

Review

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Ed Carleton unseated incumbent James L. Mikeworth for the County Board 6th District Member (Republican0 with 57 percent of the vote.

July 13
Tuscola Police Chief Craig Hastings confirmed that arson is suspected with the large fire that destroyed the former vacant Presbyterian Church/ Castle Mall at 202 S. Main Street on Saturday evening in Tuscola.

For years, locals flocked to Turners Feed and Seed for help with their planting and their harvest. The general store offered just about everything related to agriculture, from seeds and weed control to equipment repair. After closing, the building slowly faded into disrepair over the decades. Enter GAIL Technology, a new business started by UIUC grad Anthony Donato and his friend, Thomasboro’s Tony Grilo. If things go as planned, they’ll be conducting a different type of harvest by late 2022 or early 2023. They’ll be harvesting hte power of the sun by building a solar array in the space west of the building.

July 20
217 Vets to hold their first event July 30: For Gunnar Edwards, the reality that 22 veterans per day find themselves choosing suicide strikes very close to home. He was almost one of them, on more than one occasion, after returning home from serving in Afghanistan. Corey Wagle can relate. He, too, suffered from depression, anxiety and nightmares after serving. It was through Gunnar’s gymnasium, Rally Point Fitness, that the two met and the seeds of 217 Vets began to germinate.

Villa Grove Board of Education approved increases in support staff for 2022-2023 school year. Superintendent Carol Munson said that the board needs to appoint new EAISE representatives for the school year. Charlie Mitsdarfer and Kristen white volunteered to serve as the representative and alternate.

July 27
Tuscola Mayor Dan Kleiss gave a key to the city Monday night to Jordon Baird for his life-saving action June 17. “I really don’t think I deserve this,” Board said as he stepped up to accept the honor. “I was doing what I was trained to do.”

Baird is credited with saving the life of David Connour on June 17. Connour suffered a heart attack and Baird, who has a background in critical care, performed CPR until paramedics arrived.

Greg Harbin made a career out of building structures that would last. Since his retirement from the construction trades, he’s been doing the same thing to the greens, fairways and roughs of Villa Grove’s Tri-City Country Club.

August 3
The Tuscola School Board

on Wednesday, July 27, approved a letter of intent with Omni Energy Partners for the next phase of building renovations. The decision was postponed last month after Board member Darold Spillman raised questions about transparency in bidding with the first phase

Villa Grove Fire Department Chief Black discusses the importance of the department’s participation in Ag Days: It’s not an overstatement to say that VGFD Chief Chuck Black has firefighting in his blood. In fact, he got his start as a firefighter at the insistence of two of his uncles, who were volunteers with the Pesotum department.

August 10
The Tuscola City Council gave tentative approval for the county to build an addition to the animal shelter on city property. The county plans to use federal America Resuce Plan Act (ARPA) funds to pay for the addition.

Kent Brinkley looks back on Carnival Career: For the better part of four decades, Kent Brinkley and his company, Clay County Amusements, has brought enjoyment to young faces all over Illinois, Including Villa Grove Ag Days.

Reagan Smith was crowned Miss Tuscola 2022. Emma Spillman was crowned Junior Miss Tuscola. Colette Pflum was crowned Little Miss Tuscola.

August 17
Villa Grove held a groundbreaking ceremony Aug. 13 for the new community building, which is being built at Richman Park.

Tuscola school Superintendent Gary Alexander confirmed that Steve Fiscus, Tuscola High School principal, has been placed on administrative leave.

August 24
The teachers appear to be happy with a new 3-year contract approved by the Tuscola School Board. The contract restores retirement language giving those ready to retire an opportunity to boost their pensions. According to Athena LaReau, president of the Tuscola Education Association, 96 percent of the teachers voted in favor of the contract, which was passed unanimously by the Board.

Jim and Kay Higgins have adapted their business in Tuscola over and over, but the biggest change yet comes on Sept. 1 with the sale of Tuscola Home Center.

The Journal welcomes Stallings as the new editor.

Villa Grove introduced three new Villa Grove teachers, Ashleigh Sterkel, Clayton Hooker and Lauren Wendling.

August 31
Veteran-owned gym Rally Point Fitness in Tuscola, and Grunt Style, a national apparel brand specializing in patriotic-focused clothing and products, partnered for “Gruntstyles,” a free downtown event Aug. 26, to raise money for the local business. Rally Point Fitness show-

cased their downtown location, which opened to the public Sept 1.

Some artists focus on a single medium, while others tend to excel in many different arenas. Villa Grove’s Carlisa Hernandez is definitely one of the latter. I recently caught up with her to talk about her varied skills, and how she’s turned them into a burgeoning business, Artistic Eats.

September 7
Steve Fiscus will receive nearly \$140,000 island a letter of reference in exchange for resigning as principal at Tuscola High School, which he did last Wednesday, Sept. 2. The pay-out is more than \$50,000 less than Fiscus had remaining on his contract which would not have expired until June 30, 2024.

Last Spring, the Tuscola School Board discussed replacing the damaged scoreboard for the high school football field with a \$180,000 high-end video board(plus \$40,000 for installation) Some Board members are now doubling down and doubling up as they want to raise \$500,000 to replace that board and the one in the gym.

The Villa Grove Fire Department was called to a single-family house fire on the morning of Aug. 26 at 24 Hancock Dr. in Villa Grove. Chuck Black, Villa Grove fire chief, said no one was injured in the fire, but the house and most of the belongings inside are a complete loss.

September 14
Tuscola residents, first responders and veterans got together at 2:30 p.m. on Sept. 11, to participate in the “ruck march” in honor of veterans and first responders during the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. The event was organized by 217 VETS, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting veterans through camaraderie and community.

The Tuscola City Council approved the bid aard and contract authorization for phase one of the downtown alley improvement project.

Heather Skinner resigned as Douglas County Coroner Sept. 1. Lisa Edwards, form Chief Deputy Coroner took over the position until the end of Skinner’s term, which ends in two years.

September 21
The City of Tuscola, represented by attorney Andrew Bequette, filed a complaint against the owners of the “Castle Mall” because of the unsafe and dangerous condition it is in following a fire there July 9.

Negotiations between teachers’ aides and the Tuscola school district have reportedly stalled, leading to federal mediation, according to a press release from the newly formed Tuscola Education Support Professional Association (TESPA), which represents the aides, officially known as paraprofessionals.

September 28
Tuscola native Linda Metheny Mulvihill joined the University of Illinois ‘ Ath-

letic Hall of Fame Sept. 23. Through a mayoral declaration, the City of Tuscola declared Sept 23 to be “Linda Metheny Mulvihill day” in honor of her achievements as an Olympic athlete and Tuscola ambassador. She will also receive a sign on U.S Rt. 36, which reads “Home of Linda Metheny Mulvihill.”

Illinois American Water, a subsidiary of American Water, announced Sept. 22, the acquisition of the City of Villa Grove water and wastewater systems for \$11 million. The newly acquired systems add approximately 1,489 water and 1,069 wastewater customers to the Company’s eastern Illinois service area.

October 5
Two Tuscola teachers declared their intent to retire at the end of the 2024-25 school year. Third-grade teacher Ron O’Hearn and Kindergarten teacher Jennie Porter submitted letters of intent to retire. The School Board accepted the letters at its Sept. 26 meeting.

Villa Grove residents discussed their concerns with road conditions in the Sept. 26 City Council meeting. Public works director Lake noted that he had taken photos of the subdivision and the city would begin steps to remedy the issue.

October 12
Colton Rahn’s family and friends hosted a silent auction Oct. 9, at the Tuscola Moose Lodge for his medical expenses for his newly diagnosed cancer.

Dilynn Wilson underwent surgery on her legs Sept. 21. Some of the parents at the eighth grade visited the family Oct. 8 and have them a check for donations they’ve received through fundraising.

An exotic dancer at the Hideout Gentleman’s Club is suing the parent company Dirt Cheap, Inc., in a class action lawsuit on behalf of herself and over 40 other dancers. According to a federal class action lawsuit, dancers weren’t paid wages and were required to pay management “kickback” fees for each shift worked.

October 19
Villa Grove City Council considered purchasing a new \$65,000 bucket truck as the city’s current vehicle is inoperable.

The Villa Grove Board of Education approved starting the Request for Proposal process for implementing a five-year plan to improve school infrastructure Oct. 17.

Fourteen cents per hour. That was the stumbling block that sent the Tuscola school district and the union representing teachers’ aides into federal mediation, the two parties were no closer to an agreement.

Tuscola is getting a new firetruck to park in its pending new fire station on Sout Main Street.

October 26
Tuscola and Villa Grove

schools dealt with unrelated threats of violence last week. A social media stunt sounded alarm bells and prompted a police investigation Oct. 19. Villa Grove police arrested a student at 7 p.m. Oct. 19, after a physical altercation involving a potentially dangerous weapon during the homecoming pep rally.

For most folks, news of a devastating hurricane like Ian, which recently battered Florida, is enough to make them want to avoid the area. Not so for Hugo residents Paul and Starr Wilhelm, who, along with thousands of other Red Cross volunteers, headed immediately into the devastation to help in any way that they could.

A longtime dream project came to fruition on Friday, Oct. 20, when Mayor Daniel Kleiss cut the ribbon to Tuscola’s new Kelly Lock Memorial Dog Park in Ervin Park.

November 2
Karen Burris, representing the Douglas County Daughters of the American Revolution, presented a proclamation recognizing November as National Native American Heritage month.

Tuscola High school put up a job posting to fill their High School principal position Monday, Oct. 31.

Tuscola Rotary Club celebrated 100 years of “Service Above Self” with a pledge to keep building.

Villa Grove City Council discussed the sale of \$3 million worth of bonds during the special meeting Thursday, Nov. 3. The funds will be used toward the construction of the new Community Center at Richman Park.

Greg Hastings retired from the printing industry in late September after working in Tuscola for 49 years.

November 16
The proposed tax levy for Tuscola is 25 per cent higher than last year but would result in a lower tax rate due to the retirement of two tax increment finance (TIF) districts. With the ending of the

TIF districts, \$16 million in additional property value will be going back on the general tax rolls. Thus, while the levy is higher, it is spread across a much larger property valuation.

Army veteran Brad Ingram spoke to Tuscola students about leadership in the Veterans Day assembly. Nov. 11.

November 23
Students at North Ward elementary school made big impressions with the Tuscola school administration after gathering 50 signatures for a petition to have no school Nov. 23 Students gathered another 100 signatures for a pizza party and presented them to Principa Jason Wallace.

Jim Mikeworth was recognized with a certificate by the Douglas County Board Nov. 16 after serving on the Board for the last 10 years.

“Trust and friendships developed. That’s what I really enjoyed,” said Mikeworth.

Local authors Kirby and Cindy Pringle held a book signing for their new book “Happy Trails: We can’t Elope.” featuring their “dog people” Earl and Pearl Barker.

November 30
Chuck Klapatauska of Ideal Energy presented two options for the district to implement solar energy at the Villa Grove Board of Education meeting Nov. 21. These included a ground array and both ground and roof array.

The Tuscola school Board launched into its second phase of renovation Monday night by awarding a nearly \$11 million contract to Omni Energy Partners under the umbrella of energy performance contracting, which does not require public bidding.

December 7
The Villa Grove City council met Nov. 28 and discussed that the bonds for the community center would be able

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