



# Tuscola Review

Volume 5 Number 12

Est. 2017

Your locally owned community newspaper

February 16, 2022



## Office closures

The Douglas County Health Department will be closed Feb. 11, 17 and 21.

City of Tuscola offices will be closed Feb. 21.

## Music Boosters

The Tuscola Music Boosters' annual concert, entitled Rock of Ages, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 26 at 7 p.m. "Rock of Ages" is sure to be a concert that will provide toe-tapping music memories of decades past.

As there are ever changing guidelines, for health reasons Tuscola Music Boosters has opted to not serve a dinner this year. Open seating in the balcony will be available the day of the event.

Reserved floor seating is due by Friday, Feb. 21 and can be dropped off or mailed to Tuscola High School at 500 S. Prairie, or East Prairie Middle School at 409 S. Prairie (See ad on page 10).

## Spring musical

The TCHS Drama Club will present Descendants the Musical March 17, 18 and 19 at 7 p.m. and March 20 at 2 p.m. Tickets go on sale March 3.

## Englehardt Sr. VP

Congratulations to Caleb Englehardt who has been promoted to senior vice president at Morgan Stanley.

## Dean's List

Congratulations to Emily Kemp for making the Dean's List at Millikin University in Decatur for the fall of 2021. And to Elizabeth Shipman of Atwood and Collin Budd of Arcola for making the list.

## Office closures

The Douglas County Health Department will be closed Feb. 11, 17 and 21.

City of Tuscola offices will be closed Feb. 21.

## Museum program

The Douglas County Museum will host the program "Pre-Civil War Quilts: Secret Codes to Freedom on the Underground Railroad" on Feb. 17 from 7-8:30 p.m. The program will be presented on Zoom. A link to the program will be posted on the museum's Facebook page.

## Soccer registration

Spring Soccer registration is open till March 1. Kindergarten practices and games are at Ervin Park. Grades 1-12 travel within the local area. Contact tuscolasoccer@gmail.com or message Tuscola Soccer Club on their Facebook page.

## Need swim coaches

The Tuscola Torpedoes Swim Team is looking for advance youth swimmers who would be interested in volunteering as assistant swim coaches, under the training and supervision of experienced swim coaches.

Interested volunteers can send inquires and questions to torpedoesheadcoach@gmail.com.

## Library activities

StoryTime every Tuesday, 10 a.m. on Facebook

Feb. 17, Cooking with Marla, 6 p.m. on Facebook

Feb. 21, Crafter's Corner 5 p.m.

Feb. 23, Book Discussion—Fathers and Sons 6 p.m.

Every Saturday is Tech Drop-In from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Come get help with your devices.



**DENNIS OPPERMAN RAISED** the most money for the privilege of kissing a pig Saturday at the FFA Alumni Association's Pie Auction and Chili Supper. Zorro the pig wasn't too keen on smooching but was a good sport about it. Opperman edged out John Rairden by \$9. The Alumni group auctioned off 24 pies. Wives of the Kiss a Pig contest competed for highest priced pie with Samantha Baird winning with a \$400 bid. Most of the pies went in the \$250-300 range with Illini FS winning half a dozen desserts and then giving them back to be auctioned again. Ta'Carbon donated the chili for the event. Doug Rund of Pesotum was the auctioneer. All of the proceeds benefit the ag program and FFA at Tuscola High School. Submitted photo.

## City considers 'ambitious' building plan

The City of Tuscola is looking at renovations and additions to several of its buildings including the fire station, police station and street shed. No decisions were made during a study session Monday night, but City Administrator Drew Hoel was told to continue to gather information including architectural drawings and a budget.

The improvements were prompted by the demolition of the old, 4,000-square-foot street shed,

which included storage for the police department and a shooting range as well as city street department storage. The building's roof collapsed a year ago due to heavy snow.

Hoel said there is \$300,000 budgeted and \$48,500 in insurance toward replacing that building, but he used the opportunity to look at other storage needs. He suggested tearing down an old 1,000-square-foot former street department of-

fice building on the east side of town and building a 3,300-square-foot addition to the city's remaining shed east of Prairie Street.

The addition could include a firing range for the police department, but would not be big enough to accommodate their storage needs. The police sometimes have to store large items of evidence, such as a car.

The plan calls for the police department to utilize the north fire

station next door to the police station. It houses fire trucks, but Fire Chief Brian Moody said it is rarely used for emergency response. The city has maintained that station in case there is a train on the tracks blocking the fire trucks at the south station.

Moody said the fire department can utilize the overpass on Rt. 45 to get to the north side of town and

See PLAN on page 4

## Hogues renew plans for restaurant

Cast Iron Pub has put on hold its plans for a food truck, City Administrator Drew Hoel told the Tuscola City Council Monday night. Instead, owners Kenny and Angela Hogue want to refocus on opening their restaurant, Irma Lou's Kitchen, Hoel said.

The couple started renovation for a bar and separate restaurant in 2018. In January, the Council approved the use of a city-owned lot across the street from the bar for a

food truck.

In other business, Hoel reported that the city's hotel/motel tax revenue is up significantly from last year but still lagging behind 2019. He expressed optimism that it is rebounding. The tax funds tourism activities in the city.

"Now for the bad news," Hoel told the Council — Illinois American Water, which supplies the city's water service as well as water for most of the west half of the county,

is expecting a rate increase of about 30 percent in 2023.

The city has had a nagging problem of losing water within its system, and the Council took steps Monday night to again try to locate and fix the leakage. Leak Detection Services, Inc., was hired at a cost of \$20,661 to that end. The Council also approved a check valve replacement at a cost of \$8,975.

The city, through the Joint Water Agency co-owned by Arcola, is

working on a water main improvement to Cabot. It will supplement an old 8-inch line that has diminished capacity to feed water to Cabot since LyondellBasell is taking its water plant offline. The new line is expected to fix other issues within the system to the benefit of Tuscola and Arcola customers as well as West Prairie Water Co. customers.

See CITY COUNCIL on page 4

## Pritzker plans to lift mask mandate by Feb. 28

School mandates would remain in place for 'coming weeks,' pending court decision

By JERRY NOWICKI  
Capitol News Illinois  
jnowicki@capitolnewsillinois.com

SPRINGFIELD — If hospitalizations for COVID-19 continue to decline for the rest of the month, Gov. JB Pritzker plans to lift his executive order that mandates face coverings indoors by Feb. 28. The plan does not apply to schools. Tuscola schools are not enforcing the mandate following a court case in Springfield that banned the mandate and other COVID-19 protocols for schools named in the suit. Tus-

cola was not one of them.

It's unclear what level of rise in hospitalizations could lead the state to change its course, but Pritzker and health officials said at an afternoon news conference Wednesday that such a scenario was not out of the question.

"It's the end of the statewide mask mandate," Pritzker said of the planned Feb. 28 lifting of the order. "But as we've all said, if things get very bad, I think we've seen this before with the onslaught of delta and then omicron (variants of the coro-

navirus), boy, masks really helped us to keep infection rates, transmission rates down. So, there may come a time in the future when that happens."

Regardless of what happens with hospitalizations, masks will continue to be mandated at schools, on school busses and other public transportation, at nursing homes and congregate living facilities, and at day cares beyond March 1.

"The equation for schools just looks different right now than it

does for the general population," Pritzker said at the news conference in Chicago. "Schools need a little more time for community infection rates to drop, for our youngest learners to become vaccine eligible and for more parents to get their kids vaccinated."

Masks, testing and vaccines have worked to keep schools open, Pritzker said, and that was the primary goal of the administration.

But whether he has the author-

See MASK MANDATE on page 6