

A4 CENTRAL ILLINOIS Decatur Herald • Saturday, November 13, 1999

## MARCHES: Goetter plans board phone poll

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The seventh board member will get a copy today, she said.

Goetter said the proposal was given to her by state Superintendent Glen McGee and contains "an entirely different request" than was discussed at an emergency meeting of the board on Monday. She did not want to elaborate, but said a January reinstatement of the students is one of the points.

At the emergency meeting, the board voted 5-2 to shorten the expulsions to one year and open the door for the students to enroll in alternative high schools.

Goetter said that after board members have had a chance to study the 10-point proposal, she plans to poll them one by one via telephone to get their reactions and see whether a special board meeting is needed next week.

While city officials were meeting Friday about the Rainbow PUSH march, they received a phone call from Jeffrey L. Berry, the national imperial wizard of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, based in Butler, Ind.

Howley said Berry indicated he plans to arrive in Decatur on Sunday with about 30 members of the KKK, some of whom are from the Macon County area.

During an interview with the Herald & Review Friday, Berry said he is against Jackson's group being involved in the expulsion issue.

"We're going to be there, but we're not coming there for violence," Berry said. "We agree with Jackson on two years being too long (an expulsion) for the students, but they need to leave the school board alone. The politicians need to stop poking their nose in it."

Berry said he had 56 calls from people in the Decatur area asking for the Klan's assistance.

He added that his group would demonstrate away from the Rainbow PUSH march to lessen the chance of confrontation. He said the KKK does not believe the expulsion issue is a racial matter, but that Jackson is trying to make it racial.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights advocacy group in Alabama that monitors KKK groups, lists Berry's group on its Internet site. The center calls Berry's faction one of "the fastest-growing, most aggressive" Klan groups in America today.

While membership has been declining nationwide, Berry's group has grown. The group also is known for its strident use of racist profanity, the center stated.

The last public appearance of a KKK group in Decatur was May 1994, when Arkansas Klansman Thomas Robb held a small rally on the steps of the Macon County Building.

Goetter said the board does not want the

support of any such group.

"I'm sure the Decatur community will tell them to go home," she said. "We don't want people like that in Decatur."

Meanwhile, Rainbow/PUSH officials said their demonstration would be bigger than last Sunday's. Police estimated that 1,200 people marched last week, while coalition members said there were 5,000.

Three Chicago radio stations — WYON, WVAZ and WGCI — have been mobilizing Windy City residents for bus trips to Decatur. Local chapters of the NAACP will participate in the march for the first time.

Mark Allen, field director for Rainbow/PUSH in Chicago, said people across the state want to drive home the point that expulsion is not an effective or fair method to deal with school discipline.

"This thing has really escalated. No one had any idea the impact this would have," Allen said. "We have people calling from Peoria, East St. Louis, Bloomington. This is more than just, let's go see Jesse Jackson."

The Rainbow/PUSH theme for the march is "Save the Dream: Leave No Child Behind." Marchers will start at 2 p.m. at the north side of the Franklin Street overpass and head north on Franklin Water Street (Business U.S. 31), turn west on Grand Avenue and end at MacArthur High School. Those streets will be closed off for at least two hours.

Police Chief Michael Mowen recommended that residents "take the march in stride and allow the marchers to enjoy the event."

Mowen said the streets should be large enough to handle the crowd. He said he has no idea how many people will attend, but he expects the march to be larger than last week's event.

City council member Stockard said she has received many calls from Decatur residents who are interested in marching to support the school district's decision to expel. Her march will start at 2 p.m. at Eldorado Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, heading east on Eldorado to 16th Street.

Stockard has been organizing "Stop the Violence" marches for more than five years. She came out in support of the school board's decision after seeing video footage of the fight in the stands at Eisenhower High School's football field in Sept. 17.

"Our march signifies, No. 1, that we are against violence of any kind and that we support the school board," she said. "We support the school board's decision to expel. We support the school board's decision to expel. We support the school board's decision to expel."

She said her march is not in opposition to Jackson, but she does fear Jackson's celebrity has detracted from attention to the problem of violence in schools.

—H&R Staff Writer Kim Dickson  
contributed to this report

## TEACHERS: Year has been busy for school board

Continued from A1

rounding the Decatur students expelled for fighting and the national and international attention it has drawn. At Stephen Decatur High School, where many of the seminars were held, teachers gave an emotional school board President Jackie Goetter a standing ovation in a passionate show of support.

Joseph Smith, newly appointed principal of Washington School in Decatur, said teachers were now wearing their ribbons to show solidarity with each other, their board and for keeping violence out of the classroom.

"If we don't support each other, I think we are going to have problems," said Smith, 46.

"I think we feel safer with zero tolerance than without it. It sends a message that we are not going to tolerate violence — any violence — and it sends a message that our schools, our students and our teachers are going to be safe. We need to remember that the vast majority of kids are being in school and want to learn, we need to be taking care of them, too."

Tim Waller, a language arts, speech and drama teacher at MacArthur High School, wore his ribbon proudly. "The board has done a fantastic job," he said. "And I can only imagine the stress they must all be under."

The teacher pointed out it has already been a tough year for the school district as a continuing budget crisis — one that spawned a school reorganization plan that includes converting Stephen Decatur High School to a middle school after this school year — strained morale and divided the community.

But Waller said much of that bitterness has been forgotten in the explosion of news coverage and the barrage of outside criticism.

"What's getting lost in all this is that we are still here for the kids, that the kids are our utmost concern, and we, as teachers, are still in there every day working hard."

Tim Waller,  
language arts, speech and drama teacher at MacArthur High School

Decatur schools Superintendent Kenneth Arnold closed Decatur's high schools Monday and Tuesday to avoid a potential confrontation with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who had said he would take the expelled students back to school and risk arrest.

Ann Cholete, coordinator for school health services for the Decatur School District, has seen the stress on the faces of her colleagues. She said students, on the whole, were coping well but teachers, already weighed down by other concerns like school reorganization, are feeling the strain. "It's been a difficult year for teachers," she said.

"And now having to deal with all this after day is making it more difficult."

But, despite the problems, Cholete said support for the school board was rock solid. "Yes, there's a very great deal of support out there for them," she said.

"The board has the responsibility and obligation to carry out this school district's policies, no matter who else might disagree or agree with it, and that's what they've done."

Cholete said that teachers were enjoying the opportunity to relax a little and talk things over at the conference, a point emphasized by Craig Milligan, the regional superintendent of schools.

"An event like this is just what we needed," Milligan said. "It's

## Friday's developments

■ School board President Jackie Goetter said she gave copies of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's 10-point proposal to legal counsel and all but one of the board members. The final board member should receive it today. After they have had time to look the proposals over, Goetter will be calling them one-by-one to solicit reactions. She said it is possible the board could meet the first of the week.

■ Decatur officials acknowledged they are girding for a demonstration by an Indiana faction of the Ku Klux Klan. Jeffrey L. Berry, leader of his American Knights KKK group, told the Herald & Review he plans to demonstrate nonviolently Sunday against the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition's involvement in the Decatur expulsions cases. No location or time for the demonstration has been released.

■ Decatur City Council member Betsy Stockard said she plans to hold a "Stop the Violence" march at 2 p.m. Sunday. Stockard said she has been lobbied to hold such a march.

■ Rainbow/PUSH officials said its march, which will begin at 2 p.m. on the north side of the Franklin Street overpass and proceed to MacArthur High School, will be larger than last week's event, which attracted about 1,200 people, depending on whom you ask.

■ There were no negotiations between the Decatur School District and Rainbow/PUSH.

## What's next

■ The city will make final preparations for the demonstrations today.

■ School officials say they will consider some proposals from Rainbow/PUSH and state Board of Education Superintendent Glenn W. McGee next week.

■ The Chamber of Commerce for Decatur and Macon County has called a press conference for 2 p.m. today in Central Park regarding the issue of the expulsions.

a chance to learn, to relax, to talk with old friends — it's a great stress reliever. Yes, everyone is talking about the Decatur situation, but life goes on. These are professional educators, and they're here to take advantage of this day and enjoy themselves.

Arnold was at the conference and looking a little more relaxed than he has of late. For one thing, he was out of reach of the office telephone, which has been ringing off the hook with more than 70 requests for interviews from as far away as England.

"Everybody wants sound bites, and so now I am giving them a piece of each other," he said with a smile. "I just tell the outside media, 'Why don't you get an unbiased opinion from our local reporters?' and leave it at that."

The Decatur Education Association, the teachers' union, has no official position on the expulsions of the Decatur students, said the association's President Ann Chambliss.

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## A MESSAGE TO MACON COUNTY RURAL RESIDENTS FROM YOUR EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SYSTEM BOARD

The U.S. Postal Service will soon begin mailing new address notification letters before displaying or using your new address. This will help to insure that all emergency service response agencies and the local post offices are ready to provide efficient service using the new addresses.

The Emergency Telephone System Board wishes to thank each of you in advance for your cooperation in using the new property address assigned to you. There is still a lot of work to be done before the new Enhanced 9-1-1 system is ready, but your new 9-1-1 address will allow emergency responders and other services to find you faster and easier right now.

Macon County Emergency Telephone System Board meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first and third Wednesdays of each month in the ETSB Office, 363 S. Main Street, Suite 340, Decatur, Illinois. The meetings are open to the public.

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## CROPS: Some farmers worry about next year

Continued from A1

weeks, but we're still not moving the big, new combines," said Tim Sloan of Sloan's Equipment in Assumption.

Alan Morr at Don Morr Equipment in Oakley said farmers who really need a piece of machinery are buying, but he believes many are still holding back.

"We're fortunate that the crops have been as good as they have here," Morr said.

Dave Perisio, manager at Case-International dealership near Casey in Cumberland County, said they have not seen the same jump in sales there.

"We may see some upturn as more government checks come in, but sales haven't recovered for our dealers in our area," Perisio said.

The USDA is considering an agricultural disaster declaration for 47 counties in the state affected by drought and wind damage. If that declaration is made, farmers could apply for direct aid that is not contingent on how many bushels of crops they raised.

In Springfield Township in Cumberland County, the township board recently held the line on the tax levy for next year with the

plight of farmers in mind, said board member Keith Deters, a hog and grain farmer.

Unfortunately for farmers the drought pattern has persisted, and some farmers have begun verbalizing fears that next year may bring worse.

Ron Marshall, manager at the Fayette County Farm Bureau, said drought conditions were very spotty in his area.

"We had high yields and some very bad areas. It was feast or famine," Marshall said. "Within a mile and a half, drastic difference in crops planted close to the same."