



REMEMBER WHEN?

ROCHELLE
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Section 3

OGLE COUNTY
LIFE | Monday, Jan. 27, 2025
Section C
ROCK VALLEY SHOPPER



REMEMBER WHEN

The Rink at Pine Creek updates front facade, doubles size of arcade

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

MT. MORRIS — The Rink at Pine Creek recently underwent renovations including improvements to its front facade with a mural and the expansion of its arcade, doubling it in size, Owner Rebecca Wilson said Oct. 29.

The front of the building was resided, and later painted by a mural artist. Outdoor renovations around the building will continue. 10 new games were added to the arcade and all games were changed to arcade cards, which will now accumulate tickets electronically. The arcade's prize redemption area has added larger and more exciting prizes, Wilson said. The Rink at Pine Creek has been in operation at the site as a roller rink for 76 years.

"We had our 75th birthday last year, so this year going into our 76th year we're trying to bring life into this place," Wilson

said. "There's tons of people that are still coming out and skating, but we want to remind the community we're here. The front now reminds people that we're alive and well and tells people to come on inside. When winter starts to kick off, it's a good time to start looking for things to do indoors. We'll continue to put more resources back into the place and keep it fun and exciting for people."

Wilson, who also owns the wedding and vacation venue Pine Creek Escape, purchased The Rink at Pine Creek in 2019. The business saw the immediate impacts of COVID-19 and shutdowns. After business got back to normal, she and her husband, Aaron, were able to make the investments to upgrade The Rink.

Wilson and family and a maintenance worker hung the new steel on the front of the building before the mural artist was hired for the rest. The changes to



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

The Rink at Pine Creek recently underwent renovations including improvements to its front facade with a mural and the expansion of its arcade, doubling it in size, Owner Rebecca Wilson said Oct. 29.

the arcade have been a new initiative for staff at The Rink.

"We've continued to invest in the business, but

a lot of it's been behind the scenes," Wilson said.

"These recent improvements are nice and fun and front and center for every-

one to see. As a business owner, it's been enjoyable to do something that's visible. Because it feels like a lot of time and resources are

put into training and staff and not always things like seeing a big new mural."

See THE RINK page 3

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REMEMBER WHEN

THE RINK: ‘We’ll continue to put more resources back into the place...’

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The Rink at Pine Creek is open Fridays 7-10 p.m., Saturdays 1-4 p.m. and 7-11 p.m. and Sundays 1-4 p.m. The venue is also open for private two-hour parties any of the times it isn’t open. In-session parties during business hours are also offered.

Wilson said that five years into ownership, the business finally feels like it’s “catching its stride” post-COVID-19 and activities like field trips coming back, which has encouraged her to do projects and make investments.

Part of making the investments in The Rink is to ensure it carries on for years to come as a safe place for youth in the community to go, Wilson said. Aaron Wilson said he enjoys that his family acts as stewards of a piece of the community that’s been around for 76 years, a place that’s larger than them.

“Being here for the past five years, I’ve seen

the different generations of families that come in,” Rebecca Wilson said. “It might be grandma bringing grandkids and she used to skate here and sometimes she still skates. You see these families and they’re multigenerational. And when I’m out doing things, I don’t feel like I see much of that in other places. It’s really cool to see it here. Grandparents tell their grandchildren about when they used to skate here.”

On Oct. 21, The Rink at Pine Creek was the site of filming by a movie crew that has been shooting around Ogle County. The movie, which Rebecca Wilson said is titled “BRB”, spent a full day transforming and filming at The Rink. The movie, set in 2006, redecorated to make things look like that time period and used some of the roller rink’s staff as extras.

“It was exciting that they chose to shoot here,” Rebecca Wilson said. “Our



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

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staff was very excited. It just feels like things are hitting their stride around here. When you start to

do things, they snowball. We’re putting in an arcade and redoing the front of a building and a film crew

is here and it’s kind of all happening at once. I think that’s really cool for the staff to get excited about

that. We’re always hiring and maybe someone new will see it as a place as they want to work.”



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Dedication held Aug. 29 for restored Veterans Memorial Fountain

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

MT. MORRIS — On Thursday, Aug. 29, a dedication ceremony was held at the recently-restored Veterans Memorial Fountain in Mt. Morris.

The fountain, on the northeast corner of the campus square, was a project of Mt. Morris Post 143 of the American Legion, presented to the village and dedicated on Nov. 14,

1926, to honor Mt. Morris veterans of World War I, and the five local soldiers who were killed in action. Resident Heathcote Mann designed it, and all work not requiring skilled labor was done by local legion members. The fountain is made of stones sent by American Legion Posts, organizations, and individuals across the U.S., inscribed with many donor names.

The fountain fell into disrepair over the years and many of the stones became unreadable. Mt. Morris

Economic Development Committee Executive Director Paula Diehl and Chairman Rob Urish began contacting organizations and people to appraise and refurbish the fountain, and got in touch with The Kohler Foundation, which specializes in projects like it and agreed to take it on at no cost to the village. The Kohler Foundation has preserved art environments across the country for over 30 years.

Heritage Restoration and Design, masonry conservators from Peoria, was selected by The Kohler Foundation for the work because of its expertise in the material. The work began May 28 and included thoroughly cleaning the surfaces, tuckpointing each joint, and reattaching any fallen elements.

Speakers at the dedication event included Mt. Morris Village President Phil Labash, Kohler Foundation Preservation Project Manager Beth Wiza and Michael Berlinger from



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

On Thursday, Aug. 29, a dedication ceremony was held at the recently-restored Veterans Memorial Fountain in Mt. Morris.

Heritage Restoration and Design. The event was attended by village officials, community contributors and residents.

Labash said that when he and his wife moved to the village about 30 years ago, one of the first things they attended was a Memorial

Day service hosted at the Veterans Memorial Fountain. He was surprised by how many people attended that event, and he knew then

that the fountain was important to the community.

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(PHOTOS BY JEFF HELFRICH)

The fountain, on the northeast corner of the campus square, was a project of Mt. Morris Post 143 of the American Legion, presented to the village and dedicated on Nov. 14, 1926, to honor Mt. Morris veterans of World War I, and the five local soldiers who were killed in action.

FOUNTAIN: ‘Now, you don’t have to hear about the history... You can see it’

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“As we lived here longer we heard more about the fountain and its history,” Labash said. “This is the first of a few phases to restore the fountain. It’s not a working fountain yet, but everything we need is here. I’m really excited by its appearance after this work. Now, you don’t have to hear about the history of it. You can

see the history. I think it’s just a beautiful part of our community. This was done at no charge to the village. It was really the kindness of the Kohler Foundation and their grants and ability to do this. Art is impactful. I believe this piece of art is very impactful to our community. We very much appreciate it.”

Wiza called her work exciting because she gets

to help increase access to the arts and build community through preservation. She thanked Diehl and Urish for bringing the project to The Kohler Foundation’s attention and praised Michael and Stephen Berlinger for their work.

“We’re honored to invest in a full masonry conservation of the Veterans Memorial Fountain, an important piece of

Mt. Morris’s history, as well as vernacular art,” Wiza said. “Families and other American Legions contributed to this memorial with stones to create the monument of fallen soldiers. We selected Heritage Restoration & Design Studio out of Peoria for their expertise. The beloved sculpture has returned to its original aesthetic to honor the soldiers lost in

World War I.” Michael Berlinger said his company’s motto is “Design, restore and preserve for the future.” The restoration work done on the fountain will have it in good shape long into the future, he said. “There’s a lot of history here and it represents sacrifices made by local people and the entire community and country in a great time of con-

flict,” Michael Berlinger said. “It’s something that should be preserved for the future. I think preservation is critical to our nation’s history. Without knowledge of the past, you don’t know where you are or where you’re going. History is critical to knowing who we are. A monument like this is a very visible sign of that history and it’s very specific to Mt. Morris.”

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REMEMBER WHEN

Ribbon cutting ceremony held Feb. 13 for Rochelle Recovery Center

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

ROCHELLE — On Feb. 13, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the Rochelle Recovery Center at 242 May Mart Drive in Rochelle.

Sauk Valley Voices of Recovery is a recovery community based out of Dixon. For the past three years, it has covered Lee, Whiteside and Ogle counties and recently started coverage of addiction needs in DeKalb County. The Rochelle Recovery Center is also the hub for the Ogle-DeKalb counties recovery-oriented system of care (ROSC) council, which brings together a coalition of local stakeholders from hospitals, police departments, businesses and more to look at the area and its addiction needs to try to get it moving in a positive direction.

“We’re just trying to make sure that everybody in the community is involved with the ROSC, anybody

that has decision-making capability or that is a person of lived experience,” Ogle/DeKalb ROSC Coordinator Heather Tomlinson said. “We want to make sure that everybody’s voice is heard and that the people that can solve the problems for the people whose voices need to be heard are there to do that.”

SVVOR Executive Director Gerald Lott said he got involved with helping those in the community with substance abuse issues after battling addiction of his own and noticing barriers to treatment when he tried to get substance abuse help for his daughter.

“At that point I realized I needed to do something to help,” Lott said. “I quit my other job and went into this full-time and took a leap of faith. I ended up with an amazing team. We’re just keeping things going. We’re just trying to let people know that there is hope. Sometimes it’s not that we can help the person that’s suffering. Sometimes

it’s the child of the person that’s suffering. When someone calls and says they want help, we go and help them find treatment or whatever may be the next step for them. Sometimes we can’t help that person. But there’s an entire family around them. If we can stop it from becoming intergenerational, we really hope to do that.”

The Rochelle Recovery Center is available for free to anyone in the community that wants to do substance abuse support meetings. Current Rochelle Recovery Center and SVVOR projects include working on a collegiate recovery community at Northern Illinois University, putting together a recovery farm, and working on a team text line.

“Please let people know that we’re here,” Lott said. “This isn’t just a place to send the people you’re tired of listening to and dealing with. It’s also a place to send somebody who wants to help and volunteer. I be-

lieve we all have a purpose and talent and those are where we connect with people. Anybody who is in recovery, send them over and we’ll find something to do with them.”

The ribbon cutting was hosted by the Rochelle Chamber of Commerce and City of Rochelle. Speakers included Chamber Executive Director Tricia Herrera, Mayor John Bearrows, and State Rep. Bradley Fritts. Herrera welcomed the Rochelle Recovery Center on Feb. 13.

“A few months ago we met with the Rochelle Recovery Center and heard its story on services provided in other areas, the needs it saw in Rochelle and how it got here,” Herrera said. “We want to welcome and thank you. You have provided the service and you know that all of the people that come here and use your services are the most important part and piece of this. We thank you for that and for investing in our community. Anything



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

On Feb. 13, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the Rochelle Recovery Center at 242 May Mart Drive in Rochelle.

we can do for you, please let us know.”

Fritts spoke about the work that the Rochelle Recovery Center does to fight the stigma of addiction and said he works with SVVOR at the state level to help the local community.

“It’s an illness just like anything else,” Fritts said. “I think you’ve done a phenomenal job, and everyone here is a testament to it, to take a little bit of the stigma away and say that there are resources and help. There’s

not one of us in this room that hasn’t been touched by it in some way, shape or form. I can’t thank you enough for that and I look forward to continuing to be a resource for you at the state level.”

Bearrows thanked the Rochelle Recovery Center’s leaders for choosing Rochelle to provide its services to help city and area residents. He offered the city’s help with anything that the center needs in the future.

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Camplain retires after 33 years with OCEC

BY JEFF HELFRICH
 MANAGING EDITOR

CHANA — Four years ago, Chana Education Center Principal Terry Camplain wrote a letter giving his retirement notice. But he couldn't bring himself to submit it right away.

Camplain will retire at the end of the school year after 20 years as principal and 33 overall with the Ogle County Educational Cooperative. Before his time as principal, he was a school psychologist in Rochelle for 13 years.

"I sat on that letter for a long time," Camplain said. "It's the right decision for me, but it was still a difficult decision. I'm nervous about what's next for myself. But I'm looking forward to it. It's very bittersweet. In education, it's good for younger people to take over some things. I've been doing this a long time. Some younger mindsets coming in is going to be great."

Camplain described the

CEC as a place students can work on self-regulation and the choices they're making to ultimately return to their home school, if that's their goal. The CEC works to help students achieve whatever their career path goals are.

"Some people get the idea that this is where all the bad kids go," Camplain said. "We don't have bad kids here. We have kids here that maybe made some mistakes or bad choices. We've had some kids with bigger struggles than others, but they're not bad kids. They just needed some extra guidance to get back on track and that's what we're here to do."

During his time as a school psychologist with the OCEC, Camplain worked at every school building in Rochelle, including Rochelle Township High School. He achieved his administrative degree and the CEC principal position came open. Camplain said taking the job was the

right choice, and he's seen education and staff's approach to students evolve in the 20 years since.

"I have a lot of memories of students overcoming challenges to have good outcomes," Camplain said. "There are a lot of students that still contact me. I've had one call me on my birthday for the last 20 years. I've had former students who have gone into education and a former student that's a lawyer. There's a whole gamut of students and their success stories. Those connections that we make with our kids are important. And everybody's story is different. For one student it may be just getting a diploma. For others it may be good grades or attendance. We have to go along with them on their journey to help them achieve whatever their success story is."

Camplain helmed CEC during the challenging time in education that was the COVID-19 pandemic,

which he described as "building a ship while going over a waterfall." Students and staff found difficulties with learning from home through computers and Zoom. Mental health impacts were seen to both CEC students and staff, and have been more common since.

"It had a huge impact on students and their emotional struggles and mental health issues," Camplain said. "During the school day, if a student is having a struggle or had a struggle the night before, they can come in our door first thing in the morning and sit down and talk and take as much time as we need to work through that problem. We're here and we can be in the moment right away. During COVID-19, we had scheduled times and we were all on call. When a student was at home having that struggle or difficulty, they weren't able to come and talk to us and get some time. That was lost for



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

Terry Camplain retired at the end of the school year after 20 years as principal and 33 overall with the Ogle County Educational Cooperative.

students that needed that emotional support."

Camplain thanked the CEC staff for their work and time over his 20 years at the school. When working with the students that the CEC services, that work often extends outside of curriculum, he said.

"I've been very fortunate over the years to be able to surround myself with people who have the same mindset on what we do in working with kids

here," Camplain said. "The staff here works extremely hard and it's so much more than just teaching. It's being that connection for a student and that person that they can go to. It doesn't matter who a student makes a connection with in the building. As long as it's someone. Our staff is great about that and being available to kids in need. If a student has a struggle, they can go find that person."



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