

# Herald & Review

Serving Central Illinois Since 1873

Tuesday  
November 23, 1999  
Decatur, Illinois

## Quick Take



C10

## Teams poised to give Classic performances

The field for this year's Decatur Thanksgiving Basketball Classic, which begins today at Milikin's Griswold Center, is as strong as any in the history of the event.

Sports / B1

## Under pressure

A growing wave of private lawsuits against Microsoft Corp. suddenly has the company fighting on several legal fronts at once, raising the stakes in its antitrust battle in Washington and intensifying pressure on Microsoft to settle the case.

Business / D1

## Lottery

Here are the winning numbers selected Monday:  
 ■ Pick Three-Midday: 1-8-4  
 ■ Pick Three-Evening: 2-8-5  
 ■ Pick Four-Midday: 0-6-9-0  
 ■ Pick Four-Evening: 6-0-9-5  
 ■ Little Lotto: 02-15-18-29-30  
 ■ Lotto jackpot: \$3 million  
 ■ Big Game jackpot: \$13 million

## Weather

■ Today: Thunderstorms, High 65.  
 ■ Tonight: Showers, Low 44.

Details / B6

## Inside

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 39  
 Celebrate 2000  
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 Issue 327 • Four sections

## Zero-tolerance hearing set Dec. 27

Judge grants lawyer representing expelled Decatur high school students an extension, denies request to have the case dismissed

By TOM COLLINS  
 Staff Writer

URBANA — An effort to overturn the Decatur school board's so-called "zero-tolerance policy" on violence is on hold until after Christmas.

Lewis Myers Jr., a lawyer representing six expelled Decatur high school students, asked for a continuance Monday in a federal lawsuit to strike down the controversial policy.

Federal Judge Michael P. McCuskey granted the extension and set a new hearing for Dec. 27 in U.S. District Court.

It's alleged in the Nov. 9 complaint that the zero-tolerance policy is unconstitutional and was used unfairly when the board expelled seven students (one is not represented in this action) after a Sept. 17 fight at a football game.

The students seek an injunction that would overturn the policy and return them to regular school. The students enrolled Thursday in alternative school and were scheduled to begin class Monday.

Craig Milligan, Macon-Piatt regional superintendent of schools, would not say what programs the students were attending, nor would he comment on whether the students attended

classes Monday.

Myers told McCuskey that much had changed since the filing of the complaint, and there needs to be language changes made in the parts of the complaint relating to zero tolerance and disproportionate punishment.

McCuskey agreed and told Myers to file a revised complaint by Nov. 30. The school board, represented by Springfield attorney Thomas W. Kelly, has until Dec. 7 to file a response.

McCuskey warned Myers this

HEARING

Continued on A4



REPORTING: Shawn Honorable, one of the students expelled by the Decatur school board, reports to the offices of the Macon/Piatt adult and teen GED program at 363 N. Water St. on Monday.

## TREETOP SERVICE

## Feline's fate no longer up in the air

Fire department lends a hand — and a ladder — to get cat trapped in tree on the ground.

By ARLENE MARSHLEN  
 Staff Writer

DECATUR — It's still a couple of days before Thanksgiving, but Neighborhood Cat has plenty to be thankful for. And so do the residents of the 1100 block of East Logan Street.

The year-old cat got pawed back onto solid ground after spending nearly five days howling — loudly and plaintively — from a perch 20 feet up in a sycamore tree, where she'd been stuck since an altercation with a neighborhood dog last Wednesday.

Nobody really owns Neighborhood Cat, but it has been adopted and fed by people in the area. Neighborhood Cat was part of a litter born about a year ago under the porch of Hilda Wallace, who is one of the people making sure the cat is fed.

Another "owner," Terri Acree, said she just couldn't stand the thought of the cat stuck in the tree, and she and other neighbors had been trying to figure out a way to get it down. Until Monday, she and Clifton Ball (whose sycamore tree the cat was perched in) hadn't been able to get help.

On Sunday, the neighbors tried a rescue themselves, but no one had a ladder long enough to reach the frightened feline.

Finally, on Monday, Decatur Fire Department equipment arrived on



WATCH YOUR STEP: Firefighter Scott Gillen retrieved a stray cat from a sycamore tree in the front yard of 1161 E. Logan St. on Monday. Neighbors said the cat had been treed for about five days.

FELINE

Continued on A4

## Nation's aid to families earns D +

But the news isn't all bad, YMCA reports, saying this year's grade is better than last.

CHICAGO (AP) — The United States is far from family-friendly, the YMCA said Monday in releasing a report that gives the country a "D+" overall in providing help for families.

"The Nation's Report Card," the YMCA claims that too many families and children are being underserved in the areas of child care, education, violence and several other social issues.

The country gets only a "C" for its efforts to address family-oriented economic issues despite a vibrant national economy.

"The problem is that for those at the bottom end of the economic ladder, a booming economy doesn't help much," said David R. Mercer, executive director of the Chicago-based YMCA of the USA, an umbrella agency for the nation's 2,300 branches nationwide.

"Yes, the economy is doing better, but there are still 7 million people in poverty.

"For a nation that is as strong and successful and wealthy as ours is, to have this kind of situation is unacceptable," he said.

The country's performance in three other categories rated by the panel — child care and education, health and violence — is even worse, the report says. While national crime statistics are declining in several areas, the panel gave the country's treatment of violence a "D."

Child care and education and health fared only slightly better, scoring a "D+."

The YMCA's ratings were issued by a panel of doctors, intellectuals and other experts. Panel members spent five months reviewing some 600 documents concerning family and children issues, a YMCA spokesman said.

The panel also issued 25 recommendations, including a suggestion that policymakers treat poverty as a public health issue and a call for more federal funding for child care programs.

The panel's child care funding recommendation indicates "some unfinished business for us," said Michael Khuri, a spokesman for the Department of Health and Human Services. He said the Clinton administration's request to pump \$7.5 million into the Federal Government Child Care and Development Fund was among a handful of family-friendly funding measures excluded from the 2000 budget passed by Congress.

Despite the negative connotations of a "D+" grade, conditions for America's families are improving, Mercer said. He cited the YMCA panel's slightly lower "D" grade issued last year as one sign that things are getting better.

"Health care is improving, but still there are about 11.1 million children without insurance and basically no access to the greatest health care in the world. We didn't get this way real fast, and we won't get out of it real fast."

## Down syndrome spike sparks meeting

Parents, medical specialists to discuss reasons for 1998 increase.

By TONY REID  
 Staff Writer

DECATUR — Researchers and medical experts on Down syndrome will visit Decatur today to talk about an unusually high number of cases of the genetic disorder in Macon County.

The meeting, scheduled for 7 p.m. in the great hall at Central Christian Church, also will explore new research that holds the possibility of developing a therapy to lessen the mental retardation associated with the syndrome.

Parents who belong to Decatur-based KIDS — Kids with Down syndrome support group — have been worried by a spike of cases in Macon County that occurred in 1998.

Statistics researched by the National Down Syndrome Society indicate 1 in every 800 babies nationwide will be born with the disorder. But out of the KIDS membership, six families had children born in 1998, a year when there were just 1,754 births in the county (for a rate of 1 in 300 births). Statistically, older mothers have a greater chance of having a child with Down syndrome, but most of the Macon County mothers were

under 35.

This follows a period from 1993 through 1997, when just 11 children with Down syndrome were born in Macon County.

"The parents are really looking forward to this meeting and hearing from the experts we have coming," said Deb Widenhofer, director of curriculum/teacher with BabyTALK, an organization that assists parents in their children's development. She serves as a facilitator for the KIDS group and has also expressed concern about the 1998 case spike. "We also expect to have parents there from all over Central Illinois, and it wouldn't surprise me to have 100 turn up," Widenhofer added.

The experts talking to them will include Dr. Virginia Kimonis, a geneticist and assistant principal professor, division of genetics and metabolism, at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine's department of pediatrics.

Kimonis has said previously that the Macon County cases are "mysterious" and warrant further study. The doctor, who has already met many of the KIDS parents through her work, will introduce them to Dr. Leonard E. Maron, professor of microbiology and immunology at SIU, who will speak

MEETING

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## Businesses vow to fight OSHA's ergonomic rules

Regulations intended to cut down on such problems as carpal tunnel syndrome, back pain and tendonitis.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The 27 million Americans who labor on assembly lines, at computer work stations or in jobs involving heavy lifting could benefit from a government proposal aimed at lessening repetitive-motion injuries, supporters say. Business threatened to fight the rules in court.

"Government action to prevent the crippling of working men and women is long overdue," said John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, the nation's largest labor federation.

Businesses face an estimated \$4.2 billion in annual costs to fix job sites and pay

RULES

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