



ROCHELLE News-Leader

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Vol. 101 • No. 4

LOCAL NEWS... LOCAL VIEWS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2020

\$1

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Award
The City of Rochelle received an excellence in finance award. **See page 7**

WEATHER

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
HIGH LOW	HIGH LOW
64 52	68 55
FRIDAY	SATURDAY
HIGH LOW	HIGH LOW
74 50	67 55

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OBITUARIES

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• DANIEL MCCLUSKEY JR.
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INSERTS

• ALDI
• FARM & FLEET
• ACE HARDWARE

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Honoring our heroes

BY ANDREW HEISERMAN
STAFF WRITER

ROCHELLE — To show appreciation and support for healthcare workers continuing to work through the pandemic, the City of Rochelle organized a community vehicle parade through town.

The parade took place on Tuesday, May 12 at 2 p.m., starting at the

Rochelle Middle School and heading down School Avenue to loop around the Rochelle Community Hospital and multiple local nursing homes. After looping around the hospital, the parade went down Caron Road, passed the Rochelle Gardens and finished at Hawthorn Inn on Flagg Road.

See HONOR page 2



Members of the community took part in a parade Tuesday honoring local healthcare workers. The route took the drivers around the hospital, local nursing homes to honk, wave signs and shout words of encouragement to healthcare staff.

(PHOTO BY ANDREW HEISERMAN)

Time for a new chapter

BY ANDREW HEISERMAN
STAFF WRITER

THE Ogle County Sheriff's Department said farewell to one of its finest deputy sheriffs who served the community for nearly 30 years.

Cheri Brodzik had been an Ogle County deputy sheriff since 1990, and she held multiple titles throughout her career with the department. As she approached her 30th year on the force, she recently made the emotional decision to retire.

"I have really enjoyed being a police officer for 30 years and at the school for the last two, but it just seemed like good timing for me," said Brodzik. "It is bitter-sweet for sure, I am going to miss all of my students, teachers and staff at the high school and the group of guys that I work with on the force."

Brodzik knew from a young age she wanted to become a police officer and help other people. She was hit by a car when she was 8 years old, and it was the police officer who responded to help her who inspired her to become a police officer herself.

"I was crossing the street with my brother and I got hit by a car," said Brodzik. "The officer that showed up to help me was Jack Wells and I was just in awe of him. He stayed with me in the ambulance and came to see me in the hospital. That's when I decided I wanted to become a police officer and help people like that."

Brodzik graduated



Ogle County Deputy Cheri Brodzik has served the county for 30 years in many facets — the latest as the Rochelle Township High School resource officer. She recently made the decision to retire from her career in law enforcement.

"She had a good capability of communicating with people, especially working well with young people. It's hard to get people that can communicate with the public and get the job done well like she could."

Mel Messer

from Rochelle Township High School in 1985 and went to Kishwaukee College to begin her journey toward becoming a police officer. She graduated from Kishwaukee College and received her associate's degree in criminal justice in 1987.

She then started her first law enforcement position at the Ogle County Sheriff's Department in 1990. During her time at the department, she held many different positions and achieved many accomplishments. She worked as a juvenile officer before becoming a D.A.R.E. officer in all the county schools for 13 years.

Additionally, she served as court security at the Ogle County

courthouse and was the school resource officer at Rochelle Township High School for the last two years before her retirement.

Out of her many accomplishments in her 30 years of service, one of her most memorable was returning to Kishwaukee College to teach students enrolled in the criminal justice program.

"I was an adjunct instructor at Kishwaukee College, meaning I was a career person out in the field that would teach the criminal justice classes as well," said Brodzik. "I love to teach, so going back to the community college that I learned at to teach was very special."

See RETIRE page 4

School year winding down

Deficits expected next year due to COVID effect on state funding

BY ANDREW HEISERMAN
STAFF WRITER

ROCHELLE — The monthly Rochelle School District 231 board meeting began Tuesday with an update from assistant district superintendent Tony Doyle on remote learning and end-of-the-year activities.

Teachers are finishing up with their students this week and next week, students will return any materials borrowed to learn from home. End-of-the-year activities have been left to the school's discretion and some have already been planned. The board also announced that Monday will be its last official day of handing out food and the Illinois Food Bank will take over for the summer.

"We have given the schools discretion to do closure activities of their choice," said Doyle. "Tilton School will be doing a car parade; May School is doing a reverse parade and Rochelle Middle School is doing a graduation video that will be going out."

The second topic discussed during the board meeting was a financial update presented by Kevin Dale. He informed board members that, with the current COVID-19 situation and school closures, the district will be taking a hit in state funding next year.

"There is a proposal going out to cut educational funding by 35 percent, that is a \$2 billion cut," said Dale. "This refers back to about \$1,000 per student in state funding. If this goes into effect, you are looking at about a \$1.5 million hit to District 231 in state funding."

"We will be facing deficits next year, it is just still an unknown as to where and how it will play out."

Kevin Dale

Dale also reported a 5 percent drop in payment of property taxes as well as late property tax payments that are occurring across the state. This will affect the district receiving its property taxes on time, causing the district to see a big hit near the end of the year.

"We will be facing deficits next year, it is just still an unknown as to where and how it will play out," said Dale. "Right now, we are looking at reduced revenue across the board both local and state."

Retirees

Following the financial report, District Superintendent Jason Harper made a point to congratulate and thank the seven teachers retiring at the end of the year. Since the schools have been closed, they were unable to experience the traditional farewell from the district, so Harper personally thanked each of them for their years of service.

See SCHOOL page 5

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LOCAL NEWS

HONOR: Community comes together to show support

From page 1

The Rochelle Police, Rochelle Fire Department and Rochelle Mayor John Bearrows led the parade, but all members of the community were encouraged to decorate their vehicles and participate. With this week being National Hospital Week and last week being National Nurses Week, this was a perfect opportunity for everybody to show their support.

"We were talking about different things we could do for a way to honor our healthcare workers," said Bearrows. "Everybody has time on their hands and they could certainly be a part of a parade to honor the Rochelle Community Hospital and healthcare workers everywhere. That includes all workers at the assisted living and the nursing homes as well."

While the parade was led by the city and local law enforcement, it was members of the community who made it special. Many residents, businesses and organizations came out to show support for the

hardworking healthcare workers.

Vehicles were covered in window paint, had many handmade signs and both police sirens and car horns were constantly going off. Among the groups of people participating in the parade were third and fourth-semester nursing students from Kishwaukee College.

The group of nursing students all wore matching T-shirts and decorated multiple vehicles for the parade. The students originally had a plan to go to Springfield for a Political Action Day rally, but were unable to go due to the COVID-19 closure. While they were unable to attend the rally, this parade is the next best way for them to show support.

"We had shirts made and all of this stuff planned to go down for the rally, it was a big event we were supposed to attend," said Tina Neale, Kishwaukee College nursing student.

"Unfortunately, we were unable to do that, so we were trying to find things we could do as a group to show support and came



(PHOTO BY ANDREW HEISERMAN)

Tina Neale and her fellow third and fourth semester Kishwaukee College nursing wearing matching shirts and standing in front of one of the many vehicles they had in the parade.

across the parade."

Also participating in the parade were longtime Rochelle residents Jim and Shirley Brown. The two regularly visit the local nursing homes and since they have been unable to during the stay-at-home order, this was their way of supporting the nursing homes.

"The nursing home has been such an important part of our life for so long, we felt the need to participate to show our appreciation for all that they do," said Shirley Brown.

During the parade, many residents came out of their homes to hold

signs and wave to the vehicles as they drove past. Employees of the Rochelle Community Hospital did the same with as many available staff members as possible.

Anybody working at the hospital during the time of the parade, that was able to come out and witness it, did so. All sides of the hospital had employees waving as the vehicles drove by, honking and holding their signs. Many of the hospital employees were very emotional when they saw the amount of support from the entire community.

"It was hard to tell be-

cause there were staff on all sides of the building, but I would say we had 60 or more staff members out there," said Michelle LaPage, manager of community and organizational development. "I got sever-

al emails afterwards from staff that was out there, they thought it was a really kind, heartwarming gesture."

This parade is a great example of what a community can do when they come together to show support during tough times. The city would like to give a big thank you to the entire community for its support and patience as everybody is affected by this situation.

"As mayor of the city, I want to say a huge thank you to all of the residents because I know this is difficult on everybody," said Bearrows. "There is not just one group that is impacted, this affects all of us. I really appreciate the cooperation that most all the citizens in our community has given. We are working hard every day to move forward and get this community back on track as soon as possible, while maintaining the safety of everybody."



(PHOTOS BY ANDREW HEISERMAN)



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LOCAL NEWS

Hospital employees recognized for service

ROCHELLE — Rochelle Community Hospital is announcing 2020 service award recipients.

A dinner and awards presentation originally scheduled for April 29 has been postponed.

Twenty-nine employees are being honored this year, representing 380 years of service at Rochelle Community Hospital.

Employees being honored include:

Five years

Sandra Cummings, Linda Kulesa, Erin Metzger, Christina Neale, Michele Perez, Daniel Pineda, Beth Popovich, Sheri Sanders, Pamela Shore, Rachel Toth

10 years

Tara Felix, Lori Gutierrez, Jewel Niedermeier, Susan Stover, Jacob Terry

15 years

Andrei Brzazgon, Lisa Charboneau, Tyanne Kennedy-Etes, Merry Mathis, Margaret Villatoro, Lucinda Zoeller

20 years

Sharon Fore, Carol Lapinski, Angela Nelson, Sandra Schaab, Scott Stewart

25 years

Janet Stewart

30 years

Penny Lamb

35 years

Pamela Needham-Volkert

Reunion planned

FOX LAKE — The Second (Indianhead) Division Association is searching for anyone who served in the Army's 2nd Infantry Division at any time.

For information about the association and our 99th annual reunion in Kansas City, Missouri, from Sept. 23 through 27, visit website at www.2ida.org/99th-annual-reunion/ or contact Bob Haynes at 2idahq@comcast.net and 224-225-1202.

Chapter to host first virtual educational program during Covid-19 shutdown

Biogeography and natural history of amphibians and reptiles in northern Illinois focus

ROCKFORD — Nathan Kutok and Ben Davies will present a video program for the Rock River Valley Chapter of Wild Ones about the amphibians and reptiles found in natural habitats of northern Illinois, with an emphasis on habitat associations, relative distribution, and local conservation efforts on Thursday, May 21 at 7 p.m.

A link to the video will be sent prior to the event for those wishing to attend.

Kutok is a soon-to-be graduate of Cary-Grove High School who has had an interest in reptiles and amphibians for as long as he can remember. He will enter Southern Illinois University—Carbondale this fall, majoring in wildlife biology and conservation. He has assisted with several regional herpetofaunal inventories, assisted the McHenry County Conservation District in a survey of smooth green



Nathan Kutok and Ben Davies

snakes, and is currently doing a study on the ecology and distribution of crayfish snakes. He is on the seasonal stewardship staff of the Boone County Conservation District.

Davies is currently a junior at the University of Wisconsin — Stevens Point, majoring in forestry-ecosystem restoration and management, with a focus on botany, plant ecology, and ecosystem restoration. He is a graduate of North Boone High School and Rock Valley College, and has interned with Citizens for Conservation in Barrington. He has also worked as a seasonal employee for the Boone

County Conservation District.

Future programs of Wild Ones — Rock River Valley chapter will be presented online until our meeting venue reopens to the public. For information about this program or how to link to the video, contact Jerry Paulson at 815-222-4414.

13 WREX honored with three regional Edward R. Murrow Awards

ROCKFORD — 13 WREX has been awarded three Regional Edward R. Murrow Awards, including the top honor of "Overall Excellence" for the fifth consecutive year.

13 WREX also won for "News Series" and "Excellence in Video," marking the third year in a row the station has received three regional awards.

The awards were announced Tuesday morning by the Radio Television Digital News Association. The Edward R. Murrow Awards recognize outstanding achievement in electronic journalism.

This is the fifth straight year 13 WREX has been honored with the award for "Overall Excellence." This category recognizes a station for the totality of its journalistic efforts, including breaking news, continuing coverage, weather, sports, community service and digital media.

"Winning the award for 'Overall Excel-

lence' for a fifth straight year is a spectacular accomplishment for our news team," said Josh Morgan, station manager at 13 WREX. "We have a team that prides itself on telling stories that matter to the communities we serve, and I couldn't be prouder of the work they've accomplished."

In the "News Series" category, 13 WREX was honored for its month-long series on Scott's Law called Lives on the Line. The 13 News team produced several stories to help viewers understand the dangerous safety implications law enforcement, tow truck drivers, construction workers, etc. face when drivers fail to move over.

The series was created in the aftermath of the death of Illinois State Trooper Brooke Jones-Story, who was hit and killed by a Scott's Law violator on the side of the road on U.S. 20 in Stephenson County.

"Tragedy inspired this series. That's a so-

bering reminder when we go to celebrate our hard work and the recognition of it," said Audrey Moon, news director at 13 WREX. "We did this series in the name of Trooper Brooke Jones-Story, who is a hero. And we did it for our viewers—who deserve good journalism and journalism that will make them safer."

In the "Excellence in Video" category, 13 WREX was recognized for its short documentary on the "CRE8IV" Transformational Art Festival in Rockford in 2019. Over the course of several weeks, eight artists were hired and came to the city to create eight large-scale murals across town.

Several members of the 13 Creative Services team followed the artists from start to finish to show the incredible transformation of these murals. This documentary is told through the voices of the painters and the video of their incredible artwork that brought the murals and the city of Rockford to life.

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LOCAL NEWS

RETIRE: Brodzik ready to spend time with family and relax

From page 1

Fellow officers have said Brodzik was a model deputy sheriff with exceptionally good communication skills. Mel Messer, former Ogle County sheriff of 16 years, personally worked with Brodzik during his time at the department. He saw what a great officer she was and thanks her for her years of service. "She had a good capability of communicat-

ing with people, especially working well with young people," said Messer. "It's hard to get people that can communicate with the public and get the job done well like she could. I wish her good luck and a good retirement."

Brodzik has plans to relax and spend time with her family, including her new grandson, during her retirement. While there have been many challenges along the way, she said trying

to separate her line of work from being a mother at home was most challenging.

"I saw some pretty horrific things in my career," said Brodzik. "Then, to have to come home, shift gears and leave everything back at work, that was my biggest struggle."

Brodzik left a mark at the sheriff's department that will be remembered long after her retirement. Current Ogle County Sheriff

Brian VanVickle knows it will be hard to find an officer like her and hopes that new deputies have learned a thing or two from her.

"When a long-term employee retires, it's hard to fill those shoes with that knowledge you lose when they walk out the door," VanVickle said. "We continue to have the senior officers share that knowledge and experience to our newer officers."

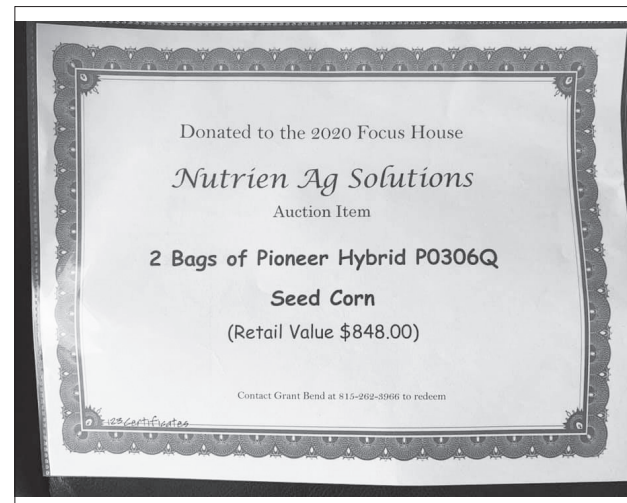
Online auction raising funds for Foundation for Focus House

ROCHELLE — In an effort to recoup funding lost because of cancellation of the annual spaghetti supper fundraiser, Foundation for Focus House set up an online auction with donations from many area businesses. "We have our auction going with items that were donated for the spaghetti supper auction but since it was cancelled, we are doing the auction online," Executive Director for Foundation for Focus House Jeni Hardin said.

The auction is currently up on the Foundation for Focus House Facebook page: Foundation for Focus and Community Programming.

A variety of items are up for auction and include a minimum bid amount listed with each item.

Funds raised will benefit Foundation for Focus House.



Nutrien Ag Solutions of Shabbona donated two bags of Pioneer Hybrid P0306Q seed corn to be auctioned to raise funds for Foundation for Focus House. The retail value of this auction item is \$848. It is just one of many items up for auction through Friday, May 15. Check out the auction on Facebook at Foundation for Focus and Community Programming.



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Obituaries

Betty Cole

MOUNTAINHOME, Arkansas — A private family graveside service for Betty J. Cole of Mountain Home, Arkansas, was held at 10 a.m., on Tuesday, May 12, at the Lawnridge Cemetery, Rochelle, with Pastor Gregg Hoffman officiating.

Betty passed away May 7, 2020, in Mountain Home, Arkansas at the age of 91. She was born Feb. 8, 1929, in Kirkland, the daughter of George and Anna Paulsen Schabacker. She married Virgil Cole on Nov. 1, 1958 in Rochelle and worked as a secretary. Betty lived in Mountain Home since moving from Bloomington in 1992.

She was a member of the Redeemer Lutheran Church and she had a great sense of humor and loved animals, especially cats.

Betty is survived by her sister-in-law, Frances Schabacker of Rochelle; nieces, Gae Schabacker of

Rochelle; JoAnne (Bobby) Andrews of Addison, Alabama; June (Byron) Sloan of Freeport, and Jill (Tim) Crowe of Louisville, Kentucky; nephews Don (Nancy) Schabacker of Rochelle, and Andrew (Teresa) Schabacker of Rochelle; and many great nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Virgil; parents; brother, Donald Schabacker; and sister, Lavona Schabacker.

Memorials may be made to Redeemer Lutheran Church, 312 W. North Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653 or Humane Society of North Central Arkansas, 2656 Hwy. 201 North, Mountain Home, AR 72653.

Arrangements are by Kirby and Family Funeral and Cremation Services - Mountain Home, Arkansas. Visit an online obituary and guestbook at www.kirbyandfamily.com.

Daniel C. McCluskey

RIB LAKE, Wisconsin — Daniel Charles McCluskey, age 89, of Rib Lake, Wisconsin, formerly of Rochelle, died unexpectedly on May 8, 2020.

Dan was born on Feb. 20, 1931 on the same property in Rib Lake, Wisconsin, that he returned to in his retirement.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Charles and Agatha McCluskey; and his wife, Joan G. Roiger, whom he married on June 25, 1953 at St. Ann's Church in the Township of Greenwood.

Dan will be lovingly remembered by his children, Daniel (Pam) McCluskey Jr. of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, Dennis McCluskey of Medford, Wisconsin, Jeffrey (Cindy) McCluskey of Rochelle, Susan (Edward) Worley of Chana, and JoAnn (Danny) Martinez of Schaumburg; grandchildren, Matthew McCluskey, Katie (Dustin) Long, Tawnee McCluskey, Denny (Tiffany) McCluskey, David McCluskey, Niki (Chris) Bonnell, Kristi McCluskey, Shaine McCluskey, Danielle Worley, Michael (Kristen) Worley, Benjamin (Lauren) Worley, Gabrielle Martinez, Stephanie Martinez, Danny Martinez, Jr.; eight great-grandchildren; his beloved brother Keith McCluskey; as well as several brother-in-law's and sister-in-law's who were all a special part of his life.

Dan graduated from Rib Lake High School in 1948 and served proudly in the United States Navy from 1948 to 1952 with the Patrol

Squadron Thirty-Four, USNAS Norfolk, Virginia.

He started his career with Standard Oil as a truck driver in Chicago. He went on to serve as the Amoco Oil Terminal Manager in Rochelle and Madison, Wisconsin, where he worked until his retirement in 1991.

Dan was a loving husband and father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He was an avid fisherman and hunter and loved being outdoors.

His greatest joy was spending time with his five children and their families. With the tip of his hat you knew he had a story to tell and it didn't matter if he was passing along the history and knowledge of his heritage, entertaining his grandchildren, or simply trying to distract his family from day to day worries, he had a story.

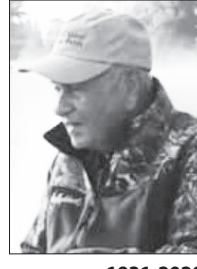
His memory will live on through the telling of those stories for generations to come, he will be deeply missed.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions only immediate family will be able to say goodbye in person, but many family and friends will mourn his loss. A private service and burial will be held at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Whittlesey on May 15. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

Hemer Funeral Homes of Medford and Rib Lake assisted the family with arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to his family to be designated at a later date in Dan's name.

For online condolences, please visit hemerfuneralservice.com.



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Read and Recycle

LOCAL NEWS



(COURTESY PHOTO)

Holcomb Bank supports local communities with grant

ROCHELLE — Holcomb Bank is proud to support their community partners on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis with donations totaling \$20,000. In conjunction with the Federal Home Loan Bank COVID-19 Relief Grant Program, Holcomb Bank President/CEO Perry W. Byers presented checks to local fire departments, food pantries and Ogle County

Habitat for Humanity. “When we first heard about the grant opportunity, we knew it could make a difference in our local communities and applied as quickly as possible,” Byers said. Organizations benefiting from this grant include the local fire departments of Byron, Flagg Center,

Hillcrest, Lynn-Scott-Rock, Monroe Center, New Milford, Ogle-Lee, Rochelle and Stillman Valley; local food pantries including Bread of Life, People Helping People and Rochelle Christian; as well as Ogle County Habitat for Humanity. Holcomb Bank is a member FDIC/Equal Housing Lender.

Freeport man arrested on outstanding warrant

On May 9, Teodoro Jimenez, 20, of Freeport was arrested on an outstanding Ogle County warrant for driving while license suspended following a traffic stop. Jimenez was given a \$1,000 recognizance

bond and was given a June 3 court date. On May 5, Gaige Lozdoski, 22, of Mt. Morris, was arrested on a failure to appear warrant. Lozdoski posted the \$732 bond.

SCHOOL: Board approves plan to renew district health insurance

From page 1

Retirees include Kim Salsbury, Deb Howard, Patty Bond, Linda Cooper, Chris Fletcher, Donna Drought and Jill Schwartz. “Most of the time, retiring teachers would have a long goodbye here at the school, especially

in April and May,” said Harper. “I want to make sure that I took a moment to say thank you to these seven teachers for their service to Rochelle students and the community at large.” Board members then closed the meeting by mentioning the Illinois Association of School

Boards sent down its first of three board policy updates. Board members will look over the updates for the required month and a decision will be made at next month’s meeting. Lastly, board members approved a plan to renew the district’s health insurance policy.

Report policy

Any arrests listed in this paper are merely charges and the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law. Please note that all police reports received from the Rochelle Police, the

Ogle County Sheriff’s Department and the Illinois State Police, will be printed without exception. Requests to omit particular reports will not be considered or honored at any time.

Executive order will help educator candidates and schools

SPRINGFIELD — To address the educator shortage that Illinois faces, and a pandemic that has changed the educational experience for all students, Gov. JB Pritzker recently signed Executive Order 2020-31 to help teacher, paraprofessional, and other educator candidates gain licensure and join the workforce.

“This is a big move forward for students and for classrooms around the state that targets two sides of the problem,” said Illinois Board of Higher Education Executive Director Ginger Ostro. “Illinois has more than 15,000 candidates in teacher, school support personnel, or administrator preparation programs. They, along with their colleges, requested flexibility now that the classroom experience is unavailable to them. IBHE was happy to work with the Illinois State Board of Education and Gov. Pritzker to resolve this.” This past October, Illinois schools faced more than 4,800 unfilled positions, including for teachers, social workers, administrators, and paraprofessionals.

“Governor Pritzker’s executive order helps to ensure that all of Illinois’ current and prospective educators will be able to support our students in the fall as planned,” said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala. “Our primary goal has been to minimize the educational impact to students during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These changes make it possible for students to have the qualified teachers they need in the fall to continue learning

and growing,” said Ayala.

Executive Order 2020-31 involves two agencies. As recommended by IBHE and ISBE, it waives requirements for those educator candidates who cannot complete normal student teaching, internships, and other pre-licensure exams, including the edTPA, this spring because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both agencies reached out to school districts and colleges for input and suggestions.

Teacher candidates who are eligible for these exemptions have already undergone extensive coursework, pre-clinical fieldwork experiences, and a licensure content test to prepare them for the professional educator license. EO 2020-31 also waives certain requirements, such as the Constitution exam and physical fitness test, for eighth graders and high school seniors so they can graduate.

The educator licensure order only affects students who are completing program requirements during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations period and whose institution verifies that the student could not complete the requirement due to COVID-19. Institutions still have the authority to evaluate the students’ progress in meeting program requirements. ISBE and IBHE will monitor the pandemic situation and make any recommendations for the fall semester as warranted.

Refunds are available through Pearson for educators who registered for but have not yet completed the edTPA.

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LOCAL VIEWS

Guest column

A courtesy for those around you

BELIEVE it or not, a cap and gown won't protect you from the Coronavirus.

I was thinking about that Saturday as I drove past a park not far from where I live and saw the 2020 Tri-City High School class scrunched up in a gazebo posing for pictures in a city park. No one was wearing masks and they most certainly weren't observing the 6-foot social distancing requirements.

And, yes, I get it. It's not fair that this year's graduates aren't experiencing the usual pomp and circumstance to mark this milestone in their lives. But this pandemic we are experiencing isn't fair. It preys on the most vulnerable in our society.

It's easy to be dismissive of this crisis as being a "Chicago problem" and not a concern for folks elsewhere. But just down the road from where these kids were posing, 20 people died in one nursing home of this horrible disease.

I began wearing a mask before Gov. J.B. Pritzker issued an edict requiring them. I don't wear it to comply with the government; I wear it as an act of kindness toward others.

Are they 100 percent effective? No. But they are a deterrent. Wearing a mask during an epidemic is much like at other times covering your nose before you sneeze. It's not only good hygiene, but it's a courtesy to those around you.

Sadly, I've seen the mask rule ignored.

I dropped by an auto parts store in Springfield on Wednesday for some power steering fluid. The place was packed with about 20 customers. Only myself and one other were wearing a mask. Even the employees working the cash register left them dangling around their necks. The story was much the

same at a farm-supply store, where I went to pick up some pet food.

When I dropped by a nursery on Saturday, to buy a Mother's Day gift, I couldn't help but roll my eyes. None of the cashiers and fewer than one-fifth of the customers wore masks. And the place was packed.

They are not only showing contempt for Pritzker's order but also for the welfare of others.

Part of the problem has been Pritzker's approach.

This past week, he unveiled a five-phase plan for bringing Illinois back to "normal." While well intentioned, it is unwieldy and ultimately as ineffective as a Soviet five-year plan.

This heavy-handed, big government "solution" won't work for the simple reason that a law only is effective if it is obeyed. Right now, many people are ignoring the executive orders because they view it as government overreach. Noncompliance, for them, is an act of civil disobedience.

Governor, you want folks working with you – not against you. To achieve this, you need to stop ordering and start listening.

For example, under the governor's plan, most in-person worship services are banned indefinitely.

The governor's plan says groups of 50 or more won't be allowed to meet until there is either a vaccine or effective treatment for COVID-19.

There is no guarantee of a vaccine. More than 30 years ago, when I was a medical reporter, I wrote about massive government funding and Herculean scientific efforts to develop an AIDS vaccine. That vaccine

doesn't exist yet.

And a COVID-19 vaccine doesn't exist either. Like the AIDS vaccine, it may not come to fruition.

For the governor to pin reopening churches, mosques and synagogues to future medical advances isn't a plan, it's a hope. A more effective idea might be to work with religious leaders on ways to minimize the risk of infection.

Things like wearing masks during church services, creating social distancing barriers between families and eliminating a handshakes and hugs would go a long way toward alleviating possible routes of infection.

The governor ought to

be working with religious leaders to develop solutions that will allow them to meet, rather than issuing orders that will ultimately result in churches defying the governor and meeting anyway.

Remember, a law is only effective if it is obeyed.

The nature of democracy is compromise and consensus. Our lawmakers represent the different needs and concerns of various areas of the state. And yet, the governor has acted unilaterally for months without any formal input from legislators.

He has the authority to call the legislature back into session. But he has chosen not to.

And that does not serve the state well.

"We have a system of checks and balances," House GOP Leader Jim Durkin said. "We need the legislature to meet in Springfield. We can do this safely. ... The governor has not done a good job of balancing the state's health needs with its economic needs."

The governor's office did not return calls seeking comment.

In the working-class community where I live, many people are experiencing unemployment for the first time. Once proud barbers, waitresses, bartenders, cashiers and others have been reduced to scrounging at a food pantry to just feed

their families.

People want to return to work in a safe way. Their employers are willing to develop safety plans. But instead of collaboration, we receive one-size fits all edicts from Pritzker.

That's not how our system of government is supposed to work.

It's time for lawmakers to return to Springfield and provide input. And it's time for the governor to stop telling and begin listening.

After all, a law is only effective if it is obeyed.

Scott Reeder is a veteran statehouse journalist and a freelance reporter. ScottReeder1965@gmail.com.



Scott Reeder

VOICE ON THE STREET

Question:

Once the stay-at-home order is lifted in Illinois and other states, will you plan to take a vacation? Where would you like to go?

"I hope we can resume international travel this year. I have a couple trips booked but waiting to see. A conference in Boston in July has not been cancelled or postponed yet."

Silene Q. Walters

"We are heading to Florida."

Kim Salsbury

"The Smoky Mountains in Tennessee."

Dawn Estes Johnson

"Yes, to see family in Florida."

Melinda Kay

"I'm going to Texas in July."

Kathy Pignato

"Yes, to Tennessee."

LaWanna Eldridge

"Arizona and possibly Mexico. [Our] April Florida trip canceled because of Covid."

Laury Bailey

"I would love to take a bus trip to Branson with my daughter."

Susie Land

"Out of Illinois. Other than that, I don't care."

Markus Anton

"Arizona to see my oldest daughter."

Sue Tyler

"I am heading back to Rochelle."

Beth Allen Mihok

"Any place but Illinois."

Ann Andersen



How to contact government officials

U.S. Con. Adam Kinzinger
1218 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C.
20515
(202) 225-3635

IL Sen. Brian Stewart
M104A State House
Springfield, IL 62706
(217) 782-0180

IL Rep. Tom Demmer
314 Capitol
Springfield, IL 62706
(217) 782-0535

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The Rochelle News-Leader encourages responsible letters to the editor on subjects of interest to our readers. Editing may be necessary for space, clarity or to avoid obscenity or libel, but ideas will not be altered. All letters must bear the handwritten signature of the writer and include address and phone number or e-mail address for verification purposes. Neither the street address nor phone number will be printed. Letters should be typed or legibly

handwritten, and no anonymous letters will be published. Any letters from boards or organizations must include at least one name of an individual. Any criticism of public officials should be limited to issues related strictly to their position or actions made in office, as personal attacks will not be published. Letters involving private disputes between the writer and a business will not be published. Political endorsements will be published,

however letters from candidates endorsing themselves will not be printed. Letters may be dropped at the News-Leader office (211 IL Route 38 East), mailed to the News-Leader (P.O. Box 46, Rochelle, IL 61068) or e-mailed (news@rochellenews-leader.com.) The News-Leader reserves the right to edit or reject any letter to the editor for any reason, and letters chosen for publication do not necessarily reflect the views of this newspaper.

COMMUNITY

City of Rochelle receives financial excellence award

ROCHELLE – For the sixth year in a row, the City of Rochelle has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the fiscal year 2018 by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada.

An Award of Financial Reporting Achievement has been awarded to City Finance Director Chris Cardott as the designee primarily responsible for preparing the award-winning CAFR.



Cardott

ning CAFR.

The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental

accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

“We are thrilled that the GFOA has recognized Rochelle’s transparency and accountability in our financial reporting,” said City Manager Jeff Fiegenschuh. “Our Team is committed to meeting the high standards of the GFOA.”

The CAFR has been judged by an impartial

panel to meet the high standards of the program including demonstrating a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the CAFR. The Government Finance Officers Association is a nonprofit professional association serving approximately 17,500 government finance professionals with offices in Chicago and Washington, D.C.

RMU brings back summer saver residential electric rate program

ROCHELLE – RMU is again offering the summer saver electric rate program for residential customers. Customers can save money by reducing their electric usage between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday during the months of

June through September.

With the summer saver rate, you will be billed \$0.2202 per kilowatt hour during peak hours (2 p.m. until 7 p.m. Monday through Friday) and \$0.0783 per kilowatt hour during off peak hours. The current summer res-

idential rate is \$0.1275 per kilowatt hour for usage at any time.

Residential customers can sign up for the summer saver electric rate at www.rmu.net or by calling the RMU Customer Service office at 815-562-4155.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

May 16
Kathy Conant

May 18
Arianna Thompson

May 20
Darrell & Beth Bolhous

May 21
Heather McPhearson

Heidi Bonilla

Brad & Kelly Arnold

May 24
Katie Sherburne

May 25
Dave & Mary Helfrich

May 27
Leland Hazlip

May 29
Tristan Perkins

Check us out online at www.rochellenews-leader.com



FROM THE HEART DAILY CASH WINNERS

April 21 - Robert Lindenmeyer, Sublette, \$25

April 22 - Scoops, Oregon, \$25

April 23 - Robert Ballard, Sycamore, \$25

April 24 - Rochelle Area Community Foundation, \$25

April 25 - Wyatt Berogan, Dixon, \$25

April 26 - Anne Avery, Verdun, Quebec, Canada, \$50

April 27 - Chris & Marilyn Sanford, Earlville, \$25

April 28 - Ashlynn Tinsley, Rochelle, \$25

April 29 - Dulce Lopez, DeKalb, \$25

April 30 - Jaleesa Pernicek, Sycamore, \$25

May 1 - Brock Sutton, Rochelle, \$25

May 2 - Glen Hughes, Dixon, \$25

May 3 - Scott Eckhardt, Rochelle, \$50

May 4 - Joy Kohler, Davis Junction, \$25

May 5 - Joan Albrecht, Amboy, \$25

May 6 - Doris Lindaas, Rochelle, \$25

May 7 - Stephanie Crawford, Rochelle, \$25

May 8 - Jessica Morris, Rochelle, \$25

May 9 - Matt Wolf, (CHS) Rochelle, \$25

May 10 - Fred & Jensine Lingenfeiter, Kingman, AZ, \$500

May 11 - Jamie Arntzen, DeKalb, \$25

May 12 - Rick Egan, Northwood, Ohio, \$25

May 13 - Richard Clayton, Compton, \$25

Checks to winners will be mailed out at the end of each month



Coffee Break

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Work units
- 5 Urban carrier
- 8 Wanders
- 12 Hoodlum
- 13 Bobby of hockey
- 14 Leave out
- 15 Atmosphere
- 17 With skill
- 18 Godlike
- 19 Indefinite interval
- 21 To and —
- 22 Regimen
- 23 Sheepish comment
- 26 Mess up
- 28 Manicurist's concerns
- 31 Mater preceded

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18							19	20				
			21				22					
23	24	25		26		27		28			29	30
31			32		33		34		35			
36				37		38		39		40		
			41			42		43		44		
45	46						47			48	49	50
51					52	53						
54					55				56			
57					58				59			

- 33 Insult (Sl.)
- 35 Nike slogan, "Just —"
- 36 Unpaid bills
- 38 1960s Pontiac
- 40 Homer's neighbor
- 41 Faraway fleet?
- 43 Actress Thurman
- 45 Help
- 47 Least adorned
- 51 Physicist Niels
- 52 Food of the gods

- 54 Tourney situations
- 55 Wire measure
- 56 Soda fountain treat
- 57 Right on the map?
- 58 Snoop
- 59 Arctic diving birds

DOWN

- 1 "Zounds!"
- 2 Jim of sports radio
- 3 Asian desert
- 4 Express disdain nasally

- 5 Massachusetts city
- 6 Joan of —
- 7 The staff of life
- 8 Proceed
- 9 Drive
- 10 Pickling herb
- 11 Eyelid woe
- 16 Ireland
- 20 Victory
- 23 Evil
- 24 Brewery product
- 25 Surprise attacks
- 27 Tractor-trailer
- 29 Falsehood

- 30 Norm: Abbr.
- 32 Originally
- 34 Unshaven, in a way
- 37 "Mayday!"
- 39 Mr. Sharif
- 42 Postage buy
- 44 Scent
- 45 Singer Lane
- 46 Protein-rich bean
- 48 Birthright barterer
- 49 Symbol of smoothness
- 50 Body pics
- 53 Russian space station

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

	5				1		8	
		9		2		3		
3	8		4					9
		4		7			3	
	2		1		6			4
1				8		5	2	
	6				3		4	
		7	2					1
8				6		2		

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: **Q** equals **B**

EBAPN MOC QBNLQADPNCG EOB
ZBJJCJJCN MOC QDHHCJM ZCYMBGTP
FAJYPCJ QC T YOCJMF TJMCG?

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Answer

3	5	2	6	9	7	4	1	8
1	9	8	5	4	7	2	3	6
7	4	6	3	1	8	5	9	2
9	5	2	4	8	6	3	7	1
4	6	7	9	3	1	8	2	5
8	3	2	1	7	5	4	6	9
6	1	9	7	5	4	2	8	3
5	7	3	8	2	9	6	1	4
4	8	2	1	9	3	6	5	7

Weekly SUDOKU

Answers

3	5	2	6	9	7	4	1	8
1	9	8	5	4	7	2	3	6
7	4	6	3	1	8	5	9	2
9	5	2	4	8	6	3	7	1
4	6	7	9	3	1	8	2	5
8	3	2	1	7	5	4	6	9
6	1	9	7	5	4	2	8	3
5	7	3	8	2	9	6	1	4
4	8	2	1	9	3	6	5	7

King Crossword

muscles be a chestmaster?
possessed the biggest pectoral
Would the bodybuilder who
answer
CryptoQuip

STATE NEWS

Another 74,000 file first-time unemployment claims in Illinois

Another 3.2 million file claims nationally as states contemplate reopening

BY JERRY NOWICKI
CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS

SPRINGFIELD — Another 3.2 million Americans filed for unemployment during the week ending May 2, including more than 74,476 Illinoisans. That brought the total number of insured unemployed for the week to 697,443 in Illinois, according to the U.S. Department of Labor estimates, while the total number of jobless claims since mid-March grew to 33.3 million nationwide. The numbers represent roughly 11 percent of Illinois' civilian labor force and 15 percent of the nation's workforce.

Last week's 74,000 filings were fewer than the 81,000 filings the week prior, and down considerably from the peak of more than 200,000 during the week ending April 4. The Illinois Department of Employment Security announced Thursday that it has processed more than 1 million claims since March 1.

"The devastation this pandemic has wreaked upon our economy, the economy of the United States and that of the world, is mind boggling," Gov. JB Pritzker said in his daily COVID-19 briefing Thursday. "The swiftness and immediacy of its economic impact has never been seen before."

The numbers continue to grow while states around the country contemplate the best plan for reopening their economies as the novel coronavirus pandemic appears to be in the middle of a plateau.

Pritzker's "Restore Illinois" plan, which he says is backed by science and epidemiologists, has faced criticism from Republican lawmakers for moving too slowly to get the state working again.

"Until we have a vaccine or an effective treatment or enough widespread immunity that new cases fail to materialize, the option of returning to normalcy doesn't exist," Pritzker said in unveiling the plan Tuesday. "That means we have to learn how to live with COVID-19 until it can be vanquished."

Pritzker's plan separates the state into four regions by grouping the state's various medical districts and sets timelines and benchmarks that must be met for a region to move into the next of five phases.

All of Illinois is currently in the second, or "flat-



Area Unemployment Numbers

(From the Illinois Department of Employment Security)

County	Jan.	Feb.	March	April
Ogle	435	351	1,393	1,828
Lee	193	118	885	1,054
DeKalb	654	483	3,156	3,305

tening," phase. The earliest a region can enter stage three is May 29, and it would have to have a test positivity rate of below 20 percent for 14 days, as well as 28 days without an increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations. Hospitals in the region would also need a 14-percent surge capacity.

To reach the final phase in which large events are allowed and all sectors of the economy are open, there will need to be a widely available vaccine, treatment, or no new cases of the virus.

House Republicans on Wednesday called for a legislative session to debate the merits of a more localized reopening strategy, claiming Pritzker's plan will kill Illinois small businesses, particularly in the hospitality industry.

"Our state cannot survive this way, businesses, the employers cannot survive this," House Minority Leader Jim Durkin, R-Western Springs, said in a videoconference.

Democratic leaders have not yet indicated they have plans to call a legislative session to address reopening. House Speaker Michael Madigan said in a statement Wednesday that the health of lawmakers, staff and the public will be paramount when deciding when to return for session.

"While I am eager to see a return to normalcy, we are talking about people's lives, and any plan for a return to Springfield must have the health and safety of all those involved as a top priority, including the communities the members represent," Madigan said in the statement.

Pritzker has faced continued criticism from Republican lawmakers for long wait times and other reported problems with the state's unemployment filing system. While the governor said its capacity has been upped to handle

an unprecedented number of claims, Republicans in the videoconference Wednesday detailed a steady flow of calls to their offices regarding issues with unemployment.

Rep. Avery Bourne, R-Morrisonville, said one constituent told her she called IDES 157 times before finally getting through.

"This is really a broken, broken system," Bourne said.

Pritzker said Thursday his office has worked to deal with years of state government disinvestment in the department, which has 500 fewer employees than it did when the Great Recession hit in 2008-2009.

"This historic number of claims has also led to historic levels of benefits being paid out," Pritzker said. "In the first four months of 2020, Illinois has paid out over \$2 billion in claims. That's \$500 million more than what was paid out in all 12 months of 2019."

Pritzker said the system was unprepared for the initial crush of claims, but staff has worked "thousands of overtime hours," and the agency has brought on new employees and brought back retired employees, increased call center hours, updated and increased phone systems, overhauled the web platform, implemented an alphabetized calling schedule and brought on outside partners.

Agents added

He said another 100 call center agents were to be added to the job as of Monday, with another 100 coming down the line.

"As a result of these improvements IDES is now paying unemployment benefits in a timely manner to 99.9 percent of clean claims," he said. "And the majority of these claimants, approximately 75 percent, receive their first payments within two weeks of filing."

Also this week, IDES released new instructions for independent contractors and the self-employed who may be eligible for newly-created federal pandemic unemployment assistance.

Workers who believe they are eligible for the new insurance must first apply for regular unemployment assistance. Receiving a denial for regular unemployment benefits is a mandatory first step in determining eligibility for the new benefits. IDES encouraged workers to submit the regular claims before a new pandemic unemployment insurance portal goes live on May 11.

If claimants receive an eligibility determination of \$0, they can appeal that decision by providing verification of wages earned, or they can submit a claim for pandemic unemployment assistance via the new portal when it opens.

Pritzker said IDES is prepared to process these claims starting Monday at a rate of 140,000 claims per hour.

"This historic number of claims has also led to historic levels of benefits being paid out. In the first four months of 2020, Illinois has paid out over \$2 billion in claims. That's \$500 million more than what was paid out in all 12 months of 2019."

Gov. J.B. Pritzker

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SPORTS

RTHS Athletics

Interstate 8 Conference honors spring seniors

Each athlete to earn All-Conference

ROCHELLE — The Interstate 8 Conference has recognized all senior student-athletes as All-Conference honorees this spring season. In a press release Friday afternoon, the conference detailed that the decision was made to recognize the seniors who lost their final spring seasons to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The schools of the Interstate 8 Conference are proud to announce the All-Conference teams for the 2020 spring season," the press release stated. "This season has been lost to the COVID-19 pandemic; the senior athletes in baseball, girls soccer, softball, boys tennis, girls track and field and boys track and field have dedicated themselves for four years to their respective sports, thus the conference is naming all senior athletes to the All-Conference team for their respective sports."

Rochelle will have three All-Conference baseball players including Gavin Ansteth, Ethan Etes and Austin Greifenkamp. Four softball players will earn All-Conference honors including Molly Irving, Ally Reish, Abby Reish and Hannah Luxton. Six members of the boys tennis team are now All-Conference recipients including Saul Alanis, Sean Flanagan, Micah Koziol, Carlos Nambo,



Gabriel Nava and Max Torres.

The Interstate 8 named nine All-Conference winners from the girls track and field team including Britney Baez, Gabrielle Harding, Breanna Heisner, Cassie Moore, Madie Ohlinger, Amy Price, Macey Ryan, Angie Saldana and Emma Smith. The girls soccer team saw five players named All-Conference honorees including Kaitlynn Ost, Jaderi Ibarra, Viviana Belmonte, Hannah Eldred and Ruby

Cervantes.

The boys track and field team will have a spring-high 20 All-Conference winners including Zack Akey, Austin Brown, Quinton Casey, Ben Hickey, Brayden Bonilla, Diego Escobar, George Rogriguez, Gyvanziel Quinonez, Jasper Murray, Nathan Miller, Nick Albers, Parker Hale, Riley Patrick, Santi Cordoba, Seth Gould, Tucker Louis, Ulices Montoya, Uzziel Zarate, Evan Horner and Aaron Vondergathen.

"The schools of the Interstate 8 Conference are proud to announce the All-Conference teams for the 2020 spring season. This season has been lost to the COVID-19 pandemic; the senior athletes in baseball, girls soccer, softball, boys tennis, girls track and field and boys track and field have dedicated themselves for four years to their respective sports, thus the conference is naming all senior athletes to the All-Conference team for their respective sports."

Interstate 8 Conference



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- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
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- After handling garbage or garbage cans
- Before and after attending to a cut or wound

Information resource: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

ROCHELLE News-Leader

Proper handwashing helps all of us stay healthy, so remember to be aware and do your part to help protect yourself and others!

Gone, But Not Forgotten

Remember your loved one with a special tribute this Memorial Day.

With Fondest Memories

David C. Andrews

July 10, 1961 – May 5, 1980



Your courage and bravery still inspire us all, and the memory of your smile fills us with joy and laughter.

Love, Mom & Dad

In Honor of Memorial Day

The Rochelle News-Leader will publish memorials of those who are gone but not forgotten. This is a wonderful way to remember those dear to us, and share memories.

Tributes include your choice of verse from the right, and an optional photo if submitted.

To remember your loved one in this special way, send this form, a photo and \$15.00 per listing.

Deadline is Wed., May 20 at 4 p.m.

If you wish, select one of the following verses below to accompany your tribute.

1. We hold you in our thoughts and memories forever.
2. May God cradle you in His arms, now and forever.
3. Forever missed, never forgotten. May God hold you in the palm of His hand.
4. Thank you for the wonderful days we shared together. My prayers will be with you until we meet again.
5. The days we shared were sweet. I long to see you again in God's heavenly glory.
6. Your courage and bravery still inspire us all, and the memory of your smile fills us with joy and laughter.
7. Though out of sight, you'll forever be in my heart and mind.
8. The days may come and go, but the times we shared will always remain.
9. May the light of peace shine on your face for eternity.
10. May God's angels guide you and protect you throughout time.
11. You were a light in our life that burns forever in our hearts.
12. May God's graces shine over you for all time.
13. You are in our thoughts and prayers from morning to night and from year to year.
14. We send this message with a loving kiss for eternal rest and happiness.
15. May the Lord bless you with His graces and warm, loving heart.

Fill out the form below and drop off or mail to:

Rochelle News-Leader, (Gone, But Not Forgotten), 211 Hwy. 38 East, Rochelle, IL 61068

Please Publish My Tribute In The Special Memorial Day Section On May 24, 2020.

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105 BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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113 FINANCIAL

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119 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Did You Know

According to the PewResearch Center...

September 2011
Local Newspapers continue to be a key information source

Figure 6

The Topics for Which Newspapers are the Top Source

1	Percent of adults who rely on newspapers for these topics ...	2	Next most preferred source for each topic...	3	Other important source for this topic
	On some topics newspapers tie for the lead with...				
Crime	36%		TV news 29%		Internet 12%
Local politics	26%	TV news 28%	Internet 17%		Word of mouth 7%
Community events	25%		Word of mouth 13%		Internet 12%
Arts events	25%		Internet 17%		TV news 13%
Local taxes	22%		TV news 9%		Internet 9%
Schools	21%	Internet 18%	TV news 10%		Word of mouth 10%
Housing	19%	Internet 17%	Word of mouth 4%		TV news 3%
Government activities	19%		TV news 12%		Internet 6%
Local jobs	17%	Internet 16%	Word of mouth 3%		TV news 3%
Zoning & development	17%		TV news 6%		Internet 4%
Social services	13%		TV news 8%		Internet 6%

Source: Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism and Internet & American Life Project in partnership with the Knight Foundation, January 12-25, 2011 Local Information Survey. N=2,251 adults age 18 and older. Conducted in English and Spanish and included 750 cell phone interviews.

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HUB SPOTLIGHT



(COURTESY PHOTO)

The RTHS Athletic Booster Club will be purchasing shirts from BEE Designs for spring senior athletes who lost their final seasons of competition to the coronavirus pandemic. The shirts will also be available online for \$10 each.

RTHS Booster Club, BEE Designs team up for special senior shirts

BY RUSSELL HODGES
SPORTS EDITOR

ROCHELLE — Although student-athletes in spring sports are unable to compete this season, the Rochelle Township High School Athletic Booster Club has teamed up with BEE Designs to give graduating seniors a special gift in recognition of their achievements as Hubs.

The RTHS Athletic Booster Club will be purchasing T-shirts from BEE Designs for all senior student-athletes in spring sports who lost their final seasons to the coronavirus pandemic. The shirts will feature the word "UNDEFEATED" on the front and the phrase "SENIOR 2020" on the back in honor of student-athletes who are now gearing up for the next chapter of their lives.

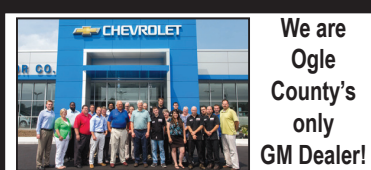
"My business philosophy has always been about giving back to the community," said BEE Designs owner Barb Eychaner. "I think the shirts are an awesome way to commemorate the seniors and it feels good to recognize their achievements despite these unusual circumstances. It means a lot to me as a business owner in Rochelle, especially considering that my three children went through the high school and graduated. I think the shirts are a neat way to help fill the void they may be feeling without having their sports and their usual ceremonies."

While the booster club will provide shirts

to all senior student-athletes in spring sports for free, BEE Designs has made additional shirts with blank backs available online for \$10 each at <https://www.beedesigns.biz/coaster-sets>. All orders must be placed by May 18 and shirts will be available for pick-up on May 30 at RTHS. Times have been designed for non-seniors (10 a.m.) and seniors from each spring sport including girls soccer (10:30), baseball (10:45), softball (10:55), boys tennis (11:05), girls track (11:15) and boys track (11:30) to grab their shirts.

"We wanted to do something special for the seniors," RTHS Athletic Booster Club President Corey Kreider said. "We wanted to honor the seniors who have lost their entire spring seasons. My daughter graduated from RTHS last year and I've gotten to know a lot of these student-athletes over the last few years. It's a very good group of kids and we wanted them to have something special to help them remember their spring sports in a positive way."

The RTHS Athletic Booster Club has helped support RTHS athletic programs for many years, using revenue from concessions and other fundraisers to purchase new uniforms, cover registration fees for student-athletes and more. Any families or parents interested in becoming booster club members can contact the RTHS athletic department or Kreider at 815-751-5555.



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SPORTS



CELEBRATING SENIORS

BEE Designs, RTHS Booster Club team up to provide shirts for spring athletes.

See page 11 for more details

RTHS Boys Track

Reaching new heights

Vondergathen to continue with Flying Dragons Pole Vault Club

BY RUSSELL HODGES
SPORTS EDITOR

Aaron Vondergathen was struggling to find an event to compete in during his first year of track and field with the Rochelle Township High School program his freshman season. That quickly changed when a friend recommended he take up pole vaulting, something most student-athletes don't have the opportunity to attempt until they reach the high school level.

Vondergathen only vaulted in two meets as a freshman, and his personal record after one season was a measly 8 feet. But his performances improved significantly over time, and his efforts resulted in an outdoor personal-record vault of 12 feet during the 2019 IHSA 2A Sterling Sectional, where he placed third and was 6 inches shy of qualifying for the state championships.

Although the coronavirus pandemic has taken away Vondergathen's senior season, the RTHS vaulting standout has committed to becoming a new member of the Flying Dragons Pole



(PHOTO BY MARCY DELILLE)

Rochelle senior Aaron Vondergathen will be continuing his academics at Illinois Valley Community College while becoming a member of the Flying Dragons Pole Vault Club in Normal. Vondergathen plans to study computer-aided drafting and design.

Vault Club in Normal. Vondergathen, who will be attending Illinois Valley Community College to study computer-aided drafting and design, said he learned about the club during his junior season.

"I decided to look into the Flying Dragons Pole Vault Club because I at-

tended a vaulting camp the club hosted during the winter of my junior year and I really liked their facility," Vondergathen said. "I look forward to improving as a vaulter and reaching new heights. What I enjoy most about pole vaulting is the feeling I have after beating an old personal record."

Vondergathen vaulted his way into the varsity lineup his sophomore season, when he competed in eight meets for the Hubs including the 2018 IHSA 2A Genoa-Kingston Sectional, where he finished fifth with a clearance of 11 feet. The senior set his indoor personal record

during Rochelle's only track meet this season, clearing 12-4 ¾ against DeKalb and Belvidere.

"I first joined the track and field team my freshman year and what I enjoy most is how you're always trying to beat our personal bests and get better in each of our events,"

Vondergathen said. "I've improved most in understanding what I'm doing while vaulting. When I look back at my first two years, I was mainly throwing myself over the bar, but now I understand what my body is doing and how I can improve my form for the next vault I attempt."

Illinois High School Association

IHSA launching three-day social media campaign

Statewide initiative taken to honor athletes, educators and seniors

BLOOMINGTON — The IHSA is embarking on a three-day social media campaign from May 14-16 to celebrate the end of the 2019-20 school year amidst the significant impact COVID-19 has placed on Illinois High School Association teams and students.

Despite challenges, COUNTRY Financial, an official corporate sponsor, recognizes the commitments of each school community throughout the entire year and is pleased to assist the IHSA in making sure those efforts do not go unnoticed. Utilizing the slogan #WeAreInThisTogether, the campaign aims to unify participants statewide via recognition of student-athletes, educators, and the senior class of 2020.

"This is a time of year to celebrate, even among these extraordinary circumstances," said IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson. "We want to come together as a statewide high school

community to let each of these groups know that we recognize their efforts and accomplishments. No matter what happens, we are in this together."

Each of the three days will have its own theme aimed at recognizing athletes, educators and finally, the seniors in the class of 2020. Over the course of the three days, the IHSA encourages anyone posting on social media to use the hashtags #WeAreInThisTogether and #IHSA, so we can find and share your stories.

May 14

America's Original March Madness came to a sudden conclusion this year, as the 2020 IHSA Boys Basketball State Finals were unable to be played, and the IHSA's spring sports eventually suffered the same fate. We encourage all high school teams, coaches, parents, fans, and athletes to post pictures and share



memories from their high school sports experiences on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In addition, the IHSA will recognize the eight schools (Aurora Christian, Goreville, Madison, Roanoke-Benson, Breese Mater Dei, Chicago Orr, Timothy Christian, and Sacred Heart-Griffin) who qualified for the 2020 COUNTRY Financial IHSA Boys Basketball Class 1A and Class 2A State Finals.

May 15

Educators around the

state have gone the extra mile in working with their students digitally over the past two months. On Friday night, when over 400 IHSA schools are expected to turn on the lights at their schools and athletic complexes for the "Lights for the Fight" initiative, we are asking students and community members to brighten social media with their own thanks to all the teachers and coaches who have helped light their path.

Lights for the Fight is about honoring first re-

sponders and essential workers, so we encourage recognition for those brave individuals, who like educators, are inspiring in their efforts to put others first.

May 16

The IHSA was scheduled to crown its first state champions of the spring on May 16, a celebration of achievement that would have repeated each Saturday through mid-June. The culmination of a high school season is extra special for our seniors, as they leave

their leadership and legacy behind to their underclass teammates.

Senior student-athletes are encouraged to post a picture of themselves on social media in their uniform, favorite school apparel, or the IHSA Student Advisory Committee's Salute to Seniors shirts.

We hope communities at large will post on social media in support of their seniors, recalling their favorite memories and the impact they have had during their four years.