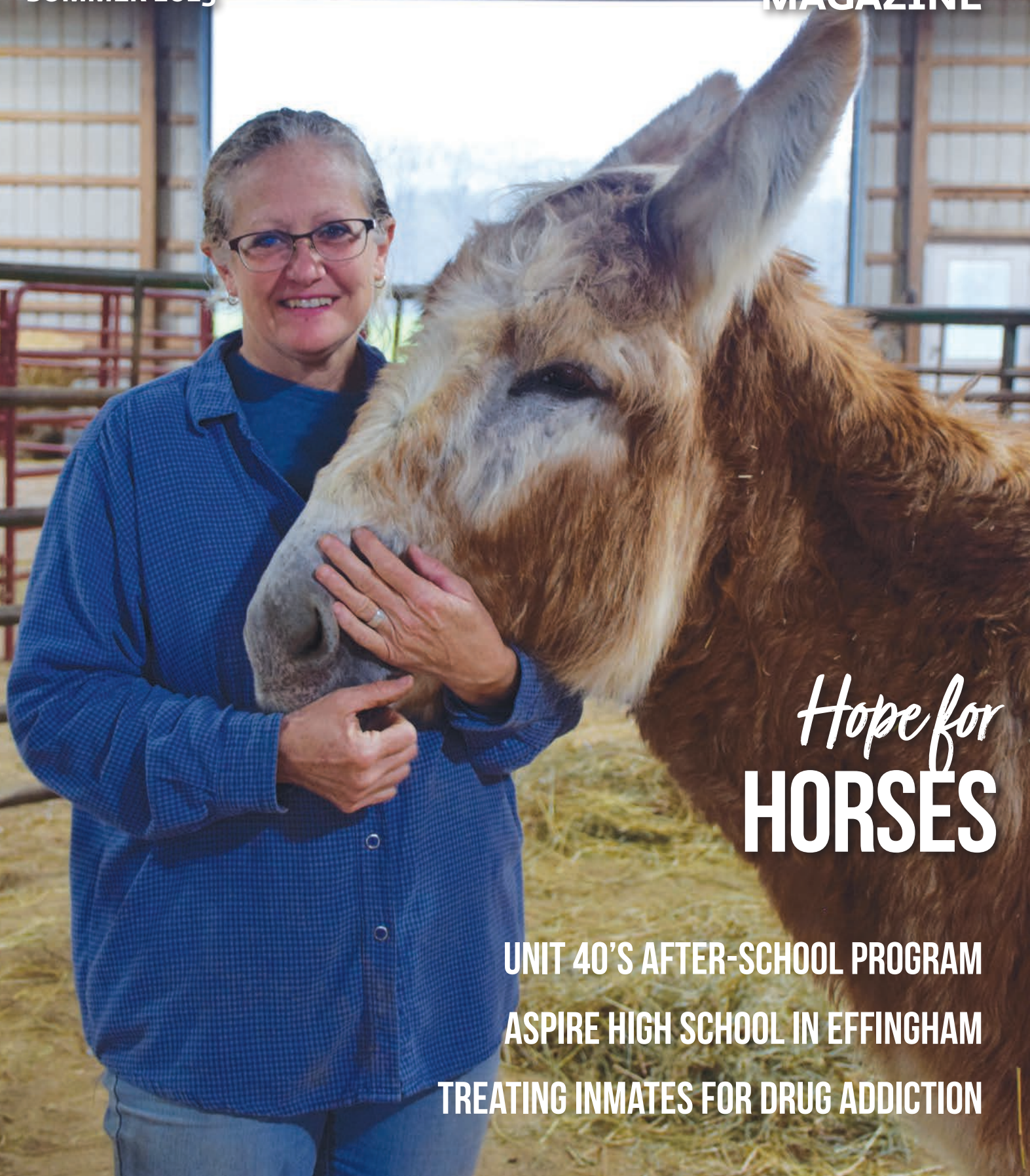


# EFFINGHAM

SUMMER 2025

MAGAZINE



## *Hope for* **HORSES**

UNIT 40'S AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM  
ASPIRE HIGH SCHOOL IN EFFINGHAM  
TREATING INMATES FOR DRUG ADDICTION



# TOP LAWYERS

## EFFINGHAM AREA

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These **LEADING LAWYERS** have been recommended by their peers to be among the **TOP LAWYERS** in Illinois.

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Bret P. Coale	Hughes Tenney Postlewait Coale LLC	Decatur	217.428.5383	Commercial Litigation; Medical Malpractice Defense; PI Def: General
R. Samuel Postlewait	Hughes Tenney Postlewait Coale LLC	Decatur	217.428.5383	Agriculture; Close/Priv Held; Comm Lit; RE: Comm; Trust/Will/Estate
Todd A. Bresney	Kanoski Bresney	Decatur	217.429.3509	Personal Injury: General
William J. Harrington	Kanoski Bresney	Decatur	217.429.3509	Personal Injury: General
Robert M. Javoronok Jr.	Kanoski Bresney	Decatur	217.429.3509	Personal Injury: General; Workers' Compensation
Kathy A. Olivero	Kanoski Bresney	Decatur	217.429.3509	Workers' Compensation
John J. Waldman	Kanoski Bresney	Decatur	217.429.3509	Personal Injury: General; Workers' Compensation
Jack Kiley	Kiley Klein Ltd	Decatur	217.428.0948	Civil Appellate; Comm Lit; Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin; PI Def: Gen; PI: Gen
Keith W. Casteel	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	Agriculture; Banking; Environmental; RE: Comm; Trust/Will/Estate
Joshua J. Dubbelde	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	Close/Private Held; RE: Commercial; RE: Resident; Trust/Will/Estate
Scott E. Garwood	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	Close/Private Held; Mergers/Acquisition; RE: Comm; Trust/Will/Estate
James T. Jackson	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	Commercial Litigation; Personal Injury Defense: General; School
Craig W. Runyon	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	Banking; Creditor Rights; RE: Comm; RE: Resident; Trust/Will/Estate
Darrell A. Woolums	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	AG; Banking; Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin; RE: Comm; Trust/Will/Estate
Timothy M. Shay	Shay & Associates Law Firm LLC	Decatur	217.425.5900	Personal Injury: General; PI: Professional Malpractice; Workers' Comp
Nicholas T. Williams	Shay & Associates Law Firm LLC	Decatur	217.425.5900	Personal Injury: General

This **EMERGING LAWYER** has been identified by their peers to be among the **TOP LAWYERS** in Illinois who are age 40 or younger OR who have been admitted to the practice of law for 10 or fewer years.

Gina Couri-Cyphers	Kanoski Bresney	Decatur	217.429.3509	Civil Appellate; Personal Injury: General
Jordan T. Klein	Kiley Klein Ltd	Decatur	217.428.0948	Close/Priv Held; Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin; PI Def: Gen; Trust/Will/Estate
Kathleen Wrigley Pletsch	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	Close/Priv Held; Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin; RE: Comm; RE: Res; TW&E
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# EFFINGHAM

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## FEATURE STORY



Students play a game at the Ron Diehl Rec Center during the Effingham Unit 40 after-school program.

Cathy Griffith photo

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Funding comes through for Unit 40 after-school program

by Cathy Griffith

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## ON THE COVER:

Donna Columbus pets one of the donkeys cared for at Hope 4 Horses. Photo by Marie Adamick

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**I**t's great when the things we are passionate about as children follow us into adulthood.

That's certainly true for Donna Columbus, who told Marie Adamick that she has loved horses since she was a little girl.

Now 58, Columbus helps take care of over 40 horses at her sanctuary, Hope 4 Horses, with the help of dozens of volunteers. Although she began rescuing horses in 2013, the sanctuary officially opened with the name Hope 4 Horses in 2018, when she applied for both the name and 501(c)(3), making it a nonprofit organization.

All of the money raised through fundraisers goes to caring for the horses, like vet bills and feed. The facility, fencing and other aspects of the sanctuary are all paid for and taken care of by Columbus and her husband. They've also previously received grants.

"People need to know that the money that they're donating to us goes 100% towards the horses," said Columbus. "Literally every dime that comes in here goes to the horses, and it's just important for people to know that, so that they know where their money's going when they do donate."

Teachers are some of the most important people to influence the things that young people are passionate about. Aspire High School in Effingham is an alternative school that offers Illinois-standard-aligned courses to students at risk of not graduating high school, along with social/emotional skills and workplace skills, to help them earn a high school diploma.

Aspire Student Support Specialist and Life Skills teacher Emily Nelson told Cathy Griffith that students aren't automatically enrolled. They have to go through an interview process and show they want to attend.

"If they come in and say I don't want to do this, this is not for me, we do everything we can in order to show them what we can offer them. But if they're not willing to put the work in, then we don't typically take those students," she said, adding that seldom happens.

Cathy spoke to several students who were eager to attend. One of them, Gia Navarro, has considered pursuing a career in immigration law, but she also said she would like to be a high school teacher — choices she can personally relate to.

"The things that I've seen my teachers be able to do for me, I think I would love to do that for somebody else," she said.

For another story in the edition of Effingham Magazine, I spoke to Effingham County Sheriff Paul Kuhns about one way the county is spending opioid settlement funds. The jail is using some of the money to launch a program to treat and counsel inmates addicted to drugs. Participants will continue treatment after their release from jail.

Although it's still in the early stages, Kuhns sees great potential for "MAR," which stands for Medication Assisted Recovery.

"It's a little outside the scope of what police officers usually do, I admit that," Kuhns said. "We arrest people. That's what we do."

"The way I like to describe it is, if we can take one young man that has an opioid dependency, that's lost everything, that has to steal or commit crimes to continue a habit — if we can take that one young man, get him cleaned up, get a job at a local restaurant as a cook, he rents a modest place and pays taxes — that's huge."

"Or a mother who's dependent and has lost her kids — break that dependency and go back to being a mother, taking care of her kids and living in the community."

"Just one or two people like that a year would be a huge impact on the community, I think," the sheriff added. "Maybe that's a little idealistic, but that's the goal."

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.



**Marie Adamick** is the newest reporter at the Effingham Daily News. Before deciding to major in journalism, she considered majoring in international business or chemistry. She graduated from University of Cincinnati in 2024 with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and a minor in History. A greater Cincinnati native, she enjoys traveling, collecting music, and going on hikes. She recently moved to Effingham to start her job at the paper and has family in Wisconsin, Cincinnati and St. Louis.



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From left are Aspire High School students Serenity Gagliardi, Paisley Phillippi, Brooklyn Navarro, Gia Navarro and Student Support Specialist Emily Nelson.



# Aspire High School

## *Students aim for their goals*

Story and photo by  
**Cathy Griffith**  
Effingham Magazine

**G**ia and Brooklyn Navarro were expelled from Effingham High School after they were caught smoking on a school bus. The twin sisters had moved to Effingham from Texas a few months before to live with their father.



The girls had lived with their mother for a few years until she started abusing alcohol and other substances. Freshman year, they went to live with their grandmother, but by that time, they had developed addictions of their own. When school ended at 3:55 p.m., they would stay and smoke in the bathrooms and wouldn't get home until 5:30.

"She talked to my dad and told him I can't do this with these girls coming home every day high out of their mind," said Gia.

The two didn't care for school. Since sixth grade, they had the main responsibility of caring for their two younger siblings.

"So, school in our mind was never a necessity. I never woke up in the morning and was like, 'Oh, I have to get ready for school today.' It was more, 'Oh, I have to get ready to take care of my siblings,'" said Brooklyn.

For the first few months after getting expelled, they were content.

"We were in our room all day. We didn't have to go to school. The only thing we really had to do was my dad would have us go get the kids from the bus. We thought this was the coolest thing ever," said Gia.

By the fourth month, reality set in.

"We're like we're not in school. We're not doing anything. It was horrible," she said.

They hadn't had a chance to make friends yet, and with no real contact with anybody outside their home, they sunk into depression.

"We were just in our rooms all day, basically getting back into the same cycles that we did before, and after a while, we realized this is not it," said Gia.

The two were on the waiting list for Aspire High School in Effingham. The alternative school offers Illinois-standard-aligned courses to students at risk of not graduating high school, along with social/emotional skills and workplace skills, to help them earn a high school diploma.

According to Aspire Student Support Specialist and Life Skills teacher Emily Nelson, students aren't automatically enrolled. They have to go through an interview process and show they want to attend.

"If they come in and say I don't want to do this, this is not for me, we do everything we can in order to show them what we can offer them, but if they're not willing to put the work in, then we don't typically take those students," she said, adding that seldom happens.

After six months, they got the call to interview. It was then Brooklyn noticed something that changed her attitude toward school.

"They asked me what my goals were. What did I like to do? What triggered me? What was trauma, in my opinion?" she recalled. "They didn't focus on why I got sent there. They focused on what I wanted to do with myself and how they could help me with that."

Since attending the school, Gia and Brooklyn have come a long way academically, and for Gia, socially. Starting out, she didn't like talking to anybody.

"I definitely am more comfortable talking to people, especially here because it's so small. You kind of know everybody," she said.

Gia said their dad has witnessed perhaps the biggest change

in them.

"Everybody in our family's seen us as my mom's daughters," she said. "I couldn't say anything. That's what we were doing."

"When we got expelled, I knew he was upset, but he could definitely tell that we were not. He now sees that we get up every day for school."

"He sees me run out that door every morning," added Brooklyn.

Gia said he sees how much their mindset has changed about school.

"He said he would have loved to get an opportunity like this. He had so many things he wanted to do when he was younger, and he pushed them away because he knew he had to work and help his parents," she said.

Their father and his parents immigrated from Mexico. His dad worked at least two jobs, working every single day, while Gia said his mom took probably three trains to get to where she had to be and three trains back. In eighth grade, Gia noted their father couldn't go to school anymore because he had to start helping them.

"There was no room for them to have school. They had to work and provide for their family," she said.

Thanks to Aspire, the girls now see the importance of a good education.

"There's no room for me to be able to say I can't graduate because I definitely can. I've already shown I can get myself there, so if I don't graduate, that's just me. At the end of the day, it's me. It's nothing else. Thankfully, I do want to, so that's not going to happen," she said.

They are even making plans to go to college and pursue careers.

Gia has considered pursuing a career in immigration law, but she also said she would like to be a high school teacher — choices she can personally relate to.

"The things that I've seen my teachers be able to do for me, I think I would love to do that for somebody else," she said.

Brooklyn would like to have a medical career, either as a paramedic, pediatric oncologist or a cardiologist.

"I just like helping people," she said.

## Other students

Paisley Phillippi was expelled after she tried a vape her freshman year at Effingham High School, which she said about cost her her life. The vape had marijuana in it.

After being hospitalized, she discovered she couldn't have such substances. Phillippi was born with fetal alcohol syndrome. Her mother died when she was 18 months old. She lived with family but ended up in foster care by the time she was 6 and was adopted at age 7. While she is happy with her adopted family, she was bullied a lot and struggled in school. She found it hard even with an individualized education plan to help her.

Since attending Aspire, Phillippi's grades have improved, and she has found support, especially from one former student who is now her boyfriend.

She credits her classes and teachers with motivating her to go to college and study psychology or neuroscience. Phillippi particularly wants to study children and their adverse

childhood experiences, which are traumatic events during childhood that can negatively impact someone's development and well-being. She was intrigued after learning about them in Nelson's Life Skills class.

"I never really thought about college, to be honest," she said before attending the school.

Serenity Gagliardi was diagnosed with a cancerous tumor on her ovary in seventh grade. She had to have it surgically removed and undergo chemo treatments. She didn't have much hair when she returned to school in eighth grade.

"Everyone looked at me differently, and one of the reasons they were friends with me was pretty much so they could say that they were friends with me because they felt bad," she said.

Gagliardi said she did well enough to pass her classes but not good enough to learn anything.

"Once I got to high school, I was not prepared, and the only thing I cared about was making friends, and all the friends I made just ended up being drama, so I did not care about school at all," she said.

Falling further and further behind, Gagliardi was given the option to attend Aspire. Her grades didn't improve at first, but then something happened.

"I think the teachers here knew I could do better, so them telling me I could do better and pushing me to do my best is really what made me think like, yeah, I can do this," she said.

Now, she refuses to earn below an A and is at school even if she doesn't want to be. One of her favorite classes is leadership and business.

"We're learning how we can make an impact for our school and how you can take responsibility in what you're doing and how you can take control," she said.

Seeing how her teachers helped her has inspired Gagliardi to want to be one herself. After graduating this spring, she will begin the path toward becoming an elementary teacher by attending Lake Land College.

"If you told me I was going to be a teacher 2 1/2 years ago, I would've been like, 'You're wrong,'" she said. "I never actually thought I could do it."

## Aspire

Gia believes what makes Aspire special is the teachers.

"These teachers try to make connections with us, and they try to get to know us because I feel like once they get to know us, they can see when we're having a bad day," she said.

Gia admits that when she first came to Aspire, she didn't want to do everything, but her teachers pushed her and got to know her in order to get her the help she needed.

In previous schools, Gia and Brooklyn would never ask for help.

"Sometimes, I looked like I needed help, and the teacher would come and ask me, and I would still say no," said Brooklyn.

At Aspire, Gia said the teachers helped them get comfortable not only with themselves but with them in general, adding she now can go up to her teacher five times in 10 minutes if she doesn't understand something.

That help extends beyond academics to their overall well-being.

"One of our teachers does a daily check-in. It's every single day. There's a question on there that says, do you need to talk to anybody?" said Gia.

The school currently has 33 students enrolled. Although it can accommodate up to 60, it strives to keep a 15-to-1 student ratio. Gagliardi said the small setting allows the teachers to create a relationship with each student. She understands that's harder to do in a public school setting where there are more students in a class.

"You're not going to be able to tell which one is having a bad day. You're just going to think, 'Oh, they're sleeping because they stayed up too late.' You're not gonna think they're sleeping because they stayed up all night working or helping take care of their siblings. They know our story," she said.

Still, Gagliardi said her teachers at Effingham High School did a lot for her.

"They let me stay after school to get my work done, sent me to The Study Shoppe to try to get my work done. It was me refus-

ing to do those things. They were amazing to me, and they still check up on me when I see them," she said.

Gia feels students can be themselves at Aspire and don't have to put on a front because everybody understands and is there more or less for the same reason: to graduate.

"I can be myself without worrying about what the next person is going to say," she said.

## Ambassadors

In Nelson's Life Skills class, students learn about the brain, how it regulates and develops, and if they have adverse childhood experiences, how that affects them.

"All of these young ladies have had some kind of ACE, some kind of trauma or toxic stress as a child. All of them had something that affected them in their childhood, some more than others, and when they take my class, they learn about the impacts of that and how those things are explanations but not excuses for our behaviors," she said. "They explain the behavior, and then we look if it needs to be changed, change that behavior, and regulate our brains and change the habits that we have maybe because of those ACEs."

The students are asked to examine their backstories, how they have impacted them, and what they plan to do moving forward.

For Gia and Brooklyn Navarro, Gagliardi and Phillippi, that meant becoming advocates for themselves and for the school.

Nelson said by learning about those traumatic experiences, they can take accountability for their actions, what they can do after their poor choices, and how they're making good

**"The things that I've seen my teachers be able to do for me, I think I would love to do that for somebody else."**

**— Gia Navarro, Aspire High School student**



choices now because of that.

“That’s why they have been chosen because they really have found power in their voice and their stories,” she said.

As part of the school’s ambassador program, the students have shared their experiences with community organizations, including Rotary and the Effingham Unit 40 school board.

They all admit they were nervous about telling their stories. Gagliardi said she used to be the person who would have done a lot of things before she told anybody what she went through.

They have overcome that, which Nelson finds amazing, especially when they spoke before the school board.

“For most of them, that board room was the place they got expelled and in front of the people who expelled them,” she said.

Gia said they heard from a couple of the board members after they spoke.

“They remembered us getting expelled, and they were really proud they heard this as well,” she said.

Gagliardi said once she discovered she had a little confidence to share her story, she couldn’t not do anything with it because she would go back to the person who would have never even thought about it.

“I think the main thing is it doesn’t hold me anymore. That’s not me anymore,” she said.

The ambassador program isn’t new. However, students have mostly spoken to legislators about funding in the past

because their stories have a bigger impact.

Nelson said the girls have gone beyond that to sharing their stories with the community.

“They continued to say I want to speak more. I want to go out more and tell more people my story and what we do here. They have kind of taken this on and created what it has become,” she said.

“I feel like each of us getting to tell our story, especially for the people who don’t really know what Aspire is, makes us feel more comfortable so we don’t feel like they’re constantly judging us for being here because now people know what it’s about and know that we weren’t just doing bad things because we were bad kids. We were making these decisions because of what we went through,” said Gagliardi.

More than their own stories, Gagliardi said they want people to know what good the school does for students despite the false reputation it tends to get, which even made her hesitant to attend at first.

“There’s a bunch of people fighting all the time, there’s a bunch of people doing drugs and doing this. But that’s never what it was. I wish that everyone would get the chance to come to a school like this and realize that it’s not just a dumb school. Dumb kids don’t come here,” she said.

Gagliardi said she will miss the school after she graduates this spring.

“Once I walk across the stage at the high school, I’m going to be like, yeah, I did that. I graduated, but Aspire is what got me there.”

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# FAST TRACK

Effingham teen earns bachelor's degree, completes first year of law school

Story by  
**Pete Rosenbery**  
**SIU Carbondale**

**S**outhern Illinois University Simmons Law School student Lily Wise's youth belies her determination. At a time when a majority of 19-year-olds would be finishing their freshman year in college, Wise, who is from Effingham, earned a bachelor's degree from SIU Carbondale's criminology and criminal justice (CCJ) program this month and is set to continue as a second-year law student.

"I just very much like the challenge, which is why I started school in the first place," said Wise, who began taking online courses at Lake Land College in Mattoon as a 15-year-old Effingham High School freshman in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I was sitting around for a few months and was like, 'I never want to have to do this again,'" she said.

Wise noted that she loves law school, and with a laugh, said her "biggest issue" is finding that she can't work ahead the way she did when taking online courses.

"It's hard, and that's what attracts me to it," she said. "It's something that's difficult that I have to work at. I don't just like gliding through things. I like the challenge."

## Goal-oriented

Matthew Giblin, professor and director of SIU Carbondale's School of Justice and Public Safety, recalls his first meeting on campus with Wise in spring 2021. She was sitting in his office with a detailed notebook in hand while her mother, Beth, sat in the back of the room.

"Lily knew exactly where she wanted to take her education," Giblin said. "She asked me question after question about the criminology and criminal justice program and our new program with the law school. I told her she was the most goal-directed student I ever encountered, amazing for someone who was just 15 at the time."

Wise attended the program's inaugural Preview Day in fall 2022 and enrolled at SIU Carbondale for the fall 2023 semester,

just weeks after earning both her associate degree from Lake Land and high school diploma.

"SIU and Lake Land have a really good rapport to where they have the online transfer equivalency, so when I picked my classes for Lake Land, I would go through and make sure all of them lined up with SIU classes," she said.

Excelling in SIU's CCJ program, Wise is the first student to take advantage of the law school's 3+3 accelerated law program, which allows her to finish her undergraduate degree at SIU while completing her first year of law school.

## A Saluki legacy

Wise turns 20 in June. Her mother, her father, Mike, and maternal aunts and uncles all attended SIU Carbondale "and loved it," Wise said, admitting, though, that SIU wasn't in her initial plan.

"Then I literally came here once, and I was like, 'OK, I have to go to SIU. I love it here,'" she said. Wise's family includes her younger brother, James, a junior at Effingham High School.

## Detailed organization

Wise said her mother encouraged her and helped write out scripts to initially assist Wise in talking with college officials over the phone.

Wise also developed the 1-inch binder with laminated materials she used to write out important details, class descriptions and other notes. She referred to the binder "for everything" during her last three years in high school and now uses a high school planner to write down her law school assignments.

"I need to see things written out so I can fully grasp what's going on," she said, adding that her parents have been encouraging but let her also find her own voice.

"It was always my mom's idea of, 'I can talk for you, but I don't know what you are doing as well as you do,'" Wise said, adding that her mother has been "a hard worker for her whole life."

"For half my life, she's had two jobs. She has tried her best to teach my brother and me those same characteristics," Wise said.

Photo by Russell Bailey



## Law school opportunity opens up

An "obsession" with the television show "Criminal Minds" prompted Wise's interest in forensic science and being a crime scene technician, but she said that particularly in rural areas, it's typical to first be a police officer. Giblin suggested she pursue the 3+3 program and law school.

Wise is now interested in civil litigation and has an internship with a large civil litigation law firm this summer. She is considering representing hospitals and doctors in medical malpractice cases in the future.

SIU Simmons Law School Professor Peter Alexander had Wise as a student in both the fall and spring semesters in legal writing classes. Wise is a "talented student and an amazing writer" who performed very well, he said.

"In Legal Writing, we use problems that are based on real-life situations that lawyers are called upon to solve, and she excelled in grasping the complex issues that the writing courses required her to address," Alexander said. "Lily is poised and thoughtful, and she has mastered the tools that lawyers use to provide helpful representation to their clients."

"I don't just like gliding through things. I like the challenge."

— Lily Wise

Outside of class, Wise helps other students who might be struggling with some of the legal concepts they are learning, Alexander said.

"She has shown not only great aptitude for the study of law, but she has also demonstrated an ability to share her knowledge, wisdom and understanding with

her peers," he said. "Those are rare qualities, and we hope to admit more students like Lily to our law school."

## Opportunities opened

Wise recalled concerns at the start that a heavy class load might cause her to miss out on her high school years, but that didn't happen. Wise played basketball in high school and was with an AAU travel team through her junior year, was a competitive equestrian rider, went to dances, worked and hung out with her friends.

Wise believes it was a benefit that she learned how to balance workload and a social life at an early age and doesn't believe she missed out.

"If anything, I feel like I have more opportunities than I would have ever gotten," she said. "The job that I've gotten for the summer is something that a million little things had to line up to get me here."

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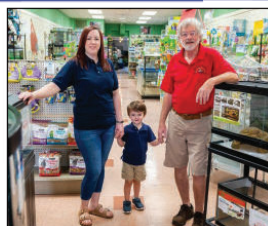


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# OPIOID SETTLEMENT:

## Effingham County Jail launches program to treat drug addiction

Story by  
**Jeff Long**  
Effingham Magazine

**T**he Effingham County Jail is using opioid settlement money to launch a program to treat and counsel inmates addicted to drugs, according to Sheriff Paul Kuhns. Participants will continue treatment after their release from jail.

Effingham County has received \$132,442.12 in opioid settlement money so far and spent \$10,368 on “abatement,” according to the state website [ilopioidsettlements.com](http://ilopioidsettlements.com). Among the uses for abatement will be the new program at the jail.

Although it’s still in the early stages, Kuhns sees great potential for “MAR,” which stands for Medication Assisted Recovery.

“It’s a little outside the scope of what police officers usually do, I admit that,” Kuhns said. “We arrest people. That’s what we do.

“The way I like to describe it is, if we can take one young man that has an opioid dependency, that’s lost everything, that has to steal or commit crimes to continue a habit — if we can take that one young man, get him cleaned up, get a

job at a local restaurant as a cook, he rents a modest place and pays taxes — that’s huge.

“Or a mother who’s dependent and has lost her kids — break that dependency and go back to being a mother, taking care of her kids and living in the community.

“Just one or two people like that a year would be a huge impact on the community, I think,” the sheriff added. “Maybe that’s a little idealistic, but that’s the goal.”

Kuhns turned to outside expertise to help get the program underway.

“We have partnered with Gentle Care Consultants, Heartland Human Services, Effingham County Probation, the state’s attorney’s office, Advanced Correctional Care — which is our doctor, we have medical now at the jail — and with Pretrial Services.

“Everyone who comes into our facility, that we have contact with at the jail, we will screen them. Heartland Human Services comes in a couple times a week and will screen any new arrivals to see if they have any type of opioid addiction or if they’re on any type of opioid treatment program. We will either continue the treatment program or try to begin one if they’re interested.

“We will provide medications for withdrawal and preventative medications for opioid dependency. They have to be so many days off the substance before we can start that. If we can start them in jail we will.

“And then, when someone gets out of jail, or out of our control, we will hand them off to Gentle Care Consultants, and we will continue to pay for medication up to three months to help them try to get on the right track. And then they will also be referred to Heartland Human Services to hopefully continue the counseling part of the

This Feb. 19, 2013, file photo shows OxyContin pills arranged for a photo at a pharmacy in Montpelier, Vt.  
AP Photo by Toby Talbot







Shown is Effingham County Sheriff Paul Kuhns. Effingham Daily News file photo

treatment.”

Shelly Kuhns opened Gentle Care Consultants in Effingham in 2019. She is a clinical nurse specialist who works with people who have difficulty accessing care.

She, too, sees the benefits of working with former inmates after their release.

“What Sheriff Kuhns is trying to do is screen everyone who comes into the jail, most of whom will never qualify for problem-solving court, but who have an addiction problem and are suffering relapse,” she said. “It’s gotten so bad they’re now in the jail.

“We can send people out of Effingham County until hell freezes over and have them ‘fixed’ by a rehab center or psychiatrist or whatever. And they can be fixed. But they have to stay fixed when they come back to the community. So we have to develop support here in our own community. And it also means that sometimes we don’t have to send those people out.”

Shelly Kuhns sees programs like this as a step toward long-lasting change.

“I’m trying to impact multi-generational issues,” she said. “Substance abuse is very often, unfortunately, passed down generation to generation. In concert with substance abuse is co-occurring mental health issues, and in concert with that is often children removed from the home and becoming in DCFS care. People who are not employed because they lose their driver’s license. There’s a multitude of socio-economic issues surrounding substance abuse.

“If people are experiencing re-arrest and returning to the criminal justice system over and over, we have to be asking ourselves: ‘What are we missing?’ And very often they haven’t had treatment for addiction and/or they have a co-occurring mental health issue we’re not fixing.

“If you don’t fix their insomnia, if you don’t fix their ADD, if you don’t fix their bipolar disorder, they’re going to re-use

**“We need to be doing this. We need to try to break this cycle if we can.”**

**– Effingham County Sheriff Paul Kuhns**

and they’re going to re-offend. If we can identify those folks before they’ve been arrested 14 times, before they’ve had a felony, then we have an opportunity. But it has to be holistic. You can’t just say, ‘Well, you have to stop doing meth.’”

Sheriff Kuhns said that law enforcement, in many cases, has become a mental health provider.

“Our state, we’re failing miserably when it comes to mental health,” he said. “I’m a little resentful that all falls on us, the county. We’re one of the biggest mental health providers in the county, as far as housing people with mental health issues.

“And with the SAFE-T Act, we’re not keeping anybody in jail. Unless you have a mental health issue and are not fit to stand trial, then we’ll keep you for months because the state has been so slow in picking them up and putting them in treatment facilities.

“No matter what we do or what we try, those people don’t get better under my care. I am just not set up to take care of them, even though we do our best.”

He thinks the new program is a start along those lines.

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Shelly Kuhns opened Gentle Care Consultants in Effingham in 2019. Submitted photo

"I'm really excited about it," he said. "I'm not naive enough to think it's going to be easy and work every time. But I'm excited about it."

Besides helping someone overcome addiction for their benefit, the sheriff said the program could also make things better for jail personnel.

"There's also liability there because of the medical condition that it creates when they go through withdrawal," he said. "And it does make them more difficult to handle. You have to provide medical support. There's risk. So, it's a good thing there, also. It makes our environment a safer place to work if we can help and treat people."

"The end goal is to try to get someone in a medication program for dependency, because there are drugs that will treat dependency — will block the receptors, where you won't get the high from opioids. That will try to keep you not using."

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**"We have to develop support here in our own community."**

**— Shelly Kuhns, clinical nurse specialist with Gentle Care Consultants**

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"That's the end goal, to try to get someone on that program. They call it a 'warm hand-off.' When they get out of our custody, we can send them to Gentle Care Consultants. We'll still pay for medication for three months, to try to get them a head start and keep them clean for that amount of time. And then they'll also be referred to Heartland Human Services so they can get the counseling. The end goal is to break the dependency or addiction on a person if we can."

Shelly Kuhns would like to see the county come up with other creative ways to use opioid settlement money.

Last year, the Effingham County Health and Insurance Committee members considered using the funds to cover the cost of testing wastewater for opioids.

"Basically, it could give us an indication if opioid use is increasing, decreasing, (or) stable," Effingham County Health Department Administrator Jeff Workman said then. "And at some point, each county should probably form a committee or do something to figure out how to appropriately spend the money."

Workman said in a recent interview that the wastewater testing was abandoned and no committee has been formed to discuss other uses for the money.

Shelly Kuhns thinks there are several other programs that the settlement money could be used for.

"What we lack is manpower to do it," she said. "I've been a little bit disappointed that our health department in Effingham County hasn't embraced this more. Or our hospital. There are different large agencies that if they went into this more heavily, there are definitely things we could do with it. Even if we could come up with a good place to spend that money, having people willing to stay with it, to champion it and staff it is a huge issue."

"I would like to see us put that money to good use. I would like to see us use the money to provide access to people with substance abuse issues."

"I've tried to broach the subject with the health department as well as the hospital. Why don't we have a clinic? Why don't we have a site where people who are referred from jail, they already have an appointment for treatment? If we have the funds, why aren't we increasing access? They always tell me, 'Where are we going to get people to staff that?' I would staff it one day a week. If you started the program and told people what you needed, you might get other providers involved."

Sheriff Kuhns agreed.

"This is not tax money," he said of the settlement funds being distributed nationwide. "This is money that's available and we need to use it. We need to be doing this. We need to try to break this cycle if we can."



# Recovery advocates: Lack of local reporting on opioid spending could lead to more deaths

Story by  
**Carson Gerber**  
**Effingham Magazine**

**C**ities and counties in Illinois are set to receive more than \$429 million over the next two decades as part of the national opioid settlement aimed at helping those struggling with addiction or substance abuse.

But those who want to know whether local officials are actually spending the money to combat the epidemic may have to dig deep to find the answer.



Daniel Busch chairs the FED UP! Coalition, a national opioid-advocacy nonprofit. Photo from LinkedIn account

Illinois isn't requiring local governments to report how they spend their portion of settlement dollars and isn't providing any oversight on how city councils or county commissioners handle the funds.

That lack of oversight could lead to money being misused or wasted on expenses that won't help those who became addicted after years of opioid over-prescribing by doctors and pharmacies, argued Daniel Busch, who chairs the FED UP! Coalition, a national opioid-advocacy nonprofit.

"It's awful," he said. "We really don't know where the money is going."

The coalition promotes more transparency and accountability on how settlement dollars are used, but those efforts in Illinois so far haven't led state officials to require local governments to better report their spending, explained Busch, a clinical psychiatrist at Northwestern University.

## 'It's not acceptable'

Illinois expects to receive more than \$1.3 billion in settlement money by 2038, according to the Department of Human Services. State lawmakers approved distributing 55% of those dollars to the Illinois Opioid Remediation Fund, which is dedicated to an array of drug prevention and treatment efforts.

Twenty percent will go directly to state coffers, a quarter of which must be used for opioid remediation programs. Around 8% of state dollars are also going directly to Chicago to use on drug programs there.

Nearly all of that money is required by law to be tracked and publicly reported.

The same requirement isn't extended to the 25% of settlement dollars earmarked for local governments.

According to the state, cities and counties are requested, but not required, to submit quarterly settlement spending reports. However, governments don't have to report how they actually used the money or which programs they funded.

The initial reporting period began in January 2023.

Since then, out of the 290 local governments that received settlement funding, 26 (9%) haven't submitted any spending reports. On top of that, the data is self-reported and not vetted by the state, which "makes no guarantee of accuracy or completeness," according to the settlement initiative website.

"Questions about funding opportunities or expenditures related to these funds should be directed to the relevant local government," the state website reads.

Even cities and towns in states like Indiana that require detailed reports of settlement spending can be found to misuse the money. One town in Indiana publicly reported using a portion of its funding on sunglasses and beach balls. Another spent funds on rifle suppressors for its police department.

That means the likelihood of a town or county misusing funds is more likely in states like Illinois, where funds can be spent in the dark without oversight, explained Busch with FED UP!

"It's hugely frustrating," he said. "I have no idea where the money's going. It's just not acceptable, but that's the way it is."

## 'Just waiting for misuse'

That's something state Sen. Sally Turner, R-Beason, has tried — unsuccessfully — to change.

For the last two years, the Republican has filed legislation that would require local governments to report their spending. The bill would also set detailed data collection requirements to measure and report how effective the programs that receive funding are at curbing opioid abuse.



Illinois Sen. Sally Turner twice filed legislation that would have added more transparency to local spending of opioid settlement dollars. Photo provided by Sen. Turner



Tanya Sorrell, co-chair of the Illinois Harm Reduction and Recovery Coalition. Photo provided by Rush University

The bill hasn't made it to a committee at the Democrat-controlled statehouse.

Turner said she introduced the legislation after residents who lost a loved one to opioid use reached out and asked for more transparency to ensure local governments used the dollars to help residents and families impacted by the epidemic.

In 2022 alone, more than 3,250 Illinoisans died from opioid overdoses, an 8% increase from 2021. That's nearly three times the number of people killed in car crashes.

"It was important to me that we had transparency when this was being funneled down to all our locals to see how we're all spending it, and to make sure we're spending it the correct way,"

Turner said.

The legislation also would put more guardrails on the money by requiring governments to submit their expenditures to the treasury department, which would review whether the money was appropriately used under the settlement agreement.

"I'm not saying that anybody's misusing it," Turner noted. "But like with anything, when you have large amounts of monies, it's always good to have checks and balances because it's just waiting there for somebody to misuse."

The bill would also ban any government unit from allocating opioid funds to supplant local or state tax dollars already being spent on programs or other services. For instance, cities and counties couldn't use the money to fund their payroll or insurance benefits for employees.

Turner said she doesn't expect her legislation to gain traction. She didn't reintroduce the bill this year, but hopes a member of the Democratic supermajority might take up the issue for families who lost someone to the opioid crisis.

"Sometimes it takes someone to push a little bit harder on the other side to get things going," she said. "I don't care if it's my bill or not, just so that we can help people get through this crappy situation."

### 'More lives lost'

Not knowing how local governments are spending their settlement funds will likely make it more difficult to combat the epidemic and help those struggling with addiction and substance abuse, argued Tanya Sorrell, co-chair of the Illinois Harm Reduction and Recovery Coalition.

She said she was surprised to learn the state didn't require local governments to report their spending — a measure she believes everyone in Illinois should support.

"That should be bipartisan," Sorrell said. "We all want to be able to show what the efforts are and that the return on investment is going in the way that it should."

That's hard to do when counties can spend their money in isolation with no public reporting, explained Sorrell, a psychiatrist and behavioral scientist at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. Counties and towns could fund unproductive programs or funnel dollars to law enforcement agencies to continue the failed war-on-drugs approach to the crisis, she said.

"Not having that information or not knowing how the money is spent does make it harder to know whether we're addressing all the areas that can comprehensively help someone as they're moving towards recovery," she said.

Twenty-two states currently require public reporting of all opioid settlement spending from every unit of government, allowing advocacy groups to target where they could provide services and programs to help drug users. It also allows local residents to keep their elected officials accountable, Sorrell noted.

A lack of transparency isn't just bad policy, she argued. It could mean more overdose deaths in counties that misuse or waste the settlement funds meant to save lives.

"We're going to continue to see deaths in towns and across counties that aren't effectively funding programs as they should," Sorrell said. "That's the greatest concern: We're going to continue to see lives lost, and no one wants that when it's so preventable."

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Donna Columbus pets one of the donkeys cared for at Hope 4 Horses.  
Photo by Marie Adamick

# HOPE 4 HORSES

gives horses a second chance



**D**onna Columbus has loved horses since she was a little girl. When she visited her grandparents' graves as a kid with her parents, there was a pony that lived next door that she brought treats for. She begged her parents to get her a horse or a pony, telling them she could keep it in their backyard or garage, but to no avail.

At 13 years old, Columbus saved money from her job working a paper route and bought her own horse. She boarded it to keep it a secret from her parents for a few months.

Now, Columbus is 58 and helps take care of over 40 horses at her sanctuary, Hope 4 Horses, with the help of dozens of volunteers. Although she began rescuing horses in 2013, the sanctuary officially opened with the name Hope 4 Horses in 2018, when she applied for both the name and 501(c)(3), making it a nonprofit organization. Since Hope 4 Horses began, they have adopted out over 150 horses.

The sanctuary takes in horses from places such as kill pens and those unable to care for them anymore. They also take in horses from local counties when horses are seized or surrendered due to neglect and abusive situations. Along with volunteering, people can also adopt horses and learn to ride them.

Columbus ended up selling her first horse. She tried to get her back, but she has a feeling that she ended up in the wrong hands. However, this just encouraged her even more to help horses in bad situations.

Besides Hope 4 Horses, there are no places in the area that help horses, even though Columbus believes there's a need for horse sanctuaries. She even has a waiting list for horses to come in.

Horses get adopted there quite often, but the number fluctuates each month. If someone is interested in adopting a horse, they fill out an application, and then Columbus calls their vet, farrier and references.

If that goes smoothly, they'll ride different horses to see which one they like, if they're a good fit and if they can handle the horse. Afterwards, they'll sign an adoption contract saying the new owner won't sell the horse or re-home it. If they move, they have to inform Columbus, so she can track the horse and make sure it stays with that family.

"We have a pretty thorough process just to ensure the safety, make sure that that horse doesn't end up in a bad place," said Columbus. "Sometimes I get a feeling about somebody, so I want to talk to them. But most people have no issues with the adoption process. If they have an issue, they won't even come to us because they know we have a contract because there's people that will buy a horse, and then turn around and sell it to make money. And that avoids those types of people."

If someone can no longer take care of the horse, they have to bring the horse back. If they want to give the horse to someone else, they have to be approved by Columbus and sign another contract.

## Donations and Volunteering

All of the money raised through fundraisers goes to caring for the horses, like vet bills and feed. The facility, fencing and other aspects of the sanctuary are all paid for and taken care of by Columbus and her husband. They've also previously received grants.

"People need to know that the money that they're donating to us goes 100% towards the horses," said Columbus. "Literally every dime that comes in here goes to the horses, and it's just important for people to know that, so that they know where their money's going when they do donate."

Hope 4 Horses also works with probation departments, so if someone needs to complete volunteer hours, they can do them at the sanctuary. Local high school students who need to complete community service hours to graduate do them there, too.

"We're 100% volunteer based," said Columbus. "We don't have any paid employees."

Volunteers help feed, groom, walk and sometimes ride the horses, clean the stalls, fill water buckets and put up hay in the summer. Columbus says grooming the horses is just as important as the other tasks because they need the attention. She and her husband, Jim, visit in the mornings to feed all the animals before going to their full-time jobs and then visit again in the evening to do the bulk of the chores including cleaning, watering, feeding, grooming and putting out hay.

Sometimes the chores take an hour-and-a-half, and sometimes it takes multiple hours. In the winter-time, chores can take three hours. It depends on how many volunteers are helping.

Volunteers don't have a schedule; they come when they want. But it is a commitment since the horses need to be taken care of every day.

Kelsey Frost, 34, began volunteering about six years ago and helped Columbus with the daily chores because she really wanted to be involved with horses and ride again. As a kid, she took every opportunity to be around horses. Growing up, one of her friends had two horses, and they would ride all day long.

While volunteering, she began to fall in love with a horse named Zippy. Zippy was considered a permanent resident of the sanctuary at the time because she's blind in her left eye. Columbus allowed Frost to lease out Zippy for a year before finally being adopted.

"I didn't have a place to put horses at the time, so it was a really good option for us because we were able to leave Zippy there, know she was getting good care and interact with her anytime we wanted to," said Frost.

Three years later, Columbus brought in several horses from a kill pen in Kansas, and Frost fell in love with another horse from that group: Cowboy.

"It has been my dream since I was a little girl to have my own horses, but I just wasn't ever in a place as a kid to be able to make that happen," said Frost. "So when I was able to get these two, that was like my dream come true."

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**"The reward is just amazing.  
You have a friend for life."  
— Patty Simpson, Hope 4 Horses  
volunteer**

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Right, Kelsey Frost leads a horse with her two girls, Eva and Emma, riding at the sanctuary. Below, Kelsey Frost leads two horses around the stables. Photos submitted by Kelsey Frost

“So the



#### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Hope 4 Horses is hosting a hog raffle, and the top three winners will be drawn at the end of June. The first place winner will win half of a hog, the second place winner will win a pork bundle and the third place winner will win a gift certificate for McMahon Meats.

On Sept. 27, they will have a golf outing at Cardinal Golf. The funds raised through admission, raffles and silent auction will all go directly to the horses. Lunch will be provided. More details will be posted on their website and Facebook page as the event gets closer.

During October, Hope 4 Horses hosts a Halloween event with horses and donkeys to pet, pony rides, hay rides, kids games and food. The event is free, but donations are welcome.

Hope 4 Horses relies solely on donations, all of which goes directly to caring for the horses. To donate, sponsor an animal, volunteer, contribute to their feed tribute or purchase items off of their wish list, visit [hope4horses.org/donate](https://hope4horses.org/donate)

To visit Hope 4 Horses, call 217-343-7796 or email [hope4horsesrescue@gmail.com](mailto:hope4horsesrescue@gmail.com) to set up an appointment. They're located at 9550 East 975th Ave., Effingham.

next thing I knew, I was buying property, building a house, building a barn just to bring these horses home. But when I brought them home, I still missed the rescue. So I still went out there, volunteered and I ended up joining their board so that I could help make a difference, as well, and help raise funds for the rescue, too.”

Janet Bathon, 58, and Patty Simpson, 60, are two other volunteers whose passion for horses started when they were kids. They feel like the horses in the sanctuary are their own.

Simpson learned about Hope 4 Horses through a horse therapy group in Charleston. Before the owner retired, they were going to send two of the horses to Hope 4 Horses, so Simpson started bonding with them. When she moved to Effingham a year later in 2022, she asked Columbus if she could volunteer there, and she's been helping ever since. Simpson volunteers several times a week, even going multiple times a day.

“The reward is just amazing,” said Simpson. “You have a friend for life.”

Because Columbus lets volunteers' pets visit the sanctuary, Simpson brings her 2 ½-year-old pit bull mix Theo to burn off energy.

Bathon came across their website two years ago and thought it would be something interesting to do, especially because she had recently moved to the area and didn't know anyone. She volunteers when she can, but it isn't as often as she'd like since she works full time and visits with family in southern Illinois.

Bathon was the youngest of 10 in a farm family growing up, so “if it wasn't going on the table, you weren't getting it.” But since they had cattle, she would ride cows and calves bareback. She didn't get her first horse until she was in her mid-20s when she could afford it and take care of it herself.

“I've had two horses ... they would be laying down and I could go out and lay beside them on the ground with them. They just picked up their head whenever they wanted to get up, and I'd get up and move,” said Bathon. “It's pretty cool; that's kind of rare, I think, but they have to be very, very comfortable to do that ... It's pure trust.”

#### Future Plans and Events

Two horses were recently adopted by HOPE of East Central Illinois in Charleston to help those experiencing domestic violence, and a program is in the works that will allow veterans and first responders with PTSD to connect and bond with the horses there. There currently are open spots for any veterans or first responders who'd like to be involved.

“It's a program just so that people can come out here and connect with the horses, and it's in a stress-free environment,” said Columbus.

The Hope 4 Horses team has been told they've





From left: volunteer Janet Bathon, volunteer Patty Simpson and Donna Columbus. Photo by Marie Adamick

helped people who visit that are in stressful or depressing times; it's a type of therapy for people. They not only help horses, they help people, too.

"Our mission is all the same," said Frost. "To provide these horses with a second chance at life and not just to survive, but to actually live and have a good life."FI've had two-and-a-half



Right, volunteer Anneke Goeckner pets Orphy the donkey, one of the other animals looked after at Hope 4 Horses. Photo by Marie Adamick





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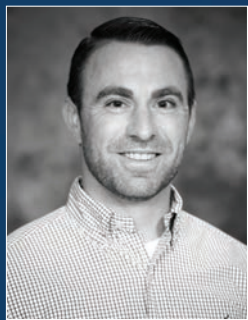


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Students play a game at the Ron Diehl Rec Center during the Effingham Unit 40 after-school program.

## Funding comes through for Unit 40 after-school program

Story and Photos by  
**Cathy Griffith**  
Effingham Magazine

**W**hen Chelle Beck came in as curriculum director of Unit 40 over a decade ago, the district had a small-scale after-school program. It was only for a few grade levels; students had to qualify, and it was focused on academic help.

The program was cut as the state fell behind in payments to school districts. Ever since, Beck had been trying to figure out how to start such a program again — this time more robustly.

“Even in just the child care world, after-school care is a need, but it kind of goes beyond that after-school care of just babysitting. We need to do more for our kids, and things that we can’t do during the standard school day, we can maybe offer some experiences and opportunities to them,” she said.

Beck knew the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant could provide such an opportunity. She also knew it would be a big undertaking.

After Andrew Johnson became the superintendent of Unit 40 three years ago, she approached him with the idea of applying for the grant. They intended to apply for it last school

year, but the grant wasn’t available.

“So, then I read they were going to accept applications for this school year, and he and I talked, and we just decided we were going to jump on it and see how far we can go with it,” she said.

The district was notified right before Christmas they would receive the grant but wasn’t given the amount.

“So, it was hard to try to plan anything without knowing how much money we had to work with,” said Beck.

It wasn’t until halfway into January they were given that figure. One grant stipulation was that they would have the program up and running this school year. So, they had to turn around and build the budget for it, not leaving much time to start the program.

“It’s not normal, in my opinion, for a school district to start a program the last seven weeks of the school year. We would much rather start it starting with the summer and/or August for the new school year,” said Johnson.

Johnson estimates the program was put together in 10 to 12 days from a staffing and programming standpoint. During that time, the district hired 20 staff members, including Unit 40 staff and people from the community. Two district administrators stepped up to be coordinators, and commu-



nity organizations jumped on board to provide secondary sites for the program.

"I think that's a tribute to this school district and the people who work here, and without the community we have for support, this is probably not doable in the manner in which it's being pulled off right now without all those pieces," he said.

## The program

The free after-school program started March 31 with 130 students registered with the purpose of providing an engaging, enriching and educational experience for children in the hours after school in a safe, structured and supervised environment Monday through Thursday. By May, the number of students registered increased to 170.

As soon as schools dismiss for the day, students participating in the program gather at designated areas in each school, where they are provided a drink, snack and the opportunity for homework help. At about 4 p.m., the students are bussed to partnership facilities in the community.

The program utilizes a couple of rooms at LLC's Kluthe Center in Effingham for junior high students. At the same time, third through fifth are housed at the Effingham Park District's Ron Diehl Recreation Center, kindergarten through second graders at Crossroots Church, and high school students at the school's library. The students can then be picked up between 5 and 6 p.m. Transportation home is also provided.

As co-coordinator overseeing kindergarten through fifth grade, South Side Principal Jessica Reeder is thankful for the community sites and the opportunity to work with them.

"Where these secondary sites are very much welcoming us in and working with us, and collaborating our ideas and coming together, it's truly a community effort and I think that is a really cool thing. It's just going to grow from here," she said.

Reeder wanted to be a part of the program because she believes in educating the whole child.

"So this is a really cool way to encompass some different types of education and get to see kids in a different light," she said.

Co-Coordinator and Junior High Assistant Principal Jordan Andruch said the program aims to give kids another reason to want to attend school. That involves learning what kids like and finding

ways to meet those interests. They also want to reach those students who aren't already involved in an extracurricular activity after school.

"How do we meet them? How do we get them interested and excited about education or the future? We want to fill in all those gaps. We know there are some students we haven't met, and I'm really hoping this is one way that we can help meet all these students," said Andruch.

One way Andruch is hoping to do that as he focuses on grades sixth through 12th is through the partnership with Lake Land College Kluthe Center.

"That means some kids are going to be on a college campus by the time they're in sixth grade. They might not be thinking about it 100%, but they already have things where they're pointing at their future, looking ahead. Lot of those kids that I think would benefit and thrive from something like this, and we're just trying to figure out how to get them," he said.

The program activities range from hobbies to career exploration.

At the Kluthe Center, students engage in coding and robot-

Students participate in a fun game during Effingham Unit 40's after-school program at the Ron Diehl Rec Center recently.



The free after-school program started March 31 with 130 students. By May, the number of students increased to 170.

Students at the Ron Diehl Rec Center color during Effingham Unit 40's after-school program.





ics, while at the other locations, students in lower grades play games and make crafts. Organizers say that will evolve as the program grows and receives more input from students, families and the community.

Johnson said they are striving to keep the program from being dull and boring.

"We want kids to walk out of there and be excited and look forward to the next day that they're going to come to that," he said.

## Funding

The district was awarded \$453,996 for this year and \$567,495 for each of the program's next two years, including a summer portion. The district will not receive any more money after that and will have to sustain the program on its own.

Right now, Johnson said the district is focused on running the after-school program and setting up the summer pro-

Students pass balls to the person behind them during a game at the Ron Diehl Rec Center. The game is one of the several activities students participate in during Effingham Unit 40's after-school program.



An Effingham Unit 40 student braces as students pass balls to the person behind them during a game at the Ron Diehl Rec Center. The game is one of the activities for students to burn off some energy during the district's after-school program.



gram before focusing on sustainability, which he hopes to possibly do through sponsorships and workforce development support.

"Cause I do hope that we implement in this program skill-sets that help students to work in industries that we have in our own community. We already do that between the four walls of our buildings every day, but we want to extend that to after-school and summer programs and really take it to another level," he said.

The 21st Century Grant is federally funded and distributed through the Illinois State Board of Education. While the district has not received the money yet, Johnson doesn't believe the district is in danger of not getting it despite federal grant cuts and the Trump administration's efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education.

"Everything that I've read states that schools will continue to receive their federally funded revenue as we have in the past per the federal government," he said.

Still, Johnson admits it is a possibility, adding that's where the sustainability pieces of the program would help.

"This community is very giving, and if the cause is good enough, they're going to jump on board with it. I really am confident about this cause being worth it," he said.

## Benefits

Johnson believes the program will not only benefit students but their families as well.

"What you're looking at is your child now can be dropped off potentially as early as 7:30 to attend our school during the day, and you can pick your child up at 6 that evening," he said. "It really helps out a lot with those that are maybe struggling to find day care, to be able to put them in a position to be able to work."

The other goal is to relieve stress.

"We would love to have that child fed to the level of their comfort for the evening and their homework done, and when mom and dad pick them up or grandma and grandpa pick them

up they can go home and play with them and maybe enjoy an evening instead of having to sit down for hours on end and do homework with them," he said.

Johnson stresses the intent of the after-school and summer programs isn't to take away from similar programs already offered in the community.

"We just want to fill a gap for some kiddos that maybe don't have the opportunity





A student works on a coding program at the Lake Land College Kluthe Center for Higher Education and Technology during Effingham Unit 40's after-school program.

to be involved in those programs that are already running at a very high level," he said.

Beck hopes the program will help not only families but also the community.

"If we have well-cared-for kids and they're supported in all ways, then they will grow up and be quality contributing

members of our community later," she said. "We aren't all dealt the same hand of cards. All families can't provide all the same things, so this is a way for us to be able to help and contribute."

## Feedback

Andruch received emails from students who were excited about the program before it even started.

"I didn't think I would get emails instantly about it and even got some phone calls from parents saying how happy they were to have something like this in our community," he said.

According to Beck, the feedback after the program started was immediate.

"Just after two days, we had parents thanking us so much for providing this, and they're looking forward to what's to come," she said.

Johnson also said the feedback has been incredible, especially from the partnership facilities.

"Every time I talk to somebody about this, I'm amazed at how excited they are about this," he said, but added he shouldn't be because of the culture of the community as a whole.

"It's what makes this area such a great area, in my opinion, is the excitement of people really stepping up to help kids," he said.



# MEET THE TEAM

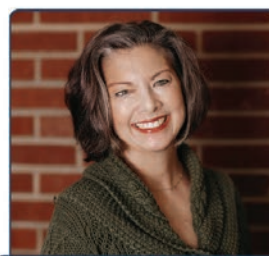
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This display room is set up as a dining room. The women's dresses show the German style worn by members of the German Singers. The photos are of early settlers of St. Francis Township, Johan Theodore Pals and his wife.

# Teutopolis Monastery Museum turns 50

Story and Photos by  
**Cathy Griffith**  
 Effingham Magazine

**F**or 50 years, the Teutopolis Monastery Museum has been telling the story of the Franciscan friars who lived there and the village's early settlers.

"These steps, walls and floors all tell a story," said longtime museum volunteer Joyce Vahling during a recent walk-thru of the main display rooms on the museum's second floor. "I'm sure they could tell a great story with all the footsteps, footprints, people that have been up here."

The display rooms were once the small "cells" or bedrooms of the former Franciscan Novitiate, which started in 1860. For more than a century, novices spent a year in seclusion and prayer at the Novitiate, preparing for the life of a Franciscan friar.

In 1967, the novices vacated the building and mainly moved to Chicago. Then, in 1974, a committee of residents from the Teutopolis area was looking for potential projects to commemorate the nation's Bicentennial in 1976. The Novitiate building had been sitting idle, so the pastor of St. Francis

Church at the time offered it as a possibility for a museum and the grounds as a mini park.

With approval from the Franciscan Order, the local Bicentennial Commission moved forward with the plan. The museum opened in October 1975 with about 15 rooms. More were gradually added, and by the end of 1976, the museum had more than 20 display rooms.

When the museum started, the commission sought artifacts from the community to display. According to Teutopolis Monastery Museum President Connie Nosbisch, people were given the opportunity to take a room, paint it, and decorate it the way they wanted with their family heirlooms. Some of the rooms were set up like rooms in a home, with a bedroom, a dining room and a parlor, giving visitors a glimpse into the lives of their ancestors. However, unlike now, all the rooms were roped off for the first opening.

"You weren't allowed to go in the room at that time. No photographs were allowed to be taken. So, we have no idea what it looked like on that day," said Nosbisch.

Nosbisch said photos were not taken until 1981, giving a glimpse of what the museum looked like inside.



While artifacts have been added to the rooms over the years, she said they have remained basically the same.

“Some of them are still today set up as the room that it would have been back in 1975 when they first opened,” she said.

Today, the museum has 38 themed display rooms, each offering a unique journey through time. Visitors can also explore the Mausoleum, where 79 Franciscan friars are entombed, and the basement, which houses a collection of smaller farm tools, plows, small pedal cars, a cider press, and old clockwork from the St. Francis Church steeple.

The displayed items date back to the village’s founders in 1839 and through the 20th century.

The displays include toys, items related to the village’s German roots, military memorabilia, items from businesses, furniture, quilts, household items, carpentry and farm tools.

Among the displays are personal items from Vahling’s and Nosbisch’s ancestors, such as Vahling’s father’s movie camera and Nosbisch’s aunt’s wedding dress and photo from 1939.

“She got married on a Tuesday. Saturday weddings became popular in later years,” Nosbisch notes.

Other displays are dedicated to the novices and friars and show items they made, used and wore, as well as photos, and books in different languages, one dated 1728. One display shows what a cell would have looked like when the novices lived there.

The museum also contains relics of Teutopolis’ past that no longer exist, including a piece of wood from the first cabin built in Teutopolis in 1839.

Others relics are pictures depicting the Stations of the Cross that hung in the



Top, Teutopolis Monastery Museum President Connie Nosbisch points to photos of J.H. Uptmor and Sons General Store during a recent walk-thru of the museum. A church parking lot now sits where the store was located.

Above, Teutopolis Monastery Museum Secretary Joyce Vahling explains the process of the cord machine, which was invented by a friar in 1929 to make the cords worn by the Franciscans more efficiently.





These Stations of the Cross hung in the first church in Teutopolis from 1840 to 1852. They were painted on paper then glued to a mesh. They now hang in the Teutopolis Monastery Museum in what was once the infirmary.

first church in the village, built in 1840. The log cabin church was named St. Peter's. A new brick church was built several years later, and the church was renamed St. Francis of Assisi after the Franciscans arrived in 1858. The Stations were later given to St. Patrick's Church in Trowbridge, which was razed in 1975.

"It's amazing we still have them after all these years," said Nosbisch, adding no one knows how old they are. "They have a history I would love to know."

Remnants of the high brick wall that surrounded the whole block of the Novitiate to keep the world out can be seen outside the museum. Items from neighboring St. Joseph's College, which became a seminary in 1927 after the Franciscans bought it, can also be seen. Except for the entry tower, it was demolished in the 1970s.

Aside from artifacts, adorning the hallways and some of the rooms are documents chronicling the history of Teutopolis and its residents, from the first land deeds to marriage and First Communion certificates, which Nosbisch notes the museum has been receiving many of.

"In days past, it was a really big thing to make your First Communion and so you'd have something signed by your priest with dates, something that would be framed and hung in your home," she said, pointing to one. "What I think is so beautiful is just so many different images, not just the framing, but the images themselves. There's a wide variety. We've got another two rooms with them."

As people and organizations have continued to donate items, the museum has designated three rooms for overflow.

"Keeping up with the inventory is a full-time job," said Nosbisch.

In recent years, organizers have been turning their attention to the building itself.

Since an extension was built in 1904, nothing had been added to the building until 2019, when work began on the Sister Ethelbert Center and Museum Renovation Project, honoring the first superintendent of Teutopolis schools.

The building, which had been used as a sandal-making shop, summer kitchen and book bindery and later became known as the "birdhouse," was torn down to make room for the entrance to the new center, which opened in 2020.

Items from other parts of the building were repurposed in the new foyer. They include wainscoting from the dining room, a long bench that was part of the dining room seating for the novices, and two stained-glass windows from the former St. Joseph College and Seminary Chapel. An ADA-compliant elevator was installed, allowing visitors easier access.

The first floor's dining hall and kitchen were renovated as part of the project. Partitions were added to the dining hall so it could be rented out as three separate rooms. Several walls were removed to open up the kitchen, and parking was also added.

More recently, Nosbisch said the two main halls of the mu-



seum were in desperate need of renovation.

“So, these last three winters, we have been painting and putting in new lighting and reinforcing the ceilings,” she said. “We’ve taken the opportunity as we repaint and refresh rooms to maybe add something different.”

In addition to its regularly scheduled hours and school tours, Nosbisch said the museum gives many private tours.

“Lot of times families have out-of-town relatives, and they often come and ask for a special tour,” she said.

However, the museum has also drawn interest from people without ties to the area.

“Last year, we had a group from Wisconsin doing a mystery tour, and there were about 50 people,” she said. “We had a couple whose car broke down last year. He was from Ukraine, and his mother was visiting from Ukraine. He was here temporarily.”

To commemorate the museum’s 50th anniversary, the museum is coordinating with the Eastern Illinois University Tarble Arts Center in Charleston on an exhibit in the Sister Ethelbert Center of 20-plus folk art carvings by the late Teutopolis parishioner, Ferd Metten.

Metten, a farmer, started carving in his 40s during the winter months. He created dioramas of scenes reflecting his life,

ranging from religious to social to farm depictions. He also carved vases and bowls using sliced walnut shells. The first showing will be Sunday, June 1, and will remain through the first Sunday of August.

Nosbisch is also marking the event with posts on the museum’s Facebook page, including its founding story and articles from the year it opened.

As for the future, Nosbisch said they plan to continue replastering and repainting rooms, adding new lighting where needed, and tuck-pointing brickwork in the basement wine cellar. She said they are also considering future publications, such as a calendar for 2026 to feature the 175 years since laying the church’s first cornerstone. As the museum con-

tinues to receive donations, Nosbisch said they will update displays, signage and pictures.

“We plan to continue for years to come,” she said.

The museum is open to visitors the first Sunday of the month from April through November, except holidays, from 12:30 to 4 p.m. Adult admission is \$5, and children’s admission is \$1. The museum has 19 volunteers who are mostly retired, but Nosbisch and Vahling note they’re always looking for more.

For more information, go to the parish website, [stfrancis-church.com](http://stfrancis-church.com), or the town’s website at [Teutopolis.com](http://Teutopolis.com) and click “Our Community.”

**“These steps, walls and floors  
all tell a story.”**

**— Joyce Vahling, Teutopolis  
Monastery Museum volunteer**



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The Effingham Daily News captures in words and pictures the life of our community in print three days per week and every day online at [effinghamdailynews.com](http://effinghamdailynews.com). Here are some snapshots of those stories from the past couple months.



▲▲ Kim Varner reads to kids at Neoga Grace United Methodist Church. Varner volunteered to give the kids a Vincent van Gogh art lesson. Cathy Griffith photo



▲▲ Neoga Grace United Methodist Church Pastor Cameron St. Michael helps kids stack cups during one of the activities at Strong for Kids. The temporary child care program was set up at the church after a tornado damaged schools in the community. Cathy Griffith photo

Chris Tegeler (left) and Patrick Zuber, Cub Master of Pack 137, (right) hand out participation medals to each Boy Scout after the Pinewood Derby at Teutopolis Grade School. Marie Adamick photo ►►



◄◄ Altamont residents gather in the municipal building to listen to the mayoral candidates during the Meet the Candidates Q & A Night. Marie Adamick photo

## MARCH





◀◀ Shown are some of the trees on S. Main Street and north of E. Grant Avenue in Altamont that will be removed and disposed of due to the water main replacement. Marie Adamick photo

# APRIL

Effingham County Farm Bureau President Kent Mellendorf herds two of his cows after recent flooding damaged the fence that keeps his cattle in place. Marie Adamick photo ▶▶



◀◀ Effingham Wastewater Treatment Plant Chief Operator Joe Williamson shows students one of the water tanks and explains the process of removing waste from water. Marie Adamick photo

Will Pujol (left) and Effingham Regional Growth Alliance President and CEO Courtney Yockey discuss land use during a discussion of the comprehensive plan for Teutopolis. Marie Adamick photo ▶▶





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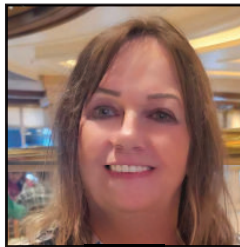


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Story  
**Jessica Damiano**  
Associated Press

Photo  
**AP/J.M. Hirsch**

This March 7, 2016 photo shows asparagus in Concord, N.H.

Though asparagus is available nearly all year, most people consider it a spring vegetable. It pairs as well with seasonal roasts as with lighter fare, such as salads with a citrus vinaigrette.

## Asparagus in the garden takes its time but is worth the wait

**A**sparagus isn't the most common vegetable among home gardeners, and that's likely because growing it is an exercise in patience. But three years of patience is a small price to pay for up to 20 years of relatively effortless tender green shoots.

If you've never seen an asparagus plant, you might be taken aback by its otherworldly appearance. Instead of the expected leaves and stems typical of most other plants, bare asparagus spears simply poke up out of the ground like sticks.

If you'd like to grow them in your garden, there are a few things to know.

For starters, in horticultural zones 3-8, asparagus isn't one of those vegetables you need to plant every year, so plant it where it can thrive long-term. That means selecting a sunny spot with well-draining, fertile soil. To achieve that fertility, incorporate a generous helping of compost or well-rotted manure into the soil before planting.

Although it's possible to grow asparagus from seeds, I recommend planting year-old crowns, which are dormant roots, instead. You'll find them at garden centers and in catalogs. Planting crowns provides a head start by reducing the time to your first harvest by a year.

Plant crowns into weed-free, prepared beds in early spring, digging trenches 12-18 inches wide, 6-12 inches deep and 3 feet apart (if planting more than one row). Plant crowns 12-18 inches apart, spreading the roots over the bottom of the trench, then cover lightly with 2-3 inches of soil, and water well.

As shoots grow, add more soil gradually until the crowns are fully buried and the trench is filled in. Then apply mulch.

Water plants deeply during dry spells but avoid overwatering.

Allow plants to grow undisturbed for two full years, then begin harvesting in spring of their third year, when stalks are 6 to 10 inches tall and about as thick as a pencil.

Use a sharp knife to cut each stalk slightly below the soil line, but take care not to damage emerging stalks. You can continue to harvest for roughly six weeks, depending on your climate. In my suburban New York garden, I can harvest asparagus until the beginning of July.

It's important not to harvest after the six-week period that begins when the first stalks are mature. The remaining stalks should be left in place to store energy for the following year's harvest.

At the end of the season, fernlike fronds will follow the spears. Leave them in place until they've turned brown, then remove them at ground level.

A note about companions: Onion and garlic will stunt asparagus, so avoid planting them nearby.

*Jessica Damiano writes weekly gardening columns for the AP and publishes the award-winning Weekly Dirt Newsletter. You can sign up for weekly gardening tips and advice.*







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## The secret to a refreshing cocktail or mocktail might be growing in the garden

Story and Photos  
**Jessica Damiano**  
Associated Press

**I**f you enjoy a tasty, refreshing summer cocktail or mocktail, why not grow your own?

No, you're not likely to grow the spirits — although they do come from plants (vodka from potatoes, tequila from agave and so on). But you can grow other ingredients that make those spirits delicious.

### Tips for growing mint and other flavorful herbs

Mint is the easiest herb to grow. It's so easy it may take over your garden if you aren't careful, so plant it in a pot and keep the pot away from the soil. Place the pot in full sun and water it regularly. In a few short weeks, you'll be able to pluck its leaves to liven up your lemonade or mint julep.

If you want to get creative, experiment with a few different varieties. My favorite is spearmint, but peppermint is classic. Chocolate mint, pineapple mint and apple mint each have their charms, named for the scents and flavors they impart. There's even a specialty variety

called Cuban mint, an authentic choice for mojitos.

Basil, too, is available in several cocktail-worthy varieties. Genovese, the Italian variety often paired with tomatoes, works equally well in beverages, as do lemon and cinnamon varieties. Plant them in full sun and provide water, but account for your climate and take care not to over- or underwater them.

Remove flower stalks, if they appear, to prevent the leaves from turning bitter.

Lemon verbena smells heavenly and pairs as well with a gin and tonic as it does with sparkling water. Most herbs don't usually require supplemental nutrients, but lemon verbena benefits from monthly applications of organic liquid fertilizer. Water plants when the soil begins to dry out; overwatering may lead to root rot.

When I have guests, I often muddle sage leaves with 1 ounce each of vodka and ginger liquor, then add to a glass with 4 ounces of ginger beer, and pineapple and lime juices to taste. It's as simple as can be — and just as impressive.

For the most concentrated flavor, harvest herbs in mid-morning, after the dew has dried but before the sun gets too hot. In my garden, that means around 10 a.m. Place them, stem side down, in a glass of water indoors, out of direct sunlight, until happy hour.

### Strawberries, cucumbers and heat

Don't forget the strawberries (bonus: The plants come back every year in horticultural zones 4-9) and cucumbers, both mandatory components of a proper British Pimm's cup, one of my favorite summertime cocktails.

I make mine by packing a highball glass with thinly shaved cucumber, sliced strawberries, mint and a couple of sliced mandarin rounds, then topping it with 1 1/2 ounces of Pimm's No. 1 liquor and 4 ounces of lemonade or lemon-lime soda.

And if you like your drinks spicy, muddle a red-ripe slice of jalapeno with lime juice and pour a shot of tequila over it, then add your choice of mixer. Or drink it straight. I'm not judging you. I'm just the garden lady.

*Jessica Damiano writes weekly gardening columns for the AP and publishes the award-winning Weekly Dirt Newsletter. You can sign up for weekly gardening tips and advice.*

This April 10, 2025, image shows a Pimm's Cup cocktail made with fresh mint, strawberries and cucumber on Long Island, N.Y.





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## AI is giving a boost to efforts to monitor health via radar

Story

**Chandler Bauder**  
U.S. Naval Research  
Laboratory

**Aly Fathy**  
University of Tennessee

If you wanted to check someone's pulse from across the room, for example to remotely monitor an elderly relative, how could you do it? You might think it's impossible, because common health-monitoring devices such as fingertip pulse oximeters and smartwatches have to be in contact with the body.

However, researchers are developing technologies that can monitor a person's vital signs at a distance. One of those technologies is radar.

We are electrical engineers who study radar systems. We have combined advances in radar technology and artificial intelligence to reliably monitor breathing and heart rate without contacting the body.

Noncontact health monitoring has the potential to be more comfortable and easier to use than traditional methods, particularly for people looking to monitor their vital signs at home.

### How radar works

Radar is commonly known for measuring the speed of cars, making weather forecasts and detecting obstacles at sea and in the air. It works by sending out electromagnetic waves that travel at the speed of light, waiting for them to bounce off objects in their path, and sensing them when they return to

the device.

Radar can tell how far away things are, how fast they're moving, and even their shape by analyzing the properties of the reflected waves.

Radar can also be used to monitor vital signs such as breathing and heart rate. Each breath or heartbeat causes your chest to move ever so slightly — movement that's hard for people to see or feel. However, today's radars are sensitive enough to detect these tiny movements, even from across a room.

### Advantages of radar

There are other technologies that can be used to measure health remotely. Camera-based techniques can use infrared light to monitor changes in the surface of the skin in the same manner as pulse oximeters, revealing information about your heart's activity. Computer vision systems can also monitor breathing and other activities, such as sleep, and they can detect when someone falls.

However, cameras often fail in cases where the body is obstructed by blankets or clothes, or when lighting is inadequate. There are also concerns that different skin tones reflect infrared light differently, causing inaccurate readings for people with darker skin. Additionally, depending on high-resolution cameras for long-term health monitoring brings up serious concerns about patient privacy.

Radar, on the other hand, solves many of these problems. The wavelengths of the transmitted waves are much longer than those of visible or infrared light, allowing the waves to pass through blankets, clothing and even walls. The measurements aren't affected by lighting or skin tone, making them more reliable in different conditions.

Radar imagery is also extremely low resolution — think old Game Boy graphics versus a modern 4K TV — so it doesn't capture





enough detail to be used to identify someone, but it can still monitor important activities. While it does project energy, the amount does not pose a health hazard. The health-monitoring radars operate at frequencies and power levels similar to the phone in your pocket.

### Radar + AI

Radar is powerful, but it has a big challenge: It picks up everything that moves. Since it can detect tiny chest movements from the heart beating, it also picks up larger movements from the head, limbs or other people nearby. This makes it difficult for traditional processing techniques to extract vital signs clearly.

To address this problem we created a kind of "brain" to make the radar smarter. This brain, which we named mm-MuRe, is a neural network — a type of artificial intelligence — that learns directly from raw radar signals and estimates chest movements. This approach is called end-to-end learning. It means that, unlike other radar plus AI techniques, the network figures out on its own how to ignore the noise and focus only on the important signals.

We found that this AI enhancement not only gives more accurate results, it also works faster than traditional methods. It handles multiple people at once, for example an elderly couple, and adapts to new situations, even those it didn't see during training — such as when

people are sitting at different heights, riding in a car or standing close together.

### Implications for health care

Reliable remote health monitoring using radar and AI could be a major boon for health care. With no need to touch the patient's skin, risks of rashes, contamination and discomfort could be greatly reduced. It's especially helpful in long-term care, where reducing wires and devices can make life significantly easier for patients and caregivers.

Imagine a nursing home where radar quietly watches over residents, alerting caregivers immediately if someone has breathing trouble, falls or needs help. It can be implemented as a home system that checks your breathing while you sleep — no wearables required. Doctors could even use radar to remotely monitor patients recovering from surgery or illness.

This technology is moving quickly toward real-world use. In the future, checking your health could be as simple as walking into a room, with invisible waves and smart AI working silently to take your vital signs.

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# Effingham & Area Events



**May 29-31**

**Neoga Days 2025.** Queen pageant, live music, food, parade, xtreme games and more at Jennings Park in Neoga!



Strangers with Kandi performs at Neoga Days in May and Schutzenfest in September.

**May 30**

**Wreckless Whiskey Band** 7-10 p.m. at Tuscan Hills Winery in Effingham.

**May 31**

**Masonic Lodge Auction for Shriners Hospitals For Children** starts at 10 a.m. at Charley Brown Park Fairgrounds in Flora, IL. All proceeds will help support life-changing specialized pediatric healthcare provided by the Shriners Hospital for Children. To make a donation to the auction, call 618-843-3815. Checks and money orders can be made out to Shriners Hospital and mailed to Don Fry, 323 East 4th Street, Flora, IL 62839.

**Scott Wattles & The Blue Suede Crew.**

Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



**June 1**

**Farmers Market with Craft Show & Flea Market.** Noon-3 p.m. at Beecher City Community Park. For more info, call or text Ashley Haslett at (618) 359-1542.

**Danny Shelton & The Bird Dogs** at Hangar 18 in Windsor, 2-5 p.m.

**June 6-8**

**Flea Market** at the Cross County Mall in Mattoon, IL.

**June 7**

**Races for All Paces 10K, 5K, 1 Mile, Toddler Trot, and Diaper Dash.** All races begin and end on EIU's O'Brien Field track. Proceeds from this family-friendly event benefit the Sarah Bush Lincoln dental program. For more info, see [www.sarahbush.org/races](http://www.sarahbush.org/races) or contact Tracy Haddock at 217-345-6828 or [thaddock@sbilhs.org](mailto:thaddock@sbilhs.org)

**Magic and Mischief: A Fairy Market** at 112 E. Section Ave. in Effingham 1-8 p.m. Free event. Magical street performers, live fairies, DJ music, face painting, 50+ fairy vendors, food vendors and more!

**Cancer Can Kiss My Jeep Run** at The Orchard Inn in Effingham. Register 11 a.m. - noon. Raffle prizes and 50/50 chances. Stops include Danny's Bar & Grill, Dozer's Pub and Muddy Bottoms. Taco bar at Danny's. For more info, call Becky Kinman at 217-821-5487, Belinda Ernst at 217-690-1537 or Teresa Haywood at 217-273-1032.

**Rock For Kids** featuring over 9 local young musicians and bands at The Stage at Lake Sara 2-9:30 p.m. Proceeds benefit Crisis Nursery of Effingham County in partnership with HSHS St. Anthony Memorial Hospital.

**More 4 Montrose Rodeo Night** at

Montrose Village Park in Montrose. Barrel racing, bull riding & mutton busting. Grounds open at 3 p.m. Rodeo at 7 p.m. Bar, concession stands, merchandise, food vendors, live performance and more! For more info, contact Zach Hilton at 217-240-0742 or Trisha Funneman at 217-343-3042 or email [m4mrodeo@gmail.com](mailto:m4mrodeo@gmail.com)



**Jo Dee Messina.** Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

**June 13**

**Teutopolis KC Picnic.** Grounds open at 5 p.m. with Randy Kemme playing music 6-8 p.m. and Bryor Rhodes playing music 8:30-end. Food and drinks available for sale.

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TWENTY-FIVE**

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<b>THE PEOPLE v. HUGH DENEAL</b>	<b>PETER KEANE</b>	<b>KLYMA &amp; OLD FANGLED</b>
<b>ROD PICOTT</b>	<b>OLIVER STECK</b>	<b>TAYLOR STEELE &amp; THE LOVE PREACHERS</b>
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<b>JACOB KUHN'S EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>HALOS SNOWBIRD STREET BAND</b>	<b>TERRY KLEIN</b>
<b>SOPHIE &amp; THE SAINTS</b>	<b>SHEAFOR AND SIMES</b>	<b>ISAAC BIVER</b>
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The 2025 Moccasin Creek Festival at Lake Sara features more than two dozen bands. Graphic [moccasin creek festival.com](http://moccasin creek festival.com)





Dave Parker and Cheryl Parker of Effingham seize the opportunity to sample some hometown barbecue during the EffingHAM-JAM Hometown Throwdown in 2022. EDN file photo

#### June 14

**Veterans Jeep Run** starting at noon at MVP Happy Holler, rural Newton.

**Captain Rat and the Blind Rivets** at Willow Ridge Winery, rural Shelbyville, 6-9 p.m.

**Father's Day Car Show** at Evergreen Nursing in Effingham. Free admission. Starts at 10 a.m. Awards at 2 p.m. Food trucks, vendors, music. For more info, call 217-460-9450.

#### June 19-22

**Moccasin Creek Festival** at Lake Sara, Effingham, IL. Suzy Bogguss, Sister Sadie, John Moreland and 2 dozen more bands!



#### June 20

**Teutopolis KC 2025 Cruise Night & Car Show** at Teutopolis Banquet Hall. Cruise 5:30-8:30 p.m. Car show 5:30-9 p.m. Food by Shriners and refreshments available for purchase. Power Wheel derby 5:30-6:30

p.m. For more info, go to Facebook page "Teutopolis Cruise Car Show." Proceeds go to Teutopolis Banquet Hall, Shriners, Shop With A Cop Effingham County, Altamont High School Skeet & Trap, and Teutopolis Monastery Museum.

#### June 21

**Fireworks & Flight Fifty** at Sky Saloon, Ste. Marie, IL starting at 2 p.m.

#### June 24

**Great Race Lunch Stop** at 11 a.m. at Effingham Performance Center. The GREAT RACE stops in Effingham as part of a nine-day rally. FREE event with family-friendly atmosphere, so bring the kids! More than 150 classic cars and trucks.

#### July 11

**Relay for Life 2025 Effingham County** 5-8 p.m. at Teutopolis Community Park.

#### July 12, 16-19

**Mattoon Bagelfest.** Miss Bagelfest Pageants at The Fields Church starting at noon on July 12. July 16-19 features carnival, bingo, vendors all 4 days. Musical entertainment by The Bow Wow on July 16, free Christian concert on July 17, Everclear with X-Krush July 18. Featured events on July 19 include Run for the Bagel 5K, World's Biggest Bagel Breakfast, Bagelfest Parade at 10:30, Battle For the Bagel Powerlift Contest, a quartet and ends with the Josh Turner with Jake & Mikayla concert at 7:30 p.m. on July 19. All at Peterson Park in Mattoon.

#### July 18

**EffingHAM-JAM** from 5-7 p.m. Big Things in Effingham — bring the kids downtown to experience some big things! HAM CITY JAM demo local skate competition; 5-10:30 p.m.: Food trucks, vendors & beer tent; 5:30 until sold out: Hometown Throwdown Amateur BBQ Challenge with blind judging by local community reps, Hometown Throwdown sponsors and KCBS professional judges; 5-6:30 p.m. cowboy space western folk rock band "The Troubadours."

#### July 26-Aug. 2

**Effingham County Fair** at the fairgrounds in Altamont, IL featuring Dylan Scott in

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concert Aug. 1 and Jake & Mikayla. For a full list of events, go to [www.effinghamcountyfair.com](http://www.effinghamcountyfair.com)

### Aug. 3

**We The Kingdom.** Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



### Aug. 20

#### Happy Together Show 2025.

Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7:30 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)

### Sept. 21

**Fall Craft & Vendor Show** at Thelma Keller Convention Center from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. 80+ booths to shop from. Gift card giveaways.

### Sept. 27

**Schutzenfest** at Effingham County Fairgrounds in Altamont. Strangers with Kandi play at 8 p.m.

### Oct. 17

**Adam Wainwright Live in Concert with Special Guest.** Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



### Oct. 26

**Colin Mochrie & Brad Sherwood.** Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. [www.theepc.org](http://www.theepc.org)



### Nov. 30

**All I Want for Christmas Craft & Vendor Show** at Thelma Keller Convention Center in Effingham. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Free entry. 80+ booths to shop from. Free pictures with Santa!

### Dec. 6

**Holiday Vendor Market** at West End Event Center in Newton, IL starting at 9 a.m.

Have an event you want to promote? Send to [jody.hardiek@effinghamdailynews.com](mailto:jody.hardiek@effinghamdailynews.com)



Fairgoers make their way through the food court at the Effingham County Fair in 2021. This year's fair takes place from July 26 to August 2 at the fairgrounds in Altamont. Effingham Daily News file photo

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