

Heat wave affects people and crops

Cooling centers open up across Douglas County

By Dominik Stallings
 Much of the United States is currently experiencing a heat-wave during the Earth's hottest month since records have been kept. Douglas County is not exempt.
 "I know that this is the hottest it's been since several years ago," said Douglas County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) director Chana Ray.
 Last week, temperatures hit a high of 100 F in Douglas County. For this reason, sev-

eral cooling centers opened in Douglas County.
 If you're finding yourself in need of an air-conditioned space, you can visit Tuscola Community Building, Arcola Community Center, Arthur's public library and Community Center, or the Villa Grove Senior Center.
 Ray said that people should avoid strenuous activities and stay hydrated during the heat spell. Infants, children and the elderly especially should be cautious.

Prolonged exposure can lead to heat exhaustion and heat stroke without treatment. According to the CDC symptoms of heat exhaustion are dizziness, thirst, heavy sweating, nausea and weakness. Individuals experiencing heat stroke may feel confused, dizzy and lose consciousness. Staying in cooler areas and drinking cool water can improve symptoms.
 Ray recommends people drink water, Gatorade or other drinks with electrolytes to

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 — Dan Meyer

stay hydrated. Soda should be avoided.
 The intense heat may also have consequences for crops in Douglas County.
 Douglas County Farm Bureau past president Dan Meyer said, "We were really dry until that

big storm came through June 29. It wreaked havoc on Tuscola ... but it blessed us with 1.3 inches of rain. We really needed that."
 Afterward, six inches of rain in a 10-day period allowed crops to bounce back.
 "With the soils we have in Douglas County, the deep black soils, we can normally weather drought for a while. But it all depends on the timing, and since we got the rain in late June, we were able to pollinate the corn and the beans took off for a time," said Meyer.

Stormy weather on Friday night helped provide much-needed cooling for crops.
 "If we can get back in the 60s at night and let the plant relax, that's a huge benefit. But if we stay in the 70s at night, the plants can't rest. There's so much defense mechanisms during the day just to survive," said Meyer.
 "The weather is out of our control of course. Farmers are eternal optimists," said Meyer. "It's a livelihood of faith."



CABOT TUSCOLA donated \$500 to SAM Food Pantry at the Methodist Church, 901 N. Prairie St., Tuscola. The Food Pantry is open on Wednesdays from 7:30-10 a.m. If you would like to assist those in need, please consider volunteering at SAM Food Pantry, make a money donation (check/cash), and/or donate fruits and vegetables from your garden. Kim Murphy, North American FMO technical manager, provided the donation on behalf of Cabot to SAM Food Pantry. Pictured from left are Doris Young, Dave Butler, Kim Murphy, Jerry Lenard, Maribeth Opperman, Amy Church, Jane Lewis and Carol Beals. Submitted photo.

Rose statement on audit exposing \$5 billion in unaccounted-for unemployment payments

State Senator Chapin Rose (R-Mahomet) released the following statement regarding the recently released performance audit of IDES during the pandemic:
 "I think during the early days of the pandemic we felt that everyone was doing the best that they could with an extremely difficult and unprecedented situation. However, it quickly became clear to myself and countless others on both sides of the aisle in the General Assembly that the taxpayers were being robbed blind by what was happening at IDES. The Governor ignored these warnings and told us the situation was under control. I filed the resolution that led to this audit so that we could all finally get some answers and

find out how bad it really was.
 "This audit has made it crystal clear that the administration's management of the unemployment system during COVID was an unmitigated disaster of historic proportions. More than \$5 billion was paid out improperly, and only about a tenth of that was recovered. \$6 million in payments went to people who were deceased and a whopping \$40 million was paid to people who were behind bars at the time. While we are still reviewing all the details of the scathing audit, it's clear that the agency failed to follow its own safety protocols, and, according to the audit, is apparently still refusing to follow common-sense guidance from the feds. All the while, the agency completely

dropped the ball on the one thing it said it was focused on, which was getting unemployment benefits in a timely matter to the people who desperately needed them.
 "The people of Illinois should be disgusted at how badly their money was handled and how little was done to account for the outright theft and gross incompetence. The people who were supposed to serve as stewards of their resources completely failed them, and their ineptitude served to embolden and help criminals to abuse the system and steal benefits. I have constituents who were lawfully entitled to benefits that they never received, and then now they have to read about billions that are missing."

First Mid announces Mandy Lewis as new chief operations officer

MATTOON, IL — First Mid Bank & Trust announced the appointment of Mandy Lewis as its executive vice president, chief operations officer. Lewis is making a transition from her previous role as EVP, chief deposit services officer within the organization, demonstrating First Mid's commitment to nurturing talent and fostering growth from within.
 Lewis assumes the role previously held by Laurel Allenbaugh, who will be retiring at the end of the year. During Allenbaugh's 33-year tenure at First Mid, she has served in multiple roles including Controller, Head of Retail, and Chief Operations Officer. Joe Dively, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at First Mid, says, "Laurel's invaluable contributions and unwavering dedication have been truly impactful to our entire organization. Laurel leaves behind a remarkable legacy, and we extend our heartfelt appreciation for her exceptional leadership. We will be sad to see her step away, but her retirement is well-deserved."
 Having played a crucial role in driving growth and success in the organization's deposit



Lewis

services division, Lewis possesses a keen understanding of customer needs, operational efficiency, and technological advancements in the financial sector. With over 22 years of invaluable banking industry experience, her expertise in marketing, deep product knowledge, and leadership in deposit customer service efforts position her well for Operations in today's dynamic banking environment. In her new role, Lewis will oversee all operational functions of

First Mid, including deposits, loans, and facilities. She will focus on driving excellence, process optimization, and enhancing customer experiences. Collaborating closely with fellow executive leadership, department heads, and cross-functional teams, Lewis will ensure seamless operations and alignment with strategic goals.
 Dively says, "With this appointment, we are further strengthening our leadership team by leveraging the deep expertise and institutional knowledge Mandy has cultivated throughout her career. She has been an invaluable asset to our organization, leading our deposit services division with unparalleled dedication and expertise. First Mid remains steadfast in our commitment to providing exceptional financial services, fostering innovation, and maintaining a customer-centric approach. By playing a pivotal role in driving these strategic objectives, we are confident Mandy will excel in her new role as Chief Operations Officer."
 "I am honored and excited to embrace the role of Chief Operations Officer at First

Mid," says Lewis. "Having served as the Chief Deposit Services Officer, I am well-acquainted with our institution's values and operational landscape. I look forward to working closely with our dedicated teams to drive operational excellence, elevate customer experiences, and further propel First Mid's position as a leader in the financial industry."
 Lewis began her career

with First Mid in 2001. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Marketing Communications from Eastern Illinois University and is a graduate of the ABA Bank Marketing and Management School. Lewis was a member of the Mattoon Charleston Journal-Gazette's 2011 Class of 20 Under 40 and has been recognized by the Illinois Business Journal as a Rising Star for career accom-

plishments. In 2013, she received the Chairman's Award for Excellence, the highest honor an associate can receive at First Mid. Lewis serves several community organizations, currently sitting on the Eastern Illinois Business Advisory Board and the Southeastern Illinois Community Foundation Board. In addition, she is a past board member of Mid-Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters.

College earns workplace well-being award

Lake Land College announced that it has received an Inspiring Change Bronze level Aetna Workplace Well-being Award. Lake Land features a comprehensive well-being strategy that its employees are passionate about. This award is the culmination of the employees' desire to live healthier, more active lives and make well-being a priority.
 Established in 2017, Aetna awards recognize organizations with superior performance in well-being strategy and design, communication, organizational engagement and program implementation and evaluation. Employers complete the award appli-

cation using data from their most recent 12-month program year. A peer review committee made up of well-being professionals then review and score all applications based on pre-defined criteria.
 Lake Land said its strong performance demonstrates its commitment to offering fitness, health promotion and preventive health programs to its employees. The wellness activities offered to employees are deliberately designed to reduce lifestyle risks and improve health and well-being through risk appraisal, education, fitness and fun activities that encourage involvement from all College employees. Services offered

include health screenings, wellness-related activities and a fitness center that includes both cardiovascular and strength-training equipment.
 "Lake Land College is proud to receive an award that represents the commitments in place throughout our Laker Advantage strategic plan to invest in our employees and promote workplace engagement," Lake Land College President Josh Bullock said. "Our wellness programs are vital in providing support and belonging to our employees and are among the many available benefits that make Lake Land one of the top employers in the region."

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