

CENTRAL ILLINOIS

A3

Decatur, Illinois

Herald & Review

Friday, December 24, 1999

'92 bug not expected to put a bite on schools

From turning off the power to software to detect problems, officials say all systems are go.

By KEN HICKSON

Staff Writer

Sorry, if you're counting on the Y2K bug to eat away your bad grades and replace them with all As, it's not going to happen.

School officials throughout Central Illinois assure everyone that the thousands of computers and pieces of software and critical systems like accounting, bookkeeping and student records are safe and Y2K bug-free.

Decatur Christian School Administra-



For Randy Thacker said the organization ran software to detect their computers' ability to roll over to 2000 without trouble. "Plus, we normally run backups with hard copies just in case something happens," he said. "Unless it's an act of God, we're ready. Everything should work as it should. There may be some students praying for Y2K intervention, but I wouldn't count on it."

Dennis Harper, management information system coordinator for the Decatur School District, said the school computer systems are not as critical as, say, bank-

ing systems, but they're ready just the same. "We don't plan to have anybody here Jan. 1," he said. "We'll see what happens when the time changes, but I'm confident everything will work fine."

"We've gone through all the systems and made sure they are Y2K compliant. We had a few older ones that were not, but all those are off-line."

Harper said all the computers will be turned off for the holidays. He said if electrical power is affected, it would be better if computers were not connected through a phone line or plugged into an outlet.

Just the same, Paul Reed, principal at Harris School in Decatur, said he and his computer technician will be in sometime

Jan. 1 to see if everything is working OK. "We want to know early if something is wrong," he said.

Randy Massey, director of learning technologies for the Maroa-Porsyth School District, said all equipment has been checked for Y2K, and school officials have updated the critical software.

"We're shutting down all the servers," he said. "If the power goes on and off, it wouldn't be good for them."

He said all the main servers were updated over the summer, and the other hardware and software was checked.

"If the company we hired is correct that we are Y2K compliant, then we should be in good shape," he said. Cerro Gordo Superintendent Leonard

Bogge said his district also hired an outside firm to check for Y2K problems.

"They looked at every machine and all related devices and brought them up to standards," he said.

"I'm not concerned. We'll check the building after Jan. 1 to see if there is something unforeseen. It's possible that something outside the district that affects us could go wrong, but it's not likely," Effingham Superintendent Don Roberts is not concerned either.

"We have backup systems for everything," he said. "I think we've done everything we can to protect ourselves. I think this is all much about about nothing, but you never know."

Vandalia man gets three-year sentence

Ex-mayoral candidate Sheldon Schulte was guilty of violating his probation.

By BRETT WILCOXSON

Staff Writer

VANDALIA — A former Vandalia mayoral candidate was sentenced to three years in prison on Wednesday for violating his probation.

Sheldon Schulte, 50, of Vandalia was on a 30-month home confinement probation after being found guilty of aggravated battery to a police officer June 26.

Fayette County State's Attorney James Overholt said the battery occurred while Schulte was being arrested on a charge of driving under the influence of alcohol, which was dropped.

Overholt said according to the terms of Schulte's probation, he was only allowed to leave home to go to work or to the doctor, and he was not allowed to consume alcohol — conditions he was found to have violated.

"On Labor Day weekend he had a tent set up in his yard, drinking beer with friends," Overholt said, explaining one of "numerous occasions" Schulte violated his probation.

Robert Elvitz, Schulte's attorney, said Overholt had a witness who testified to that violation. "He had evidence of that," he said.

Elvitz said he had hoped that Schulte would be placed back on probation. "We're certainly disappointed," he said.

This is not the first time Schulte has violated probation. In December 1996, Schulte pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor drug charge and was sentenced to probation. Schulte was arrested a month later after he was found asleep in his vehicle with three weapons, two of which were loaded.

Schulte, who was a candidate for mayor of Vandalia at the time, pleaded guilty in March 1997 to a misdemeanor weapons charge and was sentenced to probation and 120 days in jail.

He violated the terms of his probation on both charges by reporting to the jail and testing positive for cocaine.

Schulte is currently being held in the Department of Corrections intake center at Graham Correctional Center in Hillsboro.



LOADING ZONE: Sheri Holohan, right, and her mother, Mildred Ashtenfelder, who now lives in Fort Walton, Fla., went grocery shopping Wednesday at Decatur MarketPlace. The women were getting ready for their holiday festivities this weekend.

Shoppers share strategies for smart parking

By SUSAN REEDY

Staff Writer

DECATUR — Three types of warriors can be found on the battlefield known as the holiday parking lot: the circler, the shadower and the quick-taker.

Before waging war with crowds and lines inside the stores, last-minute shoppers had to battle for a spot in the parking lot. On Thursday, shoppers at local hot spots shared their strategies and advice for successfully procuring a spot.

"I circle around maybe two or three times; it drives my husband crazy. Sometimes I do wait for a spot," said Maya Fombelle of Decatur, after holding up traffic waiting for a close spot at the Wal-Mart Supercenter on North Prospect Drive.

When shopping with her two small daughters, Fombelle said she tries to park close to the store. While she doesn't shadow shoppers returning to their cars, she keeps an eye on who's circling.

Parking at the mall was hit or miss. Some lots were at capacity, while several choice spots remained in others.

As a Von Maur employee, Lori McDonald is forced to park in the back. But when she's shopping, she usually does a little bit of circling to find a good spot.

"I'm not going to drive around forever if I don't find one. It's too much time to waste," she said. "People cut you off. I almost got into an accident here. It's not worth it."

The parking lot at Kruger in Brettwood Village was packed with people pushing carts filled with Christmas treats or their regular weekly groceries.

"It's been crazy. It took me 15 minutes to find a spot. I circled around a few times," said Amanda Schlattweiler of Decatur. "I usually take the first one but since it was so cold out, I wanted a close one so I didn't have to walk."

Larry Goetz of Harrison finished his Christmas shopping early but had to brave the last-minute rush at Kruger for groceries. He settles for the first spot he comes to. As for the people who cut him off, he ignores them.

"I slow down. I let them go in front of me. If you get an attitude, it makes it worse," he said. "You need to make sure to watch out for other people because they're not going to watch out for you. Just give a little; it's not going to hurt. A one-minute stop is better than getting into a wreck."

Despite parking aggravations, long lines inside the stores were still the worst, shoppers agreed. Waiting in the checkout line is the worst. It never fails that you get in the wrong one. The one that looks the shortest always seems to take the longest," said Mark Hunt of Forsyth.

"I circle around maybe two or three times; it drives my husband crazy."

Maya Fombelle of Decatur

Sarah Nidiffer of Decatur doesn't like to follow people laden with packages in the hopes of taking their spot.

"It freaks me out when people do it to me, so I don't do it to them," said Nidiffer, who was stuck in a spot near the front of Wal-Mart. "It surprised me. I was expecting far worse."

It wasn't impossible to find a spot, but a little bit of walking was inevitable.

"I go for the spot that's open and then I weave the walk," said Jeff Weaver of Decatur, after parking near Kohl's at Hickory Point Mall in Forsyth.

"It's quicker parking farther away and walking than circling around for a close spot."

Parking at the mall was hit or miss. Some lots were at capacity, while several choice spots remained in others.

As a Von Maur employee, Lori McDonald is forced to park in the back. But when she's shopping, she usually does a little bit of circling to find a good spot.

"I'm not going to drive around forever if I don't find one. It's too much time to waste," she said. "People cut you off. I almost got into an accident here. It's not worth it."

The parking lot at Kruger in Brettwood Village was packed with people pushing carts filled with Christmas treats or their regular weekly groceries.

"It's been crazy. It took me 15 minutes to find a spot. I circled around a few times," said Amanda Schlattweiler of Decatur. "I usually take the first one but since it was so cold out, I wanted a close one so I didn't have to walk."

Larry Goetz of Harrison finished his Christmas shopping early but had to brave the last-minute rush at Kruger for groceries. He settles for the first spot he comes to. As for the people who cut him off, he ignores them.

"I slow down. I let them go in front of me. If you get an attitude, it makes it worse," he said. "You need to make sure to watch out for other people because they're not going to watch out for you. Just give a little; it's not going to hurt. A one-minute stop is better than getting into a wreck."

Despite parking aggravations, long lines inside the stores were still the worst, shoppers agreed. Waiting in the checkout line is the worst. It never fails that you get in the wrong one. The one that looks the shortest always seems to take the longest," said Mark Hunt of Forsyth.

'All I want for Christmas' wishes revealed

Community leaders tell their heart's desire for the holiday and new year.

By KEN HICKSON

Staff Writer

DECATUR — If Judy Gibbs climbed onto Santa's lap and whispered a wish in his ear, she would ask that the Decatur area get a 24-hour crisis nursery for parents who need an emergency break.

Gibbs, coordinator of the Baby Love program in Macon County, was one of several people from the Decatur-Macon County area who were asked by the Herald & Review what they would wish for on Christmas.

"We need a big building for a crisis nursery," she said. "It would be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week and open days and nights, so if a parent was starting to lose control, they could drop off their child for an hour or two."

Decatur School District Superintendent Kenneth Arndt wishes the pending court appearances, remnants of the explosion fight with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, would be dismissed or postponed so he and his family could return to Ohio for the holidays.

"That's my No. 1 wish," he said. "There was one court appearance (Thursday), and there is another next Monday. Right now, it doesn't look like we're going to get back to Ohio for Christmas."

Keith Anderson, director of Homework Hangout, wishes his organization had more money and additional staff to better serve the youth who come through his doors.

"I wish we could serve them and give them the time and attention they need," he said. "I would like to expand to a seven-day program, but presently that's not going to happen. Some kids are falling through the cracks."

The program currently runs from 4 to 9 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

State Sen. N. Duane Noland, R-Blue Mound, said he didn't get his first wish an agreement on the Safe Neighborhoods Act. The act, which has 60 provisions, was recently struck down by the Illinois Supreme Court, and Gov. George H. Ryan has called for the legislature back three times to get it re-enacted.

Julie Moore, director of the Chamber of Commerce for Decatur and Macon County, wishes for health and happiness for all.

"Plus, I would like to turn the controversy of the last few months into positive action, which can make this community a better place for all of us," she said.

Moore was referring to the rift with the NAACP over the Chamber supporting the Decatur school board during the explosion issue.

Decatur Mayor Terry Howley wishes everyone good health, happiness and prosperity for

similar wish.

"I wish the city would become more of a community — all members working together to improve the livelihood of all the citizens of Decatur," he said.

Jeanette Norman, president of the Decatur chapter of the NAACP, wishes for everyone to live in harmony and peace.

"I wish everyone would learn to accept the differences in each other and recognize those as assets instead of negatives," she said.

Forsyth Village Administrator Jim Stevens would like a railroad bridge for Christmas.

"I'd really like to see the Illinois Terminal railroad bridge (over Interstate 72, east of the U.S. 51 interchange) get a bike path bridge," he said. "They are threatening to remove it. It would make a great crossing from Forsyth to Decatur."

Stevens said the problem is that no one wants to be responsible for the maintenance.

State Rep. Bill Mitchell wishes everyone good health, happiness and prosperity for



Arndt Holiday trip to Ohio
Moore Happiness for all
Howley All citizens suit together
Norman Everyone live in harmony

the coming year.

"I also wish the state would fix the problems with the child support payments," he said. "I talked to one single mother (Wednesday), and the state is \$20 behind in payments, and her children may not get Christmas."

Gail Crookshank, vice president of institutional development at Richland Community College, wishes that she could encourage everyone who is considering coming back to school to do so.

"I wish we could help everyone with whatever their need is to get them in school — whether it is finances or just a dose of courage," she said. "If there are people out there thinking about starting over, looking for a second chance or thinking about finishing something they started years ago they should take a deep breath and sign up. I will change their lives."

Arcola clubs join forces for families

Bringing holiday happiness to the needy is the mission of the entire community.

By DEBBIE PIERCE

Staff Writer

ARCOLA — No one should do without during the holidays, especially if that person lives in Arcola, say members of Arcola service clubs.

After months of planning, preparation and work, it all boils down to the week before Christmas, when the entire community cooperates to make the holidays bright for everyone.

Firefighters collect toys for needy kids. Elementary and high school students collect canned goods that local Scouts help sort. The Lions Club and other volunteers distribute food baskets on Christmas Eve. And the Arcola Jaycees "do Christmas" for an entire family.

"A lot of people have a happy Christmas because of these combined efforts," said Malcolm Fox, a Lions Club member and superintendent of Arcola schools.

It was four years ago that the 35-member Jaycees decided to take on a charity project of their own. They called it the "One Voice" project.

Members select one family's name from the food basket list the Lions Club compiles. They collect donated canned and dry goods, buy a ham and a turkey, purchase gifts for the family's children and give a cash gift to the parents.

"We try to keep it as anonymous as we can to let them keep their dignity," Hackett said. "But this is a small town, so everybody knows each other. It's kind of hard when the family is one you know, but there's a sense of gladness in knowing you're helping someone."

Louis Turner knows about help from the getting and the giving end. Several years ago, Turner, a member of the Arcola Lions Club, started a Santa Fund to help needy parents buy winter clothing for their children.

"Arcola has been good to me," Turner said. "I came from a poor family. I've been there."

The Santa Fund distributes vouchers to parents, Turner said, "so it looks like it's not charity."

Hackett said the family chosen by the Jaycees "has no idea they're coming. We load up the stuff in a bunch of trucks, call Decatur to make sure they're there, visit take the stuff in, set it down and leave."

Turner said the volunteer group "do it because we love to." He agreed the needy might find it difficult to accept charity from their fellow community members, but "you can't let pride get in the way of taking care of your kids. Charity begins at home."

Hackett said so much food and money was donated last year that Jaycees were able to help two families. "We got a thank-you note from one family one year," he recalled. "You know you're making an impact."