

# HAWK HERALD

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 5

THE NEWSPAPER FOR ALL PRAIRIE CENTRALIANS

APRIL-MAY, 2017

## FORWARD, JOHN CAPASSO, SUPERINTENDENT

Saying it has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve Prairie Central as its superintendent for the past 15 years – its students, its mission to teach them, its dedicated staff, and its board, assembled with just the right blend of wisdom, empathy, and patience – is *understating it*. I'll be watching Prairie Central from afar, enjoying her successes, and imagining that I played a small part in them. I shan't dull the reader's senses with a sentimental goodbye, like McArthur's "Old soldiers never die"; or a dramatic caution, ala Washington's "entangling alliances". But, I will leave some advice . . . while allowing the reader the option, as always, to *keep or crumple*.

If PC is to endure another 30 years, its local citizens must sustain it financially, for clearly our State cannot. *Be open to ideas for expanding the tax base*. If legitimate commerce or industry is seeking a home, encourage it; nay, even *court it*.

A school system comprised entirely of rural communities has reason to ponder its future. As mean income falls, the challenge for an education system rises, socio-economic life is sorely affected, vices come, and public safety is tested. I would not want it said that the only thing growing in a rural community is the police force, and not the number of new homes. *Strive to make communities attractive to people of substance*, whether home-grown or those seeking respite from city squalor; to people who *value education*.

Continue to make a substantial investment in your schools, and put it toward children's limitless future. If PC is to spend \$20-25 Million on each matriculating class make the investment a sound one by *insisting that kids have lofty goals* and engage their minds and energies in something good. Thanks, again, for this opportunity! Long live Prairie Central! May good fortune always smile on her!

## BOARD SET TO WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The terms of Jeffrey Austman, Jason Dotterer, Patricia Haberkorn, and Mark Slagel as members of the Prairie Central CUSD #8 Board of Education, will end this Spring. Mr. Austman, Mr. Dotterer, and Ms. Haberkorn have opted not to seek another term. On the April 4, 2017 ballot will be office seekers, Brian Plenert, Ted Bachtold, and John Wilken; and incumbent Mark Slagel.

The election is an *at-large election*; in other words, candidates may be selected from anywhere in the District (as opposed to designated districts or townships).

Once seated, board members are required to take training on the Open Meetings Act; education & labor law, financial oversight & accountability, and fiduciary responsibilities; and the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA-teacher evaluation).

On April 18, 2017, a canvass of the election will be read and successful candidates determined. The current Board will adjourn sine die. A second meeting will be convened during

which new members will be seated and officers chosen.

### Retirees recognized

**Jeffrey Austman**, a Forrest farmer and former chair of First Farm Credit Services, retires after two terms (eight years) on the Board.

**Jason Dotterer**, also a two-term retiree, holds the title of Service Manager at State Farm Systems, State Farm Insurance Companies, Bloomington.

**Patricia Haberkorn** retires after four terms (12 years) on the Board. She has served as president of the Board since April, 2009. Ms. Haberkorn is currently Assistant Executive Director & Director of Health Services at Futures Unlimited, Pontiac.

*Prairie Central appreciates the distinguished service of the three retirees, the tireless work they have done, and the difficult decisions they—and their colleagues—have had to make.*

**SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION APRIL 4**

## FFA HOLDS ANNUAL HOG ROAST & AUCTION

PC's active FFA student and alumni chapters sponsored their annual Hog Roast and Auction on March 16, with all proceeds going to support the highly successful FFA judging program.

The meal was free to the public and included pork and turkey. Some seven (7) hogs were donated by local people for the event.

More than 200 items were also donated for auction by community members. The marquis item was an 88 Oliver tractor, donated

by Bud Nussbaum and restored as a class project

by an advanced agriculture class. Raffle tickets were sold weeks in advance for the tractor. Another featured auction item was a drone, a remote-controlled aerial surveillance device for use in agriculture settings.

PCHS's judging program has parlayed such support into several national championships, top-ten finishes, and national recognition.



## OFFICIAL SCHOOL CALENDAR APPROVED FOR 2017-18

At its March meeting, the Board of Education approved the Official School Calendar for 2017-18. School will begin for staff on August 14-15, with day-long institutes. Due to the Fairbury Fair schedule, school will not start for students until the following Monday, August 21. From the start of school to Labor Day, students will be released one (1) hour early due to anticipated heat.

The grading quarters, for grades 7-12, will

end on October 19, December 20, March 9, and May 29. The first semester will, therefore, conclude before the Christmas Holiday.

The Trimesters, for grades K-6—adopted to ease the eventual transition to standards-based grading—will end November 10, February 16, and May 29.

With no emergency days used, school will end for students on May 21; and for staff, May 22.

Back To School!

## STUDENTS TO ENJOY FAIR, THEN SCHOOL!

With all six (6) built-in emergency days employed, those dates will be May 30-31.

The Christmas Holiday is December 20 to January 2; and Spring break is March 26 to April 2 (Monday following Easter).

PC will again release students two (2) hours early on the first Wednesday of every month, except January, for school improvement activities.

PCHS commencement is slated for May 25.

The **Hawk Herald** is published bimonthly, August through May by Prairie Central CUSD #8, 605 N. 7th, Fairbury, Illinois 61739, and is assembled by the Unit Office staff and the Prairie Central "Silver League".

### Administration

Dr. John Capasso, Superintendent; Brad Beyers, High School Principal; Tonya Dieken, Junior High Principal; James DeMay, Upper Elementary Principal; Paula Crane, Elementary Principal; Karen Hazelrigg, Primary-East Principal; Daniel Groce, Primary-West Principal; Rose Smith, Special Education Director; and Patricia Paulson, special liaison.

### Board of Education

Patricia Haberkorn, President; Mark Slagel, Vice-President; Ann Steidinger, Secretary; Jeffrey Austman; Jason Dotterer; Timothy McGreal; and Corey Steffen.





## Music Department News!

### JAZZ, LES MISÉRABLES, AND POPS HEADLINERS IN APRIL-MAY

Prairie Central welcomes three major music events in April and May: The Annual Evening of Jazz; the musical, *Les Misérables*; and the Pops Concert & Art Exhibit (with the pork dinner).

The always entertaining Evening of Jazz—staged at Primary-West, Chenoa, and “dressed up” in the manner of the Blue Note Café nightclub—is set for April 8. Patrons may dance, or just listen, to an array of Big Band selections, with modern arrangements, performed by two, very talented PCHS ensembles, conducted by Ms. Kline. Refreshments will be available.



Primary West, Chenoa, will raise its curtain again on the evenings of April 20-22 (7 PM), and the afternoon of April 23 (3 PM matinee), for the mainstage musical, *Les Misérables*, presented by PCHS players and directed by Mr. Cheek.



Les Misérables

*Les Miz*, as it is commonly known, employs very little dialog, but mostly music and lyrics, to tell the story.

The original novel was written by celebrated French author, Victor Hugo; and the story was adapted for the musical stage by Claude-Michel Schönberg (music) and lyricists Boublil (French) and Kretzmer (English). *Les Miz* has enjoyed immense critical and popular success since its premier in 1980, including on Broadway where it ran for 6,680 performances and won 8 Tony awards.

The story's central figure is “Jean ValJean”, a fugitive seeking personal redemption on the eve

of the French Revolution. Expect music and costuming on a grand scale.

The Pops Concert & Art Exhibit will be May 13, 4:30-9 PM, at PCHS, and will feature the voices and instruments of students, grades 5 to 12. The work of PC's young artists from around the District will be on display in the small gym, as well. The Music Boosters will serve a pork dinner in the café during the early hours of the festivities. Parents/citizens are invited to this evening popular music, art, and fine dining.

#### April-May-Summer music events (Key: Date—event, place, and time)

- ♫ April 8—PCHS Jazz Show, Prim-West (Chenoa), TBA;
- ♫ April 11—PCHS & 6th grade solo/ensemble contest, PCHS, TBA;
- ♫ April 20—PCHS musical *Les Misérables*, Prim-West (Chenoa), 7 PM;
- ♫ April 21—PCHS musical *Les Misérables*, Prim-West (Chenoa), 7 PM;
- ♫ April 22—PCHS musical *Les Misérables*, Prim-West (Chenoa), 7 PM;
- ♫ April 23—PCHS musical *Les Misérables*, Prim-West (Chenoa), matinee (TBA);
- ♫ May 2—PCE 4th grade musical, PCHS gym, 6:30 PM;
- ♫ May 13—“Pops” concert/art exhibit/ pork dinner, PCHS gyms & café, 4:30—9 PM;
- ♫ May 29—Memorial Day services for PCHS band, TBA (itinerary), morning TBA; and
- ♫ July 27-August 4—PCHS band camp, PCHS marching field, TBA.



## EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

—Clarence Darrow,  
*Crime: Its Causes*  
*and Treatments*, 1922



Great minds  
explore a  
great  
institution!

“It is often said the accused should be given an immediate trial; that this and subsequent proceedings should not be hindered by delay; that the uncertainties of punishment furnish the criminal with the hope of escape and therefore do not give the community the benefit of the terror that comes with the certainty of punishment that could prevent crime. I can see no basis in logic or experience for this suggestion. It is based on the theory that punishment is not only a deterrent to crime, but the main deterrent. It comes from the idea that the criminal is distinct from the rest of mankind, that vengeance should be sure and speedy and that then crime would be prevented. If this were true and the only consideration to prevent crime, then the old torture chamber and ancient prison with all its hopelessness and horror should be restored. Logic, humanity, and experience would protest against this. If there is to be any permanent improvement in man and any better social order, it must come mainly from the education and humanizing of man. I am quite certain the more the question of crime and its treatment is studied, the less faith men will have in punishment.”



## PARCC, SAT SCHEDULED

The PARCC exam will be administered to students, grades 3-8, from April 3rd to the 13th. The battery, including mathematics and reading, will again be presented on-line (computer). Only students in grades 5 & 8 will sit for the science exam on April 21.

PCHS students, principally grade 11, will sit for the SAT on April 5.

Preparation should include a good night's sleep and a nutritious breakfast before a testing day. PARCC is a test of critical thinking, rather than rote memorization, so rest and diet are important.

Parents can access [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org) to learn more.

## READ ACROSS AMERICA CELEBRATED

All Prairie Central buildings planned special reading activities during or around Read Across America Week, March 6-10, a time designated to both remember the birthday of celebrated author and illustrator, Dr. Seuss; and encourage reading as an important, enjoyable, and life-long activity.

There were guest (sometimes, surprise) readers, games, and dress-up days (especially, Cat-in-the-Hat hats!).

For example, Prairie Central Upper Elementary held a Family Reading and Wellness Night

on March 14. PCUE students and their families visited a variety of stations to learn about the health benefits of reading, fitness, and wellness.

The stations featured Kilgus Dairy, Elite Fitness, Fuel Up to Play 60, Zumba, and There's an App for That.

Families also took part in a trivia game about Title I (a reading support program) and the health benefits of reading. Prizes included books and fitness trackers.



## DOES YOUR TEEN “HATE” YOU? IT’S NORMAL, BUT YOU DON’T HAVE TO TAKE IT LYING DOWN!

"Adolescence is a time of rapid change for kids both physically and cognitively," explains Stuart Goldman, MD, director of psychiatric education at Children's Hospital in Boston. "It's the task of the teenager to 'fire' their parents and then re-hire them years later, but as consultants rather than managers."

But that doesn't mean you have to take it lying down. The following common teen behavior problem has a relatively civilized solution.

### Your Teen Seems To Hate You

One minute your sweet child is begging you to come on the class trip or to lie down with her while she falls asleep. Then, seemingly overnight, she starts treating you like dirt, discounting everything you say and snickering at your

suggestions. "It's so hard for parents when this happens," says Nadine Kaslow, PhD, a psychologist specializing in kids and families at Emory University in Atlanta. "But part of adolescence is about separating and individuating, and many kids need to reject their parents in order to find their own identities." Teens focus on their friends more than on their families, which is normal too.

### Your Solution

Sometimes parents feel so hurt by their teens' treatment that they respond by returning the rejection — which is a mistake. "Teenagers know that they still need their parents even if they can't admit it," says Goldman. "The roller-coaster they put you on is also the one they're

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feeling internally." As the parent, you need to stay calm and try to weather this teenage rebellion phase, which usually passes by the time a child is 16 or 17.

But no one's saying your teen should be allowed to be truly nasty or to curse at you; when this happens, you have to enforce basic behavior standards. One solution is the good, old-fashioned approach: "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." By letting your teenager know that you're here for him no matter what, you make it more likely that he'll let down his guard and confide in you once in a while, which is a rare treat.

BOARD OF EDUCATION NEWS . . . FROM THE MARCH 2017

MEADOWBROOK DEMO CONTEMPLATED

BETTER OPTION THAN SELLING, LEASING?



The Board of Education learned, at its March meeting, that it will cost \$203,902 to demolish Meadowbrook Elementary School. The school, constructed in 1957 and closed before the current school year, was toured by PC architect-of-record, Randall Middleton, whose estimate was submitted as follows:

Remove building structure	\$94,640
Remove footings, slabs, pavement	21,225
Remove utility infrastructure	4,500
Remove (abate) ACM	65,000
Contingency (10%)	18,537
Total	\$203,902

The Board has wrestled with the disposition of Meadowbrook, expressing its belief that a venerable school building, that served the area's children for six decades, ought not to become a dilapidated ruin. Principal options are to sell the facility outright (as is), lease/rent it, or demolish it and clear the site for sale. Selling or leasing may mean the building will sit for a time, as old schools do not lend themselves to conversion, and are expensive and difficult to maintain.



Demolition, albeit an unceremonious end to a piece of Forrest history, may be the only way to assure Meadowbrook doesn't sit interminably

and die slowly, all the while creating a hazard and eyesore, as abandoned schools often do. The Board has two options to demolish: to spec and bid demolition in the conventional way, then sell the cleared property; or to establish an incentive for a vendor to demolish and earn the property as compensation.

The Board also

- Learned that the comptroller's office has, to date, not reimbursed PC any of the roughly \$1.6 Million it owns in special education and transportation reimbursement for the fiscal year.
- Reviewed a list of summer maintenance projects, among them a security door at PCE, phase II of the life-safety condensate project at Prim-East, the installation and mechanization of backboards in the PCHS gym, and ceiling repairs (due to water) at PCUE & Prim-West.
- Was reminded that the third and final sale of equipment, furniture, and supplies at Meadowbrook Elementary will be May 6, 9 AM – 1 PM, as part of the Forrest village-wide garage sale.
- Approved amended and new Policies on school board procedures and the use of school vehicles for co-curricular events.

- Approved the official calendar for 2017-18 (see page 1).
- Accepted bids from Cloverleaf and Aunt Millie's for café milk and bread products, respectively, for 2017-18.
- Renewed membership in the IHSA for 2017-18 in re high school interscholastic events.
- Conducted a first reading of six amended policy articles, five regarding school board procedure and one on instruction (wellness). Following executive session, the Board
- Accepted the resignation of Sarah Cox, PCUE special education teacher, following the term.
- Appointed (all for 2017-18) Janay Ericksen (café worker @ Prim-W), Erin Ifft (winter cheer sponsor @ PCHS), Eric Hall (instrumental music instructor at PCHS & PCUE), and Heidi Schaab (speech therapist).
- Appointed (for the current year) Brittany Steidinger and Trevin McCulloh (auxiliary coaches for softball, baseball @ PCHS).
- Discussed a salary range and benefits for new principal appointees.
- Adjourned at 10:22 PM.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS . . . BOARD RETURNS LP BUSES; WILL INCLUDE PE GRADE IN GPA @ PCHS NEXT YEAR

Having had enough of incessant fill-ups and a number of mechanical problems, the Prairie Central Board traded its new propane-powered buses, an International and a Blue Bird, back to the respective companies for diesels.

The Board, with two months to observe, concluded that propane buses are better-suited for short distances. With necessarily long routes and the less efficient engines (~3.5 mpg), the propane vehicles needed refueling once or twice per day.

Propane-powered buses may be a thing of the future, but the Board was convinced that further refinement of the model is needed. The Board approved the exchange at its February meeting.

Also in February, the Board elected to include the physical education grade in the grade point average for high schoolers. GPA is used to determine class rank, valedictorian/



salutatorian, and—in many cases—college admission.

The rationale, as presented earlier by PCHS teacher Scott Willi, is that the study of PE is now more rigorous and encourages life-long learning. It includes an understanding of wellness and of the importance of diet and exercise. Heart-rate monitoring now plays a part in physical education.

Physical education will become part of the GPA beginning with the Class of 2021.

THE STATE OF OUR STATE

The State of Illinois is responsible for both overseeing a number of public services and institutions and, at least in part, funding them. Education is one of those services. Illinois is, presently, \$10 Billion short of meeting its general funding obligations. It is also ranked dead last among states in its ability/willingness to financially support its schools. And yet, the State's mission for education not only remains, but promises to grow in complexity. At present, for example, considering all it is required to provide, Prairie Central is languishing at 63% of the funding needed for an adequate education.



CAN ILLINOIS FUND ITS SCHOOLS APPROPRIATELY?

agreement to-date between major parties, between governor and general assembly, and among regions of the State. The solution now on the table has a number of parts, each reliant on another for ultimate success.

Nothing has created more rancor up-State and down than property taxes, which are viewed as not only burdensome for the citizen, but a source of inequity in educational funding. The suburbs can afford everything, while rural and urban areas strive for adequacy. A two (2)-year property tax freeze has been proposed. With no other action, however, a property tax freeze would cost PC \$500,000+ in revenues.

To off-set the freeze, and bring some equity to the table, legislators have considered raising the State's income tax rate from 3.75% to 4.95%. Raising taxes is never popular, even if they have been lowered elsewhere.

One of the most costly services for which the State is responsible is the public pension system,

which comprises nearly 1/4 of the entire State budget. The system is admittedly "rich", presented at a time when the Illinois economy was much stronger. The five (5)-pension system, a part of which is the Teachers Retirement System, is now in debt \$111 Billion. Since, by law, pension programs cannot take benefits away from retirees, shifting the cost from the State to institutions and members appears logical . . . but costly for someone else.

Although it is highly unlikely that a fundamental right, like education, can be simply dropped for financial reasons, lawmakers have discussed mandate relief, or a process by which a school may waive certain things for which the State promised to pay, and hasn't.

Finally, an effort to replace the antiquated state aid formula with an evidence-based formula is now afoot. Schools, under the proposal, will claim monies based on need, or monies sufficient to provide an adequate education.



# HAWK-HERALD

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Fairbury, IL 61739

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### Topics in this edition:

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- *Read Across America*
- *PARCC/SAT testing*
- *Board activity*
- *"Does your teen 'hate' you?" - advice for parents*
- *State funding for education*

### CLASS OF '17 PITCHES IN!

Seniors will take the day on April 5, while others are testing, to offer aid to the City of Ottawa, IL, struck by a tornado some weeks ago. Helpers will likely work clean-up detail in one or more of the public parks.

Readers can visit [http://illinoisvision2020.org/wp-content/files/Vision\\_2020\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://illinoisvision2020.org/wp-content/files/Vision_2020_Executive_Summary.pdf) and/or <http://illinoisvision2020.org/> to learn more about Vision 20/20 and how to participate.



### ON THE CALENDAR . . .

<u>Date</u>	<u>Events</u>
3-13 April	PARCC Exam
5 April	SAT Exam
13 April	Progress Reports (3rd Trimester)
14-17 April	Easter Holiday (No School)
21 April	Illinois Science Assessment
28 April	Progress Reports (4th Nine Weeks)
21 May	PCHS Baccalaureate
26 May	Last Day for Students (Report Cards), PCHS Commencement
29 May	Memorial Day (No School)
30 May	Last Day for Staff

