

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Barickman: NRI spending continues after program was halted

Date: 10-2-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

State Sen. Jason Barickman, who co-chairs a panel investigating Gov. Pat Quinn's anti-violence program, said the governor never shut down the troubled anti-violence program as he claimed.

Barickman, R-Bloomington, told WJBC's Scott Laughlin the Neighborhood Recovery Initiative which funneled money to Chicago-area communities for the sake of fighting crime was nothing more than a political slush fund that goes on to this day.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: New public defender appointed

Date: 10-16-14

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

McLean County's Public Defender's office has a new leader.

Chief Judge Elizabeth Robb on Thursday announced the appointment of Carla Barnes as the next public defender. Barnes is a Bloomington native who's been with the office for 13 years. Robb said Barnes' strong work ethic and integrity are a couple attributes which led to her appointment.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Republicans win major elections

Date: 11-4-14

Time: 1 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Illinois Republican rode a tidal wave of support to major election victories yesterday, including Illinois' first Republican governor in more than a decade. Bloomington mayor and Illinois Wesleyan University political science professor Tari Renner told WJBC's Scott Laughlin, while voters might be calling for change, he's not sure that's what they'll get.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bloomington votes on land purchase

Date: 11-12-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

A deal approved by the Bloomington City Council on Monday to purchase four acres of the eastern edge of McGraw Park might be falling through.

The land would be purchased using a \$750,000 state grant. A portion of it would be used to create a practice football field for Central Catholic High School.

However, Mayor Tari Renner said a problem has turned up.

Renner explained one alderman has asked the council meet to reconsider the deal, which passed by a 5-4 vote. However, Renner might veto it.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: One of closest races in history

Date: 12-2-14

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Illinois' treasurer election between Democrat Mike Frerichs and Republican Tom Cross was one of tightest races in state history - the official numbers from the State Board of elections prove it.

When the dust settled, Frerichs had 9,225 more votes than Cross. A total of 3.5 million ballots were cast in the election. Frerichs' spokesman Dave Clarkin said Central Illinois played a key role in electing Frerichs.

Despite the trend across the rest of the area, voters in McLean County heavily favored Cross, who outgained Frerichs by a two-to-one margin.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Brady doesn't like decision

Date: 12-18-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

State representative Dan Brady was surprised by Gov. Pat Quinn's move to call lawmakers back to Springfield to consider a 2016 special election to replace late Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka.

Brady expected something to come up in the spring legislative session.

Quinn said voters need a chance to weigh in on the decision.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Two arrested in copper theft

Date: 10-3-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Two men have been arrested in connection with the theft of large amounts of copper from a decommissioned residence hall on Illinois State University's campus. A news release from the university said Jacob Schultz, 30, and Tyler Reinitz, 30, both of Bloomington, were arrested early Friday by ISU and Normal police. University police received notice just after 1 a.m. that a motion detector on a hidden camera at the location had been activated. That camera had been set up days earlier due to an incident from last week in which \$40,000 worth of copper was stolen from the building.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Trial continues in murder case

Date: 10-9-14

Time: 2 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

A man accused of murder continues to stand trial in McLean County Court on Thursday.

The prosecution has claimed Larron Carroll, 19, of Bloomington, intentionally shot and killed Kuantrae Massey in a Bloomington apartment in January 2013. In testimony Thursday, Bloomington police detective Matthew Dick, who was one of the lead detectives on the case, said Carroll originally told him Massey was perhaps shot by a pair of men who ended up having nothing to do with the incident.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bloomington man accused in fatal shooting

Date: 11-19-14

Time: 4 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

The 29-year-old from Bloomington is accused of fatally shooting Aaron Robinson, also of Bloomington, in May 2013. A friend of Mays, Chris Rose, testified in court Tuesday and told a jury that Robinson confronted Mays and Rose outside of a

convenient store. Rose says Robinson broke a beer bottle and later pulled a gun on the two men.

A short time later, Rose said Robinson confronted the two again on the 2200 block of Todd Drive, before Mays eventually shot Robinson to death in the driveway of Robinson's apartment.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Police seize cocaine in Bloomington

Date: 11-20-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Bloomington police have seized over 300 grams of cocaine after an investigation of drug sales in the city.

Police said Kianté M. Simmons, 38, of Lynwood was arrested on Monday. Police made the arrest after conducting a search warrant at an apartment in the 400 block of West Market Street.

During the search, detectives located 303 grams of cocaine and cash. The drugs have an estimated street value of \$30,000.

Simmons is being held in the McLean County Jail. He faces five counts of charges related to the sale of drugs.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Sexual assault leads to 13-year prison sentence

Date: 12-17-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

A man who represented himself in a sexual assault trial has been sentenced to 13 years in prison.

40-year-old Ricky Burden of Bloomington was sentenced Tuesday on charges of predatory criminal sexual abuse and aggravated criminal sexual abuse of girls under the age of 13.

Burden reportedly threw a chair as he left the courtroom in October and told assistant state's attorney Adam Ghrist to watch what he was saying during the sentencing hearing.

Burden will serve at least 85-percent an eight-year sentence for predatory criminal sexual abuse and at least 50-percent of a five-year sentence for aggravated criminal sexual abuse.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Woman sentenced to 10 years in prison

Date: 12-29--14

Time: 5 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

A woman from Bloomington will see 10 years in prison as part of a plea deal on aggravated battery charges.

Authorities accused 20-year-old Heather Shrum of hitting her then-five-week-old child in the face in late August and then throwing her on the floor in early September.

Authorities say Shrum originally told police the infant rolled off a couch and a bed, but eventually admitted to police that she caused two skull fractures to the child.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: West football coach suspended

Date: 10-3-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

The Illinois High School Association has suspended Normal West head football coach Darren Hess for the remainder of the season. A statement today (Friday) from IHSA Executive Director Marty Hickman says a letter Hess sent to the father of a student-athlete while the youth was enrolled at another high school was a form of "improper contact." Hess says they self reported the violation. The school suspended Hess from the last two games after bringing the issue to the IHSA's attention. Duane Thoennes (tennis) has, and will continue to served as interim head coach. Hess says the team's record is not effected by this situation and all players are still elidgible for play.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title:

Date: 10-6-14

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

An Illinois State University professor will be able to continue his research on brain neurons thanks to a new grant.

Wolfgang Stein is a Professor of Cellular Neurophysiology who has been with ISU since 2012.

"What I'm most fascinated by is that we process all this sensory information - we see a lot of things, we hear a lot of things - and we come up with the adequate responses. We do a behavior and it usually works out," said Stein. "However, we really don't know how the nervous system comes up with those adequate responses."

Stein said his goal is to identify why these neurons respond the way they do. They attempt to do this using a process called Optical Imaging.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Unit 5 considering tax increase

Date: 11-12-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Unit 5 is considering increasing its portion of next year's property tax levy. The proposed \$84 million levy is a half-percent increase compared to last year. Business manager Marty Hickman said the main reason for the increase is the district is looking to increase funding for IMRF and social security.

"We lowered those last year to give some tax relief knowing that over time, between EAV growth and potential rate increases, we would have to bring it back up," said Hickman. "Maybe not to the same level it was previously, but it will have to come back up at some point so that we don't actually deficit spend."

Under the increase, residents would pay about two cents more per 100 dollars of assessed property value. This means the owner of a \$150,000 home would pay \$10.20 more than last year.

Hickman explained the property tax revenue is an extremely important funding stream.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Funding cuts are problem at state level

Date: 11-24-14

Time: 3 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Advance Illinois' annual report on the state's educational performances showed promise in some areas, but reason for concern in others.

Speaking at State Farm headquarters in Bloomington Monday, Advance Illinois executive director Robin Steans said early childhood education has shown some cause for concern. The primary problem is funding cuts at the state level.

"As a result, after having really moved the number of students that we were able to serve in early childhood to an all-time high we are now back where we were five years ago," said Steans. "We've undone a lot of those gains."

According to Steans, Illinois is 50th in the nation when it comes to investment in schools and 49th in how regressive educational spending is.

"We don't do a good job of spending what state dollars we have where their needed most," Steans said.

Steans said just 34 percent of Illinois students are reading by fourth grade.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: District 87 residents may see tax raise

Date: 12-10-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Residents within the District 87 school district will see their property tax rise. The board unanimously passed a roughly 3.4 percent increase for next year.

District 87 Superintendent Barry Reilly said the board was careful about the increase, which is roughly 2 cents per \$100 equalized assessed valuation.

"We compare our rates to others around us, and when you compare District 87, our overall tax rate, to districts around here, certainly in (McLean) County, you're going to find that we're one of the lowest," said Reilly.

The increase means the owner of a property worth \$150,000 would pay an additional \$8.56. The board also approved plans for a new enterprise zone, because the current one expires at the end of next year.

Reilly said the school board could also look at a new deficit reduction program. He expects the district to operate with a budget deficit around \$1.5 million for the next two years.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: ISU prepares for winter commencement

Date: 12-12-14

Time: 2 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Illinois State University is preparing for its winter commencement ceremonies. ISU Spokesman Eric Jome said the university will issue 1,149 baccalaureate degrees, 139 master's degrees and 40 doctoral degrees.

The first ceremony is at 9 a.m. at Redbird Arena with the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Fine Arts and Mennonite College of Nursing. The second ceremony begins at 1 p.m. with the the College of Applied Science and Technology, College of Business and College of Education.

Jome says traffic around Redbird Arena will controlled in a way similar to basketball and football games.

"Just be aware that there is going to be a little increased traffic in and out of the area of Redbird Arena," said Jome. "But traffic along Main Street will continue to move, traffic along College Avenue will also continue to move."

Issue: Business**How Issue Was Treated: News story****Title: Gammer takes EDC post****Date: 10-15-14****Time: 8 a.m.****Duration: Story runs 12 hours****Description:**

Bloomington has found a new economic development coordinator. City manager David Hales has selected Austin Grammer to replace Justine Robinson, who resigned earlier this year to take a position in the St. Louis area. Grammer was most recently the Customized Training Coordinator at Heartland Community College, a position he held since 2011. While at Heartland, Grammer developed and managed incumbent worker and community workforce development training programs, plus had a hand in several other initiatives. Grammer's first day on the job will be Oct. 29.

Issue: Business**How Issue Was Treated: News story****Title: Medical marijuana plan goes to Downs****Date: 10-23-14****Time: p.m.****Duration: Story runs 12 hours****Description:**

Tim Lewis, the man who had his proposal for a medical marijuana growth facility in rural Downs shot down by the McLean County Board, has taken his idea to the Village of Downs itself.

Lewis is now looking at building the facility at 405 N. 2000 E. Rd., in Downs. It's an idea which has the backing of Mayor Mike James.

"I was against it, then I went neutral and then now I'm for it after learning about mostly security," said James. "Once I learned about security and more about the process I was 100 percent in support of it."

The Village Zoning Board next week will consider re-zoning the property to allow the facility.

The town hosted a public meeting Thursday night to discuss the idea with residents. Renae Seth, of Downs, showed up to voice her support.

"It's medical, but it's going to bring jobs. The money is going to stay here or in McLean County. I just think it's a win-win-win situation," Seth said.

Lewis explained even if he gets the thumbs up from the zoning board, there's still no guarantee the facility will be built. Only one medical growth center will be permitted in each State Police District. 11 have applied to build a facility in District 6, which includes McLean, Dewitt, and Livingston counties.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Country Financial against plans

Date: 11-15-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

COUNTRY Financial once again plans to return a significant amount of money to those with life insurance through the company.

COUNTRY estimates it will pay out an estimated \$74 million in dividends to eligible policyholders in 2015. Senior vice president of financial services Kelvin Schill said this points to the strength of the company.

"Customers are paying in and when we have favorable experience on this block of business we're able to return some of the money that the customers paid in back to those customers in the form of dividends," said Schill. "We might have investment experience that's better than what we had priced in, or mortality experience, or expense experience."

Schill said the company's 300,000 customers will receive about \$250 each, depending on their policies.

"On average it's a nice return," he said.

The \$74 million is about a three percent increase over last year.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Normal looking at enterprise zone

Date: 11-29-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

The Normal Town Council is working to make sure the area doesn't lose its enterprise zone. The General Assembly voted in 2012 to end the current enterprise zones at the conclusion of 2015 and create new ones starting in January 2016. City manager Mark Peterson says the town plans to vote tonight on an application for a new zone.

The application must also be approved by Bloomington, McLean County, Ford County, and Gibson City - all of which are in the current and proposed new enterprise zone. Peterson says these zones are vital for economic development.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Ham takes over as EDC executive

Date: 12-1-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

The Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council has named Kyle Ham as its new chief executive officer. He will start his job December 15.

Since 2010, Ham has served as the chief of staff for the Illinois State Treasurer's Office in Springfield. A news release says Ham's responsibilities included investing more than \$10 billion in taxpayer dollars, investing the Illinois Funds money market fund of more than \$5 billion in assets, and overseeing more than \$6 billion in college savings assets and more than \$4 billion in unclaimed property assets. The release also says Ham directed efficiencies that led to a total budget reduction of 10 percent over a three-year period. He achieved record growth of college savings accounts, including a 30 percent increase in new accounts and a 68 percent increase in total assets.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Mitsubishi sales up 7.6 percent in November

Date: 12-3-14

Time: 8 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

To say 2014 has been a good year for Mitsubishi Motors would likely be an understatement.

The company reported November sales were up 7.6 percent compared to November 2013. That makes for the best November sales month since 2007.

Spokesman Dan Irvin added sales are up 27.4 percent year-to-date.

"For the year, January to November, biggest 11 months we've had and almost a cinch to be the best year we've had," he said.

Sales for the Bloomington-Normal produced Outlander Sport was up 30.1 percent in November versus November 2013.

"That's 25 percent for the year," said Irvin. "That's been really consistent."

Irvin did not expect things to slow down at all in December.

"December is usually a really good month, probably because of the holidays," said Irvin. "Things probably will slow down the first of the year a little bit."

Another highlight for November was the Mirage, which had a sales increase of 26.7 percent from November 2013.