-foot medical clinic there with 16 examination rooms supporting eight providers.

The single-story plan also calls for two treatment rooms, an outpatient lab and imaging space as well as offices, a waiting room and a telecom/data room. The project includes an outdoor walking path that will be accessible to the public "to promote a healthier work environment and life style." Construction materials are brick, metal panels and an aluminum glass

storefront. Landscaping includes "native plants and grasses" to reduce maintenance.

The city acquired the lots when the mall was built as compensation for putting in the road. They are lots 1, 2 and 7 of Amishland Country Village south of the Big Red Barn at the end of a cul de sac.

Since the site is in a tax increment finance (TIF) district, the city requested proposals from anyone wanting to develop the property. Carle was the only responder to the request. Drew Hoel, city manager, said the price offered is about \$1 per square foot.

Hoel said Carle discussed trading its current clinic at the corner

of U.S. 36 and Egyptian Trail. He recommended to the Council that the city take a "first right of refusal" on that property. He said he expects to close on the sale of the lots in three months.

In other business, the Council approved a \$1.8 million reimbursement to Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores, Inc. as part of a redevelopment agreement that included the construction of Moore Avenue.

Also approved was a Community Building lease to Tuscola Home Center for a Christmas party Jan. 15. It was also announced that all 2021 golf cart permits have expired; residents wishing to renew

their permits can do so on the city's website, tuscola.org.

In his written report to the Council, Hoel said Cabot Corporation has agreed to pay for the preliminary surveying and engineering on the proposed water line replacement between the Tuscola and Arcola meter stations. The county has been asked to contribute \$1 million of its federal America Rescue Plan Act funds toward the project.

Alan Shoemaker served as mayor pro tem in the absence of Mayor Dan Kleiss. Also absent from the Council meeting was alderperson Terra Waldrop.

Holidays spark increase in COVID infections

By Colleen Lehmann
DCHD public health liaison

Christmas has come and gone ... wouldn't it be great if COVID did the same? No such luck, unfortunately. The 7-day rolling positivity rate for Douglas County as reported by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) on Dec. 24 was 12.6%, while that same result for Region 6 was 10.2%.

From Dec. 20-27 the Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) saw 133 new cases, 113 of which were unvaccinated folks. As of yesterday, we were monitoring 292 active/close contacts. Total county cases now number 4,119 and there have been 46 deaths.

On the vaccination front, IDPH figures show 44.77% of Douglas County residents are fully vaccinated, while 48.85% have had at least one dose. There have been 3,046 booster doses administered to county residents.

On January 6, 2022 DCHD resumes weekly COVID vaccine clinics on Thursdays at Tuscola Community Building for J&J,

Moderna, and Pfizer first/second/booster doses. Appointments can be made online at dchealthdept.org. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this free health service.

News on the COVID front ...

--News is plentiful, but at least for this moment in time in Douglas County, it is preliminary. IDPH is our boss when it comes to recommended practices, so getting official word from that entity is necessary for DCHD to begin implementing them. That said, there is a recent CDC recommendation to shorten isolation and quarantine times in specific situations.

If and when IDPH adopts the CDC recommendations, then COVID isolation/quarantine guideline changes would likely be as follows:

Asymptomatic positive cases = 5 days isolation followed by 5 days mask use around others

Direct exposure to COVID-positive cases would be as follows:

If unvaccinated = 5 days quar-

antine followed by 5 days strict mask use

If fully vaccinated with primary series but unboosted* = 5 days quarantine

Fully vaccinated and boosted OR had COVID less than 6 mos. prior = no quarantine as long as asymptomatic

*Fully vaccinated and 6 mos. out if Pfizer or Moderna, 2 mos. out if J&J means vaccine immunity has likely waned. If your primary vaccine series was less than the aforementioned timeframes, the no quarantine option would likely be recommended.

Soaring numbers of positive cases making it increasingly burdensome for local health departments to keep up with contact investigation and tracing prompted IDPH to develop a single, centralized center for this aspect of COVID management. This approach is scheduled to begin Jan. 13, but due to many questions and unknowns regarding the process, DCHD is not sure when, if or to what degree it will participate. We hope to learn more in the coming days/weeks and will provide

specific information as it is received. In the meantime, don't be surprised if you have a positive COVID result and receive an IDPH text message, as starting today they will be doing so with any new positives recorded in the state system.

This week's update

Happy New Year to all ... hope you are well as we begin to navigate 2022. The end of 2021/start of 2022 has been a challenge at J600, with record numbers of positive COVID cases and testing demands. Just this past week, Dec. 27-Jan. 2, there were 218 new cases (170 unvaccinated, 48 vaccinated). Four of those daily totals were 56, 48, 59, and 40 – and that was cutting down testing time to 3.5 hours due to staffing shortages.

By comparison, the previous week's total number of new cases was 133. The 7-day rolling positivity rate for Douglas County as of Dec. 27 was 13.9%, with Region 6 positivity rate at 11.5%

Currently, DCHD is following 292 active/close contacts, and

the county has seen a total of 4,331 cases and 46 deaths since the pandemic's start. Testing so far today is on pace to set another record number of positive cases.

Speaking of testing ... we are experiencing a backlog in rapid testing supplies so are having to make changes to our testing schedule this week. I have attached a PSA regarding those changes and the reasons for them. I'd also like to point out that we are trying to discourage people from lining their vehicles on roadways when waiting in line for a COVID test. The line should remain within the parking lot area of Tuscola Outlet Mall, so as not to disrupt traffic flow.

With December coming to a close, I can report the following COVID numbers for 2021. There were 2,402 new cases and 14 deaths recorded in Douglas County for 2021. We began recording vaccination status in September 2021. In that four-month period there were 1,379 new cases -- 1,162 of them unvaccinated and 217 vaccinated.

IDPH figures show Douglas County has 49.02% of residents with at least one vaccine, and 44.83% are fully vaccinated. There have been 3,133 boosters administered to county residents.

News on the COVID front ...

Late last week, IDPH adopted CDC guidance on shortening isolation and quarantine periods for the general public. This is for everyone other than schools, higher education, corrections facilities, and long-term care facilities – interim guidance for these entities is expected any day and will be shared as soon as it is released.

DCHD looks forward to reinstating weekly COVID clinics this week. On Thursday, Jan. 6 we will be back at Tuscola Community Building for appointment-based vaccinations of J&J, Moderna, and Pfizer. Appointments can be made online at dchealthdept.org. As of today, we have almost 200 appointments on the schedule this week.