

Fieldcrest School Board Cuts Daycare Program As Financial Challenges Arise

The Fieldcrest Board of Education made what they believed to be the difficult, but right decision to close the district's daycare which was opened a few years ago and has operated as a service for children of staff. At their regular board meeting on January 28th, board members unanimously voted to end the daycare program effective at the end of the 2025-2026 school year. Board member Robert Hakes was not in attendance to vote at this meeting.

The daycare staff and parents (aka Fieldcrest staff) using the daycare were notified on January 21st that the daycare would be closing at the end of this school year due to financial reasons. This is the first cut as the district is looking to reduce expenses between \$600,000 and \$700,000 from the Education Fund for the 2026-2027 school year.

Prior to the vote, the board heard pleas to reconsider from staff and family using the daycare service. They all stressed the difficulty in finding a safe, affordable daycare in the area. The daycare was said to be a draw for teachers as they come into the district and when they are deciding if they want to stay.

Garilyn Wells, noted within the district there are only four other certified daycares with approximately 32 spaces available and Fieldcrest serves 28 children. "What happens to those kids?" she asked, "And what happens with those teachers?"

Others stressed the importance of understanding that this program was never meant to generate a profit, but the benefits outweigh that fact. Abby Delvalle, a first grade teacher said just because the daycare doesn't generate a profit, doesn't mean that it isn't an asset for the district as a recruiting tool.

The program has been said to be successful and a high quality one where students are prepared to transition into the Fieldcrest school district easily, they argued. The daycare consists of three full time employees and one part time. The daycare runs concurrently with the school year, open for 180 days and after a rate increase this year, costs \$38 per day for one student. Parents with second child, receive a \$5 per day discount.

Reed Klendworth, the husband

of a Fieldcrest teacher and father of children in the program, asked the board to wait to make the final decision until the parents had time to find a solution. He said the daycare has been worth every penny and it is "unimaginable what the impact will be to us."

The net cost to the district since the 2022-2023 school year has hovered between \$114,600 on the high end and \$93,900. This year has been the lowest at \$93,900 due to the rate increase. These numbers were provided by Superintendent David Johnson following the meeting. They also do not reflect the initial start up cost, though that was provided for by other grant funding. While there are food, equipment and supply costs attributed to the program, the largest expense is the salary and benefits for the employees.

Board members were sympathetic to the staff and family members' comments, noting how hard they had found it finding safe daycare at one time or another, but they stood firm in their decision.

"We are responsible for the education of K-12 kids," Beth Palm said, with Heather McKay echoing that "K-12 students are the focus."

Palm would go on to add that if the board doesn't vote to close the daycare it will be to the detriment of the kindergarten to 12th grade students. Keep this program or lose classroom positions, she added. Those are the options she sees.

The board and the administration is open to a compromise. They were all quick to say that if an outside party would come in and rent the space from the district to run the daycare, they would be open to those conversations. This is just not something they want to be the ones managing at this time.

In a budget update given also during this board meeting, Johnson outlined the financial issues the district is facing. With rising supply and building costs, coupled with a nearly stagnant increase in EBF (Evidence Based Funding) and declining state support when it comes to mandated categoricals like reimbursement for transportation, the district is facing some tough decisions. Johnson's budget presentation is available on the district's website under the board documents section.

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Traffic Accident On Interstate 39 On Thursday, January 29th Results In One Fatality

On Thursday, January 29, 2026 at 12:05pm the Woodford County Sheriff's office received a call of a serious accident on South bound I39 just North of El Paso. When local Deputies arrived, they found a two-vehicle accident involving a semi tractor trailer and a passenger car.

The Semi was an oversized load traveling at a reduced speed, the passenger vehicle hit the back of the semi.

The single male occupant of the passenger car was found deceased at the scene of the accident. The Woodford County Deputies are investigating the crash with help from the Commercial Motor Vehicle team from the Illinois State Police.

The south bound I-39 lanes between Mionok and ElPaso were closed on that day due to the accident. Traffic was diverted at mile marker 22 over to south bound 251. Traffic was allowed back on to I-39 at mile marker 14 in El Paso. The closure lasted several hours.

The identity of the victim has not been identified to the press as of our print deadline pending family notification.

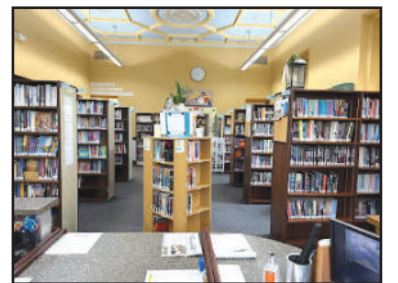
Toluca Public Library To Host Open House & Tiny Art Show On Wednesday, February 4th

The Toluca Public Library is inviting the community to stop in, look around, and celebrate creativity during a special Open House and Tiny Art Show on Wednesday, February 4, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

The event offers residents a chance to see recent updates and changes inside the library while also enjoying a unique display of local artwork created by community members.

The Tiny Art Show will feature miniature masterpieces designed by local artists of all ages. Participants picked up free Tiny Art Kits from the library - complete with a 4-by-6 canvas, acrylic paints, and a brush - and created their own small works of art to be exhibited during the show. The collection highlights the creativity and talent found throughout the Toluca community.

In addition to viewing the artwork, guests at the Open House can tour the library, meet staff, and learn more about programs, services, and upcoming events. Whether you're a regular visitor or haven't stopped by in a while, the evening is a perfect opportunity to reconnect with everything the library has to offer.



Library staff hope the combined events will bring neighbors together to celebrate both the library's improvements and the artistic spirit of the community.

For more information, contact the Toluca Public Library or visit during regular hours.

Lady Knights Honored On Senior Night

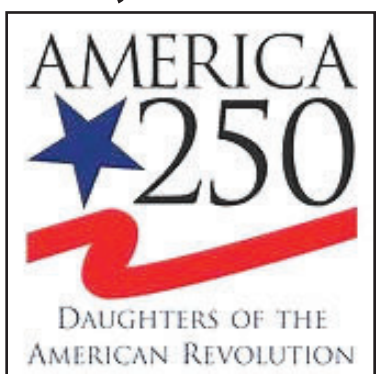


Fieldcrest seniors were recognized before the game on Thursday, Three senior were recognized

along with the families. The players pictured above from left to right are Pru Mangan (#2), Ava

Gott (#24) and all-time Fieldcrest points leader Macy Gochanour (#3).

Chief Senachwine DAR Highlights American History As The United States Turns 250



On April 19, 1775, approximately 700 British regulars were sent to Concord, MA, to seize weapons and supplies hidden by the colonial militia. Lexington lay in their path. That day saw the first shots of the American Revolution, fired on the green of Lexington. After the failed British attack on Concord, the American militia (Minutemen) ambushed the British on their retreat to Boston.

The Battle of Bunker Hill soon followed as did the Siege of Bos-

ton. American troops invaded Canada (also known as the Invasion of Quebec, a major early campaign by the newly formed Continental Army). This disastrous failure by the Americans solidified British control of Canada and pushed Canadians away from supporting the American cause.

The Americans succeeded at taking Fort Ticonderoga in upper NY territory followed by such battles as the Battle of Valcour Island, Battle of Monmouth, raids against the Onondaga Indians, (revenge for attacks on American settlements), Battle of Saratoga, Battle of Rhode Island, and Battle of Stony Brook.

Ancestors of the members of the Chief Senachwine Chapter are descended from our illustrious forefathers and helped found our country.

If you are interested in researching relatives who helped create our country, please contact 815-866-4288.

Marshall County Court News

FINES LEVIED

Sylas L. Porch 6/15/25 by County Crm & Juv, "Domestic Battery/Bodily Harm" 6/17/25 Initial Appearance Hrg. PDO: Dangerous. PT: Petition to Detain. PT: Detention Hrg. PDO: Dangerous. 11/4/25 "guilty" 1/28/26 Jail: 6-00, Credit time served: 227; fine \$550.

Colbey R. Terry 7/11/25 by County Crm & Juv. "Dom batry/harm/1-2 preconv" 7/14/25 Initial appearance hrg. PDO: Dangerous. PT: Petition to Detain. PT: Detention Hrg. PDO: Dangerous. 1/28/26 "guilty" jail: 32; credit time served: 16, 24 months probation, fine \$2,619.

Shawn D. Clark 12/27/25 by County Crm & Juv "disorderly Conduct" 1/27/26 fine \$689.

Thomas A. Ekena 11/3/25 by County Traffic "DUI Alc/Intox compound/drug" 1/27/26 "guilty". "Operate uninsured mtr vehicle" 12/10/25. 1/27/26 fine \$3,482.

John A. Rideout 12/24/25 by County Traffic "operate uninsured mtr vehicle" 1/27/26 fine \$375, 90 days supervision.

David G. Ogg 12/23/25 by

County traffic "driving 21-25 mph above limit" 1/27/26 Charge amended/reduced "driving 15-20 mph above limit" fine \$375, 90 days supervision.

Rishabh Sinha 1/5/26 by County traffic "driving 21-25 mph above limit" 1/27/26 fine \$164.

DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE

Jason Tyler Hovey (D). Hannah M. Hovey (P). 1/28/2026 Dissolution of Marriage/Union.

LAND TRANSFERS

Grantor: Brian A. Miller Admin. Grantee: SDF Services LLC. Santa Fe the 1st Add Block 72, Lot 15, Notes E10'. Lot 16. Administrator Deed.

Grantor: Kathy S. Hodel, Kenneth R. Hodel. Grantee: Jeremy J. Hodel, Tamara S. Hodel. Section 31, Township 29N, Range 1W, Govt Lot: --NE, Notes W 10A of E50A of W 1/2, W 1/2 of E 1/2. Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Craig Noe, Gina Marie Noe. Grantee: Lydia Mullins, Matthew Mullins. Henry Heights Sub Lot 6. Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Bryan A. Payton, Ra-

chel A. Payton. Grantee: F11 Properties LLC. Section 24, Township 30N, Range 1E, Govt Lot: -NE-SE. Notes Pt, Lt 1. Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Mad Dog Farms LLC. Grantee: Land Investments LLC. Section 13, Township 30N, Range 2W, Govt Lot -NE-SW. Section 13, 30N, 2W, -NW-SE. Quit Claim Deed.

Grantor: Phillip E. Michael. Grantee: Bette A. Michael, John A. Michael. Section 36, Township 29N, Range 2W, --SW, Notes E 1/2, 80A, ex pt, Subj to ease. Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Cara L. Pelz Tr. Grantee: Cara L. Pelz. Section 26, Township 30N, Range 1W, Govt Lot --SE, Notes: W 1/2. Trust Deed.

Grantor: James R. Witko, Valerie j. Witko. Grantee: James R. Witko Co. Tr., Valerie J. Witko Co. Tr. Section 9, Township 13N, Range 10E, Govt Lot: -NE-SW. Notes Unidv 1/2 int, Pt Lt 1. Section 9, 13N, 10E, --SE. Unidv 1/2 int, pt, pt Its 2, 3 & 4 of W 1/2. Section 9, 13N, 10E, -SW-SE, Notes Unidv 1/2 int, pt, It B. Warranty Deed.