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# EFFINGHAM

FALL 2024

MAGAZINE

## FEATURE STORY



The Chuck Wagon Gang, a country-gospel quartet, performs at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville on July 7. From left are Nick Poe, Josh Garner, Shaye Smith, Melissa Kemper and Cody Shaneyfelt. Submitted photo.

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by Nick Taylor

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**ON THE COVER:** Effingham Athletic Director Dave Woltman accepts a commemorative basketball during halftime of a boys basketball game in the Effingham/Teutopolis Christmas Classic at Effingham High School, Saturday, Dec. 30, 2023. Photo by Alex Wallner, Daily News





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**A**n Altamont native recently took the stage at the historic Grand Ole Opry, a feat that most musicians only ever dream of accomplishing. On July 7, Nick Poe, 31, performed at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee with the country-gospel group The Chuck Wagon Gang, a quartet that's been performing since 1935.

"It is the dream to play there, and I know many people who have been playing music for 50 or 60 years and never have got to," Poe said. "So I'm extremely honored that because of The Chuck Wagon Gang and just the way all the cards lined up until this point that I got to and more than likely will get to again."

Poe, who lives just south of St. Elmo, is a guitarist. He also plays the banjo. He got his start playing music when he was about 14.

Our congratulations to Nick for such an awesome experience.

Elsewhere, we recount how on June 8, Greenup resident Bianca Miller's life took a turn she never expected. The 21-year-old was riding in a utility task vehicle in rural Neoga with others when the driver took a sharp curve. The vehicle rolled over, throwing Miller, who was not wearing a seat belt or helmet, from it. The UTV then landed on her head.

Witnesses lifted the UTV off of Miller. When first responders got to the scene, she was unresponsive. ARCH 3 crew airlifted her to Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, where doctors stabilized her.

On a Saturday in July, Miller reunited with the team of first responders who helped save her life from ARCH, Cumberland County Sheriff's Office, Neoga Police Department and Neoga Fire Protection District.

The reunion is something ARCH flight nurse Vanessa Horst said she rarely gets to experience.

"We hardly ever find out what happens to them. So when we do, it's really nice to see what we did helped someone, which is always our goal," she said.

We thank all first responders for the work they do keeping us safe.

Those stories and more can be found within this fall edition of Effingham Magazine.

Jeff Long  
Editor



**Jeff Long** is the editor of the Effingham Daily News. He is a 1987 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has worked for newspapers in England, Pennsylvania and Virginia. For 13 years, he was a reporter and later an editor at the Chicago Tribune. A past president and current board member of the Illinois Associated Press Media Editors, he lives in Altamont with his wife, Karen.



**Cathy Griffith** is news editor of the Effingham Daily News. She is a 1998 graduate of Eastern Illinois University with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. She has worked at the Daily News for 22 years in news and magazine publications. She is a lifelong resident of Effingham, where she resides with her husband, Tim, and daughter, Leah.



**Nick Taylor** is a former Effingham Daily News reporter. He graduated from Butler University in 2021 with a bachelor's degree in philosophy. As the son of two Indiana attorneys, he worked as a paralegal assistant at Taylor Law Firm in his home state before moving to Effingham in the summer of 2022 to begin a career in journalism. He now works for a newspaper in Michigan.



**Alex Wallner** is the sports editor of the Effingham Daily News. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2016. Before joining the EDN, he was the sports editor at the Standard-Democrat in Sikeston, Missouri for three years. He resides in Effingham.





**Katelyn Klosterman, MD**

FAMILY MEDICINE

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# Altamont musician **NICK POE** takes talents to

## GRAND OLE OPRY.



A crowd watches as Nick Poe plays his guitar at the Grand Ole Opry with The Chuck Wagon Gang on July 7. Poe said some of his family and friends attended the show. Submitted photo.

**Nick Taylor**  
Effingham Magazine

**A**n Altamont native recently took the stage at the historic Grand Ole Opry, a feat that most musicians only ever dream of accomplishing.

On July 7, Nick Poe, 31, performed at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee with the country-gospel group The Chuck Wagon Gang, a quartet that's been performing since 1935.

"It is the dream to play there, and I know many people who have been playing music for 50 or 60 years and never have got to," Poe said. "So I'm extremely honored that because of The Chuck Wagon Gang and just the way all the cards lined up until this point that I got to and more than likely will get to again."

Poe, who lives just south of St. Elmo, is a guitarist. He also plays the banjo. He got his start

playing music when he was about 14, and over the years he took lessons from local musicians Larry Paul Passalacqua, Marty Williamson, Jed Adams and Lance Fulk.

"When I first started playing, I tried out for the Oneighty band, a church organization for youth," Poe said.

Around the time that he began playing contemporary Christian music with the Oneighty band, he was asked to join another Effingham based group, Firebox. Poe would play bluegrass music with Firebox for several years before the group split up.



"I played with them for about 10 or so years," Poe said. "We still remain good friends to this day but decided to quit playing. We grew to be a semi-regional success, playing bluegrass festivals across the Midwest and had some studio recorded albums."

Eventually, Poe would play with Phillip Steinmetz and his Sunny Tennesseans which, as the group's name indicates, is based out of Tennessee. While he was playing with this group, Poe heard of yet another opportunity for him to advance his musical career.

"I still play with him to this day, but this past

summer, I got a call from a friend of mine and former member of The Chuck Wagon Gang, Jeremy Stephens. And he asked if I wanted to fill in some with The Chuck Wagon Gang," Poe said.

"The Chuck Wagon Gang is kind of acknowledged as the liaison between other gospel music and bluegrass music."

Well aware of the group's impressive legacy, Poe jumped at the chance to join The Chuck Wagon Gang, even if it just meant filling

in on guitar for a couple shows. However, soon after he started playing with The Chuck Wagon Gang, its leader and alto singer, Shaye Smith,

**Basically, every band I played in since I started, the goal was always to play the Grand Ole Opry.**

**— Nick Poe**

The Chuck Wagon Gang, a country-gospel quartet, performs at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville on July 7. From left are Nick Poe, Josh Garner, Shaye Smith, Melissa Kemper and Cody Shaneyfelt. Submitted photo.





asked him to join the group as a full-time guitarist and bass singer.

"We really hit it off good. It worked out, and I really enjoy playing with them," Poe said. "We play a lot of southern states, and the band is kind of from all over. And they've had quite a bit of success with their latest album, 'Come Go With Me.'"

Poe said the first song from "Come Go With Me" to be played over the radio, "I will Not Cry Today," made it to the top of the country's bluegrass-gospel charts and remained there for about three months.

The Chuck Wagon Gang's performance at the Grand Ole Opry in July wasn't its first there, but Poe noted that the group hadn't played there in about six or seven years.

"It was really neat when they asked us to be on there," he said. "Basically, every band I played in since I started, the goal was always to play the Grand Ole Opry, and every band I've played in has gotten a little closer to that."

"It was a huge honor to get to play it."

Although he isn't sure just how many people were listening to him play that Sunday, Poe said that the average



Nick Poe plays guitar at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville on July 7. Poe performed with The Chuck Wagon Gang, a country-gospel quartet. Submitted photo.

number of Grand Ole Opry listeners on Saturday nights is 2.5 million.

"It's a whole different ball game playing on the Opry stage because of everyone who has played it before you, and it's blasted over the radio all across the world," he said. "In fact, my brother was on his honeymoon in the Dominican Republic and listened to me play."

Some of the artists that first got Poe interested in country and bluegrass

music were Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins. Now he can say that he has played on the same stage as them.

"It's wild," Poe said.

In addition to those listening on the radio, some of Poe's family and friends traveled from all over the country to watch him play. This even included some of the buddies he shoots pool with in Altamont.

"My daughter was out in the crowd with my family, and then my girlfriend was backstage with me," Poe said of his 7-year-old daughter, Rosalie Poe, and his girlfriend, Barbara McGuire. "I had about 25 people come from all over to see me in the crowd."

"It was pretty humbling to see how many people support me and all the

messages I received before and after I played saying that they listened in or 'good luck.'"

Another supporter who went to the Grand Ole Opry in July to see Poe perform was Lance Fulk.

"My grandpa and I actually took our first banjo lessons from him, so he was pretty proud that I came from that to playing the Opry," Poe said.

Unfortunately, Poe's grandfather, Les Smith, died about a month prior to his performance at the Grand Ole Opry. But Poe explained that he could feel his presence there, particularly when he went backstage to see legendary country music artist Little Jimmy Dickens' dressing room.

"He was my grandpa's favorite," Poe said. "He was kind of the one who got me started in music. It was kind of hard knowing that he wasn't going to be there with me, but he most definitely was. I could tell he was there."

"He just loved the music, and he grew up listening to the Grand Ole Opry while he was milking cows."

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## EHS Athletic Director **DAVE WOLTMAN** calls it a career after 32 years

**Alex Wallner**  
Effingham Magazine

**D**ave Woltman handed over the keys at the end of June.

His days as athletic director at his alma mater were officially over at the end of the month; Woltman retired after 32 years.

"It's been a privilege," the 1982 Effingham graduate said. "It's been an honor to serve the district, and I've tried to do a good job. Things don't always go how you planned them to go, but I feel like we tried to do things that were right for kids."

Prior to being an athletic director at EHS, Wolt-

man was a teacher and coach at St. Anthony.

Former Athletic Director Dave Bartlett was retiring and approached Woltman about taking over the reins.

He accepted.

"(Bartlett) was asked to be the principal and he was the head varsity baseball and basketball coach and athletic director," Woltman said. "He asked me if I would be interested in becoming the athletic director at St. Anthony, so that's how it started."

Woltman is one of three mainstays at EHS that are moving aside heading into the 2024-2025 school year.

**Effingham Athletic Director Dave Woltman accepts a commemorative basketball during halftime of a boys basketball game in the Effingham/Teutopolis Christmas Classic at Effingham High School, Saturday, Dec. 30, 2023. Photo by Alex Wallner, Daily News**

Scott Mosher will no longer be the public address announcer at football games and Sid Kibler won't do the same for boys basketball games. Both Mosher and Kibler decided to step away when Woltman was ready to do so.

"(Kibler) and Scott Mosher both pretty much told me that at the same time," Woltman said. "Those two guys have been awesome and very reliable. Never had to worry about that part of football and basketball. But, there have been so many people who have been helpful to programs directly or me directly that have made a big impact on the programs that we offer."

Woltman's final stand as athletic director ended with a bang.

In the fall, the EHS football team earned a second straight berth in the Class 4A Playoffs. The volleyball team won its first regional championship since 2018. The girls cross-country team earned a spot in the state meet and the soccer team had a record-breaking season.

The winter continued with the girls basketball team winning its first regional since 2019 and the spring followed with the softball team winning its first regional since 2017 and individual moments from the boys and girls track and field teams.

The EHS baseball team also won 21 games, one year removed from placing fourth at the state tournament.

"Starting with that and moving forward into this past school

year, we've had a really good run in athletics in general," Woltman said.

Those were just some of the moments that Woltman looks back fondly on, though.

"It's a combination of all kinds of different moments," Woltman said. "Some of them are very simple things that happened and some of them are state tournament trips or successful seasons, but the biggest thing for me is watching kids accomplish their maximum ability. And, honestly, sometimes seeing them fail because that's the only way they learn and get better."

While there were great moments to highlight, Woltman compared the job to planning a wedding.

"I always liken it to planning a wedding. The mother of the bride and the

bride are the only ones who really know what's supposed to happen, so when things go wrong, people are still enjoying the wedding and that's very similar to athletics," Woltman said. "I have in mind what should happen, but there are things that occur that you have to change gears and try to fix it or solve it."

That was the case for the Effingham/Teutopolis Christmas Classic, which Woltman helped start.

He and now superintendent Andy Johnson kicked around ideas of something to do. They eventually settled on the tournament.

**It's been an honor to  
serve the district, and I've  
tried to do a good job.**

**— Dave Woltman**



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"The idea of it started a long time ago when I was at St. Anthony and we were trying to put together a tournament like this," Woltman said. "Andy Johnson and myself talked about trying to do something and finally, we threw our feet in the water. We started with five teams and it's grown to something that's one of the better Christmas tournaments anywhere around the state.

"It's been a good thing to watch."

As for life after retirement, Woltman said he plans on spending more time with family.

"We're definitely planning on doing more with family. That's my goal," he said.

Additionally, he'd also like to improve his golf game.

"Hopefully, it won't get any worse," Woltman laughed. "That's one of the prices you pay. I, at one time, was a decent golfer. Now, I'm not as good anymore because you don't spend as much time doing it."

Effingham High School Athletic Director Dave Woltman reflects on the Effingham High School baseball team's historic season during a reception at Effingham High School in June 2023. Effingham Daily News file photo.



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# Katie Koester discusses priorities as new Chamber president



New Chamber president Katie Koester began her role in August and said being chosen was "extremely humbling."

Nick Taylor  
Effingham Magazine

An Effingham native has been named the new president and CEO of the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce, and is developing a vision for the organization's future.

Katie Koester has taken over for the Chamber's interim president and CEO, Jeff Fritchtnitch, who was appointed to the position following the departure of the previous president and CEO, Lucinda Hart, on May 31. Koester officially became the president and CEO of the Chamber in August.

Koester said being chosen for the position was "extremely humbling," noting that she was pleasantly surprised that she was even considered for the role.

"It was very overwhelming on Friday when they officially announced it on social media and the radio and things like that, but I'm extremely honored," she said.

Koester grew up in Effingham and returned to the area after graduating from Kentucky Christian University in 2010. She said she initially didn't think she would stay in Effingham, but after getting involved with the Chamber and other local organizations, she began to realize how much the area had to offer.

"I love the Effingham community," she said. "I was born and raised here."

Koester first got involved with the Chamber about 13 years ago, working as its program coordinator from 2011-2013.

"I did all of their events and marketing," Koester said.

Over the years, Koester has become closely involved with several local organizations, including the Effingham Sunrise Rotary, Effingham Tourism Advisory Board, Effingham Unit 40 Education Foundation, 40Forward and 100+ Women Who Care of Effingham County. She also worked as the director of weddings and events at the Keller Convention Center from 2013-2017.

For the past seven years, Koester has worked as an integrator at Firefly Grill in Effingham, and she said her role there is essentially that of a "team operations manager." She believes



that this role has helped prepare her for her new position with the Chamber, especially when it comes to managing multiple people.

"The Chamber's office is a small office, but it reports to almost 600 members. So, I think that goes hand in hand with operating a restaurant as well," Koester said. "We have 75 employees, but I'm dealing with thousands and thousands of diners every year. So, the operations side, I think, is really very similar."

Additionally, Koester is already well versed in finance, in part, because of the time she spent with Firefly Grill.

"I've learned a lot at Firefly," Koester said. "So, I think that will all transfer over to this new position as well."

Koester already has some goals regarding the future of the organization, including its engagement with the county's youth.

"I feel like our junior high, high school and college kids in this community are our next generation of leaders, so I think being involved and getting them more involved in the Chamber kind of allows them to see what a great business community we have," Koester said. "And hopefully, we'll

have them return to the area or stay in the area depending on what their goals or plans may be."

Another goal for Koester is to get more residents involved with the Chamber by reaching out to those who aren't familiar with it and teaching them about the work they do within the community.

"I don't think a lot of people understand how vibrant and busy our Chamber is and what it exactly does, so I think through marketing efforts as well as communication, that could be something that will really allow the Chamber to thrive even more in the community," Koester said.

Koester is also well aware that Effingham County has been experiencing a shortage of affordable workforce housing and affordable childcare. She said she will further explore both issues to see if there is anything the Chamber can do to help the county address them.

"I sell real estate as well on the side with RE/MAX Key Advantage, so I definitely see the need for housing, especially affordable housing in our community," she said. "So, I think that's definitely an initiative that I'd love to dive into and learn more about."

## Koester grew up in Effingham and returned to the area after graduating from Kentucky Christian University in 2010.



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# BIRTH TO FIVE ILLINOIS

## begins rolling out action plan

**Nick Taylor**

Effingham Magazine

**B**irth to Five Illinois Region 3, which includes Effingham County, is beginning to roll out its plan to make early childhood care and education programs in the area more inclusive and accessible for all residents.

In 2022, Birth to Five Illinois established regional offices throughout the state, and each of them formed an action council and family council tasked with making recommendations for how early childhood care and education programs could be made more equitable in the area. The action council is composed of community members, and the family council is composed of parents and caregivers.

Amy Robinson is the regional council manager for Birth to Five Illinois Region 3, which includes Bond, Christian, Effingham, Fayette, and Montgomery counties. She said that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state began to realize just how inequitable early childhood programs were in Illinois.

"Some kids were being completely taken care of, and some kids were getting nothing," Robinson said. "The councils were created in order to make sure that we were having the community voice front and center of what we were doing."

Robinson explained that the primary goal of the action plan is to address these inequities, and the first part of the planning process was creating a regional needs assessment. The assessment took about a year to put together and included early

**Amy Robinson is the regional council manager for Birth to Five Illinois Region 3. Submitted photo**



childhood data, feedback from families and feedback from community stakeholders.

"From there, we have strengths, needs and recommendations," Robinson said.

One of the members of the action council for Region 3, Crisis Nursery of Effingham Executive Director Meghan Rewers, described the regional needs assessment as a "comprehensive snapshot of the region," and she said the implementation of the action plan will include more than 10 area organizations.

"And then from there, our council tries to sort of summarize the needs that we can identify for our region," Rewers said.

Crisis Nursery of Effingham provides 24-hour emergency services for families with children from birth to 6 years old. Rewers noted that while Crisis Nursery of Effingham is based in Effingham County, it serves all of Region 3.

According to Robinson, the action plan for Region 3 is meant to be "all encompassing."

"We have two main recommendations," Robinson said.

One of them is to better train early childhood care and education staff in mental health and trauma-informed care. According to the action plan, the number of children in Region 3 experiencing abuse and living in alternative care is double that of the state average.

"We're seeing a huge mental health decline across all ages right now," Robinson said. "Our workforce isn't prepared for these children."

Additionally, Robinson said that working with children that are experiencing mental health related issues can also have a toll on staff members.

"We need real, deep training on how to deal with children who are having mental health breakdowns, who are going through a crisis, and their families," she said.

Dealing with children who have experienced trauma is not uncommon for Crisis Nursery of Effingham, and the organization has already taken steps to implement the portion of the action plan addressing mental health training.

"I have started conversations with our assistant director on some of the different training aspects that we may be able to provide to our staff here," Rewers said.

Through this training, Rewers hopes her staff will be better equipped to get children experiencing mental health crises the help they need.

"We're not seeing any sort of direct roll out quite yet, but it's definitely having an impact," Rewers said regarding the action plan. "It's starting conversations and doing a lot of what it's meant to do."

The other main recommendation made by the council is meant to ensure that as many families as possible have access to services for their children, including families living in rural areas, CCAP recipients, the families of children with physical or developmental disabilities, and the families of children with parents who work second-shift hours.



"There's just always something that seems to be a hitch in a family's plan in order to provide what they need for their children," Robinson said.

Rewers noted that Crisis Nursery of Effingham is well aware of the need rural families have for better transportation and access to services for their children.

"I do think we see that isolation as a pretty particular barrier for families," Rewers said. "We can identify resources all day, but how do we get families connected with them?"

"It'll continue to be a constant conversation that we'll have to have in this region."

The action plan also identified a recent rise in the number of children in Region 3 that speak English as a second language, and in Effingham County, Crisis Nursery of Effingham is already working to address the recent influx, particularly in the number of children who primarily speak Spanish.

"We are currently in the process of rolling out a service of support through our agency to be able to work better and communicate with families that speak Spanish or other languages using a translating service," Rewers said. "Right now, we do not have anybody that can speak Spanish fluently, so we've been working with an outside company to provide 24/7 support."

The process of implementing the action plan has already begun, but efforts have slowed for the time being as Region 3 prepares to appoint new council members for the plan's next phase. New council members will take over in October.

"It takes a lot of energy recruiting council members," Robinson said.

In October workgroups from each county in the region will begin identifying their specific needs, and these workgroups will meet once a month to develop a plan to best address these needs.

One of Effingham County's needs that has been identified by organizations throughout the area is its needs for housing. Robinson said she also recently heard that the county's child mortality rate has been on the rise.

"We want to make sure we know what's causing these issues and then what we can do to help fix it and close that gap so that we're protecting those children," she said.

Additionally, Robinson said that CEFS Economic Opportunity Corporation is



Meghan Rewers, a member of the Birth to Five action council for Region 3, is executive director of Crisis Nursery of Effingham. Effingham Daily News file photo.

already working to provide more slots for children from birth-3 years old that are in classrooms rather than continuing home visits.

"We're seeing that home visiting is harder to do because parents have jobs, so they're really trying hard to close those gaps and provide that," she said.

One of the major hurdles that Birth to Five Illinois has had to deal with in the implementation of the action plan in

Region 3 is a lack of staffing.

"You can find these programs, and you can get these grants. But if you don't have the staff for them, then it shuts everything down," Robinson said.

Robinson noted that Birth to Five Illinois will begin holding mobile office hours in each of the counties in Region 3 on a monthly basis, and she encourages anyone looking for more information on Birth to Five Illinois to attend them.

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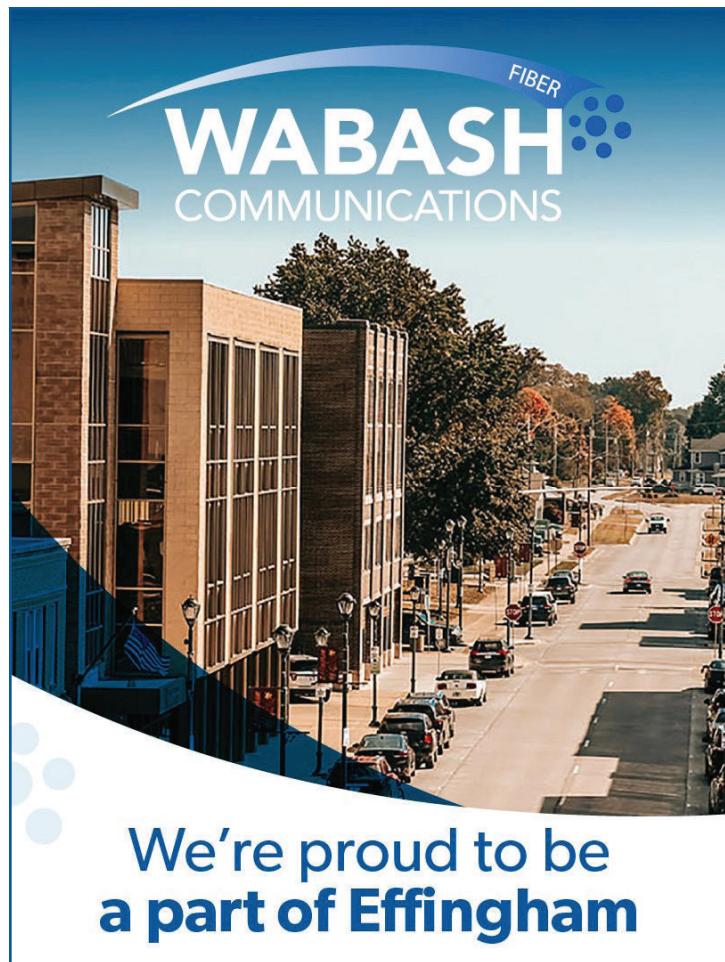
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# Five graduate from Effingham County Problem Solving Court

Story and photos  
**Nick Taylor**  
Effingham Magazine

**Judge Ericka Sanders** speaks during a ceremony for graduates of the Effingham County Problem Solving Court program at the Effingham County Government Center.

**F**ive Effingham County residents now have a clean slate after graduating from the Effingham County Problem Solving Court program.

A graduation ceremony was held in July in a courtroom at the Effingham County Government Center. The residents who graduated from the program were Shannon Borton, Matthew Jackson, David Ervin, Alexa Feldhake and Ashley Schaufler.

"These five individuals have done some of the hardest work they will ever do," said Effingham County Probation Officer Christine Winters.

The ceremony was led by Judge Ericka Sanders, who explained that most people lack the ability or drive to make it through the program and stay sober.

"They do what most people can't, change, and they changed despite every unimaginable obstacle in their way," Sanders said. "You are the definition of success in anyone's book."

Sanders also expressed her appreciation for the work of the members of the Strategic Training and Restoration (STAR) Board: Stacy Schuette, Katrina Smith, Stacey Durbin, Shelby Overbeck, Katie Smithenry, Tonya Siner and Christine Winters. STAR is a nonprofit organization that helps fund area drug court programs and assists program participants with the cost of living, even when it comes to housing.

"In short, they provide a hand up until our participants are able to use their own hands," Sanders said. "They are people dedicated to their professions."

In a video played during the ceremony, it was revealed that it costs \$46,743 to incarcerate someone, while it only costs \$6,000 to put a resident through the Effingham County Problem Solving Court program, which began in 2006.

"We are a successful program, saving literally millions in incarceration costs," Sanders said.

Effingham County Problem Solving Court Case Manager Macie Will also spoke during the ceremony and, alongside Winters, introduced the family of Sam Hurst, who presented Susan Miller with the Sam Hurst Memorial Award.

Sam Hurst used to be a probation officer in Effingham County, and he died in January of





2015. The award is meant to honor his memory and his approach to rehabilitation, which Will said is “paramount” to the success of those in the probation system.

“You see, Sam was a relationship builder,” Will said.

According to Winters, Miller, who has had her own battle with addiction, dedicates much of her time to helping others in recovery, and she gives presentations to United Way of Effingham County when STAR asks for funding.

“She exemplifies that quality to the fullest,” Winters said. “She has a heart as big as this room.”

Miller spoke after being presented with the award, saying she was “just blown away,” and she congratulated each of the graduates on the success they’ve had with the problem solving court program.

“It’s such an honor,” Miller said. “I can only give back what was given to me, and that was personal freedom from addiction.”

The Brianne Martin Award was also presented during the ceremony. The award honors the memory of Brianne Martin, who died in the fall of 2014 after a semi-truck driver with cocaine in his system crashed into her vehicle.

Martin was one of the youngest to ever go through the Effingham County Problem Solving Court program, entering it in 2010 when she was just 15

**Mathew Jackson, right, and Alexa Feldhake clap as Shannon Borton and Ashley Schaufler hug after Borton proposed to her at the end of a ceremony for Effingham County Problem Solving Court graduates at the Effingham County Government Center. Jackson, Feldhake, Borton and Schaufler are all graduates of the program.**

years old. But she managed to turn her life around and attended both Lake Land College and Eastern Illinois University.

“She made it impossible to not be affected by her enthusiasm or contagious laugh,” Winters said.

Martin’s mother, April Hurt, presented one of the graduates, Matthew Jackson, with the award during the ceremony.

In the video played during the ceremony, Jackson said the program allowed him to reapply with his employer for an assistant manager position at Speedway. He also thanked STAR for helping him pay his rent.

“It helped out a lot,” Jackson said.

Additionally, Jackson said that since going through the program, he’s learned to better cope with his emotions in relationships and take control of his life, which has meant paying his rent and bills on time.

“I’ve learned how to basically be responsible,” he said. “I keep my head above water.”



**Susan Miller speaks to residents after receiving the Sam Hurst Memorial Award during a ceremony at the Effingham County Government Center. The ceremony was held for recent graduates of the Effingham County Problem Solving Court program.**



# **We are a successful program, saving literally millions in incarceration costs.**

— **Judge Ericka Sanders**

Other graduates also shared their stories via video during the ceremony.

Shannon Borton said he grew up around people who abused drugs and alcohol, explaining that this type of behavior was a “fairly normal” part of his life, and since he was a teenager, he has been arrested numerous times.

“I started using drugs at the age of 13 years old,” he said. “I just kept along that path because I

really didn’t know another way. When I’m using drugs, that’s all I do.”

Borton is now determined to be a good role model for his children, and he hopes to someday watch them play sports.

“I just want to see my kids grow and be happy,” he said.

One of the keys to Borton’s success in the program has been living life one day at a time, and his determination to stay clean led to him getting promoted at his job recently.

“That’s huge for me,” Borton said regarding the promotion. “I live day by day. I just want to stay where I’m at on this path.”

Borton has been rebuilding his relationships with his loved ones, and he said he’s learned to hold himself accountable for his actions.

“I was a very selfish person,” Borton said. “If I say I’m going to do something, I follow through.

“Just because we’ve stumbled in life doesn’t mean we’ll always stumble.”

One of the relationships of Borton’s that has been flourishing since he got into the problem solving court program is his relationship with another program graduate, Ashley Schaufler. Schaufler also discussed her journey towards recovery during the ceremony, explaining that one of the roots of her drug problem was the relationships she used to have.

“I isolated from everybody,” she said. “I have a healthy relationship with my family, and I have real friends today.”

Schaufler also said that the program has taught her that achieving small goals can lead to major changes for the better. She also realized that the counselors with the Effingham County Probation Department simply wanted to help her.

“I definitely did not want to tell my counselors anything,” Schaufler said. “I used to lie about everything, I mean everything.”

Moving forward, Schaufler hopes to soon begin studying to become a dental assistant.

At the end of the ceremony, Schaufler and just about everyone else in the courtroom where the ceremony took place were surprised when Borton got down on one knee to propose to her after saying he had one more question to ask.

Borton and Schaufler are now engaged.



Shannon Borton speaks during a graduation ceremony for the Effingham County Problem Solving Court program at the Effingham County Government Center. Borton is one of five recent graduates from the program.



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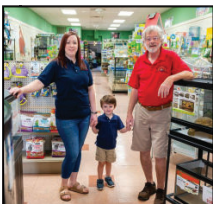
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Bianca Miller poses for a picture with her family and first responders who helped save her life at the Neoga fire station.

# RESCUE REUNION

Greenup woman reunites with responders who helped save her life

Story and photos  
**Cathy Griffith**  
Effingham Magazine

**O**n the night of June 8, Greenup resident Bianca Miller's life took a turn she never expected.

The 21-year-old was riding in a utility task vehicle in rural Neoga with others when the driver took a sharp curve. The vehicle rolled over, throwing Miller, who was not wearing a seat belt or helmet, from it. The UTV then landed on her head.

Bianca Miller, right, shares a laugh with her grandmother, Jill Kelley, while mother Stephanie Chapman, in back, watches.





Witnesses lifted the UTV off of Miller. When first responders got to the scene, she was unresponsive. ARCH 3 crew airlifted her to Carle Foundation Hospital in Urbana, where doctors stabilized her.

On a Saturday in July, Miller reunited with the team of first responders who helped save her life from ARCH, Cumberland County Sheriff's Office, Neoga Police Department and Neoga Fire Protection District.

The reunion is something ARCH flight nurse Vanessa Horst said she rarely gets to experience.

"We hardly ever find out what happens to them. So when we do, it's really nice to see what we did helped someone, which is always our goal," she said.

Horst noted that Miller's head injury was "very bad," so it amazed her to see Miller walking and talking at the reunion.

"We don't see that very often in these situations and very happy when it happens. (I'm) very happy to see her doing so well. She's still got a long journey ahead of her, but she's making good progress," she said.

Neoga police officer Trevor Moore, who was first on scene with Cumberland County sheriff's deputy Ashley Decker, was happy to see her recovery. Moore has responded to accidents involving all-terrain vehicles before but noted this one was pretty severe.

"It's fantastic to see her up and moving. Doesn't always turn out that way, so when it does, it's fantastic to be able to see," he said.



ARCH flight paramedic Dylan Johnson, left, and flight nurse Vanessa Horst, right, help Bianca Miller, center, out of the ARCH helicopter at the Neoga fire station after she got to sit in it. Miller reunited on Saturday with the ARCH 3 crew and others who responded to a UTV accident that left Miller, a passenger, with a severe head injury. The ARCH team airlifted her to Carle Foundation Hospital.





Bianca Miller, center, is flanked by grandmother Jill Kelley and father Jay Shunn at the Neoga fire station. Mother Stephanie Chapman is in the background.

"It's definitely a miracle," added Decker. Moore credited the team effort of all the responders for getting her the care she needed. "Everybody played a part. Everybody did great that responded, from dispatch to EMTs to helicopter," he said.

Miller's family is also grateful.

"We have some good medical people out there that won't give up, and they didn't," said Miller's father, Jay Shunn.

"I'm really, really happy that everybody's there to support her and support us through this whole thing," said Miller's mother, Stephanie Chapman.

"I think we're very lucky to have her. If it wasn't for this whole team of people, I don't know what would have happened," said Miller's grandmother, Jill Kelley.

**If it wasn't for this whole team of people,  
I don't know what would have happened.**

**– Jill Kelley, Bianca Miller's grandmother**

Chapman thanked Cumberland County sheriff's deputy Jerry Weber, who also responded to the scene, for being there for her following the accident.

"He held me, held my hand. We prayed together," she said.

Miller was thankful beyond words for seeing the first responders and for their efforts. She doesn't remember much from that night.

"I just remember getting thrown out of the side-by-side," she said.

The left side of Miller's skull was crushed. She suffered severe head trauma and brain damage, according to Shunn. She also suffered several fractures in her face, two broken bones in her wrist and a S-line fracture in her upper forearm.

Miller underwent surgery to reset several parts of her skull that were displaced. However, doctors were unable to save her entire skull, so she will have to undergo further

surgeries to reconstruct it.

In the meantime, Miller must always wear a helmet to protect her head and have someone with her, even when she walks to the bathroom.

"She's got to be monitored pretty much 24/7 unless she's in bed. That's why she has that belt on, so we can stay close to her if she tries to fall or something," said Shunn.

The head injury has also affected Miller's memory, particularly short-term, which Shunn said doctors aren't sure she will regain.

"She could get a full recovery on her long-term. It could take up to roughly two years minimum for a full recovery," he said.

Miller notes she is slowly making progress.

"I went to speech therapy Monday, and I remembered something I learned on Friday," she said.

Chapman said her daughter improves every time she goes, adding that progress has been better than medical staff expected, especially from the condition she was in when she started recovery.

"She had to learn how to sit up, how to stand up, how to talk and swallow, like all of it," she said.

Miller was a second-year student at Eastern Illinois University, majoring in Human Services, and a member of the Panther marching band before the accident. She hopes to eventually get back to school and play the flute again.

"She wants to get back out on that field pretty bad. She's talked a lot about it," said Shunn. "It's going to be a long road."





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DATE/TIME	SHOW	TOP TIER	LEVEL A	LEVEL B
Oct. 11   7:00 pm	Forever Simon & Garfunkel: A Tribute	\$40	\$30	\$20
Oct. 18   7:00 pm	Linda Davis: Evening in the Round	\$45	\$35	\$30
Oct. 25   8:00 pm	The Rocky Horror Picture Show (Interactive Movie)	\$15	\$15	\$15
Oct. 26   7:00 pm	Walking with Ghosts with Amy Bruni	\$45	\$30	\$20
Nov. 02   7:00 pm	BritBeat: A Tribute to the Beatles	\$55	\$45	\$35
Nov. 15   7:00 pm	Terri Clark	\$55	\$45	\$35
Nov. 17   7:00 pm	Kenny G: The Miracles Holiday & Hits Tour	\$85	\$70	\$50
Nov. 22   8:00 pm	Hairball: A Tribute to Arena Rock	\$32	\$32	\$32
Nov. 23   2:00 pm Nov. 23   7:30 pm	Ozark Jubilee's Branson Country Christmas	\$35	\$25	\$20
Dec. 06   7:00 pm	Buckets N Boards: Holiday Remix	\$40	\$25	\$15
Dec. 07   7:00 pm	Lee Greenwood Christmas	\$60	\$45	\$35
Dec. 08   4:00 pm	Christmas In The Air	\$55	\$40	\$25
Dec. 14   3:00 pm	The Polar Express (Interactive Movie)	\$35 VIP	\$15	\$15
Jan. 05   7:00 pm	Colin Mochrie & Brad Sherwood	\$65	\$50	\$40
Jan. 18   3:00 pm	Aladdin (Interactive Movie)	\$35 VIP	\$15	\$15
Jan. 24   7:00 pm	One Night in Memphis: Presley, Perkins, Lewis & Cash	\$45	\$35	\$25
Jan. 25   7:00 pm	Serial Killers with Dr. Scott Bonn	\$45	\$30	\$20
Feb. 01   7:00 pm	Bored Teachers Comedy Tour	\$55	\$45	\$35
Feb. 06   7:00 pm	DRUMline Live!	\$50	\$35	\$25
Feb. 07   7:00 pm	Puppy Pals Live!	\$30	\$20	\$15
Feb. 08   7:00 pm	The Marshall Tucker Band	\$75	\$55	\$40
Feb. 15   7:00 pm	EagleMania	\$45	\$35	\$25
Feb. 22   7:00 pm	Six String Summit	\$20	\$20	\$20
Mar. 08   7:00 pm	Mike Super: Magic & Illusion	\$55	\$35	\$25
Mar. 14   7:00 pm	Starship featuring Mickey Thomas	\$65	\$50	\$40
Mar. 21   7:00 pm	Hank & My Honky Tonk Heroes	\$45	\$35	\$25
Mar. 22   7:00 pm	Here Come The Mummies	\$35	\$35	\$35
Mar. 28   7:00 pm	The Drifters, The Platters, & The Coasters	\$65	\$55	\$35
Apr. 05   7:00 pm	BlackHawk	\$55	\$40	\$30
Apr. 12   7:00 pm	Great White & Slaughter	\$75	\$55	\$45
Apr. 25   7:00 pm	EPC Idol Finals	\$10	\$10	\$10
May 31   7:00 pm	Scott Wattles & The Blue Suede Crew	\$25	\$25	\$25



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## Ultraprocessed foods are everywhere. How bad are they?

Story  
**Jonel Aleccia**  
AP Health Writer

Photo  
**AP Photo/Lisa Poole, file**

A customer makes a purchase at a convenience store in Boston in this file photo.

**W**hether they know it or not, most Americans don't go a day — or often a single meal — without eating ultraprocessed foods.

From sugary cereals at breakfast to frozen pizzas at dinner, plus in-between snacks of potato chips, sodas and ice cream, ultraprocessed foods make up about 60% of the U.S. diet. For kids and teens, it's even higher — about two-thirds of what they eat.

That's concerning because ultraprocessed foods have been linked to a host of negative health effects, from obesity and diabetes to heart disease, depression, dementia and more. One recent study suggested that eating these foods may raise the risk of early death.

Nutrition science is tricky, though, and most research so far has found connections, not proof, regarding the health consequences of

these foods.

Food manufacturers argue that processing boosts food safety and supplies and offers a cheap, convenient way to provide a diverse and nutritious diet.

Even if the science were clear, it's hard to know what practical advice to give when ultraprocessed foods account for what one study estimates is 73% of the U.S. food supply.

The Associated Press asked several nutrition experts and here's what they said:

### What are ultraprocessed foods?

Most foods are processed, whether it's by freezing, grinding, fermentation, pasteurization or other means. In 2009, Brazilian epidemiologist Carlos Monteiro and colleagues first proposed a system that classifies foods according to the amount of processing they undergo, not by nutrient content.

At the top of the four-tier scale are foods created through industrial processes and with ingredients such as additives, colors and preservatives that you couldn't duplicate in a home kitchen, said Kevin Hall, a researcher who focuses on metabolism and diet at the National Institutes of Health.

"These are most, but not all, of the packaged foods you see," Hall said.

Such foods are often made to be both cheap and irresistibly delicious, said Dr. Neena Prasad, director of the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Food Policy Program.

"They have just the right combination of sugar, salt and fat and you just can't stop eating them," Prasad said.

However, the level of processing alone doesn't determine whether a food is unhealthy or not, Hall noted. Whole-grain bread, yogurt, tofu and infant formula are





all highly processed, for instance, but they're also nutritious.

## Are ultraprocessed foods harmful?

Here's the tricky part. Many studies suggest that diets high in such foods are linked to negative health outcomes. But these kinds of studies can't say whether the foods are the cause of the negative effects — or whether there's something else about the people who eat these foods that might be responsible.

At the same time, ultraprocessed foods, as a group, tend to have higher amounts of sodium, saturated fat and sugar, and tend to be lower in fiber and protein. It's not clear whether it's just these nutrients that are driving the effects.

Hall and his colleagues were the first to conduct a small but influential experiment that directly compared the results of eating similar diets made of ultraprocessed versus unprocessed foods.

Published in 2019, the research included 20 adults who went to live at an NIH center for a month. They received diets of ultraprocessed and unprocessed foods matched for calories, sugar, fat, fiber and macronutrients for two weeks each and were told to eat as much as they liked.

When participants ate the diet of ultraprocessed foods, they consumed about 500 calories per day more than when they ate unprocessed foods, researchers found — and they gained an average of about 2 pounds (1 kilogram) during the study period. When they ate only unprocessed foods for the same amount of time, they lost about 2 pounds (1 kilogram).

Hall is conducting a more detailed study now, but the process is slow and costly and results aren't expected until late next year. He and others argue that such definitive research is needed to determine exactly how ultraprocessed foods affect consumption.

"It's better to understand the mechanisms by which they drive the deleterious health consequences, if they're driving them," he said.

## Should ultraprocessed foods be regulated?

Some advocates, like Prasad, argue that the large body of research linking ultraprocessed foods to poor health

should be more than enough to spur government and industry to change policies. She calls for actions such as increased taxes on sugary drinks, stricter sodium restrictions for manufacturers and cracking down on marketing of such foods to children, the same way tobacco marketing is curtailed.

"Do we want to risk our kids getting sicker while we wait for this perfect evidence to emerge?" Prasad said. Earlier this year, FDA Commissioner Robert Califf broached the subject, telling a conference of food policy experts that ultraprocessed foods are "one of the most complex things I've ever dealt with."

But, he concluded, "We've got to have the scientific basis and then we've got to follow through."

## How should consumers manage ultraprocessed foods at home?

In countries like the U.S., it's hard to avoid highly processed foods — and not clear which ones should be targeted, said Aviva Musicus, science director for the Center for Science in the Public

Interest, which advocates for food policies.

"The range of ultraprocessed foods is just so wide," she said.

Instead, it's better to be mindful of the ingredients in foods. Check the labels and make choices that align with the current U.S. Dietary Guidelines, she suggested.

"We have really good evidence that added sugar is not great for us. We have evidence that high-sodium foods are not great for us," she said. "We have great evidence that fruits and vegetables which are minimally processed are really good for us."

It's important not to vilify certain foods, she added. Many consumers don't have the time or money to cook most meals from scratch.

"I think foods should be joyous and delicious and shouldn't involve moral judgment," Musicus said.

*The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.*

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## The new covid vaccine is out. Why you might not want to rush to get it.

Story  
**Arthur Allen, Eliza Fawcett  
and Rebecca Grapevine**  
Healthbeat

Photo  
**Bing Guan/Bloomberg/Getty**  
Images via KFF Health News

**T**he FDA has approved an updated covid shot for everyone 6 months old and up, which renews a now-annual quandary for Americans: Get the shot now, with the latest covid outbreak sweeping the country, or hold it in reserve for the winter wave?

The new vaccine should provide some protection to everyone. But many healthy people who have already been vaccinated or have immunity because they've been exposed to covid enough times may want to wait a few months.

Covid has become commonplace. For some, it's a minor illness with few symptoms. Others are laid up with fever, cough, and fatigue for days or weeks. A much smaller group — mostly older or chronically ill people — suffer hospitalization or death.

It's important for those in high-risk groups to get vaccinated, but vaccine protection wanes after a few months. Those who run to get the new vaccine may be more likely to fall ill this winter when the next wave hits, said William Schaffner, an infectious disease professor at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and a spokesperson for the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

On the other hand, by late fall the major variants may have changed, rendering the vaccine less effective, said Peter Marks, the FDA's top vaccine official, at a briefing Aug. 23. He urged everyone eligible to get immunized, noting that the risk of long covid is greater in the un- and undervaccinated.

Of course, if last year's covid vaccine rollout is any guide, few Americans will heed his advice, even though this summer's surge has been unusually intense, with levels of the covid virus in wastewater suggesting infections are as widespread as they were in the winter.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now looks to wastewater as fewer people are reporting test results to health authorities. The wastewater data shows the epidemic is worst in Western and Southern states. In New York, for example, levels are considered "high" — compared with "very high" in Georgia.

Hospitalizations and deaths due to covid have trended up, too. But unlike infections, these rates are nowhere near those seen in winter surges, or in summers past. More than 2,000 people died of covid in July — a high number but a small fraction of the at least 25,700 covid deaths in July 2020.

Partial immunity built up through vaccines and prior infections deserves credit for this relief. A new study suggests that current variants may be less virulent — in the study, one of the recent variants did not kill mice exposed to it, unlike most earlier covid variants.

Public health officials note that even with more cases this summer, people seem to be managing their sickness at home. "We did see a little rise in the number of cases, but it didn't have a significant impact in terms of hospitalizations and emergency room visits," said Manisha Juthani, public health commissioner of Connecticut, at a news briefing Aug. 21.

Unlike influenza or traditional cold viruses, covid seems to thrive outside the cold months, when germ schoolkids, dry air, and indoor activities are thought to enable the spread of air- and saliva-borne viruses. No one is exactly sure why.

"Covid is still very transmissible, very new, and people congregate inside in air-conditioned rooms during the summer," said John Moore, a virologist and professor at Cornell University's Weill Cornell Medicine College.

Or "maybe covid is more tolerant of humidity or other environmental conditions in the summer," said Caitlin Rivers, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins University.

Because viruses evolve as they infect people, the CDC has recommended updated covid vaccines each year. Last fall's booster was designed to target the omicron variant circulating in 2023. This year, mRNA vaccines made by Moderna and Pfizer and the protein-based vaccine from Novavax — which has yet to be approved by the FDA — target a more recent omicron variant, JN.1.

The FDA determined that the mRNA vaccines strongly protected people from severe disease and death — and would do so even

**It's important for those in high-risk groups to get vaccinated, but vaccine protection wanes after a few months.**



though earlier variants of JN.1 are now being overtaken by others.

Public interest in covid vaccines has waned, with only 1 in 5 adults getting vaccinated since last September, compared with about 80% who got the first dose. New Yorkers have been slightly above the national vaccination rate, while in Georgia only about 17% got the latest shot.

Vaccine uptake is lower in states where the majority voted for Donald Trump in 2020 and among those who have less money and education, less health care access, or less time off from work. These groups are also more likely to be hospitalized or die of the disease, according to a 2023 study in *The Lancet*.

While the newly formulated vaccines are better targeted at the circulating covid variants, uninsured and underinsured Americans may have to rush if they hope to get one for free. A CDC program that provided boosters to 1.5 million people over the last year ran out of money and is ending Aug. 31.

The agency drummed up \$62 million in unspent funds to pay state and local health departments to provide the new shots to those not covered by insurance. But “that may not go very far” if the vaccine costs the agency around \$86 a dose, as it did last year, said Kelly Moore, CEO of Immunize.org, which advocates for vaccination.

People who pay out-of-pocket at pharmacies face higher prices: CVS plans to sell the updated vaccine for \$201.99, said Amy Thibault, a spokesperson for the company.

“Price can be a barrier, access can be a barrier” to vaccination, said David Scales, an assistant professor of medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College.

Without an access program that provides vaccines to uninsured adults, “we’ll see disparities in health outcomes and disproportionate outbreaks in the working poor, who can ill afford to take off work,” Kelly Moore said.

New York state has about \$1 million to fill the gaps when the CDC’s program ends, said Danielle De Souza, a spokesperson for the New York State Department of Health. That will buy around 12,500 doses for uninsured and underinsured adults, she said. There are roughly one million uninsured people in the state.

CDC and FDA experts last year decided to promote annual fall vaccination against covid and influenza along with a one-time respiratory syncytial virus shot for some groups.

It would be impractical for the vaccine-makers to change the covid vaccine’s recipe twice every year, and offering the three vaccines during one or two health care visits appears to be the best way to increase uptake of all of them, said Schaffner, who consults for the CDC’s policy-setting Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.

At its next meeting, in October, the committee is likely to urge vulnerable people to get a second dose of the same covid vaccine in the spring, for protection against the next summer wave, he said.

If you’re in a vulnerable population and waiting to get vaccinated until closer to the holiday season, Schaffner said, it makes sense to wear a mask and avoid big crowds, and to get a test if you think you have covid. If positive, people in these groups should seek medical attention since the antiviral pill Paxlovid might ameliorate their symptoms and keep them out of the hospital.

As for conscientious others who feel they may be sick and don’t want to spread the covid virus, the best advice is to get a single test and, if positive, try to isolate for a few days and then wear a mask for several days while avoiding crowded rooms. Repeat testing after a positive result is pointless, since viral particles in the nose may remain for days without signifying a risk of infecting others, Schaffner said.

The Health and Human Services Department is making four free covid tests available to anyone who requests them starting in late September through [covidtest.gov](https://covidtest.gov), said Dawn O’Connell, assistant secretary for preparedness and response, at the Aug. 23 briefing.

The government is focusing its fall vaccine advocacy campaign, which it’s calling “Risk less, live more,” on older people and nursing home residents, said HHS spokesperson Jeff Nesbit.

Not everyone may really need a fall covid booster, but “it’s not wrong to give people options,” John Moore said. “The 20-year-old athlete is less at risk than the 70-year-old overweight dude. It’s as simple as that.”

*KFF Health News correspondent Amy Maxmen contributed to this report. Healthbeat is a non-profit newsroom covering public health published by Civic News Company and KFF Health News.*



# Effingham & Area Events

**Sept. 27: Glo Bingo** at Effingham Event Center. Doors open 6 p.m. Bingo 7 p.m. Over \$1,000 in Cash Prizes. Cash Bar. Raffle Baskets. Must be 18 or older to attend. Benefit for Effingham County Humane Society.

**Sept. 27 & 28: City-Wide Garage Sales** in Effingham IL



**Sept. 27 & 28: Altamont Schuetzenfest.** German Food, Beer, Games, Live Music & More, all at the Effingham County Fairgrounds in Altamont IL. Hip Huggers Band Friday Night. Saturday events include AEF Kickball, Car Show, The Mason Dixies, King & Queen Coronation & Bryor Rhodes Band. Follow us on Facebook at "Fritzzy Schuetzenfest".

**Sept. 28: 2024 Oktoberfest** at the Teutopolis Banquet Hall grounds starting at 5 p.m. Live Music by Butch's Polka Kings from 5:30 to 9 p.m. and Bad Habit from 9 p.m. to the end. Free admission! Free inflatables for the kids! German style food! German style beer! Stein holding contest! Event by Teutopolis Civic Club.

**Sept. 28: Crossroads Music Festival** from Noon to 1 a.m. at the Reel Marina at Lake Sara in Effingham IL.

**Oct. 5: Dieterich Village-Wide Garage Sales**

**Oct. 5: Harvest Vendor Fair** at Barn & Bottle Winery from Noon to 4 p.m. Vendors selling crafts & merchandise, Food Trucks, Kids Petting Zoo & Wine!

**Oct. 5: Jeep Run** at Harry's Tavern in Dieterich IL featuring band Cornfield Mafia!

**Oct. 5: Boom Box All 80's Band** 7 p.m. at The Whistle Stop Saloon in Altamont.

**Oct. 11: Forever Simon and Garfunkel: A Tribute.** Iconic songs include "The Sounds of Silence", "Bridge Over Troubled Water", "Mrs. Robinson", "I am a Rock", "The Boxer", "Cecilia", "Hazy Shade of Winter" and so many more! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Oct. 11: Monster Mash Bash** presented by United Way of Effingham County to benefit 19 local partner agencies. Doors open 6 p.m. at Thelma Keller Convention Center in Effingham IL. Costume Contest: Best Individual & Best Group. Costumes encouraged but not required. Call the United Way office at

(217)342-3824 for more information and to RSVP.

**Oct. 12: Saturday Night Spookshow** at On The Rox in Altamont. Live Music by Coffinscum with very special guests Mantra of Morta. Free Admission!

**Oct. 17: Women's Health Showcase** 4:30 to 9 p.m. at Thelma Keller Convention Center in Effingham IL. Watch the Facebook page for more info.

**Oct. 18: Linda Davis: Evening in the Round.** Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Oct. 18: Jack Willhite Rock & Roll Comedy Show** at Tuscan Hills Winery starting 7 p.m. See winery website for tickets.

**Oct. 25: The Rocky Horror Picture Show.** Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 8 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Oct. 26: Walking With Ghosts With Amy Bruni.** Paranormal investigator, author, podcaster and star of Kindred Spirits and Ghost Hunters, Amy Bruni shares hair-raising tales from her countless hours hunting ghosts at America's most haunted locations. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Nov. 1 & 2: Downtown Effingham Holiday Open Houses.** Nov. 1 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Nov. 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.



**Nov. 2: BritBeat: A Tribute to the Beatles.** BritBeat is an unparalleled fusion of live musical prowess and cutting-edge multimedia technology. This show isn't just about music; it's a multimedia spectacle that redefines the future of live entertainment and makes you feel like a part of the Beatles' historic journey! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Nov. 2: Boom Box All 80's Band.** 7 p.m. at A1 Liquors on Rt 33, Effingham.

**Nov. 7-10: "Oklahoma!"** Musical presented by St. Anthony High School

**Nov. 15: Terri Clark.** Terri has produced hit songs such as "Better Things To Do", "Poor Poor Pitiful Me" & "Girls Lie Too". Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Nov. 17: Kenny G: The Miracles Holiday and Hits Tour 2024.** Kenny G has a way with melody! That's not necessarily a revelation, but more like a huge understatement. Kenny G has sold more than 75 million albums worldwide, owns the best-selling instrumental record of all time with 1992's 12-times-platinum "Breathless" and has the number one Christmas record of all time with 1994's 8-times platinum "Miracles." At the heart of those achievements is Kenny's ability to convey deep emotional resonance with his saxophone, which is never more apparent than in his sparkling holiday shows! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



**Nov. 22: Hairball: A Tribute to Arena Rock.** Homage will be paid to some of the biggest arena acts in the world including Van Halen, KISS, Motley Crue, Queen, Journey, Poison, and Aerosmith. Hairball's show includes lights, sound, video screens, smokebombs, confetti and more! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 8 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Nov. 22: Pink Friday** in downtown Effingham from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**Nov. 23: Ozark Jubilee's Branson Country Christmas.** Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center. Shows at 2 and 7:30 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Nov. 29 through Dec. 28: Tinsel & Tails A Holiday Experience** at Cardinal Golf Course, 15737 N. Beach Rd., Effingham IL. 4 to 9 p.m. each evening, to benefit EARS (Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary). This new holiday event will take patrons on a short golf cart ride to enjoy festive light exhibits, sip on hot chocolate, roast s'mores and get plenty of snuggles by the fire pit.

**Nov. 30: Small Business Saturday** in downtown Effingham from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Dec. 1: All I Want For Christmas Craft & Vendor Show.** 80+ Crafters & Vendors. Pictures with Santa. Gift Card Giveaways. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Thelma Keller Convention Center in Effingham.

**Dec. 6: Buckets N Boards: Holiday Remix.** Celebrate the holiday season with this hilarious,



high-energy show chock-full of amazing percussion, ridiculous songs, spectacular tap dancing, inventive instrumentation and an incredible variety of musical talents! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Dec. 7: Hometown Christmas Festival** in downtown Effingham

**Dec. 7: Lee Greenwood Christmas.** An icon in country music, Lee Greenwood sings his Christmas hits! His hits include "I Don't Mind the Thorns if You're the Rose", "Dixie Road", "Somebody's Gonna Love You", "Mornin' Ride" and "Going, Going, Gone". Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Dec. 8: Christmas In The Air.** Christmas In The Air is a first class, Broadway-style song and dance review, wrapped up within a feel-good holiday storyline told by Santa's favorite elves. Starring Rand Productions' dazzling precision dancers, known as the Tinseltotes, the show delivers the perfect mix of classic holiday melodies with modern favorites and original music. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 4 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Dec. 14: The Polar Express: An Interactive Movie Experience.** Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 3 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**2025**

**Jan. 5: Colin Mochrie & Brad Sherwood: Asking for Trouble.** Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



Great White and Slaughter appear at the Effingham Performance Center April 12.

**Jan. 18: Aladdin: An Interactive Movie Experience.** Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 3 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Jan. 24: One Night in Memphis: Presley, Perkins, Lewis & Cash.** One Night in Memphis is a rocking concert tribute to legendary Sun Records recording artists Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley. Be a witness to a rock and roll royalty jam session that pays tribute to the famous night of Dec. 4, 1956 when the four legendary artists played together at the Sun Records studio in Memphis, featuring the hits including "Blue Suede Shoes", "Folsom Prison Blues", "Great Balls of Fire", "Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On", "Shake, Rattle and Roll", "Don't Be Cruel", "Hound Dog" and many more! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Jan. 25: Serial Killers with Dr. Scott Bonn.** Renowned criminologist and serial killer expert Dr. Scott Bonn takes you inside the minds of the world's most savage and prolific murderers. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Feb. 1: Bored Teachers: The Struggle Is Real.** Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Feb. 6: DRUMLine Live!** DRUMLine Live is an international tour based on the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) marching band tradition, incorporating original compositions and soul-infused interpretations of Top 40 hits, group performances range from colorful, choreographed routines to heavy doses of drum riffs and cadences. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Feb. 7: Puppy Pals Live!** Action-Packed, Comedic Stunt Dog Show as seen on America's Got Talent! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Feb. 8: The Marshall Tucker Band.** Hits include "Heard It in a Love Song", "Can't You See", "Fire on the Mountain", "Long Hard Ride", "Ramblin" and many more! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**Feb. 15: EagleMania.** EagleMania is the World's Greatest Eagles Tribute Band! EagleMania

has been thrilling audiences all over the country with its stunning five part harmony and its uncanny ability to emulate the unmistakable sound of the Eagles. The show includes some of the Eagles' greatest hits, as well as some of the solo work of Don Henley, Glenn Frey and Joe Walsh. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



BlackHawk appears at the Effingham Performance Center April 5.

**Feb. 22: Six String Summit.** This show features six of the area's best guitar players backed up by the amazing Summit Band. The 2025 line-up features: Marty Williamson of Effingham, Flight 50; Terry Smith of Fairfield, Edgewood Opry; John Sawyer of Lerna, Sawyer Brothers Band;

Isaac Biver of Freeburg, Isaac Biver Music; John Spicer of Patoka, The John and Dave Duo; and Jon Clarkson of Mattoon, The Brat Pack. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**March 8: Mike Super: Magic & Illusion.** Mind-blowing illusions combined with the hilarity of a headline comedian! Mike Super is the winner of NBC's hit TV show Phenomenon and is the only magician in history to win a LIVE magic competition on primetime network television and voted America's Favorite Mystifier! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**March 14: Starship featuring Mickey Thomas.** Mickey Thomas is the owner of the soaring voice that propelled Starship through the decade of the 80s. Hits include "We Built This City", "Sara", "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" and "It's Not Over Til It's Over". Starship's live performances include its hits, as well as a few selections from Jefferson Airplane. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



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**March 21: Hank & My Honky Tonk Heroes with Jason Petty.** Celebrate Hank Williams 100th birthday with this tribute! Over the years, Jason Petty has had the chance to meet and become friends with those who know and played with Hank Williams. Jason has translated the stories he learned from them into a beautiful mosaic of live music and storytelling, taking the audience down memory lane. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**March 22: Here Come The Mummies.** The Mummies is an eight-piece, funk-rock band of 5,000-year-old Egyptian mummies with a one-track mind who have been direct support for P-Funk, Al Green, Mavis Staples, KC and the Sunshine Band and Cheap Trick and have rocked Super Bowl Village as well as being regulars on "The Bob and Tom Show" and

appeared on "That's My Jam" with Jimmy Fallon. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**March 28: The Drifters, The Platters, & Cornell Gunter's Coasters.** It's not a concert...it's a party! Enjoy the Rock N Roll/Doo wop sound with hits including "Charlie Brown", "Yakety Yak", "Poison Ivy", "Only You", "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes", "The Great Pretender", "Under the Boardwalk", "Up on the Roof", "This Magic Moment" and "On Broadway". Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**April 5: BlackHawk.** BlackHawk produced hit songs including "Goodbye Says It All" and "Every Once in a While". Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**April 12: Great White & Slaughter.** Great White & Slaughter are two esteemed acts who will share the stage for a night of rock! Great White has hits including "Once Bitten, Twice Shy" and "Rock Me". Slaughter's hits include "Up All Night" and "Fly to the Angels". Two of the 80's biggest acts together in one night! Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**April 25: EPC Idol Finals.** Singers from across the region are invited to participate in a singing competition to determine who will be the next EPC Idol and the winner of a \$1,000 cash prize! Preliminary contests will be

held at sponsoring locations with winners of each preliminary contest to take the stage for a night of performances to determine who will be voted the EPC Idol, voted by audience members via electronic voting. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**May 31: Scott Wattles & The Blue Suede Crew.** Songs include Elvis hits and Gospel music. Tickets Online Now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



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# TOP LAWYERS EFFINGHAM AREA BASED UPON A SURVEY OF THEIR PEERS



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Darrell A. Woolums	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	AG; Banking; Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin; RE: Comm; Trust/Will/Estate
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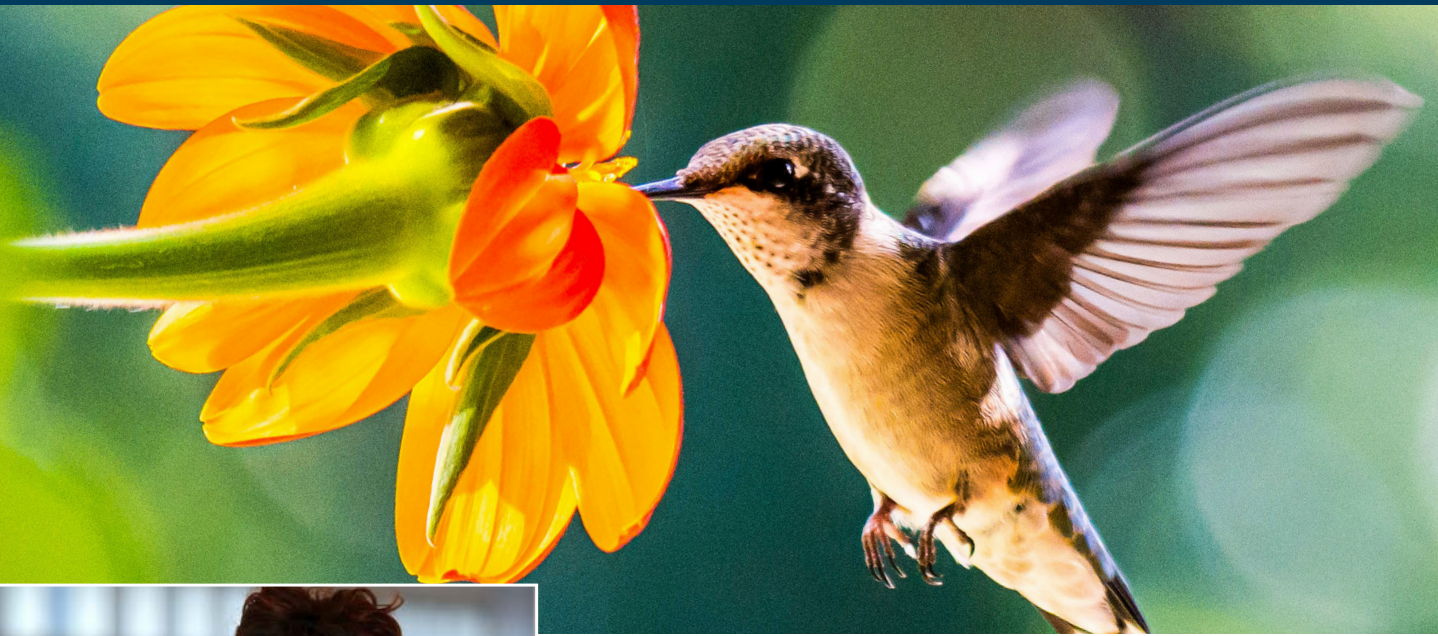
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