

QUARTERLY ISSUES/PROGRAMS LIST

Station WJBC-AM

Location: 236 Greenwood Avenue, Bloomington, Il. 61704

For quarter beginning:

- _____ January 1, 2019
- _____ April 1, 2019
- _____ July 1, 2019
- ~~_____~~ October 1, 2019

Attached hereto are descriptions of local issues addressed by the station and descriptions of how each issue was treated through the stations most significant issues-responsive programming or announcements during the report period.

WJBC-AM

Order Number	Copy	Total Spots	Date Range	Rate
99432	EEO Employer	176	10/1/19 - 12/29/19	\$0.00
271041	Entrepreneur of the Year	58	10/7/19 - 10/27/19	\$0.00
299445	Holiday Open House 2019	19	11/5/19 - 11/8/19	\$0.00
247054	Home Sweet Home Ministries	77	10/1/19 - 12/31/19	\$0.00
262496	MTPW/Breast Cancer Awareness	78	10/1/19 - 10/27/19	\$0.00
335492	PSA Rotator	10	12/30/19 - 12/31/19	\$0.00
99421	PSA Rotator	415	10/1/19 - 12/29/19	\$0.00
2019 QTR 4 totals		833		

Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: EEO (Equal Employer Announcements)

How Issue Was Treated: WJBC-AM ran a total of 176 recorded PSA's for Radio Bloomington an Equal Employer Opportunity

Title: EEO Employer

Date: 10/1/2019 - 12/29/2019

Time: Midnight to Midnight

Description:

WJBC-AM ran a total of 176-promotional announcements about WJBC-AM and Radio Bloomington being an EEO Employer.

Confirmation with Wide Orbit Traffic Order #99432

Quarterly Issues/Programs List

<u>Issue:</u>	The Means Center for Entrepreneurial Studies
<u>How Issue Was Treated:</u>	Recorded PSA's
<u>Title:</u>	Entrepreneur of the Year Dinner & Awards
<u>Date:</u>	10/7/2019 - 10/27/2019
<u>Time:</u>	Rotated through all dayparts 24- hours a day

Description:

WJBC-AM ran a total of 58-Recorded PSA's to help promote the Entrepreneur of the Year Dinner and Awards Banquet. The Illinois State University Alumnus Entrepreneur of the Year Award is for an alumnus of Illinois State University who has achieved outstanding entrepreneurial success since graduating.

WideOrbit Traffic Confirmation Order Number: 271041

Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: Uptown Normal Holiday Open House

How Issue Was Treated: Recorded PSA's

Title: Holiday Open House

Date: 11/5/2019 - 11/8/2019

Time: Rotated through all dayparts 24-hours a day

Description:

WJBC-AM ran a total of 19-Recorded PSA's to help promote The Holiday Open House in Uptown Normal. This free event provides free carriage rides, Santa & Mrs. Claus, free Hot Cocoa to help promote Uptown Normal.

WideOrbit Traffic Confirmation Order Number: 299445

Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: Home Sweet Home Ministries

How Issue Was Treated: Recorded PSA's

Title: Home Sweet Home Ministries

Date: 10/12/19 - 12/31/2019

Time: Rotated through all dayparts 24-hours a day

Description:

WJBC-AM ran a total of 77-Recorded PSA's to help promote Home Sweet Home Ministries.

Home Sweet Home Ministries has been serving the homeless and hungry with management and other supportive services to the homeless such as shelter, hot meals and access to clothing.

WideOrbit Traffic Confirmation Order Number: 29947054

Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: Breast Cancer Awareness

How Issue Was Treated: Recorded PSA's

Title: Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Date: 10/1/19 - 10/27/2019

Time: Rotated through all dayparts 24-hours a day

Description:

WJBC-AM ran a total of 78-Recorded PSA's to help promote Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

WideOrbit Traffic Confirmation Order Number: 262496

Quarterly Issues/Programs List

<u>Issue:</u>	Local Charities
<u>How Issue Was Treated:</u>	Recorded PSA's
<u>Title:</u>	Local PSA Rotator
<u>Date:</u>	10/1/2019 - 12/31/2019
<u>Time:</u>	Rotated through all dayparts 24- hours a day

Description:

WJBC-AM ran a total of 425-recorded PSA's about local charities and their upcoming events. These rotated evenly over the time frame listed above. PSA's that rotated are:

LaSalle County Historical Society Burgoo Festival; Shriners Hospitals 5K; Normal Rotary Oktoberfest; American Red Cross Saluting Our Heroes Breakfast; St. Jude Children's Hospital; Uptown Normal Treat Feast; St. Jude Golf Committee Million Quarter Challenge; Homes of Hope Draw Down; Arthritis Foundation Jingle Bell Run; Honor Flight Fundraiser; Holiday Expo at Parke Regency Hotel; B4 Event at Grossinger Motors Arena; The Baby Fold Festival of Trees; David Davis Mansion Christmas at the Mansion; Toys for Tots Silver Ball; Miller Park Zoo Wild Lights; Toys for Tots Toys Collection; Special Olympics of Illinois Polar Plunge; American Red Cross Gift of Life Blood Drive

Confirmation with WideOrbit Traffic Order #335492 & 99421

Quarterly Issues Fourth Quarter – October-December 2019

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Two robotic vacuums stolen from local store

Date: 10/01/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Police are asking for the public's help to identify a woman who allegedly stole two autonomous robotic vacuums.

Police said the theft happened at a local retail store Sept. 24. The stolen vacuums are valued at \$588.

BPD said the person of interest is a black female, 18-25 years old, with black hair.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Bloomington Police at 309-434-2379 or McLean County Crime Stoppers 309-828-1111.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: ISBE to hold budget hearing at Bloomington High School

Date: 10/01/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - The Illinois State Board of Education will hold a hearing later this month in Bloomington to gather community input on the state's budget for public education.

The ISBE will hold several hearings, including one Oct. 23 from 3:30-5:30 p.m. at Bloomington High School. Other hearings will be held in Chicago, East St. Louis and Mount Vernon.

Feedback and funding requests received at the hearings and online will inform ISBE's fiscal year 2021 public education budget recommendation that the agency will submit to Gov. JB Pritzker and the General Assembly in January.

A form to submit feedback is available online at www.isbe.net/budget.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Blue Ridge teachers union discloses latest offer to break stalemate

Date: 10/02/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

FARMER CITY - With a possible strike looming, the union representing teachers and other Blue Ridge School District employees is releasing to the public its latest contract proposal.

The Blue Ridge Federation of Teachers says it wants a one-year deal with a 4.25 percent raise, compared to the school board's desire to reach a three-year agreement providing employees with a 2.25 percent increase the first year.

The union is also asking the district to raise its contribution to health savings accounts to offset employees' deductibles.

Federation President Don Anton said the union is open to a multi-year contract, if there's an agreement on other issues.

The union is submitting its proposal to the Illinois Labor Relations Board, which Anton said is a step toward a possible strike.

At the union's request, Superintendent Susan Wilson said in a statement released last week that latest offers from both sides would be made public October 7, two days before negotiators are scheduled to meet for a third session with the federal mediator.

The union says the soonest a walkout can happen October 21. Although there hasn't been a strike vote, members voted last month to create a strike exploratory committee.

The federation represents about 110 employees, including teachers, secretaries, aides, library clerks, cooks, nurses, custodians, and bus drivers.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Maple Hill Armed Robbery

Date: 10/03/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

Police are investigating a hold up at a hotel early Tuesday morning on Bloomington's west side.

Bloomington Police say the armed robbery happened around 2 o'clock in the 900 block of Maple Hill Road.

Authorities say a man entered the hotel holding a gun and demanded money. The suspect took off with an undisclosed amount of cash and nobody was injured.

Police are describing the suspect as man wearing all black, 20 to 29 years old, approximately 5-foot-9, and around 180 pounds.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Bloomington Police or McLean County Crime Stoppers.

ISSUE: Politics

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Bloomington Democrat announces candidacy in 88th District

Date: 10/03/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A local business owner will try to unseat Republican Keith Sommer in the 88th Legislative District.

Bloomington Democrat Karla Bailey-Smith announced her candidacy during a news conference Thursday at the McLean County Democratic Headquarters.

Bailey-Smith owns Artistic Answers in Bloomington, and is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University.

Bailey-Smith said she feels unrepresented in the 88th District. She helped with fellow Democrat Jill Blair's campaign, who lost to Sommer in the 2018 election.

"For me I want to spend as much time as possible in Tazewell County and I'm going to do my very best to connect with people on a personal level," said Bailey-Smith.

Bailey-Smith said she does not agree with Sommer's voting record, which included nay's to raising the minimum salary for teachers and increasing spending for infrastructure.

Sommer has been in the legislature since 1999.

The 88th District includes central, west, and southeast Bloomington, and parts of rural McLean and Tazewell counties.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Ex-McLean County prosecutor claims colleague sexually harassed him

Date: 10/04/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A former McLean County Assistant State's Attorney, who used to try sexual assault cases, is accused in a federal lawsuit of repeated sexual harassment against a co-worker.

William Layne Roberts, who has his own legal troubles in a separate case, is asking for unspecified damages from Kristin Alferink, who at one time led the McLean County Sexual Assault Task Force.

Former State's Attorney Jason Chambers, who's now a judge, and current State's Attorney Don Knapp are also named as defendants, along with McLean County government.

The lawsuit stated that Alferink's campaign of harassment and retaliation started in December 2016 and escalated in frequency and severity over the next year.

Alferink allegedly had closed-door meetings to be alone with Roberts, grabbed him, and tried to kiss him when he tried to leave. Both were married at the time, according to the lawsuit.

Instead of taking action against Alferink, Roberts claimed Chambers retaliated by firing him in November 2017.

Knapp fired Alferink last year for undisclosed reasons. She's now a prosecutor in Champaign County.

Alferink did not respond to a request for comment. Chambers said he would "love to comment" on the case, but Illinois Supreme Court rules prohibit him from doing so. Knapp said it would be irresponsible for him to publicly discuss pending litigation.

In a separate case, Roberts awaits disciplinary action from the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission.

Records indicate Roberts worked as a prosecutor here even though he wasn't licensed at the time to practice law.

The state removed him the registry of licensed attorneys because he failed to complete continuing legal education requirements and did not pay a \$250 late fee for missing the deadline.

ISSUE: Politics

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Bloomington's Bray urges residents to contact council members on cannabis sales

Date: 10/06/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington residents are being asked to contact their city council members as a task force examines the community impact of selling marijuana for recreational use.

The request comes from Ward 9 Council Member Kimberly Bray, who represents parts of Bloomington's northeast side. She's convinced most people in the city are opposed to allowing cannabis sales.

"I'm asking everyone to reach out to their city council members and let them know their thoughts on the issue, and ask the hard questions because it's the city council and our ward system that represents the multiple sectors of our city, and there are multiple perspectives," said Bray.

Ultimately, Bray noted the council will make the key choices how the city implements the state's new cannabis law, perhaps imposing taxes on marijuana sales, or joining communities like Decatur and Naperville, which decided to ban marijuana sales for recreational purposes.

After attending Bloomington's first cannabis task force meeting, Bray said there's wisdom in Decatur's six-to-one council vote against pot sales.

"I think that when you invest like Decatur has done in doing revitalization and creating opportunity in the community, you don't do a 180 (degree) direction and add something that will drain resources and cause challenges to the community by adding additional demands for resources like this will do," Bray also said.

Bloomington's debate over cannabis sales comes as Normal's Town Council holds its first public meeting on the issue.

Normal's town staff is scheduled to make a presentation, to be followed by council members' discussion, at a work session set for Monday at 5 p.m., prior to the regular 7 p.m. town council meeting.

ISSUE: Politics

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Caisley to step down from McLean County Board, backs newcomer for seat

Date: 10/10/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - A retired judge, who served the past 13 years on the McLean County Board, said Thursday it's time for someone with fresh perspectives to replace him.

William Caisley announced he will not run for a fifth term representing District 4, which includes west Normal.

Caisley is endorsing Adelita Cruz, who's a manager at State Farm, in the 2020 election.

Caisley said now's a good time to leave because the jail addition is done, and the board recently hired a new administrator. However, he was worried about who might follow him.

"I found several that I thought would be well qualified, but they weren't interested. It takes somebody who demonstrates an interest in the job, and I think she demonstrates an interest in the job. She wants to do it," Caisley said.

Cruz, who's a Republican, said she's particularly interested in mental health and veterans affairs. Her husband Brandon is a Marine Corps Vet and served in Iraq.

"I don't think I would say that we need to divide ourselves that strongly, saying Republican or Democrat," said Cruz.

"I am a citizen who has the opportunity to improve the lives of everyone. So, I found a great support team here than can help me achieve that goal," Cruz added.

The Cruz family moved to the Twin-Cities from Colorado in 2015.

Caisley, who's 79, is concluding almost five decades of public service, including 32 years as a circuit judge.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: SOLD: State Farm building sale finalized

Date: 10/11/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

State Farm has announced the sale of its Downtown Bloomington building has been finalized.

The Bloomington insurer says the sale agreement with Rockford-based developer Urban Equity Properties, which was signed in September, went through Thursday afternoon.

In a news release, State Farm says the sale preserves the building for the community and ends the long-term financial obligations for maintenance and upkeep.

Urban Equity intends to transform the 13-story building into "Bloomington Lofts," a residential complex with more than 200 luxury loft apartments, including a fitness center, tenant lounges, communal space and ground-floor café.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Long prison sentence awaits local woman convicted of armed robbery

Date: 10/14/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A Bloomington woman will be sentenced to mandatory prison time in December after a McLean County Jury convicted her of robbing a co-worker at gunpoint.

The jury last week found Mary Harris guilty of armed robbery and unlawful use of a weapon. She was one of two people arrested for the hold-up last December outside Casey's General Store on Fox Creek Road.

In a news release, McLean County State's Attorney Don Knapp said Harris faces mandatory prison time of between 21 and 45 years in prison because a gun was used to commit the crime.

Authorities say Harris was an employee there. No shots were fired, although the co-worker handed over more than \$5,000.

Knapp said the victim was incredibly brave to testify after suffering a "horribly traumatic experience."

Harris will be sentenced December 13.

Co-defendant Calvin Harris, believed to be the woman's brother, is awaiting a November 22 status hearing in McLean County Court.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Drug suspect gets away from BPD, captured in Peoria

Date: 10/16/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Police avoided danger to themselves and perhaps the public by not chasing after a suspected drug offender who escaped from the downtown area and fled to Peoria.

As it turned out, police got their man and no one was hurt.

Public Information Officer John Fermon said a street crime vice unit officer conducting a drug investigation tried to arrest the man who was driving a stolen silver Jeep with Michigan license plates near Main and Jefferson Streets about 11 a.m. Wednesday.

"The suspect got out of the car, (and) ran away. We had our K9 unit there. The suspect got back in the vehicle, was able to get free, and then basically rammed into one of our street crime units, took off the bumper, and then fled at a high rate of speed through downtown," Fermon said.

Fermon says the suspect got out of the Jeep, fled on foot, ran back to the vehicle, crashed into the squad car, knocked down a street sign and garbage can before he got away.

Police chose not to chase the suspect because a high-speed pursuit is dangerous when there are many innocent bystanders nearby, according to Fermon.

"It's a dangerous situation when you get a vehicle driving recklessly through a highly populated area. You never know what to expect," said Fermon.

"A vehicle hits a person walking, and then it could be fatal," Fermon added.

Peoria Police Public Information Officer Amy Dotson told our news partner Heart of Illinois-ABC that authorities captured the suspect Wednesday afternoon on the Bob Michel Bridge in Downtown Peoria.

Police are not releasing the suspect's name or details about the alleged drug crimes.

ISSUE:Politics

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: LaHood: Trump's 'lynching' tweet not appropriate

Date: 10/22/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A Central Illinois lawmaker does not agree with President Donald Trump's tweet describing the impeachment inquiry process as a "lynching."

U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood (R-Dunlap) told WJBC's Scott Miller he doesn't agree with the language used in the president's tweet.

"It's not language I would use and it isn't the appropriate term to use," said LaHood.

While LaHood does not agree with Trump's tweet, he does back the president. LaHood said Trump has constantly been hounded by Democrats in Congress trying to undo the results of the 2016 election.

This is Trump's first use of the term "lynching" to describe the impeachment inquiry. CNN reports that Trump previously retweeted a statement during the 2016 election referring to his media treatment as a "disgusting lynching."

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Accuracy of Connect Transit leaders' statements questioned

Date: 10/22/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - A Connect Transit board member is questioning the accuracy of statements made by the board's chair and vice chair when they spoke earlier this month to the Normal Town Council.

John Bowman said at the conclusion of Tuesday's board meeting that Chairman Mike McCurdy and Vice Chair Ryan Whitehouse were wrong when they told the town council that routes had never been changed because of the size of buses.

Bowman pointed to a nearly four year old document indicating there were in fact route changes when the transit system started to phase in larger 40 foot buses.

"Sunnyside Apartment Complex was one that lost service directly because of the larger buses," said Bowman.

"There was a pretty strong statement that was made at the October 7 session with the town council that no changes had ever been made because of bus sizes. That's simply a revision of history, frankly," Bowman said.

McCurdy believes he was providing correct information, and intends to review prior reports to check his accuracy.

Whitehouse said he answered council members questions to the best of his ability, but does not rule out missing a fact or two during the nearly two hours that he and McCurdy appeared before the council.

"I have served on this board as a volunteer for almost eight years. I'm not going to say I'm perfect. That could have happened, but if that did happen, it was out of good faith," said Whitehouse.

"Nothing that I said was a dishonest misrepresentation," Whitehouse also said.

Unintended factual errors undermine the transit system's credibility with a skeptical public, said Bowman.

ISSUE: Education, Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Modest economic growth seen to reduce District 87 tax rate

Date: 10/23/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Property owners in District 87 might see a modest decline in their tax bills next year, assuming there's a boost in taxable land values.

School system administrators acknowledge they are overly optimistic in their growth projections to make sure the district captures all available tax dollars. Property taxes account for almost 63 percent of total district revenue.

The school system's chief financial officer, Colin Manahan, presented to the school board Wednesday night a proposed tax levy in which the district would collect almost \$44.5 million dollars next year, based on a three percent increase in taxable land values. That's better than the McLean County Assessor's projection for a one percent gain.

The district sees its tax rate dropping three cents to \$5.12 per \$100 of assessed valuation, although Manahan declined to speculate how that would impact individual tax bills because he said there are too many unknown variables right now.

There's some reason for optimism about growth due to the massive expansion at Westminster Village, redevelopment of the old State Farm Headquarters in Downtown Bloomington, and the opening of the upscale restaurant and bar called Rob Dob's on North Hershey Road.

However, Manahan is also watching the still-struggling Eastland Mall, which he said is "one of the most visible corners in the State of Illinois, outside of Chicago and St. Louis."

"We want the people that own Eastland Mall to turn things around, to redevelop, to invigorate the area, bring in whatever to stimulate that area because right now we all know what's going on," Manahan said.

The school board will be asked to adopt the tax levy after a December 11 public hearing.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Pot sales debate shifts to Bloomington Planning Commission

Date: 10/28/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington City Council is starting a public hearing process before deciding if recreational cannabis businesses should operate in the city.

The council's action comes despite a religious leader's concerns city leaders are moving too fast on the issue.

The Bloomington Planning Commission will hold a November 13 public hearing on proposed zoning rules, and may conduct other sessions before a planned council vote in December.

Father Dave Halt of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church said he likes to stay out of political debates, but told council members he's worried they're rushing into the marijuana business without knowing its impact.

"You have the option to opt in, but being an early adopter really gets us nothing if it's the wrong decision and the wrong fit," said Halt.

"Please, for our community, slow down."

Local business operator RJ McCracken believes the council is not moving fast enough.

"Please hurry up. There's money to be made here," said McCracken.

"There are investors who are waiting on our decision who want to develop real estate," McCracken added.

He suggested tax revenue generated from pot sales could be allocated to help kids in need.

"It doesn't have to be an alienating issue that makes all of us hate each other, make people think that they're outraged because reefer madness is going to take over the town," McCracken said.

"It's going to be legal here, no matter what we do, so why would we turn away the money that we could actually use to help our community," McCracken also said.

Kimberly Bray and Donna Boelen were the only council members voting no. Earlier, they failed to win council support for narrowing the planning commission's focus to just dispensaries and craft growers.

Bray said people she represents in Ward 9, covering parts of northeast Bloomington, are less than thrilled about the prospect of marijuana businesses sprouting up, perhaps creating foul odors and reducing property values.

"While there are those in the community that are very bullish for these opportunities, I'll tell you that I represent a ward that is not bullish for this opportunity," said Bray.

If marijuana businesses become legal, Boelen said they should be close to public bus routes.

"Everybody that wants it, if it's legal, should be able to access it, and for people that maybe want to work there," Boelen said.

Bray and Council member Scott Black said they will not support onsite marijuana consumption, while members Joni Painter and Jamie Mathy urged the city to work closely with the Town of Normal, which is considering zoning rules cannabis businesses

Addiction specialist Deb Carter, who served on the city's cannabis task force, estimated 30 to 40 percent of Bloomington adults smoke marijuana.

"It's your friends, it's your co-workers, there's a great number of white, upper-middle class professional people, lawyers, bankers, people you wouldn't know. The reason why you do not know this is because of the stigma," Carter told the council.

Carter believes legalized marijuana sales would help remove the stigma.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: BPD: Man holds steak knife against woman's throat

Date: 11/03/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - McLean County prosecutors this weekend filed felony charges in a domestic violence case in which a man is accused of holding a steak knife to a woman's throat on Bloomington's east side.

Bloomington Police were called early Friday evening to the 1200 block of Orchard Road where 55-year old Andre Banks allegedly asked a woman to move out of the house.

As she was packing, authorities say Banks forced her to the floor in bedroom and held a steak knife to her throat for about two or three minutes.

Authorities said she was able to get up and leave the residence.

Police arrested Banks about 6:20 p.m. Friday.

Prosecutors charged him with aggravated unlawful restraint, unlawful restraint, and domestic battery.

Banks is jailed on a \$7,500 cash bond. He's not allowed to have contact with the alleged victim if he's released from jail.

ISSUE: Community

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Developer remembered for wielding power to spur Twin-City's growth

Date: 11/04/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Two former Twin-City mayors who presided over an economic boom in the 1980s and 90s agree that local developer Jack Snyder was one of the community's most powerful people.

Snyder died Thursday at age 90.

"I am so proud to have been involved with Jack in so many of his projects," said former Bloomington Mayor Jesse Smart.

Smart said Snyder's power stemmed from his ability to come up with projects that were really needed and secure the capital necessary to make them happen.

In Snyder's obituary, he's credited with developing "over 20 percent of the land area of Bloomington-Normal."

Former Normal Paul Harmon noted that Snyder was responsible for building Ironwood Subdivision and Golf Course, which Harmon said was key to Normal's northward expansion.

"It might not compare to some of the things on the east side of Bloomington today, but at the time, it was considered very upscale," said Harmon.

"It still is a very, very nice subdivision. It was not only the fact that it was an upscale subdivision, but it was massive," said Harmon, who was Normal's mayor from 1985 to 1993.

Harmon said Snyder lived up to agreements he made with local governments.

One of Snyder's projects that did not happen was demolition of the historic south block of the courthouse square in Downtown Bloomington that would have paved the way for commercial buildings, a parking garage, and green space. The city council narrowly defeated that proposal.

Snyder was developer of a commercial building on the east side of the courthouse square that replaced the Unity Building, which was destroyed by fire in 1988. The Bloomington Pantagraph now occupies part of the newer building.

Smart said Snyder doesn't get the credit he deserves for building subdivisions at a time when Bloomington-Normal needed new housing.

"Drive around and look. He built a majority of them," said Smart.

He said Snyder had a great personality and built "great developments."

A memorial service will be held Wednesday at 2 p.m. at First Christian Church in Bloomington. There will be no visitation. Calvert & Metzler Memorial Home is in charge of arrangements.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Normal council backs off from property tax hike for pension funding

Date: 11/04/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - Normal Town Council members believe they've figured out how to avoid a hefty increase in property taxes next year, and perhaps temper some of the criticism leveled against elected leaders for raising taxes.

"You're not making Normal, Illinois an affordable place to live, said Craig Stimpert, one of five people who spoke out during Monday night's council meeting.

"This taxing madness has to stop," Stimpert said.

The council is willing to step back for a year from the goal of funding employee pensions at 100 percent by the year 2040. Instead, the town would fund pensions at the state-mandated 90 percent.

Mayor Chris Koos and Council member Kathleen Lorenz suggested a temporary change on pension funding.

"The 100 percent is certainly above and beyond, and that's usually what we try to do in terms of being better than just normal or average, but in light of the situation of some of the mechanisms that have caused the bump this year, I don't know that we have that luxury," Lorenz said.

The council unanimously backed the change despite Council member Kevin McCarthy's reservations about kicking the can down the road.

"I'm not very flexible about funding our pensions," said McCarthy.

Council member Chamberly Cummings also agreed to what she said was "one-year hiatus."

"Because we have been so responsible, and we want to continue to be responsible, it does give us an opportunity to go back to the drawing board and re-think some things and ask some additional questions," said Cummings, who's running next year as a Democratic candidate for the 105th District State Representative's seat now held by Republican Dan Brady.

The council was much more divided, voting 4-3, to adopt Stan Nord's idea to find almost \$100,000 in additional spending cuts to reduce the tax levy to this year's level of just under \$13 million, down from the original \$13.6 million levy.

"The best thing we can do for our economy, for businesses, for people living here, is lower our taxes. If it's only for one year, let's take advantage," said Nord.

McCarthy, Koos, and Cummings voted against Nord's amendment.

Based on expectations for a 1.25 percent boost in taxable land values, town staffers now estimate the owner of a \$165,000 home would see an increase of just \$7, instead of an extra \$37 next year had the council adopted the larger tax levy.

ISSUE:Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Two Verizon workers robbed at gunpoint in Normal

Date: 11/05/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - Normal Police say a masked man robbed a local business at gunpoint Tuesday night.

Police were called about 8 p.m. to Verizon Wireless, The Digital Store in the 1700 block of Bradford Lane, just off Raab Road, in north Normal.

The suspect had a handgun, and made off with an undisclosed amount of cash and some iPhones, said Sgt. Steven Koscielak. No one was hurt, according to the sergeant.

"No shots fired. No overall violence except the armed robbery part of it, which is scary and violent in itself, but not above and beyond that," Sgt. Koscielak said.

He said the employees did not see how the suspect got away.

"We are working on getting video, and our detectives are in talking with our victims, and we're going to get it all pieced together," said Koscielak.

Investigators have not released a description of the suspect.

ISSUE:Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: One person dead after van strikes pedestrian on Veterans Parkway

Date: 11/06/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - A pedestrian was hit by a van and killed about 8:30 p.m. Wednesday on northbound Veterans Parkway, just north of Fort Jesse Road in northeast Normal.

Normal Police said the pedestrian, who was an adult, was crossing Veterans and killed by the vehicle traveling northbound. It's not known whether the person was using the crosswalk.

McLean County Coroner Kathy Yoder will release the victim's identity after she notifies relatives, and an autopsy is completed to determine the cause of death.

Police closed off northbound Veterans, between Fort Jesse and Shepard Road, while an accident reconstruction team investigated what happened, according to Normal Police Lt. Nick Thacker.

"They'll look at all physical evidence that's on scene, anything that was on the person, anything from the vehicle," said Thacker.

"They have a machine that will take measurements to hopefully gauge speeds, impacts, skid marks, things of that nature," Thacker said.

Anyone who may have witnessed the accident is asked to call Normal Police at 309-454-9525.

"I don't know where they were hit. I don't know if they were in the crosswalk, or not," Thacker said.

"Those are all things we'll look at. I can tell you Fort Jesse at Veterans is one of the busiest intersections in town," he added.

Wednesday night's fatal accident came 41 days after an 18-year old man was hit while crossing Veterans Parkway, near East Empire Street in Bloomington.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Suspected drunk driver accused of endangering two children in her van

Date: 11/11/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A woman is free on bond after McLean County prosecutors charged her with endangering two children in her van because she had been drinking vodka before taking the wheel.

According to court documents, Bloomington Police were investigating a multi-vehicle crash late Friday night in the 900 block of North Main Street.

Police say 31-year old Nakisha Wilkes was the driver of a van that was heavily damaged. Two children, ages three and ten, were said to be inside the vehicle.

Police say Wilkes failed standardized field sobriety tests and admitted she was drinking vodka.

It's not clear in the court records whether the children were hers.

Wilkes is charged with child endangerment, drunk driving, aggravated drunk driving.

She posted a \$500 cash bond pending a November 22 court appearance.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Carrillo: People need safe places to legally smoke pot

Date: 11/11/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A Bloomington City Council member believes people might not have safe places to legally smoke marijuana if government leaders ban consumption in areas where pot might be sold.

Proposed ordinances in Bloomington and Normal would require users to smoke pot in private, and not at businesses that sell it.

However, Council member Jenn Carrillo said people who don't own their homes might have nowhere to go if landlords ban marijuana on their property.

"Those of us who rent, and those of us who are in public housing are going to face a significant number of restrictions," Carrillo said in a video she posted on her Facebook page.

Carrillo sees this as a social justice issue, especially if people are forced to smoke in public.

"It's a problem that is not on everybody's radar," said Carrillo.

"I think people are thinking about it like a very frivolous issue, but this will actually allow there to continue to be criminalization of people around a substance that is now going to become legal," Carrillo said.

Carrillo is speaking out before the Bloomington Planning Commission holds a public hearing on Wednesday.

Carrillo persuaded the city council to create a task force, which voted seven-to-three to recommend the council permit cannabis-related businesses to serve recreational users.

Meantime, Black Lives Matter Bloomington-Normal released a statement on the cannabis issue Monday night.

The group is calling on the planning commission to come up with a proposal maximizing opportunity for minority enterprise, increasing public revenue, and repairing damage inflicted minorities by the "failed and brutal" war on drugs.

"Generations of disproportionate enforcement, sentencing, and incarceration for cannabis has lead to separated families, community instability, exacerbated poverty, as well as hiring and housing discrimination and civic exclusion," Black Lives Matter said in a statement.

"The new law seeks to address some of the damage done by generations of oppressive, racist policy with built-in expungement provisions that seek to work with law enforcement to identify cannabis related arrests in recent years, and expunge the records of an estimated 800,000 people," the organization said.

The planning commission's public hearing is scheduled for 4 p.m. Wednesday at Bloomington City Hall.

ISSUE: Crime, Courts

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Murder defendant's young daughter testifies mother gave Rica Rountree a "whooping"

Date: 11/14/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - The seven-year old daughter of accused killer Cynthia Baker told a McLean County Jury on Thursday she saw her mother physically abuse eight-year old Rica Rountree.

Baker's daughter said she remembers her mother kicking her sister in the stomach, then laughing.

"She was whooping her," Baker's daughter told the jury.

Baker's daughter said Rountree was often in trouble, but did not do anything to deserve punishment. Rountree was not allowed to even sit on the couches in their home.

She then told jurors her mother kicked Rountree in the stomach, causing the girl to become dizzy and run into a television, prompting Baker to kick her again and start laughing.

Another witness, who lived with the family, said she took notice of the treatment described by the daughter.

“They would play on the couch, or flips and tricks, or cartwheels, and handstands. Rica was not allowed to that. She wasn’t allowed to stand on the couch or jump on the couch or anything of the things that the other kids were doing,” said Kalei McCague.

The jury also heard from the doctor who operated on Rica the night she died. He said her injuries “could” have come from a car accident, as the defense is now suggesting.

However, the doctor said the family never mentioned a car accident at the time.

A video, hours long, was shown to the jury. It was of Baker’s interview with police in January.

In the video, Baker insisted she did not discipline any of the children in her home, despite saying Rountree tried to bite and punch her.

Baker, in the police interview, said she and Richard Rountree, her boyfriend, fought to get custody of the child because they believed it was in the child’s best interest.

Baker denied ever disciplining her children, but the detective who interviewed her also interviewed her kids, who said Baker kicked, slapped and punched them as a form of punishment.

When asked why her children would say that if it was not true, Baker said, “I don’t know. I’m not going to call my kids liars.”

In the interview, Baker denies kicking or punching Rountree in the stomach and says she did not see anyone in her home do it either.

Baker could be sentenced to natural life in prison if found guilty of the murder charge.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Normal adopts rules for cannabis businesses, approves tax on dispensary sales

Date: 11/18/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - Normal is welcoming cannabis-related businesses to town, setting what elected leaders say are strict ground rules and imposing a sales tax when recreational marijuana use becomes legal New Years Day.

The council voted 6-1 for a zoning ordinance keeping dispensaries away from areas near Illinois State University, Uptown Normal, in mobile home parks, and at least 200 feet from single-family homes, and 100 feet from schools, day cares, and churches.

The only exception is The Green Solution, a medical dispensary in north Normal that's a little less than 100 feet from a church, and is likely to seek permission to run a recreational dispensary there.

Council member Stan Nord was only no vote after requesting a joint meeting with Bloomington's council to set uniform zoning rules.

"Say on Vernon and Towanda Avenue, Bloomington-Normal cross right there, if we're not the same, and one town really doesn't want something there, and the other one does, we're going to have some clashes," said Nord.

Kathleen Lorenz voted with the majority.

"I want to be business friendly, and I want us to be thoughtful about the safety of our community, and I think striking a balance of allowing this to happen, but with the strictest land use regulations and zoning regulations is the way to go," said Lorenz.

The council unanimously voted to levy the maximum-allowed three percent tax on dispensary sales, but rejected Nord's attempt to allocate those tax dollars to pay for police and fire pensions.

"This isn't revenue that we had before, so you think it's kind of greedy for us to take it to spend it for the general fund purposes when the brunt of the expense and learning curve is going to fall on our emergency services," Nord said.

No one knows for sure how much tax money Normal will make from marijuana sales. Council member Chamberly Cummings says decisions how to spend the money shouldn't be made on the fly and should be hashed out during budget discussions.

ISSUE: Crime, Courts

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Accused child killer's lawyer seeks convictions on less serious charges

Date: 11/19/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - The attorney for an accused child killer from Normal acknowledges his client is guilty of domestic battery, but did not commit more serious charges, including murder.

Defense attorney Todd Ringel, in his closing argument, referred to the graphic videos of Cynthia Baker physically abusing eight-year old Rica Rountree.

"She is 100 percent guilty of every domestic battery they charged her with. I'm her attorney and I'm telling you that, but those videos do not show aggravated battery, they do not show murder," said Ringel.

"They show an offense she is accurately charged with," Ringel also said.

As news partner Heart of Illinois-ABC reported...McLean County Assistant State's Attorney Erika Reynolds replayed the video of Baker hitting the naked child and slamming her head on the wall in front of all the children in Baker's home.

"For most, it's unthinkable, but for Rica it was normal," said Reynolds.

In the 407 Stanhope residence, Rica was treated as less than as this defendant's punching bag, and her pain served as entertainment for the entire family, Reynolds told the jury.

Authorities claim Baker kicked the child so hard in the stomach that she died from her injuries in January at a Peoria hospital.

Baker did not take the stand in her own defense. The girl's father, Richard Rountree, also did not testify.

Jurors started deliberating at about 3:45 p.m. on Monday, but they'll return at 9 a.m. Tuesday with a new member. Judge Casey Costigan placed an alternate juror on the panel because of an issue with one of the jurors being late.

ISSUE:Politics

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Federal dollars boost Connect Transit's Better Bus Stop Campaign

Date: 11/21/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Connect Transit's Better Bus Stop Campaign is receiving federal government support to the tune of a half-million dollars.

Central Illinois Congressmen Rodney Davis and Darin LaHood announced Bloomington-Normal's public transit system is receiving the money from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Buses and Bus Facilities Grant Program.

The \$500,000 grant comes as Connect Transit works to improve safety, and makes bus stops more accessible for disabled riders. During the past 18 months, the transit system has made improvements to 53 bus stops, according to a news release.

In a statement, Davis said he's seen first hand how bus stop upgrades improve rider safety. LaHood said he'll continue to work in Congress to bolster Illinois' infrastructure.

Connect Transit General Manager Isaac Thorne said in a statement the grant money allows the transit system to continue investing in bus stop improvements, which improves riders' mobility to get to work, school, and medical appointments.

Connect Transit's Board of Trustees approved the Better Bus Stop Campaign in March of 2018.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: McLean County car crashes this weekend claim two lives

Date: 11/24/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - A woman is dead and three other people were hurt when a car and a sport utility vehicle collided in far southeastern McLean County.

The woman, 31, is one of two people killed on McLean County roads this weekend.

Coroner Kathy Yoder says the woman was the driver and only occupant of the car. Three people in the SUV were treated at an area hospital. Their conditions are not available.

Yoder is scheduling an autopsy to determine what caused the woman's death. Her name won't be released until Yoder notifies relatives. The coroner and Illinois State Police are investigating what happened.

Meantime, the coroner's office and the McLean County Sheriff's Department are investigating a three-vehicle crash early Saturday morning north of Normal that killed Andrew Dusek, 29, of Hudson.

Yoder said preliminary autopsy results show Dusek died from multiple blunt injuries. Authorities believe his car crossed the center line on Pipeline Road near Hudson, struck another car, and then collided with an SUV.

Dusek was the only person in car. Yoder provided no information whether anyone else was hurt in the crash.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: One person wounded in east side shooting

Date: 12/02/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Police confirmed one person was wounded in a shooting that happened late Sunday night in a residential area on the city's east side.

Police were called about 11 p.m. to Dianne Drive and Lisa Drive, near Clearwater Avenue and Airport Road. That's where police said a man suffered at least one gunshot wound to the leg.

He apparently did not suffer life-threatening injuries.

Police said the man was taken to Advocate BroMenn Medical Center in Normal.

Anyone with information about the shooting is asked to call Bloomington Police at 309-820-8888 or McLean County Crime Stoppers at 309-828-1111.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Normal's tax levy creeps higher as divided council restores funding for PR position

Date: 12/02/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - A divided Normal Town Council voted Monday night to restore funding to hire a public relations specialist, reversing a decision made only a month ago to offer modest property tax relief.

The council voted 4-3 in favor of Kevin McCarthy's motion to put back in the budget almost \$97,000, thus raising the levy -- the amount of property taxes to be collected next year -- to just over \$13 million.

McCarthy noted the average homeowner would pay only about \$6 more next year.

"The average taxpayer would have paid 50 cents a month to fund a communication director and better communication that we've all said we wanted, and we all said we supported, but we didn't do that. Well, I'm going to ask that we give it another shot," said McCarthy.

Mayor Chris Koos, voting with the majority, said the action corrects an error in policy and process. Council member Kathleen Lorenz believes a PR pro would have helped the council deal with Blackstone Trails subdivision residents who felt they didn't have a say about a new east side fire station in their neighborhood.

"That was a big deal about the property there, and the impact of a fire station. One of their chief concerns was that they didn't have a lot of advance notice," said Lorenz.

"Maybe a communications professional would have guided us better on that," Lorenz said.

Council member Chamberly Cummings also voted to restore the funding.

Dissenters included Karyn Smith, who called the vote a "bad faith" move. Stan Nord and Scott Preston also voted no.

Preston said he's disheartened the council decided not to delay adopting the amended levy to allow for public comment.

"That levy was not established with any time for any kind of citizen knowledge or feedback at all before the final vote on that was taken. That certainly flies in the face of the practice that we have always had every year," Preston said.

Council members left in tact a temporary plan to scale back funding of workers' pensions to the mandated minimum of 90 percent, instead of fully-funding pensions by the year 2040, which would led to a larger property tax hike.

ISSUE:Government, Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Negotiations stall to provide ISU bus riders with free Connect Transit service

Date: 12/06/2019

Time:3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - Negotiations have hit a stalemate as Connect Transit wants to receive a larger subsidy from Illinois State University to provide free bus service for students, faculty, and staff.

A divided Connect Transit Board on Thursday refused to accept a recommendation that would have extended the contract another six months, with ISU paying the transit system an extra two percent.

The contract expires at the end of this month, meaning ISU would lose the service in January if the two sides can't reach an agreement.

The board's vote was 3-3, with Chair Mike McCurdy casting one of the no votes. McCurdy says the nearly \$278,000 subsidy does not keep up with inflation.

Vice Chair Ryan Whitehouse and Monica Bullington also voted no.

Board member Julie Hile voted for the temporary contract extension, although she noted Connect General Manager Isaac Thorne has been meeting for months with ISU representatives.

"I couldn't tell you standing here where it's going to land, except to say that I've got confidence in our community, and we'll figure it out," Hile said.

Hile, John Bowman, and Judy Buchanan voted to extend the contract.

ISU uses Connect Transit buses to run its Redbird Express Service. Plus, the Universal Access Agreement allows students, faculty, and staff to ride all fixed route buses for free by swiping a valid identification card.

Connect has provided universal access to ISU since 2006.

ISSUE: Religion

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Beatification set for Thursday

Date: 12/09/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

PEORIA-- The Diocese of Peoria will be hosting a novena, or special nine-day prayer service, to move forward with the beatification of Archbishop Fulton Sheen.

Bishop Daniel Jenky says the novena will start Thursday.

Sheen's beatification was scheduled for December 21st but was postponed earlier this month. Beatification is a title achieved before one can become a saint in the Catholic Church.

The diocese says the novena will include daily meditations on reflections from Sheen and will be televised on Catholic television networks and social media.

An El Paso native, Sheen died in 1979. His remains were returned to St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria earlier this year, the same place he was ordained as a priest 100 years ago.

ISSUE:Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Cause of fire undetermined

Date: 12/12/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON-- After a lengthy investigation, the cause of a fire that destroyed Diesel Dick's in downtown Bloomington is being ruled undetermined.

Bloomington Fire Public Information Officer Eric Davison says investigators were not able to determine what started the blaze on Halloween. Davison says a dollar estimate of damage is around 500-thousand dollars.

While debris from the former auto garage still sits in the 500 block of Madison Street, Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner says the city and a local restoration company are working to clean the area.

Renner also notes there has been some interest in the property, which is in a strategic location near the downtown area.

ISSUE:Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Mayor will use veto to push pot through

Date: 12/12/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON-- The Bloomington City Council will vote Monday night to either opt-in or opt-out for cannabis sales as the new state law legalizing recreational marijuana goes into effect New Year's Day. If the council decides to opt-out, the leader of the city says he'll use his power to veto the decision.

Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner has only used a veto two times. He says using that power should only be in an extreme circumstance and opting-out would warrant a veto.

Renner says he thinks there's majority support to allow marijuana sales. The council will also consider recommendations made by Bloomington's Planning Commission. One of those is to allow on site marijuana use at dispensaries, which would make the city the first in Illinois to allow on site consumption.

Many of the panel's recommendations are similar to the town of Normal's guidelines who already voted to allow cannabis-related businesses.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Shots fired in North Normal

Date: 12/13/2019

Time:

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL-- Police are investigating a shots fired incident that happened Thursday night in north Normal.

Officers were called around 6:15 to the area of Raab Road and Rockingham Drive, just west of Constitution Trail.

Authorities say they located several shell casings in the area. Nobody was injured and there have been no arrests.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Normal Police or McLean County Crime Stoppers.

ISSUE:Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Construction approved for Bone Student Center

Date: 12/16/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL-- A new restaurant is coming to the Bone Student Center after the Illinois State University Board of Trustees approved construction.

Star Ginger, and Asian grill and noodle bar will be housed on the second floor of the student center and it comes with a price tag of one point three million dollars.

The funds approved by Trustees over the weekend will cover the cost of kitchen construction, serving area and a graphics package to meet Star Ginger corporate requirements.

The money for the project is from bond revenue.

In other business the Board approved a six month agreement with Connect Transit that covers universal access to all Connect Transit routes as well as Redbird Express bus service on the Illinois State campus.

The contract that will be funded through student fee revenues goes into effect January one and will cost the University \$289,068.

A decision on a performance raise for President Larry Dietz was pushed off until early 2020 as some members of the board were only able to join the meeting via conference call.

ISSUE: Charity

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Holiday tradition going strong after more than three decades

Date: 12/16/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON-- Christmas is getting closer and families are already packing into stores to get gifts for their loved ones. But not everyone is fortunate enough to get a lot of gifts. A Twin-Cities holiday party changes that.

Our news partner Heart of Illinois-ABC reports a Winter Wonderland for kids of all ages was filled with candy, basketballs and holiday games at Bloomington High School over the weekend.

The holidays can be hard for families, so they hope little moments like these can help everyone feel holly, jolly and bright, according to event organizer Mike Matejka.

The "Christmas for Kids Party" is a tradition 37 years strong with people coming back for more memories each year. Matejka says those moments are special for the families and Santa's volunteers.

Matejka says the biggest reward is seeing kids leave with big smiles and gifts for the holiday season.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: iPhone theft has BPD asking for help

Date: 12/17/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON-- Bloomington Police are asking for the public's help to identify three people involved in a retail theft.

Police say the suspects stole over 26-thousand dollars in iPhones from the Wal-Mart Supercenter on West Market Street. Police say the theft happened last Friday.

Authorities are describing the suspects as a black male and two black females, all between the ages of 20 and 30. A picture of the suspects can be seen at WJBC.com.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Bloomington Police or McLean County Crime Stoppers.

ISSUE: Charity

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Red Kettle campaign behind schedule

Date: 12/19/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON-- The annual Red Kettle Christmas Campaign for the Salvation Army of McLean County is nearing an end and more donations are needed.

Development Director Angie Bubon says the organization is about 10 to 15 percent behind its goal to raise 520-thousand dollars.

Bubon says the red kettles were not out at stores as early because of a later Thanksgiving.

Bubon says all money donated in McLean County stays in the area for services throughout the year.

The Salvation Army is seeking volunteer bell ringers as the red kettle campaign runs through Christmas Eve. More information to donate or volunteer can be found at WJBC.com.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Suspect in custody for stabbing

Date: 12/21/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL-- Normal Police have a suspect in custody after a stabbing Wednesday morning on the north side of town.

Our news partner Heart of Illinois-ABC report police were called around 11:30 to the 1700 block of Bradford Lane, near the Walgreen's for a woman who was stabbed. Police says the victims injuries were non-life threatening.

Officers say they tracked a woman suspected of the stabbing to the 700 block of Orlando Avenue. Authorities say the woman would not come out of the residence, so an arrest warrant was obtained.

Police say the woman was arrested without incident. Authorities could not identify the suspect at this time.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Normal police officer enters plea

Date: 12/21/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL-- The Normal police officer accused of stealing \$12,000 from a victim of a drug overdose pleaded not guilty to all charges Friday.

Brian Williams is charged with two theft charges and two charges of official misconduct, all felonies. The 18-year veteran of the department was placed on administrative leave following the arrest.

Williams was one of the responding officers November 25 to check the well being of a possible overdose victim.

The victim did die from the overdose, but after officers left the scene a family member contacted police to report money missing from the residence.

Shortly after the incident, the relative received anonymous calls, to "quit speaking with police in order to have the money returned."

While she was with Illinois State Police officers, another call from an unidentified number came in asking if she wanted the money back. She suggested they meet at a gas station in Pontiac for the exchange.

Illinois State Police followed and recorded the woman during the incident at Pontiac.

News partner WEEK reports Court documents noted undercover officers noticed an individual driving around the gas station, parking, entering and exiting his vehicle in a suspicious manner.

He eventually parked near a phone booth, got out of his car and placed a bag inside. The relative then got a call that the suspect left the money and was watching.

Normal Police say the bag contained the missing twelve grand and they approached the suspect who identified himself as a Normal Police Officer.

Williams was arrested and charged with official misconduct/theft and possession of stolen property.

Williams is next due in court January 27.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Baker asking for sentence to be vacated

Date: 12/23/2019

Time: 6 am

Duration: 12 hours

BLOOMINGTON-- The woman who was found guilty of killing her 8-year-old stepdaughter has retained a new lawyer to argue for ineffective counsel.

Cynthia Baker was found guilty by a jury on November 19 for first-degree murder of Rica Rountree, and could face life in prison due to her being found guilty of committing the crimes in a heinous manner.

News partner Heart of Illinois ABC reports, Phil Finegan, Baker's new attorney, said a January 3 hearing will be held with plans to ask the judge to vacate her sentencing and ask for time to review court transcripts and discoveries to file a motion with allegations of ineffective counsel.

Baker was represented by Todd Ringel during her trial.

According to the McLean County State's Attorney's Office, Baker has not made a request for a new trial as of December 20. Nor has any motion been filed to do so.