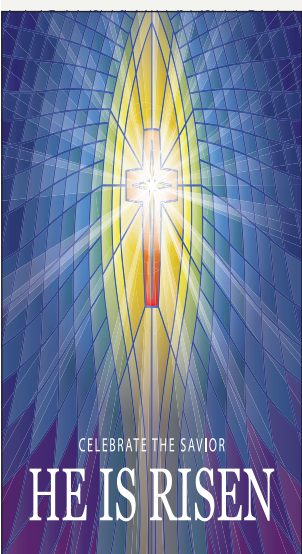


In the know



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Easter Sunday spent at home can still be a special, worshipful and delicious time for all.
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Yearbook shows a different PHS

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Weston is new chief deputy

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State museum wants your story

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Paris Beacon-News

LOCALLY OWNED, LOYAL TO OUR COMMUNITY

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2020

County to seek USDA grant

Partnering with Coles County for \$150,000 grant to use for study of jail's future needs

BY GARY HENRY
ghenry@prairiepress.net

The Edgar County board voted Wednesday, April 8, to partner with the Coles County Regional Planning Commission to seek a \$150,000 United States Department of Agriculture Grant for a study regarding future needs at the Edgar County Jail.

The jail closed in December after an inspection by the Illinois Department of Corrections threatened legal action because often cited staffing level infractions were not addressed, and the county's insurance provider refused to cover the building's operation as a penal facility. Efforts commenced almost immediately to make the physical and staffing corrections needed. It was hoped to have the jail operational by April 1 but supply

delays prevented meeting that deadline.

County board members cast the unanimous vote Wednesday without comment, although the idea was discussed during the April 6 study session. At that time, it was noted the Coles County Regional Planning Commission, which serves an 11-county area that includes Edgar County, will apply for and administer the federal grant on behalf of Edgar County.

Edgar County Highway Engineer Aaron Lawson said the planning commission has a long history of getting and administering grants, which means it will score well on the point system used for awarding a Community Facilities Technical Training Grant. By contrast, Edgar County's

score would be so low as to guarantee not getting any money.

It was also noted there is no charge to the county unless the planning commission gets the grant.

Board chairman Jeff Voigt said if the grant comes through Edgar County will pay \$15,000 to the planning commission, but the money is not due until the next fiscal year. Another attractive feature is \$75,000 of the grant is available for hiring an architect to look at the condition of the current jail, study future needs and make knowledgeable recommendations about more repairs and remodeling or if a new building is more cost effective.

Voigt did not know if \$75,000 is sufficient for an architect's study, but he said

this seems a prudent way to continue moving forward with keeping the local jail operational.

As part of the process, police departments, other emergency responders, the health department, the hospital, mental health providers, the emergency telephone system board and others will offer insight about what is needed at the jail.

"I think it is a great idea to bring all of the entities involved together and say, 'What do you want?' The USDA builds a lot of jails," said board member Andy Patrick.

Board member Derrick Lorenzen also voiced support for working with the planning commission to get a grant.

"It lets us cover some cost of an architect and also posi-

tions the county for seeking more facilities grants," said Lorenzen.

In another matter, board members voted to temporarily suspend accepting applications for building wind turbines for generating electricity until such time as the 2009 ordinance dealing with that topic is updated. The suspension was done to prevent developers from filing an application under the old ordinance in order to avoid any new regulations that may come with the revised ordinance. Voigt emphasized this is not an effort to prevent the development of a wind farm but to give the county an opportunity to create a workable ordinance reflecting the many changes that have occurred since 2009.

County clerk and recorder
See **COUNTY, Page 4A**

PARIS BUSINESSES DRAW ON COMMUNITY IN CRISIS



Samantha Tucker/The Prairie Press

Bob Miller of Edgar County Locker smiles while making cube steak. Since the first week of the shelter-in-place order, Edgar County Locker has seen a boom in customers seeking meats that are out of stock at big grocery chains like Wal-Mart. Miller says sourcing his products is complicated by slowdowns and rising prices, but so far he is managing.

Not business as usual

BY SAMANTHA TUCKER
samantha@prairiepress.net

Restrictions, shelter-in-place orders and a see-sawing balance of supply and demand are all hitting small businesses as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. In Paris, small business owners are feeling this keenly, yet also tell stories of generosity and support during an uncertain time. With the community behind them, many have hope of seeing the crisis through to the other side.

MAIN STREET CAFE

Main Street Café has switched entirely to deliveries and curbside pickup. People opting to stay in has meant a marked decrease in business, and owner Lynn Holloway said everyone has tightened their belts.

"I don't think there is a profit," she said. The restaurant is down to ordering only one or two cases of food per week from vendors, when they used to require up to four. "We used to be able to order fresh veggies in bulk, and now we're pretty much down to



Samantha Tucker/The Prairie Press

Stacey and Richard Wilken are the owners and operators of 120 Coffee Co. on West Court Street. Their sales have been hard hit, but the Wilkens have also witnessed extreme generosity.

getting what we need locally — Wal-Mart, Save A Lot, whoever might have it. Otherwise we'd be throwing cases of food away."

Things are not all bleak. Holloway has stories of generosity as well as scarcity.

"We've been very fortunate, some of our customers have been very generous with tips," she said. Several have even handed over extra cash outside of tipping to be distributed among whoever is on duty.

See **BUSINESSES, Page 4A**

Highway department expecting slow summer for maintenance

BY GARY HENRY
ghenry@prairiepress.net

The shelter at home order is having an impact on fuel sales. Without people commuting to work, gasoline purchases have plummeted.

That was a topic of discussion during the Monday, April 6, Edgar County Board study session.

Board member John Chittick questioned county highway engineer Aaron Lawson regarding how long it will take for the depressed gasoline sales of almost two months to show up in the county's Mo-

tor Fuel Tax payments.

Jeff Voigt, board chairman, said there is typically a two-month lag from when sales are reported to the state and when MFT payments are made.

Lawson said the erratic nature of MFT payments are already a problem in scheduling work, and the county receives less money from the state now than it did when he started at the highway department. He added the department's staff is already talking about the general maintenance work that can be done as the summer construction season ap-

proaches.

"I expect it will be a slow summer for GM (general maintenance)," said Lawson.

It was noted Ameren has started the Edgar County phase of the Illinois Rivers High-Voltage Transmission line. This project was delayed for several years by a group of local landowners mounting a legal challenge claiming they were not given adequate notice their properties were included in an alternate route approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission. Ameren got final clearance to move

ahead after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to accept the case.

Lawson said Ameren did sign a road use agreement with the county and the southern tier of townships but that does not prevent damage to the roads by the heavy construction equipment.

"We can't just go out there and fix a road until they (Ameren) approve it," said Lawson.

He added it normally takes two weeks, or more, from the time a complaint is received until repairs are made.

According to Lawson, the delay is the result of Ameren sending a consultant to review the complaint and damage. The consultant's report is required before Ameren authorizes the repair.

He encouraged residents with questions or complaints about the condition of the roads Ameren's contractors are using to call the highway department. Callers, however, must also understand the delay in responding rests with Ameren's bureaucracy and not any laxness on the part of the highway department.

Stimulus payments are coming

BY GARY HENRY
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The \$2.2 trillion rescue act recently passed by the federal government contains an unusual feature of direct payments of \$1,200 to every adult American under a certain income level.

"This particular stimulus payment is tax free," said Dennis Thiel, owner of Thiel Accounting and Financial in Paris.

He added the intent of Congress and the president is for people to spend the money to help stimulate the economy, while acknowledging many people are likely to save the payment against an uncertain future.

"We don't know how long this is going to last," he said.

Thiel said IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig is calling on accountants and others in the financial industry to help spread the word about what is being called the Economic Impact Payments. Any American making less than \$75,000 will receive a \$1,200 payment, and married couples earning less than \$150,000 will get \$2,400. Parents will receive an additional \$500 for each eligible child under the age of 17.

These are automatic payments and most people are not required to do anything to claim the money.

Thiel explained Social Security recipients or others who receive regular government payments via direct deposits will have the stimulus money placed into their bank accounts of record. The same is true of people who use direct deposit for tax refunds.

Based on information the IRS has provided accountants, the direct deposit payments are to start the week of April 13.

Americans without direct deposit capability will wait longer, perhaps up to four months.

"The treasury department can only print and mail so many checks each day, so it's going to be a long time," Thiel said.

He echoed a concern expressed

See **PAYMENTS, Page 8A**

Crestwood holds virtual meeting

BY NANCY ZEMAN
nzeman@prairiepress.net

The Crestwood Unit 4 school board became one of the first — if not the first — Edgar County governing body to conduct a virtual meeting for district business Wednesday, April 8.

The virtual meeting was held at the regularly scheduled time — 5:30 p.m. — but the difference was the seven board members, Crestwood Superintendent of Schools Danette Young, dean of students Megan Damler and the representative of the press attended the meeting by WebEx. Only Young was physically present at the school while board members could join by phone or via the Internet. All were in attendance, including Jared Dyer and Johnathon McCarty, who were both on planters in different fields.

Board president Jim Blue praised the work of Young, the teachers and everyone who has worked to continue learning for students since Illinois schools have been closed during the COVID-19 virus.

"I want to speak on behalf of the Crestwood board and publicly thank Danette for the leadership she has provided during this unprecedented time of crisis," Blue said in the prepared statement. He also praised the cooperation between Young and Paris 95 Superintendent of Schools Jeremy Larson.

"I also want to commend the joint efforts of Danette and Jeremy for collaborating on various projects to benefit all the children in both District 95 and Unit 4," Blue said. "I know you have worked together on things from food, to personal hygiene products, to Chromebooks and I'm sure the list will continue in the weeks to come. What a blessing for our community to have such great leaders."

Blue also commended the teachers and staff of the school. "I bet there was not a class in college you took which includ-

ed the best practices on how to teach online from home during a pandemic and still take care of yourself and your students," he said, noting they have, "been thrown into a lion's den...and are coming through with flying colors."

Blue described the teachers and staff as shining stars. The maintenance staff of the school was also praised by Blue for, "their diligent work in making sure Crestwood is spotlessly cleaned and as germ-free as possible. We appreciate all you do for us and our kids."

Blue noted the school secretaries continue to take care of Crestwood every day.

"Lastly, we will get through this, and we will come out stronger, somehow. Thanks again for all you have done for our school, our kids, and our community," Blue concluded.

The board also:
■ Selected Jarrod Dyer as the EIASE governing board delegate. Mike Reed is the alternate.

■ Approved a memorandum of understanding between the district and the Edgar County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency for use of the school gym to house people in case of emergency.

■ Thanked Larson and Paris 95 for providing meals for 35 Crestwood students.

■ Thanked Lois Moore for her donation toward laptops and Mike and Julie Garver for the donation of three laptops to students in need.

■ Hired Lynsey Gosnell as the Title I math and reading teacher for the 2020-2021 school year.

Young said Gosnell's new assignment creates an elementary school teaching position — probably for first grade.

Brocton awards water main project

BY GARY HENRY
ghenry@prairiepress.net

BROCTON — The Brocton Village Board moved quickly through all business matters during a meeting lasting about 10 minutes Wednesday, April 8.

A couple of factors helped accelerate the meeting. Following COVID-19 requirements for social distancing and Governor J.B. Pritzker's executive order suspending parts of the open meetings act to allow locally elected officials to participate by phone, there was sparse attendance at the meeting. The other issue pushing for a quick meeting was a big approaching storm with wind, lightning and rain.

Mayor Dennis Cary, trustees Christie Richardson and Richard Grice and village clerk Dana Bogle were present in the village hall. Trustees Debbie Porter and Rodney Wood participated by phone.

After moving through the routine matters of paying bills and approving the minutes and treasurer's report, the meeting was turned over to Lee Beckman of Milano & Grunloh Engineers, Effingham.

Milano & Grunloh is ad-

ministering a \$500,000 USDA Rural Development Grant for installing new water mains in part of Brocton. Beckman said three bids were opened at the Effingham office and the lowest bidder was B&T Drainage of Marshall at \$493,853. He also read the amounts sought by the other two bidders, including a Missouri company.

The village board voted to award the contract to B&T Drainage. According to Beckman, the next phase of the work is a three- to four-week period for the contractor to get bonding and insurance guarantees in place.

"I anticipate a pre-construction meeting in early May and the start of construction is possible in mid-May," said Beckman.

He also reminded the village board it is time to start preparing another rural development grant application for replacing water mains in the area of the village that is not part of this project.

That was the totality of the meeting.

COUNTY

FROM PAGE 4A

August Griffin reported the March 17 primary election is officially over.

"The election results are canvassed and submitted to the state board of elections," said Griffin, adding 25 percent of eligible voters participated in the primary.

He also thanked the election judges, the places that provided polling centers and his staff for making the election go smoothly.

"It takes a lot of people to make an election work," said Griffin.

He added only one school is left as a polling center, and while he hopes to find a new site, that will not happen in time for the November election.

MOTHER EAGLE FEEDING HER CHICK CAUGHT ON CAMERA



Christian Colvin/The Prairie Press

Talented Paris photographer Christian Colvin caught this Bald Eagle female feeding one of her two of her eaglets Wednesday at one of the Edgar County nests. The male eagle was keeping an eye on Colvin from a nearby tree while he was shooting the pictures.

BUSINESSES

FROM PAGE 1A

Holloway has already applied for a couple of federal grants and loans, including the Small Business Administration's Payroll Protection Program, a loan which is forgiven if 75 percent of it is spent on employee salaries and the rest goes to operating costs. She wants to wait before asking for more. In the meantime, everyone is doing what they can to operate efficiently and stay safe, from reducing staff hours to sanitizing and wearing gloves when interacting with cash and deliveries.

Holloway knows as time goes on, many will opt to cook at home. She encouraged people to support Main Street Café by doing what they can.

"Order, order, order. That's the key to our survival"

BETTY JANE'S KITCHEN

The attitude of Betty Jane's Kitchen is industrious optimism: times are hard, but the best way to see them through is with prayer, positivity and effort.

"We just roll with the punches and try our best to be joyful," said owner Robin Trapp.

Betty Jane's Kitchen, one of Paris's newer restaurants, is now operating exclusively via drive-through and curbside pickup. Their profits have dipped, but Trapp said she and her staff still feel support from the community.

"Their gifts of encouragement, well-wishes and prayer are endless," Trapp said.

For all the changes COVID-19 has wrought, the staff's cleaning schedule has stayed virtually the same.

"We typically go above and beyond when it comes to germs," Trapp said. "Really, the only change we have made is between each customer we Clorox-wipe everything in the drive-through window and [use] Germ-X."

Trapp has not applied for financial help yet, but she is closely watching the budget. She welcomes the community to support Betty Jane's Kitchen however it can.

"The best way to support our business is to come and see us if you are able, words of encouragement are greatly appreciated and prayers are always needed," she said.

ELLIE + OLIVE CHILDREN'S BOUTIQUE

Pia Krieger, who runs Ellie + Olive Children's Boutique with her sisters Franceska and Teresa Twigg, said they are relying fully on their online presence with Facebook Live shows, website sales and customer relationships. Thanks to their customer base, the situation is not yet dire.

"The community is still supporting us," she said.

Krieger misses seeing people visit the store but said she and her sisters regularly interact with customers by messaging and sending them pictures of items they want, then delivering.

"My sisters and I are actually delivering in town and available for curbside pickup," Krieger said.

According to Krieger, the best way to support them is to shop online and keep in touch over Facebook. She added that summer apparel has begun arriving.

Krieger does think they will need to look into federal help as the pandemic progresses.

"I think we're going to (look into financial help) just so that when all this is over we can keep moving along," she said.

LOT 50 BREWERY

Currently Lot 50, a trendy brewery and social spot, is open twice a week for growler sales. These are refills of the 64-ounce containers universally sold by breweries. Customers are filling up, but sales are rough and only one employee is needed to keep up with demand. Wine, cider and soda sales are discontinued.

"It's beating us up, no question," said Lot 50 Brewery co-owner Bruce Young.

The only thing unchanged by nationwide germaphobia is Lot 50's conscientious cleaning schedule. Brewing a malt beverage onsite means the environment and equipment need to be spotless.

"Everything about sanitation is engrained in what we do," he said.

According to Young, he and fellow owners Steve Coombes and Doug Smittkamp are reluctant to pursue loans. They applied for the Hospitality Emergency Grant Program, which supports working capital and technology changes in eligible restaurants and bars, but notification for the recipients was delayed by the volume of applicants.

Despite the uncertainty, Young said the situation is not desperate. Bookkeeper Jill Coombes, who is married to Steve Coombes, does a great job keeping them in the black.

"It'd be nice to get a little kick to support us, but we're pretty conservative with our finances, so we can go like this for a while," he said.

He and his co-owners are hopeful that by the end of May, they will be able to celebrate their second anniversary with their patrons.

"We've got a couple special batches we've worked up," Young said.

EDGAR COUNTY LOCKER

Unlike many small businesses, Edgar County Locker's retail sales boomed in the face of shutdowns and shortages.

"When Wal-Mart ran out of meat, we were swamped. Business out a week and a half ago, two weeks ago, was overwhelming. I guess I feel we've been here to support the community as best we can," said owner Bob Miller.

The tradeoff has been higher prices from suppliers and 10-hour workdays. The first week of shutdowns saw all of Miller's distributors raising their prices by 50 cents per pound as processing plants cut their workforce and demand spiked. Miller has made special trips to Indianapolis for bone-in pork loin and chicken while they are in stock.

"Even our major suppliers are having trouble getting product," he said.

Compared to the past, the locker is now over-ordering to keep meat on the shelves. This week, business increased again, which Miller believes is because more shops are closing and more coronavirus cases were confirmed in southern Illinois.

For safety, everyone is keeping surfaces wiped down. Miller encourages patrons not to crowd the store and employees are now carrying some orders to customers' cars.

Things are going well overall. But as the landscape keeps shifting, Miller says he plans to apply for payroll protection for his employees, including five new hires since the crisis started.

Miller's hope is that he gets to keep serving the community and building new customer relationships. Edgar County Locker prides itself on its selection custom meats, rubs,



Samantha Tucker/The Prairie Press

Robin Trapp of Betty Jane's Kitchen greets customers from the drive-through window. Like many restaurants, Trapp's business is now exclusively operating through to-go orders to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

spices and marinades, and Miller loves seeing people realize exactly how much variety is there.

"Keep coming back. We'll keep offering the same products we always have...when grilling season comes, don't forget Edgar County Locker tried to take care of everybody."

LORI'S PINS 'N NEEDLES

Lori's Pins 'n Needles has been a landmark in Paris for four decades. Owner Lori Bridwell says being an established business is an advantage right now, since the disruption is hitting new small businesses hardest.

"We can kind of shift a little bit with the times and it tends to work out," she said.

Naturally, Lori's has canceled many of the moneymaking events and demonstrations this spring, but the store's local customer base is creative, loyal and generous. Many are combatting the shortage of Personal Protective Equipment by sewing face masks for hospitals and senior centers.

For Bridwell, keeping everyone safe is a top priority. Employees are taking fabric orders over the phone and carrying them out to the parking lot, as well as shipping them through the mail. Keeping counters wiped down is another way they fight the virus.

"We've always been one to keep things clean," she said, but now everyone is going the extra mile.

Bridwell would rather not pursue financial help yet, saying she is positive things will come back around. In the meantime, Lori's Pins 'n Needles will do what it has always done and feed the creativity of seamstresses across the community. Bridwell urged her customers to keep communicating with her.

"They can continue to keep in touch with us, we're happy to provide them with what they need to continue their projects," she said.

120 COFFEE CO.

As hard as 120 Coffee Co. has been hit — their coffeeshop was created as a space to sit, sip and chat — they also tell stories of inspiring generosity. Customers, some halfway across the country, have paid forward boxes and boxes of donuts to give away. Someone in North Dakota bought \$100 worth, while another in Washington, D.C. sent a message along with the sweets: someone cares.

These acts make all the difference to owner Richard Wilken.

"We are down, depends on the day, up to two-thirds down on sales," said Wilken, who owns 120 Coffee Co. with his wife, Stacey. People working from home do not swing by for

coffee, and mothers with kids sometimes find it difficult to get the family out the door.

"I totally understand, I'd rather people stay safe," he said.

Currently, the Wilkens take phone orders of coffees and sweets for pickup and curbside delivery, as well as shipping bags of coffee through the mail. They are also using the lull to do a little refurbishing.

"We're using this time to do some changes, remodeling, just things we were too busy for," he explained.

Cleanliness remains a high priority. It is also surprisingly easy, Wilken said.

"One thing that's positive, all of our countertops are copper, which is one of the hardest surfaces for germs to breed on," said Wilken.

Since 120 Coffee Co. is a cash business run by its owners, and therefore has no employees to protect, Wilken said they would rather not take any government money. They may reconsider as time goes on, though.

"I would think about it," he admitted.

Wilken's biggest fear is after the pandemic subsides, people will forget about the small businesses and restaurants they enjoyed before.

"Shop, do what you can," he urged. "Buy coffee to take it home, donuts to take home... Support us on the backside when things get back to normal."

R&J STORES

Unsurprisingly to many, alcohol sales across the nation have increased in this time of stress and confinement.

"The liquor store business is one of the few businesses that has actually seen growth in sales," said owner Ben Lueken. R&J Stores has still taken a hit, however.

"We've lost our gaming and so our net profits are down," he explained, adding they have also hired five new employees who were laid off when their previous jobs shut down. Lueken is looking into the Payroll Protection Program for that reason.

Employees are welcome to wear masks and have the added safety of plexiglass dividers in the store. Signs inside encourage customers to mind social distancing. The best way to shop currently is from inside one's own car.

"We're encouraging customers to use our drive-up window," he said.

Lueken has always encouraged people to shop locally, whether at R&J Stores or elsewhere. Now, he says, it is vital.

"The impact on the small business owner is going to be felt more the longer this virus goes on," said Lueken.

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In the know



COLLEGE FOOTBALL IN LIMBO

The 2020 college football season is in limbo, thanks to the COVID-19 virus and the danger associated with it. **SPORTS, 8A**

Oxtail soup has a following

An oft-discarded cut of meat is the secret ingredient to the world's best beef stew. **C'EST LA VIE, 1B**

Antibodies could save the ill

Doctors once used donated antibodies to save patients, now the same technique could help COVID-19 victims. **HISTORY, 3B**



Coronavirus cleaning guide

The best COVID-19 treatment is prevention — sanitizing around the home is a great start. **HEALTH, 5B**

Perfect storm did not show

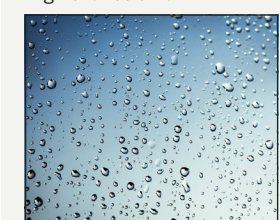
Despite a cocktail of adverse conditions, predictions of severe storm did not pan out. **WEATHER, 2A**

New scams arrive on scene

Scammers take advantage of the coronavirus pandemic, get better at covering their tracks. **NEWS, 4A**

TODAY'S WEATHER

H 57 L 39
High chance of rain. **2A**



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LOCALLY OWNED, LOYAL TO OUR COMMUNITY

SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 2020

Bills keep coming for NECAS

Bidding delays and regulations leave ambulance liable for expensive heart monitors

BY GARY HENRY
ghenry@prairiepress.net

CHRISMAN — Northern Edgar County residents voting in the March 17 primary gave overwhelming support to create a special taxing district and provide financial support to keep an ambulance service based in Chrisman.

The vote shows support for the idea but it did not create a special service area. Such action can only be done by the Edgar County Board following a lengthy process, which includes opening the service to bidding by ambulance providers once the special service area is in place. It is going to be some time before any new money is flowing and that creates a problem for the Northern Edgar County Am-

bulance Service (NECAS), which continues to operate with dwindling reserves.

NECAS board members met Tuesday, March 31, and ambulance coordinator Jeremy Neal reminded them of an unavoidable expense regarding heart monitors that must be addressed prior to February 2021. This matter was discussed at previous meetings, but no decision was made pending the outcome of the March primary.

"We can't wait until February to decide," said Neal. "This affects everybody in the whole country."

The heart monitors used on both NECAS ambulances will no longer be valid for use per federal regulations as of February. Neal said the new style heart monitors are not

items on the shelf ready to purchase and install. It currently takes a six-month pre-order to secure one.

He presented the NECAS board with three options: purchase new monitors at \$35,000 each; the manufacturer has a leasing option that costs \$1,800 per month per monitor; or purchase two used monitors at \$20,000 each. The used monitors are a model that will remain valid for use after February.

Buying a new monitor or entering a lease agreement must be done within six months of February. The used monitors are available now but are in demand. Neal said the used monitors will retain some value should it be necessary for NECAS to liquidate before the special

service area is in place and funded.

He did apply for a Firefighters Grant to fund part of the purchase for a new monitor but has since learned the board that awards those grants is not meeting while the COVID-19 restrictions are in place. It is uncertain when those grants may be decided.

Trying to find a solution weighed heavily on the NECAS board members. They are confronted with the difficult situation of keeping the ambulance current with all regulations while still being fiscally responsible with the dwindling cash reserves.

Board member Darin Craig noted all of the township boards did increase their levy requests in order to help

the ambulance service transition through this uncertain period. It was finally decided to use \$20,000 from the approximately \$76,000 left in reserve cash to purchase one used heart monitor.

"We've got to have it, and it is going to save us about \$16,000," said board member Rodney Wolfe as he cast a reluctant yes vote for the purchase.

Another unexpected expense put an additional dent in the reserve funds. Neal said the pickup truck he drives as a first response vehicle to get on scene before the ambulance arrives has developed serious engine problems. Because he drives the truck to work and keeps it at home for emergency response from

See **NECAS, Page 4A**

CRESTWOOD, PARIS 95 SERVE FREE HOT DOG LUNCH



Gary Henry/The Prairie Press

Debbie Sturgell gathers up hygiene supplies such as deodorant, toothpaste, soap, shampoo and other things to distribute during the free hot dog lunch Crestwood and Paris 95 provided the community Friday as a break from the shelter at home routine.



Gary Henry/The Prairie Press

Josh McCarty, maintenance director at Crestwood School, holds a sign for the times. A joint effort by Crestwood and Paris 95 staff provided a free hot dog lunch for the community from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Friday in the Crestwood parking lot. People drove through for a sandwich, chips, condiments, beverage and hygiene products. To maintain proper social distancing people remained in the car and items were passed to them.



Gary Henry/The Prairie Press

Meghan Damler passes a bag of chips as part of a free hot dog lunch staff at Crestwood and Paris 95 provided Friday as a community morale booster.

City council adapting to social distancing

BY GARY HENRY
ghenry@prairiepress.net

The public can still attend Paris City Council meetings, although in a unique way.

A special meeting Thursday, April 2, indicated the new normal, at least for a while. Council members and city employees present practiced social distancing in the council room, with Mayor Craig Smith and council members Harry Hughes and Jerry Branson seated at the council table.

Councilmen Drew Griffith and Steve Kemper occupied seats in the audience area. City clerk Bridgett Anderson was in the audience and city manager Michael Martin was at a separate desk. Public participation was over an open phone line, although no public comments were offered.

Smith briefed those present on efforts by the governor's office to keep city officials informed about the COVID-19 status. He said the governor hosts two weekly phone conferences for municipal officials from the village to city status.

"There is not much of a chance to ask questions, but this does give us a chance to know what he is planning," said Smith. "The governor has been very proactive in getting information out to us."

The mayor noted the most recent executive order extends all previous executive orders, including shelter at home and the closing of non-essential businesses, until April 30.

"That is just a date in the future," said Smith, emphasizing no one knows when the corona virus pandemic will relax its grasp.

An ongoing challenge for state, county and city officials is securing

See **PARIS, Page 4A**

Edgar County Health Department staying on top of COVID-19

BY GARY HENRY
ghenry@prairiepress.net

The Edgar County Health Department is a place where people can obtain accurate and up-to-date information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Monica Dunn, public information officer for the health department, said the Edgar County Health Department has existed since 1996 and has always had an emergency response plan in place.

"We have responded to things in the past, but this is unprecedented," said Dunn. "We are working hard to stay on top of what is happening in the state."

New and accurate information gets posted to the health department's website as does a daily update on COVID-19 testing.

"We do not have a positive case in Edgar County at this time, but we do have an action plan for when that happens," said Dunn.

If a positive case is detected, the health department takes the lead on investigating who that person has had contact with to find everybody and advise them of the exposure risk. There is also a plan in place between the health department, the Edgar County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency (ESDA), Horizon Health and first responders such as law enforcement and fire service if quarantine is necessary to provide individuals with a safe place to recuperate and make sure they are supplied with food and medical care.

Executive director Janet Mason added the health department's website is a better

resource for tracking test results than calling the hospital. She explained the hospital receives information on the tests it submits to the state lab for analysis, but the Paris hospital may not be the only place people go to obtain a test.

Depending on where people live, some county residents may use hospitals in Coles County, Champaign, Danville or Terre Haute, Ind., and those other medical facilities are legally obligated to inform the Edgar County Health Department when a local resident presents for testing and to also supply the results of those tests.

"I want the public to understand the health department, ESDA and the hospital are working together to provide accurate information," said Mason.

To meet that need for providing accurate information, the health department has created a Core Emergency Response Team with staff members assuming the responsibility of staying current in certain areas dealing with COVID-19.

Residents with questions or concerns may call the health department at:

■ For medical questions, contact the director of nursing at 465-2212, ext. 567.

■ For environmental health and COVID-19 response, call 465-2212, ext. 564.

■ Questions by businesses and employers should go to Dunn at 465-2212.

■ General questions, inquiries by elected community leaders or information about state contacts fall to Mason at 465-2212, ext. 566.

The health department is also responsible for trying to find the much needed Personal Protection Equipment medical workers and first responders need to protect themselves against the coronavirus. Normally such supplies are available for order through the state, and so far the health department has received three shipments. Those supplies are then distributed throughout the county for first responders.

Mason said unless something changes, Edgar County may not see any PPE supplies for a while.

"We were told the warehouse is empty," said Mason.

In addition to addressing the pandemic, the health department staff still has other duties to fulfill. The always

See **COUNTY, Page 4A**

The look of pandemic is in everyone's eyes

Many years ago when I was a young mother, my toddler son vanished from sight when I turned my back for a few seconds to water some flowers. Frantic, I ran to the street and looked in both directions, shrieking his name. Nothing, nowhere. How could this be?

A few seconds passed when a police car suddenly materialized.

"Did you lose your child?" the officer asked.

"Yes," I nearly screamed.

"Did you find him?"

"No," he said, "but you have that look."

Horror is what he saw. Thanks to a nearby jogger, JC was found a block away, gleefully chasing a cat that had wandered by during that blink of an eye when mine was turned elsewhere. Happy ending. Lesson learned.

I've never forgotten the officer's haunting words and the agonies they suggested. Apparently, he had seen the expression enough times to recognize it. I've thought of them again recently as I've begun to notice that look we can now ascribe to the coronavirus pandemic.

As I take my morning walks, I can see the faces. The hellos are polite, but the brows are deeply furrowed. They tell the story of a nation in shock, the fear and grief over the loss of the world they knew and may never know again.

The pandemic has created a new etiquette to go with That Look. It's a mixture of politesse and pragmatism. Two strangers will smile and duck their heads almost bashfully as they attempt to dodge each other, as if to say: "I'm

See **PARKER**, Page 7A

Legislators should continue bipartisanship, end gerrymandering

As a lifelong Illinoisan, I have never felt prouder or safer to be a resident of this state. Gov. J.B. Pritzker and his administration are setting a precedent for pandemic response in a time of fear and uncertainty.

I have felt the need to defend my home state in the past; explaining why I decided not to go out of state for college and why I didn't move immediately after I got my degree: taxes are too high, the government is corrupt and the weather is notoriously awful.

But Illinois' aggressive and informed COVID-19 response has me feeling vindicated in my choice to remain. Our state and local government cares that we remain alive and make it through to the end of this crisis, which, as demonstrated by the state leaders in Texas and Florida, is not a given.

However, critics of Illinois government do have a point. As it stands, Illinois consistently ranks as one of the most corrupt states in the union. That's, in large part, because we don't elect our state officials: 80 percent of state-level races in Illinois went uncontested or were not really competitive due to partisan gerrymandering.

In Illinois, the elected officials who hold power draw districts that ensure their parties' victories in the next election. Because many elected officials have their victories all but guaranteed, they rarely feel the voting booth consequences of the decisions (or lack of decisions) they make while in office. This grossly undermines the voting power of Illinois residents and shuts out our voices.

Illinois has demonstrated that we are not afraid to lead when it comes to disaster response. We should not be afraid to lead when it comes to ending partisan gerrymandering. Moves toward improved and less partisan gerrymandering have been passed in states such as Arizona, Colorado, California, Michigan, Missouri and Ohio.

COVID-19 has demonstrated that who we elect to lead matters, especially in times of crisis. Illinoisans' have demonstrated they know how to pick strong leaders in state-wide races, and they should be empowered to do so up and down the ballot. Ensuring that Illinois legislators call the Fair Maps Amendment (HJRCA41 and SJRCA18) for a debate and vote would give Illinoisans a chance to end gerrymandering in Illinois — and according to the most recent Paul Simon Policy Institute Poll, 67 percent Illinoisans want this done.

Illinois has a future beyond COVID-19. We are in the middle of a public health crisis, but legislators still are constitutionally mandated to add questions onto the ballot by May 3. Once we are on the other side of the pandemic, Illinois legislators should continue to make Illinoisans proud by setting precedents for good government by ending partisan gerrymandering in our state.

(Sarah Wasik is a project manager with CHANGE Illinois, a nonpartisan nonprofit that advocates for ethical and efficient government.)

A different inequality

Without classrooms, consequences of digital inequality become obvious

One of the problems Edgar County educators are facing due to the shutdown of our schools is something they have recognized for a long time — digital inequality for rural and poorer school districts.

Even before the shutdown, many of our Chrisman, Paris 95, Crestwood, Kansas and Shiloh students were experiencing difficulties completing routine homework assignments because they lack the home Internet access many of us take for granted.

The lack of access to the Internet is hampering the school districts trying to maintain a semblance of instruction by offering course material online. While Shiloh provides Chromebooks to every student, Chrisman junior high and high schools students also have their own Chromebooks and Crestwood eighth graders each have their own Chromebook, Kansas, Paris High School, Mayo, Paris elementary, and the remainder of the Crestwood students do not have access to a computer, laptop or tablet unless they are in school. And while a majority of students may own a smartphone, it is hardly a device to use to

OUR VIEW

This editorial reflects the views of The Prairie Press' editorial board. Other opinions on this page may not reflect this view.

complete assignments.

One of the solutions this past week for Paris students without a home computer was the free distribution of Chromebooks and tablets on a first come, first serve basis to approximately 250 families. This will provide online access to lessons provided by the schools through the I-Ready as well as special projects planned by teachers.

In addition, yellow school buses are parked throughout the community, offering wireless Internet access for those who now may have a Chromebook to complete assignments but no way to connect to the web at home. These hot spots will be discontinued once students return to school.

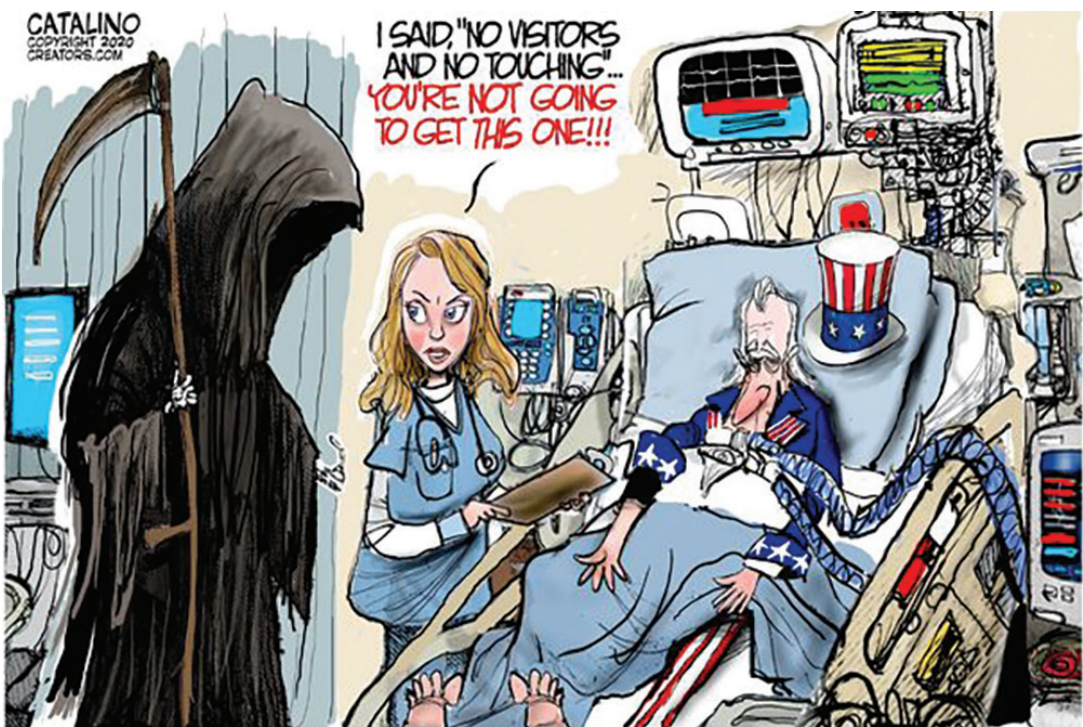
Federal Communications Commission member Jessica Rosenworcel has long been speaking to this issue. She is calling on the FCC to use funds earmarked for connecting schools and libraries to the Internet to provide schools with Internet hot

spots for lending to students. Members of Congress are urging their leadership to set aside dedicated funding to help the digital divide.

When Illinois schools were closed by Gov. J.B. Pritzker on March 17, few school districts in the state had comprehensive — or any — e-learning plans. An analysis of 46 school districts by the Center for Reinvention Public Education found no district had, "a clear solution for ensuring that 100 percent of students have a ... device and reliable, long-term access to the Internet."

The time has long passed for the country to open the door to the Internet for communities that are locked out.

The lack of Internet access in poor and rural communities comes up again and again as educators talk about the pandemic, closing the digital divide and bringing all Americans into the information age. This will require a monumental effort on the scale of the federal project that brought electricity to rural areas in Edgar and Clark counties more than 75 years ago. Bringing access to the Internet for all will be similarly worth the effort.



YOUR VIEW

'Kids these days' are capable and caring

"What's wrong with kids these days?" I hate that phrase.

Lately, I hear young adults are too busy, or too self-involved, or just not joiners, yet everywhere I turn, I find evidence to the contrary. Yes, young adults are busy establishing a foothold on their version of the American Dream, but they are also involved in grass-roots efforts, donating to important programs and establishing practices that will have lasting global impact.

Perhaps rather than a lack of desire to serve, the next generation simply wants to be treated like adults by established members. As a traditional joiner, and I'll admit I am one, we tend to enthusiastically extol our vast knowledge, experiences and the virtues of membership in the largest service organization in the world, but we should be listening to the ideas and concerns of young adults to find ways the club can help.

We should trust them to lead. A fellow Lion once said, "If it matters to you, it matters to us." That's what membership is supposed to be, and why I continue to be a member of Paris Lions Club. The greatest impact of membership has been very personal.

As my eyesight was deteriorating, I felt my usefulness dwindle

and my purpose in life fade away. Through membership, my club gave me a voice and meaningful value. The club members listened, they pitched in and they trusted me to lead.

My children have scattered, and I can't read newspapers, so I'm not as informed as I once was. To be a better member, I invite young adults to contact me on Facebook: Lion Lori Bennett and share your ideas of how Lions and others can better serve.

Raise your voice. If it matters to you, it matters to us.

Lori Bennett, Paris

Mismanagement and crisis are on Trump

You don't govern in pie-in-the sky one day and begrudgingly help the next. You deal in reality, like Dr. Fauci said, "You don't make the timeline, the virus makes the timeline."

The simple reason we don't have enough tests, ventilators, masks or hospital gowns in the country is because our government didn't care enough to implement measures Obama urged Trump to do in 2016. So doctors are now using plastic trash bags to cover themselves.

They describe horrific scenes at their hospitals – doctors infected, nurses collapsing and refrigerated trucks to store the dead, while Trump lashes out at governors asking for help.

Even with a \$2 trillion rescue plan America will be behind, soon to need much more as COVID-19 spreads. So when Trump told governors to be appreciative of help I thought, "That's your job – you act like it is your money."

On March 27, he finally ordered the DPA to get GM to make the ventilators, which should have been done weeks ago. He doesn't understand or care that delays equal deaths to our citizens.

We can recover quicker if every state is on the same page instead of doing everything piecemeal, as Bill Gates said. A national stay at home order is needed because you can't grow the economy until you deal with the virus. And during the crisis a freeze on rents and utilities would help protect our people from Depression-like conditions, which would ensue the longer the virus stays.

A time might come when quarantine is necessary, and we'll have to be ready for that, mentally and in every way imaginable.

Anita Griffith
Vermilion

Legislators find ways to stay busy

This is a story about two very different state legislators, representing very different districts with the same strong belief in hope during a time of anguish.

Some legislators are known for their lawmaking abilities and some are known for their constituent services. Rep. Tom Bennett (R-Gibson City) falls more into the latter category.

The always-cheerful Bennett can attend as many as 10 or 12 events on a week-end day. His district is huge, stretching from just south of Streator all the way east and south to right above Danville. His constant travels caught up to him last year when he was in a bad one-car accident and broke several ribs. But his pace soon returned to normal.

All the events have one thing in common: They're put on by groups to raise money for worthy causes.

"They're good people, trying hard," Bennett said, adding that he tries not to eat at every event he attends.

I reached out to Bennett to see if he was experiencing any withdrawal symptoms. He said he was keeping plenty busy.

He's visited restaurants throughout his sprawling district that have remained open for carry-out and delivery and has been highlighting their offerings on social media to help them stay afloat.

He's on numerous conference calls every day. He had been putting out a weekly newsletter, but it's now daily. Bennett, like

See **MILLER**, Page 7A



RICH MILLER
CAPITOL FAX

HAVE YOUR SAY

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In the know



BEARS ADD FOLES AT QB

Mitch Trubinsky beware. There's a new quarterback in town named Nick Foles and he's a Super Bowl MVP. Bears' QB now faces competition. **SPORTS, 9A**

Be prepared: pantry staples

Having the right dry goods, canned ingredients and spices on reserve makes home meals easy and always accessible. **C'EST LA VIE, 1B**

Disaster on the Mississippi

The 1865 explosion of the steamboat Sultana is the most deadly maritime disaster in U.S. history. **HISTORY, 3B**



Local response to coronavirus

Horizon Health and Paris Community Hospital enact precautions to protect staff, patients, community. **HEALTH, 7B**

Easters not always peaceful

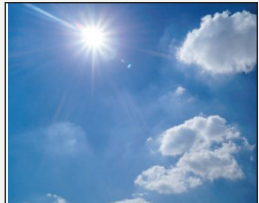
The Vatican reaches to past Easters spent in hardship for inspiration as coronavirus grips Italy. **GRACE, 5B**

Firefighters don masks on calls

Chrisman firefighters are now answering medical calls in Personal Protective Equipment, respirators. **NEWS, 3A**

TODAY'S WEATHER

H 43 L 29
Sunny with a cold spell. **2A**



LET'S BE FRIENDS!

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The Prairie Press

Paris Beacon-News

LOCALLY OWNED, LOYAL TO OUR COMMUNITY

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 2020

Illinois urged to stay home

Gov. Pritzker uses emergency powers, imposes stay-at-home order to curb COVID-19

BY JOHN O'CONNOR AND KATHLEEN FOODY
Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Friday ordered all state residents to remain in their homes except for essentials, joining similar dramatic efforts in California and New York to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

Pritzker's order, which takes effect Saturday at 5 p.m. and is set to expire April 7, still allows the state's 12.6 million residents to head outside to buy groceries and medicine.

"If there are actions that I can take that will save lives in the midst of this pandemic,

no matter how difficult, then I have an obligation," Pritzker said. The Democrat said he was trying to prevent potentially tens of thousands of deaths but urged people not to panic.

"For the vast majority of you already taking precautions, your lives will not change very much," he said, adding that people can continue to shop for groceries, visit pharmacies and gas stations and exercise outdoors.

People also can continue to pick up meals from restaurants, he said.

Pritzker acknowledged the state doesn't have the resourc-

es or the desire to enforce the order to limit individuals' actions, but he said law enforcement will take action if necessary, although it is not clear what that means.

The stay-at-home order will also mean schools statewide remain closed until April 8, he said.

Pritzker had previously ordered all schools statewide to shut down through the end of March and limited gatherings to 50 people to curb the spread of the coronavirus in the state. He also closed dine-in service at bars and restaurants, but allowed businesses to continue delivery or carryout options.

The governors of California and New York have issued similar orders.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, who stood by Pritzker's side as he announced the order, said she agreed with the decision.

"Think of this as safer at home," she said.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the virus. Ac-

cording to the World Health Organization, people with mild cases recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe ones can take three to six weeks to get better.

As of Friday afternoon, Illinois has reported 585 cases of COVID-19 in 25 counties, up from 422 a day earlier. The state reported one more death Friday — a woman in her 70s from Cook County — taking the state's toll to five.

The Illinois Chamber of Commerce issued a statement of support for Pritzker's order, stating the governor has shown strong leadership in

See **ORDER**, Page **12A**

NO KIDS LEFT HUNGRY DURING SCHOOL CLOSINGS



Samantha Tucker/The Prairie Press

Kyle Shay, left, and Superintendent of Schools Jeremy Larson hand out lunches to kids from Beautiful Blossoms Daycare outside Mayo Middle School on March 17. Mayo, Wenz Elementary and Memorial Elementary are all meal distribution points in the wake of school closings.

Schools distribute meals

BY SAMANTHA TUCKER
samantha@prairiepress.net

Area schools are distributing meals to students who may otherwise go hungry during the current coronavirus shutdown.

In Paris, Mayo Middle School, Wenz Elementary School and Memorial Elementary School are all meal distribution points, passing out or delivering hundreds of sack lunches per day from the schools' main entrances. Lunches are packed with items like ham and cheese wraps or sandwiches, chips, apples, cereal bars and milk or juice.

In Paris 95, the number of students of all ages needing food has grown this week to 950, according to Jeremy Larson, Superintendent of Schools.

Kansas and Chrisman schools are also providing daily meals for take-out, including some breakfast items.

Kansas CUSD #3 urges parents

See **LUNCHES** Page **8A**



Samantha Tucker/The Prairie Press

Sharon Evitt hands out lunches to students outside Wenz Elementary School on Tuesday, March 17. Over 500 lunches were delivered and distributed from Wenz the previous day. As a safety measure, employees were the only ones allowed in the school building.

Local officials are preparing for COVID-19

BY GARY HENRY
ghenry@prairiepress.net

Local emergency and health officials have put together a plan for dealing with the more severe aspects of COVID-19 if the disease appears in Edgar County.

"As of 11 a.m. today, there are no confirmed cases in Edgar County," Jill Taylor said Thursday afternoon.

North American Lighting announced Thursday an employee suspected of being exposed to the coronavirus tested negative and is not infected. The same day Union Hospital in Terre Haute, Ind., reported treating a confirmed case, although the hospital did not identify the home

community of the patient.

Taylor is the Edgar County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency (ESDA) coordinator and ESDA is the agency responsible for coordinating efforts with all local responders and keeping lines of communication open with state and federal authorities during a disaster or emergency.

She explained meetings with Horizon Health, the Edgar County Health Department, first responders like law enforcement, fire departments and ambulance services, along with county board representatives and other elected officials plus local restaurants and oth-

er retailers has resulted in a plan for quarantining people should that need arise.

Not every case of COVID-19 requires hospitalization although anyone who feels ill, for whatever reason, should self-quarantine and stay home to avoid exposing others to the virus. Health officials say, much like the common cold, time is the best cure for mild cases of COVID-19 and that is achieved by staying home and allowing the body to heal naturally. Medical intervention is only necessary in those cases where a high fever develops, the patient has a persistent cough with difficulty breathing or does not

show signs of improvement.

Taylor said the county's quarantine plan is for those patients who may not be able to care for themselves at home, have been discharged from the hospital but can't go home because they still pose a risk for infecting other family members or in extreme cases where everyone in the house is sick and incapable of caring for each other.

The plan has identified a location where such patients may be housed in a way that allows for their continued care and ease of supplying them with food, water and any necessary medicines, while still guaranteeing the room a COVID-19 patient

occupies is not part of a central ventilation system to prevent the virus from moving through HVAC ducts.

Another consideration is making sure the room is easily accessible for sanitizing and a way exists to isolate the patient's laundry for separate washing. The plan stipulates the responsibility of each agency involved to make sure the patient, or patients, is cared for in quarantine.

"Most people don't require hospitalization," said Taylor, adding all involved believe the contingency plan is workable and should meet local needs. "We have resources we can go to in other counties, if that becomes necessary."

Schools facing a conundrum about how to move forward

BY GARY HENRY
ghenry@prairiepress.net

KANSAS — COVID-19 and the mandatory school closing was a major topic of conversation at the Wednesday, March 18, board of education meeting for Kansas Community Unit School District #3.

Governor J.B. Pritzker ordered all schools stay closed March 17 to March 30 and Wednesday the Illinois State Board of Education advised administrators to expect the order to extend beyond March 30.

"We don't have any idea how long this will last," interim district superintendent John Hasten told board members. "I think the governor will extend it beyond two weeks."

Hasten said students were given packets of study material before they were sent home Monday, March 16, for the unscheduled two-week break. He explained the material in the packets was designed

as review to keep students where they are rather than a way to instruct them with new information.

The superintendent added it is doubtful the school will create new review packets if the closing is continued.

"My fear is this will extend to a point we will have to cancel graduation," Hasten said. "I don't see prom happening."

Board members voiced concerns about assigning grades and credit if the students do not come back to finish the school year.

According to Hasten, the simplest option is to make whatever grades students had on March 16 the semester grade. The school had three full quarters completed and was just briefly into the fourth quarter when the closing was ordered.

Granting course credit, Hasten said, is the board of education's domain so the district has the authority to grant a full year of credit even though an entire year of work

was not completed.

"If we miss eight weeks of school, how are we going to get the kids caught up next year?" asked board member Matt Ehlers.

Hasten said that has already been a discussion with the teachers and all are aware of the special circumstances. The elementary teachers know students advancing to the next grade level will not be coming in as fully prepared as they should be and a longer period of review will be needed to get them back on pace.

"It's going to be a lot of work in that first quarter to get them caught up," said Hasten, adding the biggest challenge will be addressing the loss in math carryover.

Even though schools are closed and staff is not required to be in the building, Hasten praised the cooks for coming in daily to pack carry-out sack lunches for students. He said 17 lunches were prepared Tuesday, 30 were scheduled for Thursday and he anticipates the numbers to keep climbing.

ipates the numbers to keep climbing.

"We are glad we are putting food into kids' hands," said Hasten. "Some kids might not have eaten if we hadn't done this."

He also commended the district's maintenance staff for taking advantage of the break to thoroughly clean and sanitize the building, just in case school resumes.

Principal Cindy Spencer used part of her report to extend kudos to the Tri-County Girls Basketball team for a third place finish in the state tournament, and she thanked the booster club and private donors for providing money so the girls could buy the expensive state tournament apparel.

Spencer announced the district received a Flossie Stafford grant for special education and the money will be used to purchase two iPads, or similar devices. A \$6,931 grant was received from the Edgar County Community

Foundation for the purchase of 20 Chromebooks and a cart.

"Now both floors will have a portable Chromebook cart," said Spencer.

The board awarded a contract to Industrial Services of Mattoon, as the low bidder, to install a new membrane roof on the 1956 addition to the building. The company's bid of \$192,300 was below the architect's estimate of \$200,000.

Hasten said the district received a \$50,000 state maintenance grant and the rest of the cost will come from the district's share of the Edgar County School Facility tax and the district's health, life safety fund.

In another action, the board approved 2 percent raises for non-certified staff and administrators to stay in line with the 2 percent raise that is part of the teachers' contract for 2020-2021.

Board members expressed disappointment at the Shi-

loh Board of Education rejecting a plan to expand the Tri-County coop to include all junior high sports.

"I left the (committee) meeting thinking all of the schools were on board with it," said Ehlers. "For the first time since the cooperative started, I felt like this was a way to look at how the cooperative should look."

Kansas did approve accepting Shiloh High School into the co-op for scholastic bowl competition.

Following an executive session the following staff changes were made: non-tenured teachers Beth Gibson, Christy Pinkston, Linsey Shawver and Bridget Walters were rehired for next year; Amanda Gough and Jennifer Staley were rehired and awarded tenure; Gena Bunch-Epperson and April Noel were re-employed as part-time teachers; Tracy Porter was hired as a full-time teacher; and Skyler Harford was released from her teaching position for next year.



Samantha Tucker/The Prairie Press

Chasta Huddleson, left, and Mary Switzer pack ham and cheese wraps, chips, cereal bars, milk and juice at Mayo Middle School on Tuesday, March 17. They made 300 meals to feed Paris kids who rely on schools for lunch and could be left wanting while they are closed.

LUNCHES

FROM PAGE 1A

to please email the school at absence@kansas.k12.il.us, or call the school at (217)948-5174 before 9:00 a.m. to request a lunch. Pickup is at entrance E1 of TLC (the old Kansas Grade School) between 11 a.m. and noon each day.

For more information about the Chrisman school district's meals, call the elementary school at 217-269-2022.

Shiloh CUSD #1 is offering students a week's worth of breakfast and lunch supplies across several communities, with pickups Saturday from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Parents should call the school office at 217-887-2364, ext. 1, as soon as possible to request meals for their students.

Shiloh CUSD #1 meal pickups are at St. Michael's Parish Life Center in Hume, the Metcalf Christian Church in Metcalf, the Newman First Christian Church in New- man, Little Hall in Murdock, the Christian Church in Redmon and the Brocton Christian Church in Brocton.



Samantha Tucker/The Prairie Press

Joe's Pizza owner Eno Vitale delivers a carload of sack lunches to Mayo Middle School Thursday, March 19. Joe's Pizza packed 600 lunches of ham and cheese sandwiches, apples, chips and chocolate chip cookies to help feed students reliant on school meals during the COVID-19 school shutdown.

Prom party fundraising surpasses \$11,000 thanks to students, donations

BY NANCY ZEMAN
nzeman@prairiepress.net

Paris High School students have raised more than \$11,000 to support the school's annual after prom event, the Paris Co-operative High School board of directors learned during its meeting Monday, March 9.

The students, sponsored by teacher Heather Seaton, have been aggressively hosting a variety of events and projects to raise the money for prizes and activities for the annual junior-senior prom, set for April 18.

Assistant principal Mark Cox shared the students recently raised \$3,800 with a cow chip bingo, held in the round barn on the Edgar County Fairgrounds. Other activities have included a car show and a Trunk or Treat. In total, the students have raised \$11,560.

Included in that total raised by the students, Cox said, is a \$4,800 from local businesses. "What a giving community," he noted.

The board members also had the opportunity to see a project from a PHS class in-

volving Crestwood first graders. Kaitlyn Mathews said students in a classroom at Crestwood were asked to draw a picture. The PHS students then created a three-dimensional version of the drawing using cloth and fibers.

Senior Sarah Isaf said the students then sewed the 3-D versions and stuffed them using fiber fill. Sewing was a new experience for the students in the crafts 2 class, she said. The students came up with the idea from a similar project they found on social media.

The 25 3-D versions will be presented to each student, Isaf said.

The board also:

■ Accepted the resignation of Kyra Hutchings as the school's agriculture teacher and FFA sponsor. The school is aggressively looking for a replacement to continue the ag program.

■ Accepted the resignation of Christian Mills as assistant volleyball coach.

■ Hired Steve Kemper as a volunteer softball coach for the 2020 season.

■ Approved PHS students

of Jami Wilson to participate in the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Earth Day activities at Lincoln Trail State Park.

■ Approved a fundraiser request by Taylor Birchfield for the girls track team.

■ Heard graduation is set for Friday, May 22.

Paris 95 Superintendent of Schools Jeremy Larson said the school has several openings to fill due to resignations including an assistant principal to succeed Mark Cox, who will become school principal July 1. There are currently seven applicants for the position. Applications are due by March 31.

Other vacancies include an APEX supervisor and a math teacher to succeed Doug Happ, who is retiring at the conclusion of the school year. Larson also emphasized the school will be hiring an ag teacher and FFA sponsor. "We are not eliminating the program. We need a teacher," he said.

Shiloh rejects junior high sports co-op

BY NANCY ZEMAN
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HUME — Shiloh Junior High School athletes will not be Titans but will continue to be Raiders following action by the Shiloh Unit 1 School Board Monday, March 16, meeting.

On a vote of 4-3, the board members voted against the school's junior high teams joining the sports cooperative with Kansas and Oakland. Shiloh's high school sports are a member of the cooperative.

Board president David Smith made the motion to join the cooperative following an extended discussion by board members. The motion was seconded by Tara Barrett-Duzan. They were joined by Renee Henry in voting in favor of the cooperative.

Voting against joining the cooperative were Aaron Richardson, Brian Rhode, April Morris and Justin Wood.

The board members have been discussing the possibility of joining the cooperative for the last couple of months and seemed to be leaning in that direction. Smith joined interim Superintendent of Schools Allen Hall and principal Beth Harbaugh at a co-op meeting earlier this month.

Rhode, who in previous discussions appeared to favor the co-op for junior high, withdrew his support Monday after he discovered joining the sport co-op would move Shiloh from Class 1A to Class 2A. The Tri-County junior high cooperative plays in Class 2A as set by the Illinois Elementary Association.

Rhode said moving the Shiloh athletes to Class 2A would mean they would play larger schools such as Crestwood and Casey-Westfield. He said it would be hard to compete in that class.

Shani Weiss, who coaches both the junior high girls volleyball and basketball teams, in speaking against joining the co-op, noted there is a discrepancy in discipline between Shiloh and the other two schools. She noted join-

ing the program might help the Titan high school athletic programs but emphasized fewer Shiloh students would get the opportunity to play.

Hall said Kansas and Oakland are open to Shiloh joining the co-op and added they would like the school to also co-op its scholastic bowl team. Shiloh team sponsor Terry Sullivan said it has been a struggle to get four or five high school students to participate.

While one of the first things that would have to be tackled, Smith reported, was what school would host what sport. Smith said he supports rotating hosting the sports every year.

The co-op members also requested the schools consider having only one athletic director beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, Smith said.

"There would be a lot of logistics to work out with that," he said.

Richardson said he is against joining Tri-County for junior high sports.

"We wouldn't be competitive," he said, also emphasizing there are some concerns Shiloh has expressed about the high school co-op that needs to be fixed.

Barrett-Duzan said she favored the change, noting the parents who have contacted her or spoken to her overwhelmingly favor joining the co-op.

Morris again expressed her concern that joining the junior high co-op would prevent junior high students from experiencing sports at the junior high level. Her daughter, who is just over five foot, played junior high girls basketball and said she might have never found out how much she enjoyed basketball without the opportunity to play as a younger student.

Harbaugh reported the staff spent the in-service on Friday preparing to support Shiloh students learning outside of the building.

In addition, the school will provide a week's worth of breakfast and lunch for students who sign up for the

service. The meals will be delivered to points in each community. To sign up for the service, parents must call the school and leave a message. Aramark is providing the food, she said.

The board also asked Hall to look into the cost of reviving the school's drug testing programs for extracurricular activities.

Rhode said the school needs to do drug testing to try to get a handle on the vaping problem. Vaping is a huge problem, Rhode emphasized, not just outside school but during school. He estimated 90 percent of Shiloh high school students are vaping.

Hall said he would send out the past policy for the board members to look over before the next meeting.

In other business, the board:

■ Heard from elementary students about their experiences learning about agriculture through their cross-curriculum experiences including making butter, visiting Danke Farms near Martinsville and meeting a reindeer, making crock pot applesauce and tasting Terry Sullivan's local honey.

■ Heard the school's Envirothon team took second place at the recent competition. The Ag team also did well.

■ Hired Pam Evans as a new science teacher.

■ Instructed Hall to purchase a two-sided electronic sign for the front of the school at a cost of \$27,000.

■ Declined an offer from Ormstead Wind Farm to erect a wind turbine on school property.

■ Instructed Hall to trade-in/purchase or lease a driver's education car. The current car is a 2007 model.

■ Agreed the Shiloh scholastic bowl team will co-op with the current Tri-County team.

■ Accepted the bid from O.E. Schrock of Arthur to renovate the biology and chemistry labs for a total of \$120,989.

Chrisman reacting to coronavirus threat

BY GARY HENRY
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CHRISMAN — The Chrisman City Council took action Monday night, March 16, against the spread of the corona virus causing COVID-19.

It was announced during the meeting the Chrisman Public Library is closed until further notice, and the city office will be closed to the public. City clerk Dena Burns and city treasurer Brittaney Ford will continue working in the office to handle city business and deal with issues over the phone. They will not have the building doors open to accept water bill payments or other transactions. Water bills should be paid by mailing a remittance or dropping the payment in the mail slot at the city building.

Much of the remainder of the meeting dealt with regu-

lar business matters. Council members approved two building permits so the Unit 6 school district can install solar panels at two locations. One site is the south lawn of the high school, and the other uses a portion of the playground across Madison Street from the grade school.

The Stone River Group was authorized to collect bids and award a contract to the lowest bidder to provide municipal electric aggregation rates for residential use. This process is currently bid every three years and is a way of providing the lowest possible electric rates for city residents by using one company. Residents don't have to do anything to sign up for the electric rate as that is an automatic process as part of aggregation, but citizens do have a right to opt out and select a different provider.

A new electric message

board using LED lights was approved for the food pantry the Christian Church operates in the former state bank building on the northwest corner of the square. Commissioner Thad Crispin said the bottom of the new sign will be 10 feet above the sidewalk.

Commissioner Brian Haddix reported city workers fixed a sink hole in the alley behind the American Legion. The hole was caused after a forgotten septic tank went dry.

Haddix announced he recently purchased a new camera with the intent of creating a visual record of derelict buildings and inoperable cars as part of the effort to clean the community. He confirmed being confronted by a local resident who received an order to clean up her property.

According to Haddix, the woman was adamant about not complying with the order.

Chrisman fire alters medical response

Other responders taking precautions, but not to extreme

SPECIAL TO THE PRAIRIE PRESS

CHRISMAN — Until further notice, firefighters at Chrisman will respond to all medical calls wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and respirators. Fire Chief Mike Marvin said while the appearance of firefighters in full protective body suits and respirators may be off putting, it is a simple precaution to help stop the spread of COVID-19. He added responding while wearing the PPE is as much for the safety of the patient as it is for firefighters. Paris Fire Chief Brian Gates said Paris firefighters are not

responding on medical calls with PPE gear and respirators, but firefighters are taking due caution when dispatching information indicates the patient has a fever or has perhaps traveled recently. "If we don't need to be in the house, we may maintain our distance unless the ambulance crew needs help," said Gates. The chief added the fire department has the PPE clothing and respirators for firefighters but following the lead of the Horizon Health Ambulance, it is not necessary to respond that way to each call. "If we wear it, and it's not needed it could cause mass panic," said Gates. He speculated neighbors seeing emergency responders wearing such gear as a precaution could cause people

to make unwarranted conclusions. "We want to try and avoid mass hysteria," said Gates. Samantha McCarty, the nurse in charge of Horizon Health's ambulance service, said all parts of Horizon Health are following guidance from the Edgar County Health Department, the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization. In addition, Carle Regional EMS sets the protocols for the ambulance operation. One of those protocols is 911 dispatchers are to screen callers and provide advance notification to paramedics as part of the dispatch. "We are to remain at a safe distance of six feet, if possible and if the patient is ex-

hibiting symptoms – fever, cough, shortness of breath and known exposure or travel – then we are to mask the patient," said McCarty. After loading the patient, the EMS workers are required to give advance notification to the receiving hospital of potential exposure. McCarty added the emergency room staff are wearing N-95 respiratory masks, goggles or face shields and gloves. The ambulances get fully cleaned before going on the next call. "We are not wearing the recommended isolation gowns as PPE has begun to be a scarce commodity, and we are reserving those gowns for the healthcare providers who would be collecting testing specimens," McCarty said.

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EnerStar annual meeting is postponed

SPECIAL TO THE PRAIRIE PRESS

EnerStar Electric Cooperative has postponed the co-operative's March 28 annual membership meeting. Angela Griffin, vice president of utility services, said concern regarding COVID-19 and recommendations of the Center for Disease Control prompted the decision as way to help safeguard the health of members and employees. Last week, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) urged limits on gatherings of more than 250 people. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker followed by prohibiting crowds of more than 1,000 people gathering for the next 30 days. The attendance at EnerStar's Annual Meeting is well above 250 people and has the potential to attract more than 1,000 people. In addition, the meeting was to be held at Crestwood School and schools across Illinois are closed. Griffin said the election of the board of directors will proceed as scheduled. Mem-

bers may vote the ballots previously mailed in three ways. The preferred method is returning the ballot in the prepaid envelope that accompanied it. Mailed ballots must be received by Wednesday, March 26. There are two options for hand-delivering ballots. Ballots in the sealed ballot envelope can be placed in EnerStar's night deposit box before Friday, March 27. The ballot can also be brought to Crestwood School March 28, where the cooperative will have temporary facilities in the Crestwood parking lot. Drop off times are from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Election results will be announced shortly after. "The cooperative will continue to monitor the situation to determine if the meeting can be rescheduled and held a later date," said Griffin. "We will keep the membership informed of any additional decisions through our newsletter, website, social media channels and local media." In addition to postponing the annual meeting, EnerStar

has closed the lobby of the Paris office. The co-op has instituted several measures to safeguard employees against any potential illness. This includes some employees working off-site and canceling all non-essential business travel. "In these uncertain times, EnerStar Electric Cooperative has two key priorities: Keeping the lights on and the safety of its membership and employees," said EnerStar CEO Mike Clark. "If any of our members are facing a financial strain and paying the electric bill will create an additional hardship, call us. We can help with arrangements and other payment assistance. We are also waiving late fees so no need to worry about that. These are uncertain times, but we will all get through it together." Clark added one of the founding principles of EnerStar is concern for community and the co-op is taking measures to help those who might be financially impacted due to COVID-19. "EnerStar will continue to provide the quality service

that our members expect, and we want to assure them that we continue to look for ways that we can support them at this time," said Clark.

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April in Paris gardening seminar canceled

SPECIAL TO THE PRAIRIE PRESS

The University of Illinois Extension has canceled the annual April in Paris Gardening Seminar set for April 9. Information about refunds is available by calling the Edgar County Extension office at 465-8585. Other canceled extension events include the March 26 Choose Health Action (CHAT) webinar and the April 4 CHAT in-person

training. These events have been postponed without setting a new date: March 21 Edgar County Tack Sale and Bake Sale by the Head, Heart and Hooves 4-H Club; March 31 New Member 4-H party. 4-H events moved to a new date: March 27 Shooting Sports Safety Meeting is now 7 p.m. April 24 at the 4-H Fairgrounds; March 24 YQCA in-person training is now 6 p.m. April 21 at the 4-H

Fairgrounds. Other cancellations and postponements will be posted on the website go.Illinois.edu/cce as information becomes available. Some of the in-person training sessions may be replaced by webinars. A collection of resources to assist families prepare for coping with COVID-19 is available online at go.illinois.edu/ExtensionCOVID19resources.

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