



Tuscola Review

Volume 5 Number 11

Est. 2017

Your locally owned community newspaper

February 9, 2022



DCHD closure dates

The Douglas County Health Department will be closed Feb. 11, 17 and 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 inquiries and questions to torpedoesheadcoach@gmail.com.

Library activities

StoryTime every Tuesday, 10 a.m. on Facebook

Feb. 9, Film Discussion-Scott Pilgrim vs the World 6 p.m.

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.

FFA Alumni host annual pie auction Saturday

The Tuscola FFA Alumni Association's pie auction and chili supper returns Saturday, Feb. 12, with some new twists and new faces.

The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with the auction at 7 p.m. at the Tuscola Community Building. There are 25 homemade pies to be auctioned, and the dinner includes chili from Ta'Carbon, baked potato bar, hot dogs, dessert and a drink.

This year's event includes a "Kiss the Pig" contest with five local farmers competing. Attendees can donate money to vote for their candidate to kiss the pig. Whichever jar ends up with the most money will determine who "gets to" kiss the pig, a big pot belly. Contestants are John Rairden, Sean Miller, Steve Wartars, Dennis Opperman and Jerrod Baird.

Among the new faces, Cory Green is now president of the FFA Alumni succeeding Dennis Opperman, who has served in that capacity for 10 of the past 12 years. The alumni group is in its 20th year, and this is the 17th year for the pie auction.

Opperman said the alumni group got its start after the school district stopped offering ag classes in 1987. The classes were restored in 2000.

See **PIE AUCTION** on page 3

School drops mask mandate

Parents complain of 'mixed messages'

By David Porter and Peter Hancock

Masks are now optional at Tuscola schools for teachers and students. Superintendent Gary Alexander said masks continue to be recommended.

The decision follows a Sangamon County Circuit Court ruling by Judge Raylene Grischow that granted a temporary restraining order (TRO) blocking certain schools, but not Tuscola's, from enforcing the state's masking mandate. The state has appealed the decision.

Some parents have reached out

to the Review due to what they say is mixed messaging from the Tuscola school district. In an email to parents, Alexander said, "At this time, we are working with the district's legal counsel to review the judge's decision and will communicate with you as soon as possible regarding whether this ruling impacts Tuscola [Community Unit School District 301] students and staff or does not have any bearing on Tuscola CUSD #301. Until then, I ask for your patience."

Alexander noted in the email that the ruling does not apply to Illinois High School Association

(IHSA) and Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA) events.

The parents who reached out had caught wind of another email sent only to teachers and confirmed by multiple sources. That email from Alexander acknowledged that the TRO "does not have jurisdiction over us. However, the Tuscola Board of Education has interpreted, with legal advice, that any person that challenges the mask mandate would win if they filed a lawsuit."

The email further stated that "the Board Members are in support of allowing students and staff to

make the choice of wearing a mask ... I have instructed the principals that we will not enforce the mask rule pending the appellate [sic] court decision."

Asked to clarify the school's direction, Alexander said the last vote by the Board was taken in July, which was to follow CDC guidelines. He noted that the vote was prior to the governor's mask mandate "that removed local control." He said there was a discussion about masks in August but no vote. He said the district is "going to the

See **MASK MANDATE** on page 3



AT LEFT, CONNER LEECH loses his hat as he flies down the hill at Wimple Park last week. Freezing rain followed by snow dumped 9.5 to 10 inches of snow on Tuscola, according to the National Weather Service. Other areas of Illinois received up to 15 inches with daily snowfall records broken in Peoria, Springfield, and Lincoln. Scores of accidents were reported and highways were closed in parts with a lot of truck traffic directed to Tuscola (bottom). Tuscola schools closed for three days. A lot of kids took advantage of the snow days by sledding at Wimple Park. At left, the girl scouts built a container with loaner sleds for those who didn't have their own. Autumn Taylor troop leader for Troop 2790, said girls in grades K-10 earned gold, bronze and silver awards for the sled caddy project. See more photos on page 10. Photos by David Porter and Jennie Porter.



Jarman ends its senior living service, remains open for events, offices, B&B

By David Porter

Tuscola's Jarman Center is not closing, its owners say, but they are getting out of the congregate living business, and the building is for sale.

Sally Foote and Tom Wold bought the former hospital at auction in 1990. Foote is a now-retired veterinarian who still teaches and mentors. Wold's background is in engineering and math. He said he came to the area with the idea of completing his Ph.D. in engineering at the University of Illinois but changed his mind and poured all of his energy into Jarman Center.

Foote said they wanted to help keep medical facilities in Tuscola, and the building was used for that

purpose for several years. The marketing approach for clinics, though, is to be visible on the highway, so clinics that started at Jarman eventually migrated to U.S. 36. The couple wanted to offer assisted living in the building, but the renovation costs and red tape needed to become licensed proved to be overwhelming. "There's a lot of politics in health care," Foote said.

Carle was the first one to locate a clinic at Jarman Center. Foote said they made it clear from the start that they planned to relocate after building up a clientele. Provena Care then moved in and was there for several years until their busi-



JARMAN CENTER remains open for events, overnight stays and business offices but is closing its senior living service. File photo.

See **JARMAN CENTER** on page 7