

GOVERNMENT

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Council hears Parks update

Date: 7-6-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Normal's Town Council received an update Monday night on the town's Parks and Recreation master plan.

Hitchcock Design Group has been working for the past year to update the plan. It includes the idea of building an indoor recreation facility and a soccer complex within five years. City Manager Mark Peterson said making that happen would be "monumental."

"They're expensive facilities. We've talked in terms of the soccer complex being \$15 million or more," said Peterson. "Community recreation center, depending on what facilities it includes and amenities, could be \$30 to \$50 million."

Peterson said funding the projects is a big question mark.

"That's a great question and I don't have an answer for you. You have to borrow the money. We don't have that kind of money in the checking account," said Peterson. "You have to issue bonds and borrow the money. The only downside to that is you have to pay it back."

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Chambers seeks re-election

Date: 7-15-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - McLean County State's Attorney Jason Chambers is looking for four more years in office.

Chambers announced Thursday afternoon he will seek re-election when his first term ends next year. He said he knew he would like the job, but he's surprised by how much he likes it. He's also surprised by the amount of management that comes with being state's attorney.

"Sometimes I get managed back and I think it's a good thing. It shouldn't just be a one-way street," Chambers said.

Chambers said he would like to continue working to improve mental health care in the county.

"We have a lot of work to do. And that's not taking away from what's been done so far. We were just starting from scratch," said Chambers. "There were a lot of services in our community, but a lot of them were soiled. Whenever you have that you have people who fall in those gaps; between those silos."

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bloomington hires water director

Date: 8-13-2015

Time: 1 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington didn't have to look too far to find its new water director.

Robert Yehl, who has served as assistant city engineer since 2013, has been named to the position by City Manager David Hales.

"It is my pleasure to announce Robert Yehl as the city's next water director," said Hales in a news release. "He has a strong background in project planning, budgeting, contract management and staff mentorship and training. He is ready to lead the Water Department, and I have every confidence in his ability."

Yehl told WJBC he'll have some learning to do when he takes over.

"I've got some general background knowledge in water, but I've got vast experience in other things as well," said Yehl. "So I'm going to apply that to work with the staff that's currently within the Water Department, which is a great staff."

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Normal looks at increasing sales tax

Date: 8-17-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Normal's Town Council took a look Monday night at a proposal to increase the local sales tax by one percent.

The proposal is contingent on Bloomington also raising its sales tax by the same amount. This would generate \$15.4 million in revenue each year. The revenue would be split up among various community needs, such as a new soccer complex which would see about \$1.2 million a year.

Dave Magers has been working on a proposed new \$15 million soccer complex for eight years. He described how the funding from the tax increase would be used.

"I've had discussions with local banks about financing this project," said Magers. "The revenue that would be attributed to this from councils from a sales tax increase, if that's the avenue that the council would choose to take, would be to service that debt."

McLean County mental health services would receive \$3.8 million per year.

"About half of that would go to capital expenses and new operations costs in the jail and in the justice system," said County Board Chairman Matt Sorenson. "The other half would be used to implement the hundreds of other recommendations in our very long document."

Connect Transit would end up receiving 1 million dollars annually.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Normal approves sales tax

Date: 9-8-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - A one percent sales tax increase is a step closer to reality after the Normal Town Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to approve the measure.

The increase would only take effect if Bloomington approves the same measure. If it does become active, 25 percent of the new revenue would go towards mental health care. Connect Transit, economic development, and a new multi-sport athletic facility could also see funding, but mental health is the only area with an official earmark.

Councilwoman Kathleen Lorenz said no one likes tax increases, but she believes in what this money would be used for.

"All of those are very important and important that we address sooner rather than later," Lorenz said.

Councilwoman Cheryl Gaines also believed in what the money would be put towards.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Durbin calls for trade promotion authority

Date: 9-11-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington City Council will discuss a potential sales tax increase at Monday night's meeting, but the council won't vote on a one-percent increase until the following week.

City Manager David Hales said a special city council meeting will be scheduled after the Committee of the Whole meeting on Sept. 21.

"Our proposal for these two meetings is similar to what the town of Normal board did, in as much as they first had a work session. They heard from some community individuals, then they also took public comment and they had a little discussion as to if they wanted to proceed," Hales said.

The Normal Town Council approved a sales tax increase earlier this week with 25 percent of the new revenue going towards mental health needs. Hales said he will recommend that another 25 percent go towards street resurfacing.

"This quarter-percent for street resurfacing would actually boost our overall annual street resurfacing budget from \$2.5 million to \$5 million," Hales said.

Hales is also going to recommend that the remaining revenue go into the general fund to take care of things like public safety, deferred maintenance and emergency costs. Hales said there's at least \$400 million in deferred infrastructure needs.

PM

Third Quarter Report 2015

BUSINESS

WJBC - AM

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: State unemployment drops

Date: 7-16-2015

Time: 2 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The state's unemployment rate fell below six percent in June for the first time since 2008.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security says the June rate was 5.9 percent, despite the loss of 7,500 jobs last month. IDES also modified its May report to indicate job gains of 7,400 instead of the previously reported 9,500 in May 2015.

Construction and leisure and hospitality firms had the largest job declines while companies in the transportation and utilities, financial activities and educational and health services sectors added the most jobs last month.

The construction sector lost the most jobs in June. Despite an overall gain of 7,200 in the last 12 months, the construction sector has lost 1,700 jobs the last three months.

The manufacturing sector has lost 6,300 jobs, the most of any sector since last year, but actually reported a gain of 600 jobs last month.

The number of unemployed people looking for work dropped to 382,000. That's a 2.5 percent drop from May 2015 and a 14.5 percent drop from June 2014.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Mitsubishi task force formed

Date: 7-27-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Local economic developers plan to establish a task force to come up with ways to find a new buyer to take over the Mitsubishi Motors plant which plans to stop production later this year - and to find career training for the nearly 1,300 displaced workers.

"The focus right now is on employees," said Mike O'Grady, Vice President of the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council. "Some of this can be going on simultaneously, but I think we need to find out where we are headed with this before we start worrying about what kind of incentive (to give a potential employer)."

O'Grady told WJBC's Scott Laughlin Mitsubishi has been given a generous but not out-of-the-ordinary package of tax incentives to stay in Normal.

O'Grady said if another car maker wants to take over the site, they would be wise to use union labor. Mitsubishi has said labor costs were not a factor in its decision to close, even though it's the only Japanese automaker that used union labor in the U.S.

The Bloomington-Normal mayors say it won't be easy to replace the jobs that will be lost when Mitsubishi Motors halts production

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Mitsubishi committee formed

Date: 8-6-2015

Time: 3 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Elected officials at the local, state and federal level are forming a committee to help those affected by the pending closure of the Mitsubishi Plant.

The Mitsubishi Task Force met for the first time Thursday. It consists of the mayors and city managers of Bloomington and Normal, state and federal lawmakers as well as the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Mitsubishi Motors of North America and United Auto Workers Local 2488 also have representatives on the task force.

Normal City Manager Mark Peterson said the task force will help find a buyer for the plant and employment for potentially displaced workers.

"As you might expect, (Mitsubishi) is being inundated by calls from not only the media, but other groups around the state that want to help," Peterson said.

Mitsubishi spokesman Dan Irvin said a marketing firm may be brought in to help find a buyer.

"The primary objective is to bring an existing automaker to run the facility, continue the employment and perhaps grow the employment," Irvin said.

Economic Development Council CEO Kyle Ham has been voted to be chairman of the task force.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Council considers dropping property taxes

Date: 8-9-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington City Council will consider dropping some of the property taxes for the old Mid-City Hotel if a developer renovates the property into apartments.

The property at 312 and 314 N. Main St. has been vacant since the 1960's and that's why Assistant City Manager Steve Rasmussen and other city staff members are recommending the approval of the property tax abatement Monday night.

"You're betting that it will be improved and you'll get more tax (revenue), but you're giving away future tax (revenue) that you haven't gotten anyway," Rasmussen said. "It requires some faith that it will develop and it will produce more taxes."

The developer, Mid-City Properties LLC, has to spend at least \$847,000 renovating the property and has to complete the project by June 2017 in order to receive the abatement.

The proposed abatement period is five years and Mid-City Properties would pay more taxes each year until the abatement period ends. Under the proposal, the city would only collect 89 percent of the property tax levy in the first year.

Other taxing bodies like District 87, the McLean County Board and Heartland Community College would also have to approve the property tax abatement.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: State rep thinks state is deteriorating

Date: 9-8-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - One state representative said Illinois is deteriorating while lawmakers continue to debate on a state budget.

State Rep. Tom Bennett (R-Pontiac) told WJBC businesses continue to leave the state and part of the blame is the inability for Illinois to compete with states like Indiana in areas like worker's compensation.

"As I listen to folks in our district, and here in Bloomington, and elsewhere, it might cost twice as much - maybe three times - to run a business in Illinois than it does in Indiana," Bennett said.

Bennett said in the last 45 days several businesses have announced they're leaving Illinois.

"Mitsubishi, of course we all know about that and the hundreds and maybe a thousand or more workers," said Bennett. "General Mills, this is also July 16, they're laying off 500 workers. July 15th, also, Bunge North America, they're going to shut down its plant in Bradley. That's 210 workers."

Bennett added it's still anyone's guess when a budget will be passed.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Caterpillar laying off 10,000

Date: 9-24-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

PEORIA - Caterpillar is laying off as many as 10,000 employees worldwide through next year as it works to cut costs.

Caterpillar spokesperson Rachel Potts said the mining and heavy equipment manufacturer faces tough economic conditions right now, but there are still a lot of question marks.

"We are contemplating restructuring actions that could impact more than 20 facilities. That's around the world; that's across our segments at Caterpillar. That's construction, that's resource industries, that's primarily mining, that's energy and transportation," said Potts. "We aren't providing details of what specific plants that will impact."

While Cat made announcements earlier this year of layoffs in places like East Peoria and Joliet, Potts said the job cuts they're announcing now are permanent. She said sales and revenues are now projected to be a billion dollars lower than first thought for 2015, and sales and revenues next year are expected to be lower than that.

But, Potts said there's a lot of good right now. "At the same time as that, that we've had to take these pretty significant actions, we have remained focused on our strategy, and that has meant improved market share," said Potts. "That has meant improved profit and product quality -- some of our best in history -- as well as safety. We are among the best for heavy manufacturers."

Potts said the company still intends on building a new worldwide headquarters in Peoria, but that project has been shelved for now. All of Cat's restructuring is expected to be complete by 2018, with voluntary retirement incentives available through the end of this year.

PM

Third Quarter Report 2015

CRIME

WJBC – AM

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: LeRoy police investigating burglary

Date: 7-18-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

LeRoy Police are investigating an overnight burglary at the city's public works facility. Police Chief Jason Williamson says two public works pickup trucks were stolen from inside the building. One truck has been recovered in rural LeRoy this (Saturday) morning.

The vehicle that's still missing is a white 2007 Dodge extended cab pickup truck with City of LeRoy decals and municipal plates M166456. Williamson said the public is asked to watch for this vehicle and call 911 if they spot the stolen vehicle.

Mayor Steve Dean is offering a cash reward for any information leading to an arrest. Anyone with information is asked to call LeRoy Police at 888-5030.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bond set for Zimmerman

Date: 7-22-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Bond for the man accused of killing Pamela Zimmerman is set at \$5 million.

Kirk Zimmerman, Pamela's ex-husband, is charged with first-degree murder. He appeared in court Wednesday for a bond hearing via video conference.

State's Attorney Jason Chambers said Zimmerman made some conflicting statements to investigators about where he was the night of the alleged murder, Nov. 3. Kirk Zimmerman said he was at home reading on his Amazon Kindle the night Pamela Zimmerman was shot, even though Kirk Zimmerman's girlfriend at the time, Kathleen Arthur, was at his home to meet Kirk for a date that night and told authorities no one was there. Investigators also found no activity on Kirk Zimmerman's Kindle that night. Another part of the probable cause statement said Kirk Zimmerman was frustrated about the money he was ordered to pay Pamela Zimmerman as part of their divorce settlement. The couple divorced in 2012 after 20 years of marriage, and Kirk Zimmerman was charged with contempt in Feb. 2013 and Oct. 2014 for failing to pay child support.

Numerous statements from friends of Pamela Zimmerman in the probably cause statement said Pamela Zimmerman was concerned Kirk Zimmerman may try to harm her, even telling two friends that if anything happened to her, Kirk did it.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: ISU's Coprich talks about arrest

Date: 8-5-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Illinois State's star running back wants to focus solely on football season and not on the arrest that sidelined him briefly in April.

Marshaun Coprich read from a prepared statement Wednesday.

"I want to apologize to the Redbird family and university of Illinois State for my mistake. I've worked hard so far to rectify that mistake," Coprich said. "It's time to move on and start helping my team win games."

Coprich said he won't be making any further comments. He was arrested in April and pleaded guilty in May to selling marijuana to an undercover police officer. He's serving two years of probation.

Head Coach Brock Spack said Coprich won't be making any more mistakes.

"He doesn't have a leash, does that make sense?" Spack said. "He can't sneeze wrong."

Spack also defended his decision not to suspend Coprich for any games this year. He said Coprich was not given special treatment.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Motion to disqualify immigrant lawyer

Date: 8-25-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - A motion filed to disqualify Kirk Zimmerman's attorney has been continued to late next month.

Zimmerman, 56, is accused of murdering his ex-wife Pamela Zimmerman at her office in November 2014. He was arrested in July and charged with one count of first degree murder.

The motion argues defense attorney Stephanie Wong be dismissed because her and other lawyers in her firm represented potential witnesses during the early stages of the investigation.

"We don't want to have a situation where 10 years from now there's a post conviction petition alleging that there was a conflict with his attorney that led to an effect of assistance of counsel," McLean County State's Attorney Jason Chambers said.

Chambers said the defense wants time to bring in an outside attorney to handle the motion in the event Wong is called to the stand while the motion is being argued.

"The hearing is going to have to go into the nature of the relationship with the other parties," said Chambers. "It's not just a matter of representation of Kirk Zimmerman; it's their representation of other individuals who are related to this case."

McLean County Judge Scott Draewski on Tuesday granted a motion to continue the matter to Sep. 24.

Issue: Crime

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McLean County Judge Scott Drazewski on Tuesday granted a motion to continue the matter to Sep. 24.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Chief says police aware of dangers

Date: 9-11-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - As more and more U.S. police officers are killed in the line of duty, Bloomington Police Chief Brendan Heffner said his department is more aware of the possibility of being in dangerous situations.

"However, these are some of the perils that we face every day," Heffner said. "When we put on the uniform or other attire to go to work, we are at risk of unprovoked attacks, car crashes and domestic issues."

Heffner said recent stories of police officers being killed in the line of duty won't stop his department from serving the community.

"It is disheartening to see the type of crimes that have occurred, but we have to face this," said Heffner. "We work through it and stick together. We're still going to be out serving and protecting you."

More than 80 police officers have been killed while on duty this year in the United States. Police are still searching for three suspects responsible for the shooting death of an officer in Fox Lake, Illinois on Sept.

1. Local police forces have been participating in recent efforts to connect with the public including events such as Ice Cream With a Cop and Coffee With a Cop.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Dunn faces aggravated DUI charge

Date: 9-22-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - A man from Crystal Lake is accused of being under the influence when he struck and killed an Illinois State University student in Normal earlier this year.

Joshua Dunn has already pleaded guilty to a charge of failure to report a fatal accident in the death of Benjamin Allison in January. He still faces a charge of aggravated DUI and his trial started Tuesday.

Normal Police Detective Darren Wolters testified that Dunn told him he was at a party the night prior to the incident.

"He stated that he drank approximately five to six beers throughout that evening while playing drinking games at the apartment," Wolters said.

Wolters said Dunn described himself that night as buzzed but not drunk.

The next morning, Bloomington Water Department employee David Wright said he noticed a vehicle that was identified as the one Dunn was allegedly driving that morning going through a blocked off construction zone in the 200 block of E. Vernon Ave.

"I saw (the vehicle) try to turn towards our barricades, so that's what got my attention," Wright said. "I knew it was trying to come through an area it shouldn't have been trying to come through."

PM

Third Quarter Report 2015

SCHOOL

WJBC – AM

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: ISU's Redbird Arena to get new scoreboard

Date: 7-26-2015

Time: 3 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Basketball games will be a different experience next season at Redbird Arena.

The Illinois State University Board of Trustees agreed to purchase a new scoreboard system at Friday's meeting. It costs \$950,000 and is funded by corporate sponsorships.

Peyton Deterding, ISU Associate Athletics Director for Internal Operations, said there are weight restrictions because of the roof structure, putting limits on the new system.

"It's not going to be substantially bigger, but it will have some added features to it," Deterding said. "The clarity will be better and the auxilliary boards will be much improved."

The current video board was retrofitted in 2007.

"We've been fortunate, to be honest, to even get eight years out of the existing board," Deterding said.

Deterding said the new system will likely be installed by the start of basketball season.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Student teachers face background checks

Date: 7-28-2015

Time: 3 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

SPRINGFIELD - Back to school? Background check.

It's now the law for student teachers in Illinois, though one of the state's biggest suppliers of new teachers says it's nothing new.

"When you say, I want to be a teacher, you are taking responsibility for someone else's child," said Deb Garrahy, director of the Cecilia J. Lauby Teacher Education Center at Illinois State University. She says the background check has been a requirement for ISU's prospective teachers for perhaps a decade or more. The education community, she added, must "do the best that we can in providing a safe environment for our teachers, and, certainly, a safe environment for our schoolchildren."

It really puts student teachers on the same level as regular school employees.

Garrahy adds other local districts, including Unit 5 in Normal, also have this requirement, so "our students have been used to this for quite some time; by that time they've already had about three of them."

The future teachers have more rigors, too.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Miller Park collecting school supplies

Date: 8-7-2015

Time: 3 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Miller Park Zoo is holding a school supply drive on Saturday.

Bloomington Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts Director Jay Tetzloff said event will benefit students at Bloomington High School.

"With going back to school time, a lot of people focus on, maybe, the kids in elementary, maybe even junior high, that are struggling to buy the school supplies that may be required by the school or needed by the students," said Tetzloff. "My volunteer coordinator came to me and said, 'the high school kids need it too.'"

School supplies will be accepted between 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Tetzloff said anyone who donates will be given free admission to the zoo.

Additionally, the zoo will have free popcorn available and snow cones for sale for \$1.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Tri-Valley school closed by mold

Date: 8-11-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

DOWNS - Tri-Valley Elementary School is being forced to close temporarily due to mold issues.

Superintendent David Mouser said the school experienced problems over the summer with its air conditioning after replacing the boiler. This led to higher humidity in the building and mold growth.

"The air quality tests were done. Unfortunately, our humidity levels were too high. Those tests didn't come back the way we wanted to," said Mouser. "Nothing major, but enough to where we wouldn't want teachers or students in the building if they had allergies or that sort of thing."

Mouser explained they're working to get the air quality back to acceptable levels. In the meantime, elementary students will be moved to the district's other buildings and the start of school is being pushed back to Aug. 19.

"Our Pre-K students are going to be in one area of the high school, which is kind of a secluded, different area," said Mouser. "Our kindergarten classes will also be at the high school, in a different wing."

1st through 3rd grade classes will be at the middle school.

Mouser said he's "amazed" at the way teachers have responded.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Study says teachers spend own money on classroom supplies

Date: 9-8-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

SPRINGFIELD - A new study by Springfield-based Horace Mann insurance suggests teachers spend a lot of their own money on supplies for their classrooms.

Spokesperson Michelle Eccles says the survey conducted in May shows teachers just want the best education possible for students.

"30 percent of teachers say they are spending \$200 to \$400 a year on classroom supplies, and 13 percent spent \$400 to \$600," says Eccles. "Another 14 percent report spending \$600 or more." That's up a percent from the last time the survey was conducted two years ago -- and includes things from math and science supplies to reading and language arts.

Eccles says her agency is renewing a partnership with the website DonorsChoose.org to try and help lessen that.

"Teachers can put up a project [on the website] for something that they want for their classroom -- whether it's general classroom supplies or...it's a special project," Eccles says. "A lot of times, if a teacher has been on DonorsChoose for awhile, they'll do a big class field trip, and get money for that. As you're doing more projects, you're more likely to get a project that's more expensive funded."

Eccles says Horace Mann has helped fund \$3 million worth of those projects over the last several years, and they want to fund 70 of those projects in September.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: ISU unveils memorial for crash victims

Date: 9-14-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - The Illinois State Athletics Department revealed Redbird Remembrance in a private ceremony over the weekend to honor the seven men who were killed in plane near Bloomington in April.

The memorial is near the north entrance of Redbird Arena and is now open to the public. A plaque welcomes visitors into the memorial, while the seven names are etched into the back wall. At the center of the memorial are seven columns placed in a fountain one for each of the victims.

ISU also paid tribute to the victims before the football game on Saturday. The victim's families were all on hand for the tribute which detailed the contributions each of them made to the community. Director of Athletics Larry Lyons said there was a duty to honor the men and support their families.

"We felt that we had a duty to honor these men, support their families and strengthen the Redbird bond," Lyons said. "The permanency of the memorial is to honor their legacy with dignity and respect, and we believe the design is comforting and peaceful. We picked this location so that it is accessible to the families, the campus and the community to reflect and remember."