

ROCKET NATION

WITH DIANE DUCEY



SNOW!
Our recent snow fall amounts of over a foot in East Central Illinois had me thinking about our family plan. When traveling around, if absolutely necessary, I had a flashlight and fully charged phone (and a charger in the van) and kept topping off my gas tank. In a duffel bag, packed for my vehicle, I had a comfortable change of clothes, pair of boots and a big construction neon colored shirt to slip on over my coat, in case I did go into a ditch. When we got word of the bad weather coming our way, I cleaned off the windows and tidied up the inside of the van, then assessed essential paperwork in my glove compartment. I had a friend in a fender bender who had to get towed, then sold the

totalled car after the incident, but didn't move on the project right away and was charged an expensive holding fee. To add insult to injury he had to borrow a garbage bag and be out in the cold to empty the wrecked car full of his kids sports gear, toys and fast food trash mixed in with the mail and other important papers. Being a part of that process had me wanting to not have so many material items cluttering up my car and think more about being streamlined during this chapter of life. It's been neat seeing that concept with so many friends of mine, purging unwanted, outgrown, unused items from the past to make good use of their "snow days" and donate things for someone else to use. Closet, cabinet and re-

frigerator clean outs feel so good when the job is done! Moving towards simplifying my life sounds so appealing, and I know it will take time to get there, but I'm really giving it a go in 2022. My son and I worked on throwing away stuff in his room that he isn't using anymore, then sweeping up and cleaning and he just raved about how much better he feels in his space! You could apply that to Valentine's Day for your sweetheart as a nice loving gesture! I'd much rather work on a project together or get a hand written note, or the promise of an upcoming date or night off of cooking than flowers and chocolate! Enjoy getting after it as we live our best life!



The Night Sky

By David Leake

Retired Planetarium Director of Staerkel Planetarium at Parkland College, Co-Founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc

February 9-15
The Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society meets at the William Starekel Planetarium (and online) this Thursday at 7pm. UIUC grad student Tony Chen will be the featured speaker. Join us or get the Zoom link at cuas.org. As the Sun sets Sunday evening, look for the waxing

gibbous Moon in the eastern sky. There will be two stars above and left of the Moon, making a straight line with the Moon. These are the stars Castor and Pollux, the heads of the Gemini Twins. The line is straightest at about 8pm. Keep watching as the night progresses and you'll see the Moon moving in its

orbit. Yes, the Moon appears to be moving westward due to the Earth's rotation, but using those two stars, you'll see the Moon is also moving slowly eastward. Next Tuesday is Galileo's birthday. One of the first guys to turn an "optik tube" or telescope towards the sky will be 458 years old!

Unity Student Council Weekly Senior Spotlight



Who did this sporty sweet-heart grow up to be?
Thomas Cler
Plans after graduation:
He plans on attending a 4 year university and majoring

in accounting or finance.
Best StuCo Memory or favorite thing about StuCo:
He enjoyed packing and delivering for Thanksgiving Food Drive!

Why join Student Council?
"I wanted to be more involved with the school and the community."



Rocket Replay

By: Sarah Rink



The students of Unity High School found themselves at home last Wednesday through Friday due to Winter Storm Landon, as it has been dubbed by the country's meteorologists. All extracurricular activities were canceled those three days, however, school was able to continue with the use of online remote learning, and classes carried on as usual, if a little more casual. I personally found that shoveling snow from my driveway

for an hour wasn't too horrible when I could amuse myself watching the neighbors try to snowboard down the street while holding onto the back of their friend's car. It definitely helped pass the time. On Saturday, activities resumed as normal, with the wrestling team participating at their regional competition in Olney, and Unity Vocal Rush attending Danville High School's twenty-fifth Midwest Classic, kicking off their

competitive season. The show choir placed fifth in their division and won a caption award for "best tech," leaving the stage crew happy with their hard work paying off. They will compete next Saturday at Manteno High School. The wrestling team won first place as a team, with 243 points, making it their second regional win in two years and sending eleven students to their sectional next weekend in Vandalia.

Local School Districts Stance and Guidance on COVID-19 Lawsuit Temporary Restraining Order

Tom Davis, Heritage High School.

"On Friday February 4 at 5pm, an Illinois judge granted a temporary restraining order (TRO) for the plaintiffs on lawsuits filed by some parents and school employees from throughout Illinois that challenged some state-mandated COVID-19 mitigations. For students, the challenge was the enforcement of wearing masks and quarantine exclusions from school and for employees mandating COVID vaccination proof or weekly testing.

Heritage CUSD #8 was not named as a defendant in either of these cases, and the majority of schools in the area were also not named. Some area schools including Mahomet, Gifford, and Thomasboro were named as defendants, so they will likely be effected in the short term more directly by the TRO. The judge in this case ruled that these lawsuits do not meet the definition to qualify as a state-wide "class action."

Heritage district will continue the mitigations in place until further clarification and final rulings are posted per legal guidance below. This means wearing of masks at school and school events and on all district transportation including buses, cars, and activity vans. Visitors to school are also required to wear masks within the building(s). Contact tracing will continue for known exposures and Binax testing with parent consent will still be available.

Heritage has received legal guidance from the school attorney, Brian Braun of Miller, Tracy, Braun & Assoc. of Monticello, and PSIC, which is the district's insurance company. The guidance provided is summarized below and indicates that Heritage district will continue the mitigations in place until further

clarification and final rulings. Circumstances may change at any time and everyone's understanding is appreciated.

Some important legal points communicated to districts today:

This is a temporary restraining order, which is by its very definition "temporary", and is not a final disposition of the issues. This ruling temporarily enjoins the actions of the parties, but it is not a permanent injunction and is not necessarily a reflection of the final merits of the case.

The state will be filing a motion for a stay on Monday that is expect to be granted. The state appeal, if successful, would likely dissolve the TRO and restore the named parties to their same position before the TRO.

The order only applies, by its terms, to named plaintiffs against named defendants. For those school districts who are not a party to the action, this order does not apply, and if a person asserts the order, the order does not technically apply to a non-named plaintiff or a non-named defendant.

Until a school is subject to an enforcement order, and until a plaintiff files such a challenge, a school is at least technically permitted to enforce the mandates of its own volition in coordination with its local health department. In Heritage's case, that is the Champaign-Urbana Public Health Department.

The State is seeking an emergency stay both with the Circuit Court and the 4th District Appellate Court, and the State and schools who are defendants will file to appeal the TRO on an expedited timeline, which will likely mean an order from the Appellate Court within less than two weeks with the date of February 16th/17th being communicated as the decision

dates targeted. IHSA and IESA sports rules were not the subject of the litigation, and schools remain subject to those rules in order to have sanctioned contests."

Andrew Larson, Superintendent Unit 7 School District, letter to the parents of Unit 7 Schools conveying the message that Unit 7 Schools are not or have ever been named in the lawsuit. "I want to be clear when I say that the end result we are all looking for is the same; to be what we were prior to March of 2020" Larson writes. "The divisiveness regarding the mitigations that have been cast upon us along with any patience to continue with certain mitigations has run out, specifically with the mask mandate. This has caused unneeded and unwanted stress on relationships within family units, within school faculty and staff and with students." He goes on to explain that "The biggest concern currently is that an appeal has been filed from the Governor's office to stop the TRO and we may not know the answer to the appeal for several days; to act on something that could be reversed and does not include our district at this time would be reckless on my behalf and will only cause more frustration if we would need to reverse direction." "Many will not appreciate my stance on this." "What I am asking everyone is to understand the difficult position of the Unit 7 Board of Education and administration at this time. Time is needed to fully understand the decisions being made outside of our district walls." "The Unit 7 School District, in working with district legal counsel and insurance carriers, will stay the course with current mitigations put in place by the Governor's Executive Order until the decision on the appeal is ruled upon."

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