

# Obituaries

## Phyllis Brothers

Phyllis J. Brothers, 83, of Danville, passed away peacefully on Monday, January 23, 2023, with family at her side.

Phyllis was born February 27, 1939, in Tuscola, to Everett Roy and Berniece Chaplin.

She is survived by her children, Trenton Wayne (Ginger) Gabbard of West Lebanon, Ind., Randall Duane Gabbard of Terre Haute, Ind., David Brian Gabbard of Williamsport, Ind., Marcia Jeane (Tommy) Quast of Melbourne, Fla., Benjamin Todd (GayLynn) Gabbard, Geri Ellen Shirey of Danville; her sister, Carol Ann Chambers of Bloomington; brothers Roger Lee (Sue) Chaplin of Sims, N.C., and Roy Dean (Judy) Chaplin of Normal; uncles Paul C. Moore of Champaign, and Kenny Moore of Tuscola. She was blessed with several nieces and nephews, 18 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren.

Phyllis was a graduate of Tuscola High School, and with only her diploma and six children to raise, began a path that led her to Danville in 1973 for a position as Office Manager at Danville Country Club. She became the General Manager in 1983, leaving Danville in 1988 to become the General Manager of Shore Acres Country Club, Lake Bluff, (she adored Chicago), moving to



Brothers

Sterling, Va., in 1992 for the groundbreaking of a 36-hole facility known as Lowes Island Country Club, from which she retired in 2005. She met celebrities, sports icons, politicians, and much to her annoyance, the Secret Service over a golf game. She never asked her staff to do anything that she wouldn't do herself. She excelled in and loved her career.

She married her longtime companion, Gene Brothers, at St. Vincent Hospital, Indianapolis, Ind., on July 8, 1996. He has preceded her in death, along with her parents, and beloved brother Gary Joe Chaplin.

After retiring, Phyllis and Gene adventured to Anderson, S.C., where they met and

enjoyed the company of many good friends; she loved to entertain, hosting and attending many gatherings, specifically the Epic After Christmas Party. She had a flair for decorating and enjoyed taking the backroads to auctions, estate sales, and unique shops to fill her home with treasures. Most of all, she treasured her family, traveling yearly to beautiful locations for her sibling reunion.

Phyllis was an inspiration to all who knew and loved her, showing that hard work led to success. Her kindness, generosity and intelligence will be deeply missed. We take comfort in knowing that she lived her life to the fullest. She really did.

Please join us for Phyllis' final gathering Saturday, April 1, 2023, for an 11 a.m. graveside service at Oak Hill Cemetery followed by a Celebration of Life at the Possum Trot Supper Club.

Memorials may be made in Phyllis' memory to the American Parkinson's Association.

Sunset Funeral Home and Cremation Center in Danville, 3940 N Vermilion St. Danville, Illinois 61834, is assisting the family with arrangements.

Please join Phyllis' family in sharing memories, photos and videos on her tribute wall at [www.sunsetfuneralhome.com](http://www.sunsetfuneralhome.com).

## Carolyn Eckerty

Carolyn Ann Eckerty, age 80, of Villa Grove, formerly of Port Richey, Fla., passed away on Monday, January 30, 2023, at her home in Villa Grove, surrounded by her loved ones.

Carolyn was born on November 21, 1942, to Newell Franklin Young and Anna Jane (Rumbaugh) Catlett in Kansas City, Mo. She graduated from Jamaica High School in 1960 and earned a Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in Education from Eastern Illinois University. She married the love of her life, Bob D. Eckerty on April 13, 1963, in Fairmount, and they would spend 50 wonderful years together until his passing in 2013.

She is survived by children, Robert Eckerty of Villa Grove, Mark (Dawn) Eckerty of Tampa, Fla., and Barry (Kim) Eckerty of Casey; grandchildren, Kirbi (Jesse) Fischer; Austin (Kelly) Eckerty, Elizabeth Eckerty, Gwendalyn Eckerty, Julia Eckerty, and Sophia Eckerty; great-grandchildren, Charlotte Eckerty, Vivian Eckerty, and Woodrow Fischer; and one brother, Newell "Butch" (Paulette) Young. Carolyn was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Bob Eckerty; sister, Janice Sue Smith; and



Eckerty

brother, Robert Young.

Mrs. Eckerty started teaching elementary school in Fairmount, when she was 19. After that she taught at Muncie Grade School and Columbia Elementary in Mattoon. She then went on to teach Kindergarten in Villa Grove for over 20 years before retiring in Illinois. After retiring in Illinois, she and Bob moved to Florida where she taught Kindergarten at Hudson Elementary for 8 years. After she retired from teaching in Florida, she volunteered at Pasco County Schools and the Pasco Fine Arts Council.

Carolyn loved education

and had boundless energy to not only teach children, but also gave numerous seminars on teaching and even co-authored a book for teaching methods of pre-K through Kindergartners. Some of her favorite things to do in her "spare time" were knitting and making quilts. Many people were lucky beneficiaries of Carolyn's talent.

She was a member of the Villa Grove United Methodist Church, UMW/UWE, Douglas County Retired Teachers, IRTA, Eastern Illinois Alumni Association, Illinois Kindergarten Association, Illinois Reading Council and the Pasco County Fine Arts Council.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Villa Grove United Methodist Church, Villa Grove Schools Teachers Scholarship Fund, or donor's choice.

Visitation is Friday, February 10, at the United Methodist Church in Villa Grove, from 4-7 p.m. The funeral services are Saturday, February 11, at 3:30 p.m. at the United Methodist Church in Villa Grove with Pastor Jonathan Brashear presiding. Interment will be immediately following at Fairfield Cemetery north of New-

Broken Arrow, Okla., and Kelly Bolt (Fiancé Bob Alexander) of Clinton; granddaughter, Kanoa Brown; numerous nieces and nephews; his tractor and combine buddy Maddox Reedy; and his fur baby Mr. Cooper.

He was preceded in death by his father; and brother, David.

T.G. had a close relationship with all of the Dawson Farms family. For T.G., the summertime was for spending time boating on Lake Shelbyville. In the wintertime was snowmobiling in Wisconsin. T.G. was a natural-born leader but especially experienced when it came to planning outings with family and friends. Anyone could always depend on T.G. to help them with anything they would need. He will be missed by everyone who knew him.



Redfern

Survivors include his wife, Dawn; children, McKenzie (Javon) Brown of Lovington and Janette (Collin) Budd of Decatur; mother, Cheryl Redfern of Lovington; sisters, Trisha (Mark) VonLanken of

## OP-ED

# Reflecting on the educator shortage in Central Illinois

By Dr. Kyle Thompson  
Regional Superintendent  
Regional Office  
of Education #11

It's that time of year again, time for the annual educator shortage survey results. Each year for the past six years, the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) has surveyed nearly 700 school districts statewide on the key questions around the depth and consequences of Illinois' teacher shortage crisis. The results remain unchanging: the teacher shortage crisis exists, and it is unlikely to end anytime soon. Yet, with hope in mind, we move forward actively seeking solutions.

Let us first examine some of our local results from the educator shortage survey. Keep in mind that the Regional Office of Education #11 encompasses 25 school districts over seven counties, representing the largest geographic (in terms of square miles) region in Illinois. Among ROE #11 school districts:

- 95% say they have a teacher shortage problem.
- 89% say the shortage is as bad as or worse than last school year.

- 100% say they have the same or fewer applicants for open positions as last school year.

- 95% Recommend offering additional compensation for staff in high-need subject areas or schools.

- 84% recommend increasing funding for Teachers Retirement System.

- 93% recommend offering additional scholarships and waivers to teaching candidates.

- 100% say they have a substitute teacher shortage problem.

- 79% say increasing the number of days retired teachers can substitute without affecting retirement helped with recruitment/retention.

- 79% say increasing substitute teachers days to 120 per year helped with recruitment/retention.

- 55% believe their district is adequately staffed under the



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state's evidence based funding (EBF) formula.

- 67% say supporting paraprofessionals working to obtain their PEL with incentives helped with recruitment/retention.

- 71% say proactively working with universities to place student teachers helped with recruitment/retention.

Currently, there are over 3,000 vacant positions posted on the IASA Illinois Education Job Bank. Over 130 of those are located in Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Moultrie, and Shelby Counties. While the teaching profession is not the only profession experiencing a workforce shortage, it is arguably the most important.

We at Regional Office of Education #11 continue to express concerns with State and agency (ISBE) stakeholders. Alternative licensure routes and licensure reciprocity have been extremely helpful. We have had numerous candidates obtain teacher licensure in other states, then transfer that license to Illinois. Online programs from out of state institutions such as Grand Canyon University and the University of West Florida allow for a credible licensing option that is 100% online. Our very own Eastern Illinois University has been leading a Grow Your Own Project and

Rural Teacher Corps for many years now. These pathways provide support to becoming a teacher, especially in rural areas like ours. Several local high schools have established Future Teacher groups where aspiring educators can begin engaging in experiences and learning about the profession.

In addition to partnering on the aforementioned efforts at the State, university, and high school levels, ROE #11 has led several successful initiatives internally. We have aggressively sought teachers, substitute teachers, school bus drivers, and paraprofessionals through numerous recruitment efforts. We have traveled to our seven counties to register substitute teachers on the spot, participated in speaking engagements to school districts and civic organizations when asked, and produced videos highlighting our local teachers and encouraging those interested to be a teacher, to name a few. On numerous occasions I have testified before House and Senate education committees in Springfield to champion legislation that would best serve the students, school districts, and communities of East Central Illinois. Perhaps our greatest effort has been ROE #11 Future Teacher Nights hosted at our office where prospective teachers can come and meet with representatives from a variety of universities to learn about which path may be the best for them.

When speaking to groups, I continue to state my belief that teaching remains the greatest profession that exists. That said, we need help. We need more teachers. Not only do we need more teachers, we need more substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, school bus drivers, food service, and maintenance staff. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a teacher, please reach out to our office at 217-348-0151.

Educator shortage survey results can be found at <https://iarss.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/IARSS-Educator-Shortage-AY23-230123.pdf>.

## Applicants sought for Joe and Sue Summerville ag scholarship

Applications are now being accepted for the 2023 Joe and Sue Summerville Agricultural Scholarship. Wishing to pre-

serve and grow the agricultural community, the Summerville Agricultural Scholarship will help a student pursue their education in an agricultural related field of study. Having grown up on a family farm, Sue is offering this scholarship in memory of her mother and father, Lois and Myron Riddle of Tuscola, Illinois. The deadline for application is Friday, Feb. 17.

To be considered for the 2023 Joe and Sue Summerville \$2,000 Agricultural Scholarship, successful applicants

must meet the following requirements:

- They reside in Douglas County, Illinois and are a graduating senior from high school.

- Include a copy of high school transcripts.

- Plan on attending a 2 or 4-year college/university or trade school (fulltime) majoring in agriculture or an agricultural related field of study.

- Successfully meets and is accepted to their college or trade school choice. Please include a copy of letter of acceptance.

- Write a short one-page essay, single spaced, indicating their interest in agriculture,

why they would be deserving of the scholarship, and demonstrate need if applicable.

- Successful applicant will be awarded \$2,000 in two installments upon proof of registration to their institution. Installment will be mailed directly to the applicant's institution he or she is attending.

Applications should be submitted to the Douglas County Farm Bureau office, 105 N. Main Street, Tuscola IL, 61953. No later than Feb. 17. For more information about the Joe and Sue Summerville Agricultural Scholarship, contact Tyler Harvey at (217) 253-4442 or [douglasmgr@douglasfcfb.com](mailto:douglasmgr@douglasfcfb.com).

## Scholarship

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geivity of their farms. Will and his wife, Michelle, have three young children.

"My family was a great influence for me on my interest and career choice in agriculture," said Fombelle. "Being able to grow up on a family farm gave me the opportunity to be surrounded by agriculture and to show me the wide array of opportunities of the agriculture industry."

With a strong base as a 10

year 4-H club member, Fombelle understands the importance of agriculture -based organizations. He is currently a member of the American Association of Swine Veterinarians and the Illinois Pork Producers Association.

"I really enjoy interacting with my clients and their families as I visit farms," Fombelle continued. "The agriculture industry is enormous; but at the same time, it is a tight-knitted community of people."

Interested students need to supply grade transcripts,

resume, and information indicating career intent in the field of agriculture. Applications may be mailed or turned in by February 20th to: Dale Bateman Memorial Ag Scholarship c/o East Central IL Farm Business Farm Management at 900 South Washington St., Suite B — Tuscola, IL 61953. \*\*PLEASE NOTE - applications must be sent to this office.\*\*

For more information, contact Dennis Ochs at (217) 202-2333 or Pat Titus at (217) 202-5204.

## T. G. Redfern

T. G. Redfern, 54, of Lovington, passed away Sunday, January 29, 2023, in Wisconsin.

Celebration of Life services were Sunday at the Reed Funeral Home, Sullivan, with Pastor Mel Workman officiating. Visitation was Saturday. Memorials are suggested to the donor's choice. Online condolences may be sent to the family at [reedfuneralhome.net](http://reedfuneralhome.net).

Mr. Redfern was born June 3, 1968, at Decatur, the son of Theron E. and Cheryl Davis Redfern. T. G. farmed with Dawson Farms for 35 years with 25 of those years being the farm manager. He also had done custom baling with his father. T. G. was a member of the Lovington American Legion and the Illinois Farm Bureau. T. G. married Dawn Ferguson on March 21, 2009, at Lovington.