



Tuscola Review

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Kiwanis fish fry

The Tuscola Kiwanis' annual Fish Fry is 4:30-7 p.m. Friday, March 25 at 40 Martyrs School, 109 E. Van Allen St., Tuscola. Drive-through only.

Rotary auction

The Tuscola Rotary's annual auction is Wednesday, March 23 at Ironhorse Golf Club. Registration starts at 5:30 p.m. with a meal for bidders at 6 p.m. There is no cost for the meal and the public is welcome to participate in the auction.

Olympiad winners

The TCHS Science Olympiad team competed in the Parkland regional and finished 7th with the following results: 1st place in Bridges: Kenna Clodfelder and Olivia Wallace; 2nd place in Gravity Vehicle: Thomas Bennett and Thomas Spillman; 4rd place in It's About Time: Jackson Burrell and Thomas Bennett; 5th place in Detector Building: Liam Hetland and Lia Patterson; 5th place in Chemistry Lab: Liam Hetland and Thomas Spillman; 5th place in WiFi Lab: Andrew Bennett and Brayden Taylor.

Congratulations

Congratulations to JD Barrett and McKinlee Miller of Tuscola for making the fall Dean's List at Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington. Barrett is a junior majoring in business; Miller is a junior majoring in nursing.

Meet and greet

The Board of Directors of East Central Illinois Christian School will hold a "Meet and Greet" on Saturday, March 26, at 10 a.m., at Flesor's Candy Kitchen in Tuscola. The board of directors will be there to introduce themselves, answer questions and garner support from the area as they begin renovations on their building in downtown Newman. Join them for coffee, cinnamon rolls, and discussion on how you can enroll your child for the upcoming 2022-23 school year.

Pre-K screenings, Kindergarten sign-up

There will be a free screening for kids ages 2-5 as well as Kindergarten registration March 28-30 at Tuscola United Methodist Church, 901 N. Prairie Ave. For an appointment, call Terra Waldrop at 253-2712. The screening is provided by the Tuscola school district to give parents the opportunity to see how their children are developing in the areas of speech, language, concepts and motor skills. Vision and hearing screenings are also provided free of charge. The screening times are 12:30-7 p.m. March 28 and 29 and 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. March 30.

Blood drive

The Tuscola United Methodist Church, 901 N. Prairie St., is hosting a blood drive from 9 a.m. till 1 p.m. Thursday, March 31. To schedule an appointment, call ImpactLife at 800-747-5401 or register online at www.bloodcenter.org using code 71203. Masks and appointments are required.

Library activities

StoryTime every Tuesday 10 a.m. on Facebook
 Every Saturday is Tech Drop-In from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Come get help with your devices.
 March 29, 4 p.m., Chess Club
 March 30, 6 p.m., Book Discussion-Satire



GOOD GUY CHAD, from the island of Auradon, played by Grant Kauffman (left) squares off against bad boy Jay from the Isle of the Lost, played by Brady Urban, during the Descendants, a Disney musical at Tuscola High School March 17-20. All shows were sold out for the production, which brought the children of Disney villains together with children of royalty. In the center is king-to-be Ben played by Caleb Haste. Photo by Rachel Ray.

'Slava Ukraini'

Russian invasion interrupts Arcola businessman's Ukraine operations

Arcola's Wilmer Otto has been doing business in Russia and Ukraine for two decades. But late last month, when Russian troops began carrying out Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, he hit the pause button on business and began using his contacts in Eastern Europe to try to help the families of his employees.

Otto's involvement in Ukraine began 20 years ago at University of Illinois. He founded what is now Farm Pride in Arthur, a farm implement dealership. Ukraine and Russia were in need of equipment, and Otto was in need of a place to sell older equipment taken in on trade.

Most of the equipment was only a few years old, he said, and was better than new tractors being built in Russia. The new Russian combines would lose a third of their harvest in the field, he said.

Plus, Otto could sell his older models for 40 percent less than the cost of new. He said his company sold 63 tractors overseas during their first year in the export business.

The manufacturers woke up to what was possible there when his company put together a deal to sell 80 tractors and 100 combines in a single deal. They swept in with equipment built cheaper in Brazil and Otto's company lost the big sale. Otto said the company initiated litigation and won a settlement, but the market was waning. He has since shifted to selling equipment in Africa although the farms there are much smaller, he said.

He wasn't done in Ukraine entirely, though. He turned his attention to financing equipment. A lot of banks don't want to mess with small loans of \$500 to a few thousand dollars, he said. He bought a micro finance company that had been started by a non-profit, Mennonite-affiliated organization in Ukraine and has an office in Ukraine. Otto is majority shareholder of the company, Agro Capital Management LLC.

His chief executive officer, Oleg Osaulyuk, lives and works in an area that has been under attack from the Russians. In the early days of the shelling, Otto was in daily contact



OLEG OSAULYUK STANDS in front of a bombed out apartment building in Ukraine. Osaulyuk works for a company owned by Arcola's Wilmer Otto, who has shifted his attention to humanitarian support as his business there has been paused by the Russian invasion. Submitted photo.

with Osaulyuk trying to help find a way for the man's wife and children to escape the war.

Another one of Otto's interests overseas is Terra Capital of Sighisoara, Romania, which owns Hotel Central Park, one of the top-rated [by TripAdvisor] hotels in Romania. Otto offered to put Osaulyuk's family up in the hotel if they could get there.

While other arrangements were made, the family was able to leave Ukraine, through a coordinated effort of drivers including a police car as well as lots of waiting and walking. Cars are not allowed near the border control area, Osaulyuk said. It was cold and windy, but his fam-

ily was able to find rides to their destination.

"I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you who are helping us during such difficult time," Osaulyuk wrote in a WhatsApp message. "While Huilo [Putin] bombs our houses and kills our people, you guys help our country and people! God bless you!"

With his family safe, Osaulyuk detailed other problems caused by the conflict. He told Otto about a farmer who was prepared to dump 6 tons of milk onto the ground because there were no delivery trucks to take the milk to market.

Dairy cows have to be milked, and with no outlet for the product, the

continued care and feeding of the animals becomes untenable. "One hundred kilometers up north, in Vasylykiv, people fight for the milk," Osaulyuk said. Milk there is rationed with a maximum of two liters per customer. "All canteens cooking for people urgently need butter."

Osaulyuk told Otto, "We understand the farmer's situation, too. Slowly, he will slaughter all the cows if [there is] no money to support his milk herd."

Otto began using his contacts to try to find money for diesel fuel and trucks to transport the milk. Several organizations are working to resolve that problem while the bombs continue to drop.

"Our territorial defense force in my village has one 1937-built automatic gun for each four people," Osaulyuk said. "No armed vests and helmets. ... These are a bunch of plough men mainly used for street patrols in the night. But this night, we had Russian paratroopers landing and fighting in Vasylykiv (where I live). We are good. Ukrainian army did its work; Russian paratroopers Rest in Peace."

These days, Otto has been wearing blue slacks and a bright yellow jacket — the colors of Ukraine's flag — in solidarity with his team overseas. His employees went from "a peaceful, productive life, then boom, they're in a war zone," he said. With his business interests dormant, his colleagues in Ukraine are in survival mode. "I check every morning for news from Oleg," he said.

He said he had planned to visit his office in Ukraine in April or May. "I don't think that's going to happen," he said wistfully. "We just hope and pray."

And he continues to do what he has always done, albeit under better circumstances, which is to put people together even when they're half a world away. Money for diesel fuel. Trucks to haul milk. Shelter for his employees. It's not exactly business as usual.

"Slava Ukraini," Otto replied to Osaulyuk on the WhatsApp message thread. "Glory to Ukraine."