

Herald & Review

Saturday
December 11, 1999
Decatur, Illinois

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NAACP pulls out of Chamber

Local president says group should have consulted with members before taking stand in expulsion dispute.

By ARVIN DONLEY
Herald Staff Writer

DECATUR — Unhappy with the Chamber of Commerce for Decatur and Macon County's public show of support for the Decatur School Board during the recent student-expulsion controversy, the Decatur Branch of the NAACP has canceled its membership.

Jeanette Norman, president of the NAACP's local branch, said members recently voted unanimously to end their 10-year association with the Chamber. A letter informing the Chamber of the NAACP's decision was received by Chamber President Julie Moore on Wednesday.

Norman said the NAACP was disappointed that the Chamber took a side in the matter of seven African-American students who were expelled for fighting in the bleachers during a football game at Eisenhower High School.

Six of the students were expelled — one withdrew from school — for two years initially by the school board. The expulsion was eventually reduced to one year after the Rev. Jesse Jackson and other Rainbow/PUSH Coalition members said the punishment was too harsh.

However, there was no further compromise on the length of the expulsions, and the city became divided, to some degree along racial lines, over the issue.

Norman said she wished the Chamber would have contacted the NAACP and other Chamber members before holding the Nov. 13 news conference to announce its support for the school board and believed the announcement served to further divide the city.

"It sent out a negative message to the community," Norman said.

Tom Swartz, chairman of the Chamber's board of directors, said the press conference in Central Park was intended to restate the Chamber's consistent desire for quality education, safe schools and excellent race relations in Macon County schools.

"We were not taking a stand in favor or against zero tolerance, and we were not NAACP

Continued on A5

Quick Take

Scores

■ Cerro Gordo	65
□ Findlay	62
■ Teutopolis	88
□ Shelbyville	57
■ St. Anthony	78
□ St. Elmo	64
■ Arthur	60
□ Tuscola	51

Details, more prep / B1,3



SENDING A MESSAGE: A Russian soldier paints 'For Basayev' on a bomb for use in Chechnya. Basayev is the name of a prominent Chechen rebel commander.

Chechen assault

As refugees fled the shelling in the Chechen capital on Friday, Russia appeared to back off its ultimatum to clear the city by today.

World / A2

Lottery

Here are the winning numbers selected Friday in the Illinois State Lottery.

- Pick Three-Midday: 6-1-3
- Pick Three-Evening: 9-8-7
- Pick Four-Midday: 7-0-2-8
- Pick Four-Evening: 9-7-4-7
- Little Lotto: 04-05-12-21-22
- Big Game: 15-24-25-26-32
- Big Money Ball: 13
- Lotto jackpot: \$7 million
- Big Game jackpot: \$15 million

Weather

■ Today: Sunny. High 47.
■ Tonight: Partly cloudy. Low 32.

Details / B8

Inside

Ann Landers	D4
Business	A9
Classifieds	C1-10
Comics	D6
Lifestyle	D1-7
Movies	D5
Obituaries	A8
Opinion	A6
Puzzles	C2, 5, 9
Sports	B1-7
Television	Section Inside

counts down



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WILDLIFE WONDERLAND



Nine-year-old Derek Stinton takes a chilly spin Friday evening through Sovill Zoo on the miniature train. Derek is familiar with all of the holiday happenings at the zoo. His father, Shawn, works as education coordinator there.

Story / A3

Mount Zion names new administrator

Paris native Paul Ruff will take helm on Jan. 3

By BRETT WILCOXSON
Herald Staff Writer

MOUNT ZION — Mount Zion once again has a village administrator.

After nearly three months of managing village business without its top

administrator, the Mount Zion village board voted unanimously Friday to hire Paul Ruff.

A lifelong resident of Paris — a community of about 9,000 east of Charleston near the Indiana border — Ruff served as his community's city administrator from 1989 until late October of this year.

Without dissent, the board also opted to appoint Rick Bright as a village board member. He will replace Jeff

Buchanan, who resigned on Monday.

Ruff said that during his tenure at Paris, he spent much of his time managing the city's industrial development. And during his final few months, he was beginning to delve into economic development issues — focusing on how they affect residents' quality of life. Such issues are a major concern in

Ruff
Continued on A5



Ruff Served as Paris administrator for many years

On hold for the holidays

Child support foul-up has mom depending on friends, family for children's Christmas.

By VALERIE WELLS
Herald Staff Writer

DECATUR — If it weren't for family and friends pitching in, Bo Peep Crose's two children wouldn't have a very merry Christmas.

Scrooge, in this instance, appears to be the new centralized child support disbursement system in Illinois, which has experienced glitches since it started

operating in October.

Crose, a Decatur resident, estimates she's about \$25 behind. She received one emergency payment from the state in October and only one check for November, although she is supposed to get a check every week.

When she called the State Disbursement Unit in Wheaton, she was told the unit issued checks to her on Nov. 10, 29 and 30. On Dec. 1, she received the check dated Nov. 30. On Dec. 4, she received one dated Dec. 2, but

SUPPORT
Continued on A4

Curtain coming down for Beanie Babies

By SUSAN REIDY
Herald Staff Writer

DECATUR — Creatures like "Chipper," "Goatee," and "Honks" will soon be endangered species.

Production of Beanie Babies, the popular bean-stuffed toys, will stop Dec. 31, the Oak Brook-based toy maker Ty Inc. announced on its Web site this week. Warehouses will be cleared of all surplus.

The message was included in a daily Internet "diary" entry by "The End" Beanie Baby that was posted Wednesday night. An entry Thursday morning added, "We're all a little sad today since we heard that there would be no more Beanie Babies after they retire. They

are going to start cleaning out the nursery today."

Decatur merchants say it's been a good run, but they look forward to Ty's newest creation, which is as yet unknown.

"As far as our company is concerned, this has been the biggest item in 25 years," said Steve High, president of Haines & Eastick. "There's been nothing (else) that has been that good for us, just because this product did not go to mass merchandisers. It was only sold to smaller stores."

"I think something is going to happen. I guess we wait until the new year to find out."

Many thought an announcement in August that all the Beanie Babies would

"retired" by the end of the year was a marketing ploy to pick up waning sales.

Ty didn't give a reason for stopping production, but some retailers speculate it could be because the craze has died down.

"Kids got tired of them when they couldn't find them or afford to buy them. Girls seem to have moved onto charm bracelets, and there's also Pokémon," said Claire Stogner, owner of Claire's Bears, who's carried Beanie Babies for almost four years. "People are still buying them, but it's not like it used to be."

BEANIES
Continued on A4



ENDANGERED SPECIES: Claire Stogner, owner of Claire's Bears at 121 N. 22nd St. in Decatur, says the company is retiring all current Beanie Babies as of Dec. 31, 1999.