

The Sidney Scoop

By Ann Rhoton
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Look for your correspondent's April 13 Village of Sidney Board of Trustees Meeting Coverage and a photo of the Village of Sidney 50-year time capsule published in this week's edition of the Southern Champaign County Today Paper.

The Sidney American Legion Post 433 regular monthly meeting should have taken place on April 20. Look for a report from your correspondent in next week's edition of the Southern Champaign County Today Paper.

The Sidney Lions Club will host their 67th annual donations accepted fish fry on Saturday, May 2 from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Sidney Community Building located at 211 East Main Street in Sidney.

Alaskan pollock with all the fixings, pork and beans, coleslaw, potato salad, dessert, and more are on the menu and proceeds from the fish fry go toward Sidney Lions Club college scholar-

ships and their eye glasses program.

The Sidney Lions Club will also be giving the community an opportunity to purchase Sidney Lions Club 2026 Christmas Cash – New Year's Dash raffle tickets at their fish fry. Tickets are \$10.00 each and can be purchased at the fish fry from Sidney Lions Club President Bill Hensch or from any Sidney Lions Club member.

The next regular monthly meeting of the Village of Sidney Board of Trustees will take place on Monday, May 4 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sidney Community Building located at 211 East Main Street in Sidney. All monthly meetings, unless otherwise posted, are held in the Sidney Community Building meeting room.

The inaugural Sidney Spring Fling event brought to you by The Goose & The Gander, LLC and the Sidney Improvement Group will take place on South David

Street in downtown Sidney on Saturday, May 9 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. The event will take place the day before Mother's Day so vendors will focus on gifts for Mom and more.

Reach out to Brett Franzen at The Goose & The Gander, LLC at (217) 530-5696 or by email at tgdntgllc@gmail.com for more information.

Have a great week! If you or your organization have news items you want published drop a line to Ann Rhoton at P. O. Box 491, Sidney, IL 61877 or call (217) 688-2812 between 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Don't hesitate to leave a message if there's no answer.

News items must be turned in by 10:00 a.m. each Friday to be published in the following week's paper. Items submitted after the deadline will be published in the following week's column.

Tolono Student Council Week a big success

Rocket Nation

By Diane Ducy



TOLONO STUDENT COUNCIL auction raised over \$7000 in just three and a half hours with their live auction during Student Council Week. Submitted photo.



THE AFTERMATH of pie-ing during Tolono City Council Week at the high school. Submitted photo.

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT TO OUR COLUMNISTS: 10:00 a.m. Friday prior to publication

Board

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A few topics came up for discussion, including the "right of passage" for the older students to attend Prom and if freshmen and sophomores should be able to be invited by upper classmen. It was mentioned that their should be a distinction between Homecoming and Prom. The capped out age for attending (2 people who are 20 plan to attend and have filled out the paperwork, dating the senior who invited them for while) was also brought up. A cell phone survey was sent out to 475 people to get opinions about the rule of no cell phone use during instructional time,

the safety aspect parents feel wanting access to their child and affective enforcement to maintain a balance as to not have distractions in a learning environment, with responses favoring only having access to phones during the lunch break. There is growing concerns about Artificial Intelligence and cheating, with an example of taking a picture of a test and getting the answers for that test from Chat GPT in seconds.

Amber Behrends, the Unity Junior High Principal, gave a hand out to the board to go over curriculum assessments being done and updating content in classes to keep up with the times. Computer options may take on multi media projects, journalism, storytelling, digital signage

and use of a donated 'green screen' for a more high tech experience. Digital citizenship was discussed as well as creative writing and getting financial literacy strategies as well as thinking about careers and a good education path to reach that goal. Unity East Principal, Jim Carver, talked about a successful round of testing and around 30 students coming to Kindergarten orientation with their families for a tour of the school, a chance to meet and greet teachers as well as getting tips about being attentive during class. Unity West Principal Darin O'Connell hosted around 50 families for the Kindergarten orientation and shared in the excitement of meeting people happy to be in Rocket Nation. Compli-

ments were shared about the staff and their dedication to learning and growing as well as seeing parents involvement in the students lives. Both schools reported being glad to have Art Teacher Katrina Hanners on their team and the various contests students are winning in the "design an ad" competition for a local paper and the poster that was created as we "celebrate America's 250th".

Technology updates were given by Paul Bierman, including security upgrades by installing video cameras and more efficient ways for key administrative roles to access recordings as well as getting license plate readers with better resolution to obtain a clear image. He also brought up some of the

points in his report how he's navigated changes over the past 26 years. Athletic Director Patrick Striegel talked about the work going into getting the Unity Rocket logo with a licensed trademark agreement to protect the image and build the brand. The cheerleading squad may expand from the current 14 members to 18 as open gym workouts and information meetings had brought up this concept. It could be that a cheer "travel squad" be used to be sure there is enough room to be transported to away games.

Superintendent Dr Brian Brink gave a report about the aging pipes that caused break in the water main when there was an issue this week as the fire department ran tests. Another point of action being brought up for approval was the budget for special education that has allowed room for a bus to be purchased for better accessibility and some wheelchair swings that may allow

the student to roll right onto it. 50 newer smart boards will be more interactive and should prove to be a good investment, as well as a 10 passenger bus, plus a few trailers that may be purchased soon (with one reported to have leaks). Families have been getting behind a purchase of a "Rocket Brew" trailer as donations come in from local businesses and people to support kids with disabilities who are learning to serve others. Towards the end of the meeting registration dates were posted on the agenda: sign up will open for the 2026-27 school year online on Monday, July 13th then on Monday August 3rd from 8-1:30pm and Tuesday August 4th from 11-6pm. The next regular school board meeting in the UJHS Media Center, 1121 County Road 800 North in Tolono, IL at 7pm will take place May 20th (the 3rd Wednesday of the Month).

Tolono Fire announces Lifesaver award ceremony

The Tolono Fire Protection District is proud to announce a Lifesaver Award Ceremony to be held on April 20, 2026 at 7:00 PM at Tolono Fire Protection District Station 1.

On January 11, 2026, members of the Tolono Fire Protection District, along with Carle Arrow Ambulance, responded to a cardiac arrest at a residence within our community. Upon arrival, the Tolono Police Department was actively providing CPR and had applied an automated external defibrillator (AED).

Tolono Fire personnel quickly assumed care, providing advanced, paramedic-level treatment prior to the arrival of Carle Arrow Ambulance. Due to the strong partnership and seamless teamwork between Tolono Fire Protection District and Carle Arrow Ambulance, crews were able to achieve return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) prior to transport to Carle Foundation Hospital.

We are proud to recognize the exceptional teamwork demonstrated during this in-

cident, which resulted in a remarkable outcome—the patient was able to return home without neurological deficits. Nationally, only about 10% of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest patients survive to discharge with good neurological function, making this save especially meaningful.

This ceremony will honor the first responders involved, including personnel from Tolono Fire Protection District, Carle Arrow Ambulance, Tolono Police Department, and the METCAD 911 telecommunicators, whose critical role in dispatch and coordination is vital to successful outcomes like this one.

The community is invited to attend this ceremony to recognize the dedication, skill, and teamwork of these first responders.

The Tolono Fire Protection District remains committed to providing the highest quality emergency services to our community and values the strong partnerships that make outcomes like this possible.



In the Administration's recent campaign of patronizing the Pope, the president revealed the mind-boggling extent of his self-importance not only symbolically, but in a very down-to-earth way. He said, and I have no reason to question that he believes, that the Catholic Church only chose (now former) Cardinal Robert Prevost as Pope (Leo XIV) because he's an American, and so would be the best way for the Church to deal with Donald Trump. The president said Leo XIV was only the Pope "because I'm in the White House."

Pardon my impertinence, but I happen to think that the Catholic Church, and the Cardinals in the conclave this past May, had many many more important things to think about when choosing who would be the next leader of the Church. And the Cardinals certainly had to look beyond the current US President's term in office.

Pope Leo XIV manifestly does not view his mission in the way the president imagines. He's in the morals business, but the very notion of morals appears to be absent from the president's world

view. His view is that everything's a quid pro quo. The term of art for such a view is "transactional". I hire you, appoint you, or nominate you, you owe me blind loyalty and obedience regardless of law, custom, or your oath to uphold the Constitution. I do something for you, you owe me. And if you carry out my wishes to the letter, and bad consequences ensue because I made a bad decision, you're fired because I'm always right, so it's your fault.

As an example of his underlings' obsequiousness, Vice-president Vance (who was heretofore viewed as skeptical of foreign adventures) recently chimed in, warning the pope to be careful when talking about theology. With all due respect, Mr. Vice-president, I think the Pope knows a heck of a lot more about theology - including the Catholic doctrine on "just war" - than you do. The war that the US and Israel are waging on Iran is a war of aggression, euphemistically called a "war of choice." It was not to repel an invasion or other imminent threat. The very real potential future threat of Iran building a

nuclear bomb could have been forestalled by means short of war - had the Administration been willing to use them. But they were not. The president tore up the 2015 nuclear agreement during his first administration. This is clearly part of the reason the Pope is denouncing the war.

A recent news report also got my attention: "On April 13, The Free Press reported that in January - as Leo's indirect criticisms of the Trump administration became more forceful and drew more headlines - the Pentagon called in former Holy See American Ambassador Cardinal Christophe Pierre, who retired in March, into a meeting."

The report claimed the meeting did not go well. It claimed that the Administration told the Pope's envoy that it could do whatever it wanted militarily, so the Church better get on board. Administration officials said the meeting didn't go as badly as the report indicated.

However, it seems that the Pope has canceled plans to visit the US - his home country - this summer. And may stay away during the current Administration's tenure in office. Imagine the President inviting a US citizen living abroad to the White House on the Fourth of July - and being turned down. I would say that that citizen is seriously offended by this Administra-

tion's actions.

In addition, Administration officials are telling the Pope to stop trying to apply moral principles to policy decisions. Their attitude seems to be that political decisions should be based solely on expediency, or "realpolitik" without considering the consequences to the "little people" like the thousands of civilian dead from Operation Epic Fury. In other words, that political decisions affecting other nations should be utterly divorced from morality. This is in stark contrast to the political pitch that the Administration's job is to impose a veneer of religiosity to public life here in the US.

So it seems to me that the Pope has concluded that there is no constructive purpose in his associating with the present Administration, and every chance that doing so would instead sully his reputation as well as that of the Church. I doubt that this is what the president had in mind when he took credit for the Catholic Church's selection of its Pope. However, having the first American Pope speak out against the immorality of this Administration, and shunning formal associations, may indeed be the best way for the Church to retain moral authority during this Administration.