

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: State Farm cuts auto rates for Illinois drivers

Date: 04/03/2018

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Illinois drivers covered by Bloomington's State Farm Insurance will pay lower premiums starting next month.

State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company announced Tuesday it is cutting rates 2.9 percent for the average policyholder, beginning May 7th.

That amounts to \$65 million in total savings for State Farm's 2.7 million Illinois policyholders.

In a news release, State Farm says premium changes will vary for individual motorists depending specific details customers' individual policies and chosen coverages.

The rate reduction is possible because of the company's "current financial strength," according to State Farm's Senior Vice President Rob Stewart.

Annual financial results, released in early March, showed State Farm's net worth at \$97 billion in 2017, up \$10 billion from the previous year despite paying claims for catastrophic California wildfires last fall.

State Farm Mutual is the largest auto insurer in Illinois and nationwide.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: A new report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows the number of mid-sized family farms is shrinking.

Date: 04/08/2018

Time: 6:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

WASHINGTON - The average American farm is getting larger, according to a new government report.

At the same time, the number of mid-sized farms is declining. The reason why is still up for debate.

A report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture said that over the past three decades, the majority of farming production has moved away from many midsize family farms to a small number of large family farms, leaving a large number of very small farms, having 10 or fewer acres.

By 2012, 36 percent of all cropland was on farms with at least 2,000 acres, up from 15 percent in 1987, the report said. The midpoint for cropland acreage went from 650 acres in 1987 to 1,201 acres in 2012.

“We see acreage shifting from that midsize class to larger farms,” USDA analyst James MacDonald said.

In Illinois, half of farms had more or less than 488 acres. Now, MacDonald said it’s grown.

“By 2012, it was 1,160 acres, well over doubling,” he said. “You can see that more rapid shift throughout the Corn Belt.”

The report also found a much higher number of farms with 10 acres or less.

Equipment modernization, for instance, likely allowed farmers to manage more land over the past three decades, MacDonald said.

The Census of Farmers, MacDonald said, also is doing a better job of tracking small farm operations that have less than 10 acres of cropland, potentially affecting the numbers.

One unanswered question is whether the average farmer age has an effect on consolidation. Census data shows that the average age of a farmer rose from 50.5 in 2002 to 58.3 in 2012. At 55.7, farmers, ranchers, and other agriculture managers are older than any other profession tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Murray’s Shoes to Close

Date: 05/03/2018

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Following over 140 years of business in Bloomington, Murray's Shoes is getting ready to close up shop for the last time.

Murray's Shoes will close on June 22, having originally opened in 1875. Joe Murray, who inherited the store from his father, explained with people preferring to shop online instead of going to the store, maintaining a retail store is more difficult today than ever before.

"The Amazon situation and the whole internet situation has really put a crunch, especially with the generation that's going to be coming up because they're so used to computers they think nothing of it," said Murray.

Murray said aside from the business reasons for closing the store, he's ready to begin his retirement.

"I now have got a lot of arthritis and different things, and while I'm in good health, I figured it was time to retire," explained Murray.

Reflecting on his time in business, Murray said he's grateful for the people that have come into his store.

"I've got a lot of wonderful memories with some wonderful customers," Murray explained. "There's a lot of wonderful things that have happened over the years here, and it's always been a lot of fun to come to work."

Murray said to keep the shop open, he would have had to sign a new lease and remodel the store. Once he retires, Murray said he wants to go on a cruise through the Panama Canal.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Planners back north Normal apartment complex

Date: 02/03/2018

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

NORMAL - New projects like an apartment complex planned for north Normal have become rare occurrences in recent years due to a stagnant economy. So, planning commissioners in the town seemed pleased to approve a development that would be just east of the Starplex movie theaters on McKnight Street.

Eventually, The Park at Constitution Trail will include 85 apartments in 13 buildings on almost five acres.

"The code allowed for additional units, but our push was for more of that green space. We wanted to scale that back and accommodate more green space, in addition to differentiation in the buildings as well," said developer Terry Blake of Normal. He also wants to build a sidewalk linking the apartments to nearby Constitution Trail.

Blake plans to build the apartments in phases. The first phase calls for construction of five 2 1/2 story buildings to the south containing 25 four bedroom apartments. It's hard to say when the entire complex will be done, according to Town Planner Mercy Davison.

"It'll depend on what demand looks like as to how they phase this in," said Davison.

"Will they come in with two buildings the next time, will they do all of them, will they not to any for 10 years? We have no idea," Davison said.

Normal Town Council members vote on the planned unit development May 21st.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Governor's surprise phone call to WJBC: 'I love Rivian'

Date: 05/16/2018

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Illinois' chief executive said he is cheering for the success of Rivian Automotive, which received state tax credits and other incentives to begin making electric cars at the former Mitsubishi Motors plant in Normal.

Governor Bruce Rauner made an unannounced phone call to WJBC's Afternoon Report on Wednesday, claiming political opponents are falsely spinning comments he made in recent days suggesting he's disappointed with the progress made so far by the startup firm.

"I love Rivian. We worked hard to recruit 'em," Rauner said.

"We cut a deal with them to give them EDGE (Economic Development for a Growing Economy) tax credits, and I'm all in for them to succeed."

Speaking with WJBC's Sam Wood, the governor said he was trying to point out that manufacturers like Rivian would be doing much better if not for a hostile business environment in the state.

“We took a gamble with Rivian. They’re at 40 employees, which is awesome. They hope to add hundreds, and we gave the EDGE credits to do it, but it’s frustrating because if we had better competitiveness as a state, we could already have thousands of jobs working in and around that facility,” the governor said.

Rivian plans to reveal its plans for a five-passenger pickup truck later this year, and begin making the vehicles in 2020.

Rauner said Illinois is not taking advantage of a booming auto industry that’s benefiting other states including neighboring Indiana.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Grossinger Motors Arena sees yearly deficit, fourth-quarter profit

Date: 06/01/2018

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Despite a profitable fourth quarter for Grossinger Motors Arena, the VenuWorks-operated arena saw an overall loss for fiscal year 2018.

The arena saw a total operating loss of \$667,350. Arena executive director Lynn Cannon explained the Bloomington Edge being unable to play games played a role in the arena's financial loss.

"We definitely lost revenue when the football team wasn't able to play their spring season, so we didn't have any revenue for any of the games that were scheduled during that period of time," said Cannon.

Cannon added the lack of attendance at a number of events didn't help the arena's financial situation.

"Hockey attendance was down last year, so that impacted us, especially in food and beverage sales," Cannon explained. "Although we did have quite a few concerts and outside events, we certainly could use more attendance at those as well."

She also noted despite the arena seeing a net loss in the last fiscal year, the cost of recent renovations to the arena won't be taken out of the operating budget.

"Renovations are part of the capital improvement, so it's not tied to the operating budget," said Cannon. "The building is now 12 years old, so we certainly do need to continue to update and make changes to equipment as they start to wear out."

Some of those renovations have been aimed at making the arena more wheelchair-accessible.

The arena's fourth quarter, consisting of February, March, and April, brought in a profit of \$50,719. Cannon said the IHSA cheerleading and wrestling state finals in February drew large crowd numbers for the arena, as did concerts featuring Brad Paisley, Cole Swindell, and Judas Priest.

ISSUE: Schools

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: U-High practices reunification procedure

Date: 04/05/2018

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

NORMAL - Safety and efficiency are the two main components of University High School's reunification plan.

The school simulated that plan earlier today, moving over two hundred high school students from U-High to Redbird Arena where they were reunited with their parents shortly after. As Illinois State University Emergency Manager Eric Hodges explained, schools so frequently practice what to do during an emergency, they often don't practice for what comes next.

"This is what would happen afterwards. Our industry - public safety - tends to do active shooter exercise a lot, but we don't focus on those few hours afterwards," said Hodges. "This exercise is not for public safety. It's for the parents, the students, and the employees of the school."

Hodges said the plan has been in the works for two years. Today's exercise was the first time the school had practiced the procedure.

U-High President Andrea Markert said the exercise was meant to be as realistic as possible, with some students and faculty having roles to play.

"We have vision impaired students, we have hearing impaired students, for exercises today we put some students in wheelchairs, trying to just accommodate for everything," Markert explained. "We have students that are going to pretend to have panic attacks."

Following the drill, those who participated provided feedback to U-High administrators on how they felt the exercise went and how it can improve in the future.

ISSUE: Schools

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: District 87 blasted for 'indoctrinating' kids on gun control, board fills Tiritilli's old job

Date: 04/17/2018

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A conservative government watchdog told District 87 school board members Wednesday they fired the wrong person.

Bloomington High School physics teacher Marc Tiritilli was dismissed last month in the district's annual reduction-in-force, although Tiritilli said he was let go over a disagreement with Principal Tim Moore.

Blogger Diane Benjamin told the board Moore should be fired for his handling of a school-sanctioned demonstration billed as a memorial to the 17 people killed in February's Florida school shooting.

Benjamin obtained documents showing administrators used school equipment to print about two-hundred flyers explaining how students can contact lawmakers to lobby for an assault weapons ban and background checks.

"I don't think it's the job of District 87 and BHS to community organize for gun control, and that's exactly what that document does," Benjamin said during the public comment session at Wednesday night's board meeting.

"Indoctrinating students on gun control is not a public purpose, and I don't know why somebody at BHS is not charged with official misconduct for making the copies on a public machine," Benjamin said.

Superintendent Barry Reilly acknowledges it was a mistake, and administrators have been told not to have that happen again.

"It's one of those lessons that you learn, in this case the hard way because it was already done. The cost to do this, which shouldn't be borne by the district was less than \$5.00, I believe, or around the \$5.00 mark," Reilly said.

As for Tiritilli, the board filled his position by hiring a physics teacher at a salary of \$44,847, according to the district's human resource report.

Reilly said the new hire also has a theater background and will help with student productions. Tiritilli, who came within less than a dozen votes last year of becoming Mayor of Normal, won rave reviews among students for his work as the theater's technical director.

ISSUE: Schools

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: ISU Bird-Bash to Raise Funds

Date: 04/28/2018

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

NORMAL - Illinois State's annual Bird Bash to raise funds for its women's athletics programs is Thursday night at Redbird Arena.

ISU women's basketball coach Kristen Gillespie said it's a great way to help ISU celebrate its rich history in women's athletics.

"We have 10 women's sports, over 200 female student athletes, so it's a great opportunity to fundraise for our young women just to help enhance their experiences, their opportunities," Gillespie said.

This year's event will be hosted by Kendra Haselhorst-Bull, an ISU graduate and former volleyball standout from 1997-2001.

"A bunch of (our student athletes) will be there, all our staff will be there," Gillespie said. "It's just an opportunity to celebrate the past.

"We have a really rich history of women's athletics here at Illinois State. (The event is) just to make sure our female athletes feel the love, so to speak."

Bird Bash has raised over \$390,000 for ISU women's athletics programs since 2006.

Registration begins at 6 p.m., with cocktails by Sodexo, hors d'oeuvres provided by Moe's Southwest Grill, and a silent auction presented by Advocate BroMenn Medical Center to follow. A formal program will begin at 6:30 p.m., and the silent auction winners will then be announced at 7:30 p.m. Cost is \$60 per person and the purchase of a full table is available.

To register, to go GoRedbirds.com/promotions and use the promo code BirdBash. For more information, contact Marianne Riddell by phone at (309) 438-5455 or by email at mriddell@ilstu.edu.

ISSUE: Schools

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Rotary Club honors impactful educators

Date: 05/05/2018

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington Rotary Club is celebrating four educators who are making a difference in the lives of their students.

The club recognized Claire Michaels of Oakland Elementary, Judy Szabo from Washington Elementary, Suzie Hutton of Bloomington Junior High, and Jen Weaver from Bloomington High School. Rotary president Dave Rutledge said the club is proud to celebrate educators who impact their students.

"They make a difference everyday. Their touching so many lives, especially these young people," Rutledge explained. "To recognize the teachers that do make a difference helps and encourages them to do more."

Rutledge explained the four were chosen to be honored by the people who know them best - their co-workers and peers.

"We let the principals and their staffs pick the teachers that they felt made a difference," said Rutledge. "They're there everyday, they see them everyday, so we let them choose."

Rutledge said the club will honor first responders later this month.

ISSUE: Schools

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: At parents' request, Rep. Brady mulls law regulating farm chemical spraying near schools

Date: 05/19/2018

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington State Rep. Dan Brady is investigating whether legislation is needed to regulate spraying of farm chemicals near schools.

Parents of a Fox Creek Elementary School student recently went before the Unit 5 School Board, and contacted Representative Brady to look for ways to improve communication between schools and farmer who work nearby.

"Like any potential legislation, you're going to research it and you're going to see what can come of it," said Brady.

"So I just applaud the family for stepping up and explaining what they experienced, and I'm sure others had, and to the school board for listening to them and wanting to partner (with the parents) to try to improve things for the safety of the kids," Brady said.

Thomas Maere said he went to school a couple of weeks ago and was almost overcome by the smell. His wife Janine, a medical doctor, determined the farmer was spraying the herbicide Treflan to kill weeds. Strong winds were blowing in the school's direction, and Mr. Maere said more than a hundred kids were playing outside.

Brady declined to say whether schools like Fox Creek should have been built in the first place so close to farmland.

"Should've, could've, and would've isn't something I'm interested in," Brady said.

"Solving problems is what I am interested in," he added.

ISSUE: Schools

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Unit 5 board backs TIF extension for Uptown Normal

Date: 05/28/2018

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

NORMAL - The Town of Normal now has the blessing of all six affected taxing bodies to keep certain properties off their tax rolls to stimulate Uptown development.

The Unit 5 School Board Thursday unanimously supported a 12 year extension of Uptown's tax increment financing district, which diverts property tax revenue into incentives for developers to build in the area.

The undeveloped parcels are worth only \$8,732 in taxable land values, and board members like Mike Trask are betting the TIF extension will help raise values for those parcels and nearby properties.

"If it does not get developed, then we stay with that value, so the upside is that they can develop that and we'll eventually see that parcel, that value, go up and get that EAV (Equalized Assessed Value) after the 12 years," Trask said.

Mayoral hopeful Mark Tiritilli spoke out against the TIF extension saying Unit 5's tax money is best spent on schools, not Uptown development.

"It's contrary to the mission of the district to pursue economic development," said Tiritilli, who plans to run a second time for mayor of Normal.

Unit 5 Superintendent Mark Daniel said the school district has to be concerned with growth to build its tax base.

"We are a foundation of a growing community. A growing community is also economically strong, so is it the chicken before the egg or the egg before the chicken? I don't know, but they both go hand-in-hand," said Daniel.

Earlier in the day, The Normal Township Board voted for the longer TIF, with Supervisor Sarah Grammer casting the only 'no' vote.

With all taxing bodies on board, it's believed the town will have an easier time persuading state lawmakers to adopt the TIF extension.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Normal considering officer representation on new police board

Date: 04/05/2018

Time: 6:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

NORMAL - Normal's police board will be in place in the coming weeks, according to City Manager Mark Peterson, although it's not known yet if the so-called Community Policing Culture Board will be an entirely civilian panel.

"The mayor (Chris Koos) is already talking to people," said Peterson.

"He's getting feedback from the (town) council on who would be appropriate appointees. One of the questions is would it be appropriate to have a police officer involved," Peterson added.

"In fact, we're having some meetings with police officers, and that's part of the discussion," the city manager said.

Peterson also said a police representative on the board, if approved, might be an active or retired officer.

Unlike the debate in Bloomington that led to creation of the Public Safety and Community Relations Board, Peterson said there's been no discussion whether a convicted felon would be eligible to serve on Normal's commission.

Bloomington's police board met for the first time last month. Members plan a series of community outreach meetings. They'll also publish a brochure detailing how citizens can file complaints against officers and ways to contact board members and the police chief.

Peterson said Normal's board will focus on addressing race relations, and improving communication between the public and the police department.

Peterson acknowledged receiving some grief last summer when he said racism exists, mainly on a subconscious level, in all parts of the community, including the police department.

"Not everybody was happy about that," Peterson said.

"But I had meetings with (police) leadership, and I think they understood where I'm coming from," he added.

"All I suggested is police officers are no different from anybody else, including myself. We all have probably latent racial biases that we may not even realize," said Peterson.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Bloomington adopts \$210 million budget

Date: 04/17/2018

Time: 6:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - The City of Bloomington has used a combination of fee increases and other cuts to balance its budget.

The City Council on Monday night approved the \$210 million spending plan that's \$4 million lower than this year's budget.

"We've been struggling with that for a year or so because we were about \$3 million out of budget," Interim city manager Steve Rasmussen said.

The city is hiking dozens of fees for city services including trash while cutting back on bulk waste pickup and delaying the filling of vacancies in city government for 90 days.

Alderman David Sage cast the only 'no' vote.

The new budget takes effect May 1.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Barickman: New veterans home will likely need federal help, possibly capital bill

Date: 05/06/2018

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - State Sen. Jason Barickman, R-Bloomington, said the \$250 million it might take to build a new veterans facility is a 'huge expense' and would take lots of cooperation to make a new facility happen.

A task force has recommended building a new veterans home in Quincy after a Legionnaires' disease outbreak killed 13 residents in 2015.

"We don't have 245 million or more lying around." Barickman said. "Obviously, it's got to come from somewhere.

"Hopefully we get some cooperation from the federal government from our two sitting U.S. Senators (Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth) who are Democrats. That help can help get this done."

Barickman told WJBC's Scott Laughlin a new veterans home might also spark discussion of a new capital bill, which Illinois hasn't had for a decade. Barickman said he'd be open to considering a gas tax increase, one idea that's been explored to pay for it.

All governments in Illinois would be limited in giving out so-called golden parachutes with a bill now headed to the House. A measure which has passed the Senate would cap the amount of time governments could pay in a severance agreement to no more than a 20-week payout.

Barickman said it's a sensible move to stop these eye-popping pension deals.

"This was a good and necessary thing to do," Barickman declared.

Recent examples from Northern Illinois and the College of DuPage had former administrators getting hundreds of thousands of dollars in payouts in severance payments. Timothy Flanagan got \$480,000 after Illinois State fired him as president in 2014.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Alderman Hauman wants closure on divisive ‘welcoming city’ debate

Date: 05/14/2018

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A Bloomington alderman said it's time for her colleagues to follow Normal's lead and vote on a ‘welcoming city’ ordinance as a response to the Trump Administration’s crackdown on illegal immigration.

“I think we need something definitive so we can put it to bed,” said Alderman Diana Hauman, who sat through last Monday’s debate in Normal.

Hauman said her colleagues can learn a lot if they watch the debate and public comment on YouTube.

“Even though people didn’t agree, they were respectful of one another. Even the public comment, I think Mayor (Chris) Koos did an excellent job of setting the expectations before public comments started. The residents, whether they were from Bloomington or Normal, were following those recommendations from the mayor,” Hauman said.

Normal council members voted 5-2 last week to adopt a ‘welcoming’ resolution, which includes a provision requiring the police chief to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the department should work with federal immigration agents.

Hauman said she supports the concept of a ‘welcoming city’ ordinance, but believes aldermen need to settle the issue one way or the other.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Pontiac Mayor discusses pension deal with police department

Date: 06/04/2018

Time: 6:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

PONTIAC - The Pontiac City Council approved a new deal with the police department regarding pensions during Monday night's meeting.

Mayor Bob Russell said the city has had negotiations for months concerning police department pensions. While Pontiac reached a deal to get the city through the next three years with pension funding, Russell noted that may not be the case for every city across Illinois.

"With Illinois and the shape they're in, I don't see it in my near future, but even the courts are realizing something has to be done because there just is going to be no money for anything else," said Russell.

While Russell noted the market has been favorable as of late, that doesn't mean the pension problem in the state is solved. He said legislators need to take action before municipalities are backed into a corner.

"If the markets stay improved - which who knows from day to day - that will help," Russell explained. "But they've got to do something here pretty quick or there's going to be a whole lot of cities filing for bankruptcy, because there's just no way to keep up with that."

Russell praised the work done by the Pontiac Police Department and that he's pleased with the deal that was reached.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: City manager finalists offer strategies for downtown development

Date: 06/16/2018

Time: 6:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Filling all the vacant spaces in Downtown Bloomington will be one of the challenges for the next city manager.

The three finalists, all from Central Illinois, met the media and then the public at a 'meet and greet' event at City Hall Tuesday night.

Decatur City Manager Tim Gleason said having a new person in charge creates new opportunities, and he wants to instill a 'can-do' attitude in economic development.

"When you've got somebody that's even considering developing in your community, it's critical to find that way to make it happen," said Gleason.

Washington City Administrator Jim Culotta wants to eliminate economic barriers, and said the city has to invest in its people.

"Part of that is developing a strong entrepreneurial type of culture," Culotta said.

"Maybe there (are) things that the city can do to help foster that kind of a culture that I've seen successful in communities across the country," Culotta also said.

Interim Bloomington City Manager Steve Rasmussen said there are tremendous challenges downtown, but he's enthusiastic about its future.

"We can't tax our way to success, and we can cut our way to success," said Rasmussen.

"We've got to develop our way to success, and so we need to take every opportunity from many different ways to do economic development in the downtown and the near-downtown," Rasmussen also said.

Culotta and Gleason said they each want Rasmussen to remain on the staff if either becomes David Hales' permanent replacement.

Aldermen are set to discuss the hiring in a closed session Monday night.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Local BPD: Crime down, but homicides, sexual assaults increase

Date: 04/15/2018

Time: 7:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Police say crime reports dropped to a 20-year-low in 2017, though there were three homicides last year after there were none in 2016.

The city's crime report covers violent crimes including homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary and other offenses.

BPD reports sexual assaults rose 70 percent last year, which Police Chief Brendan Heffner attributes the increase to education and the 'Me Too' movement for more victims coming forward.

Heffner presented the annual report to the City Council on Monday, adding that new body worn cameras have come in and officers are coming around to the idea.

"We've been experimenting with them, and some officers who volunteered were kind of uneasy about it, but they did it," Heffner said. "Some of them had to be pushed to volunteer, but after they get them, they see the importance of it."

Heffner said the new West Jefferson Community House has helped his department.

"Overall, it has worked the way we had hoped. We're still learning," Heffner said. "It's still a work in progress, but zero shootings in the area, crime going down. That was the goal."

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Felonies filed here for using Facebook to expose 'snitches'

Date: 04/25/2018

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A McLean County Grand Jury has indicted four Twin-Cities residents on felony charges alleging they used social media to harass or attempt to harass confidential sources and prosecution witnesses.

The grand jury earlier this month indicted Margaret Stephens, Steven Sylvester, and Mark Huffington, all from Bloomington, and Robin Casey of Normal for postings they allegedly made between August and December of last year on a Facebook group page called 'People Against Snitches.'

The indictments allege Stephens posted photos of two confidential sources. Stephens and Huffington are also accused of identifying a source by name, nickname, and source number.

In addition, it's alleged Stephens and Sylvester posted a statement about a witness, whose information helped lead to a criminal conviction. They allegedly identified the witness by name in a photograph.

All four defendants are free on bond pending court dates next month. They can receive probation or prison sentences of up to five or seven years if they're convicted.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Tazewell Sheriff: Deputy killed rural Mackinaw man in self-defense

Date: 05/05/2018

Time: 6:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

MACKINAW - It was an 18-year old rural Mackinaw man who police shot to death near Mackinaw Friday morning, according to the Peoria County Coroner.

Tazewell County Sheriff's Police say the deputy who fired the fatal shots has 25 years experience as an officer. The deputy was examined at an area hospital and released.

Sheriff's Police say two deputies and a Mackinaw police officer were called to the scene on Illinois Route 9, about three miles east of Mackinaw, where a man was said to be suicidal, armed with a knife and an ax, and trying to break into a gun cabinet.

Our news partner, WMBD-TV, reports the man came toward the officers and fired a gunshot.

A sheriff's department news release said the deputy fired back in self-defense and wounded the suspect, who was pronounced dead at Peoria's OSF St. Francis Medical Center.

Peoria County Coroner Jamie Harwood said it's not known yet how many times the man was shot.

The coroner has scheduled an autopsy, and the dead man's name is being withheld until family members are notified.

Illinois State Police and the coroner's office are investigating.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Convicted local sex offender charged in new child molestation case

Date: 05/15/2018

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - McLean County prosecutors have filed child molestation charges against a Bloomington man who's on probation in a previous sex abuse case.

Bloomington Police arrested James Shields, 31, earlier this week. Prosecutors charged him with six counts of predatory criminal sexual assault involving a victim younger than 13 between January 2012 and December 2014.

Court records indicate Shields had previously been convicted of aggravated criminal sexual abuse, which less serious than the latest charges against him. Shields was sentenced in January of last year to four years probation and six months in the county jail for sexually abusing a teenager in 2015.

Shields faces up to 60 years in prison on each of the latest charges. A judge set bond at \$ 1 million, meaning he has to come up with \$100,000 to be released from jail before his trial.

Shields has a May 11 court date.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Grand jury indicts local teenager for double murder

Date: 05/26/2018

Time: 6:00 a.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A McLean County Grand Jury has determined prosecutors have sufficient evidence to try a local teenager for killing two young men at Lancaster Heights apartments in Normal two weeks ago.

The grand jury indicted 17-year old Christopher Harrison, 17, of Normal multiple charges including six counts of first degree murder for allegedly shooting Joseph Gardner, 20, and Reginaldt Hart Jr., 19, both from Bloomington.

Harrison is being tried as an adult for the execution-style slayings that happened April 25 outside his Lancaster Heights residence.

Authorities say Gardner and Hart died from a total of 21 gunshot wounds, including some to the back of the head, neck, and back.

By taking the case to a grand jury, prosecutors don't have to present their evidence in public during a probable cause hearing.

Harrison is also accused of having stolen guns and ammunition, including an AR-15 rifle, and he's charged with possession of marijuana with intent to deliver.

He's being held on \$2.5 million bond as he waits for Friday's arraignment.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Police still seeking answers five years after Bloomington woman's murder

Date: 05/23/2018

Time: 9:00 p.m.

Duration: Story ran 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - It's the fifth anniversary of an unsolved local murder case, and Bloomington Police are hoping the public will come forward with information that might lead to an arrest.

Police say Haileigh Eichhorn, 26, of Bloomington was last seen alive Sunday, April 28, 2013. She was considered a missing person until her body was discovered nine days later on Tuesday, May 7, 2013 in rural Stanford.

The department's Criminal Investigation Unit is actively pursuing all leads in Eichhorn's murder. Detectives want more information about the days and hours prior to her death.

Anyone with information is asked to call Bloomington Police Detectives Matthew Dick at 309-434-2475 or John Heinlen at 309-434-2672.

Detective Dick can also be reached at mdick@cityblm.org and Detective Heinlen can be reached at jheinlen@cityblm.org.

McLean County Crime Stoppers accepts tips at 309-828-1111 with a reward of up to one-thousand dollars for information leading to an arrest and indictment.