



**South County
SPOTLIGHT**

St. Patrick Catholic Charities - Tolono IL Free Food Pantry Every Monday from 5-6:30 and Friday 9-10:30 - Located at the Parish - providing Fresh produce, meat and pantry items. Serving all of Champaign County

The Giving Place is open every Wednesday from 4pm-6pm in Tolono to help families in need with food items.

3rd Thursday of every month - Tolono Fun Day Committee meet at 6:30 @ Police Station

VFW of Villa Grove Bingo Every Friday Night @ 7pm

2/10 Tolono Library Cards of Kindness event from noon-6pm

2/11 Tolono Library Family Bingo in-person event from 6:00-6:30 at the Library

2/11 Daddy-Daughter Sweetheart Dance @ St. Thomas More HS from 6:30-8:30, all are welcome 217-202-0998 or leibach@gmail.com for more information

2/14 Valentine's Day

2/15 Unity Music Boosters Meeting @ 7pm in the Band Room at UHS

2/21 Sidney American Legion Meeting @ 6pm

2/26 Unity Music Boosters All Out A Capella Annual Fundraiser at 4pm and 7pm @ UHS

2/26 Sidney Fire Protection District Annual Chili Dinner 4:00pm-7:00pm at the Sidney Fire Station

If you have an upcoming event that you would like to see featured in Spotlight email us at: jamie@thetuscolajournal.com

Tolono Fire Protection District Prepared During Treacherous Winter Storms

The Tolono Fire Protection District (TFPD), like many other public safety agencies, started planning and preparing for the recent winter storm several days in advance. On Monday, it became apparent that the predicted winter storm would impact their response area and had the potential to cause major issues. As a result, department members immediately initiated actions to ensure all apparatus, equipment and facilities were fully prepared for an extended period of service during the storm. Contact was made with district partners at the Champaign County Emergency Management Agency, local National Weather Service Office, Village of Tolono Public Works, and Tolono Township to finalize plans for the impending storm. TFPD maintains an excellent working relationship with the Village of Tolono and Tolono Township which is very important during these events due to the potential need for assistance. Both the village and township offered TFPD plowing services should the need arise when responding to an emergency call for service.

As forecasted, the storm arrived early Wednesday morning and TFPD members began plowing snow in shifts to ensure apparatus and members were able to respond to calls for service without

delay. Surprisingly, yet fortunately, no calls for service were received during the first 24 hours of the storm. This phenomenon was attributed to the fact that people had listened to the storm warnings and stayed home instead of traveling on the treacherous roadways.

On Thursday at 9:09 am, TFPD was called to respond with the Pesotum Fire Protection District for a tractor trailer fire on interstate 57. TFPD responded with two engines and a tender. Due to the dangerous road conditions and traffic congestion, access to the interstate and fire scene was a challenge. The tender which is an all-wheel drive wildland firefighting vehicle was able to use the shoulder and go through the interstate median to get to the burning truck. The tender proved to be a great asset during the period of heaviest snow fall due to its ability to travel places other apparatus could not.

At 11:34, TFPD was called back to the interstates for a jack-knifed semi on interstate 57. The Pesotum Fire Protection District and the Village of Savoy Fire Department also responded to this incident. During this incident it was determined the interstate was no longer safe, and the interstate was closed from Monticello Road to Pesotum by the Illinois State Police. The interstate closure required

significant collaboration between fire agencies, state police, and IDOT. The members of the Pesotum Fire Protection District along with units from the Illinois National Guard assisted many motorists from the interstate and transported them to an emergency shelter in Pesotum. The biggest impact Tolono saw from the interstate being closed was having increased traffic on route 45, which made it even more important for people in the community to stay off the road way.

TFPD members spent the next 13 hours staffing the main station. These dedicated individuals were not required to stay but did so to ensure a quicker response to any requests for service. Having members in the station instead of responding from home was definitely beneficial. It allowed apparatus to be out the door in under two minutes. On a day when TFPD knows it is going to take longer to get places due to road conditions, having members available at the station is a tremendous advantage.

According to TFPD Chief Chris Humer, the department responded to four emergency calls for service during the height of the winter storm. Chief Humer said "I am very proud of the dedication of our members. They took time away from family, friends



TFPD main station was staffed through out the storms allowing for the quickest possible response times.

and, warm homes to ensure the highest level of service possible was provided to our district residents and visitors."

Chief Humer went on to say "Now that the snow is done falling, TFPD will evaluate the things that we felt went well during the storm and identify any changes that might need to be made. It is important for us to have plans in place, to allow us to make the best decisions

possible during an event. Things go much smoother when we are able to execute the plans already in place. We are thankful for the assistance the Village Public Works Department, Township, and mutual aid fire departments provided us during this event. We hope that it is another several years before we need to do this again. But should it happen our members will again be ready to respond when called."

Tolono Interim Supervisor Block Stepped Up to Clear the Way

By Rena Anderson Administrative Secretary, Tolono.

With the loss of our beloved Public Works Supervisor, Scott Arbuckle in December it left a deep hole in the Village employees' hearts and an even bigger void wondering how the Village Public Works department would pick up the pieces and continue to move forward.

Arbuckle dedicated his time and energy every day to making the Village infrastructure better, repairing what was broken and initiating new and innovative ideas to reduce costs and repairs for the Village. He went out of

his way to provide service for community events as well. There was nothing this man said "no" to. His positive attitude in the office and the streets of Tolono made us all better people.

The process to move forward and keep the Village running led us to Connor Block. Arbuckle personally chose Block based on his passion to work for the people, his positive attitude and the willingness to get the job done correctly the first time. Block, a full-time employee, who has only been with the Village of Tolono Public Works Department for less than a year was promoted to Public Works

Interim Supervisor and has worked non-stop since the end of December to continue to ensure the Village of Tolono Public Works Department provides superior service.

Block made sure we were prepared for the "great snow storm of 2022." As soon as the first storm watches and warnings were issued. Our entire public works department was in high-gear attaching snow-plows to trucks. Block devised a plan and organized our full- and part-time employees to plow the streets in the most efficient way possible.

Block was on-the-scene Feb-

ruary 2nd at 4:45AM putting everything in order for full-time employee, Jeff Evans and part-time employees Mike Woodworth and Anthony Wimmer. Village Board Member Ryan Perry volunteered his time both Wednesday and Thursday and former Village Board Member, Jared Ping was able to lend a hand Wednesday too. Thank you, gentlemen, you did an amazing job!

All of these men worked Wednesday non-stop until 6:00PM plowing streets and pulling people out of ditches. Thursday was no different and was made more difficult

by high winds. As soon as a street was plowed it would drift over. All our employees and volunteers fought a good battle keeping streets passable, however at 1:30PM the decision was made to call the plows back in and wait for the storm to pass. The department was back out on the streets after 4:30PM and did not stop until 10:45PM.

These men went above and beyond to ensure our Village streets were clean. They were back out Friday to do clean up of the roads and areas they may have inadvertently missed or were not able to get to.



Photo Above: Jeff Evans plows snow downtown Tolono. Photo Right: From left to right: Ryan Perry, Jeff Evans, Mike Woodworth, and Connor Block.



Cler Discusses 20 Year Career and Retirement Plans

By Tony Hooker When Don Cler was attending Unity High School in the late seventies, he had no idea he would have a 4-decade career in banking. In fact, upon graduation from EIU with a bachelor's in economics, his path still wasn't clear. I spoke with Don, who recently ended his time as President of the Villa Grove State Bank,

about how he came to work in the industry he served so admirably, what his plans for retirement are, and so much more.

There you are, sitting in Unity High School in May of 1979, thinking to yourself "Someday I'm going to be the president of Villa Grove State Bank." Is that how it worked? <laughing> That's mighty

far from how it worked! I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do, and if you talk to my friends and classmates, being a bank president is probably the last thing any of us would have thought I would do.

What were your dreams back then?

I really didn't have a clue about what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to go to Park-

land for at least a year and play baseball there and then go from there and see what happened.

Did you end up playing for the Cobras?

I walked on and made the team and ended up redshirting my freshman year. Then I transferred to Eastern. I realized I wasn't going to make any money playing baseball,

so I figured I better focus on my education. I love baseball and I made some good friends at Parkland when I was on the team. It was a good experience, but it was time to move on.

After you transferred to Eastern, how did your career thoughts and training progress? Did banking kind of develop organically for you

through your coursework?

I was an econ major, so the courses were business related courses. I enjoyed the banking aspect of it, so I was thinking maybe that might be an option, but the day I graduated I still wasn't sure. Kind of what got me started on this path was going back to grad school to get my MBA. I started working