

WRESTLING

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ILLINOIS BICENTENNIAL

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ROB STROUD, JOURNAL GAZETTE & TIMES-COURIER

Mid-Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters volunteer Madalyn Schoonover works with her "little sister" Keshae Cardwell on Valentine's Day crafts Saturday at the Charleston Carnegie Public Library.

Big Brothers Big Sisters provides important bonds

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CHARLESTON — Mid-Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters volunteer Madalyn Schoonover quickly transformed a bare tabletop into a craft area for her "little sister" Saturday afternoon at the Charleston Carnegie Public Library.

Her "little sister," 6-year-old Keshae Cardwell of Charleston, then began turning construction paper into Valentine's Day decorations, some of which will likely be added to their growing binder of past holiday craft projects.

"I have an entire backpack dedicated to craft making that I keep in my car 24-7," said Schoonover, who is a Charleston resident and a sophomore at Eastern Illinois University.

Schoonover said she started volunteering with Mid-Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters in summer 2016 and she has

been paired up as a "big sister" mentor with Keshae ever since then. Schoonover said she tries to get together with Keshae at least once a week, or every other week during busy times with her EIU studies and work.

Keshae, who is a first grader at Carl Sandburg Elementary School, said that she always looks forward to her "big sister" arriving and that they have a lot of fun together.

"I am bored when she does not come get me. I am very, very bored," Keshae lamented.

During the winter, the two of them often work on crafts and school projects at the Charleston library or at Starbucks. Keshae said her favorite Starbucks drink is the strawberry cream frappe.

Schoonover said Keshae prefers to be outdoors when the weather is warm and she particularly enjoys climbing on the monkey bars at Morton Park. She

said Keshae has now advanced to going backwards, skipping bars and hanging upside down on the monkey bars.

"I do like to go to the park, but she can run circles around me," Schoonover said, adding that she makes sure to wear comfortable shoes to keep up with Keshae.

Schoonover said she used to be nervous around young children, but has overcome this nervousness with the help of Keshae. Schoonover said being a Big Brothers Big Sisters volunteer has inspired her to add elementary education to her studies at Eastern, where she is also a public relations major.

Jill Schafer, a match support specialist with Mid-Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters, said this nonprofit organization has a mission to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one mentoring relationships that change their lives for the better. The main of-

ice is located in Charleston and serves children, ages 5-13 years old, primarily in Coles and Effingham counties.

Schafer said Mid-Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters uses adult volunteers, "Bigs," ages 18 and up to provide guidance and support to local children, "Littles." This can be done in a community based setting, like with Schoonover and Keshae, or in a school based setting. Both require a commitment of at least one year.

"Children who have positive role models are more likely to succeed in school and avoid risky behaviors; and it only takes a few hours a month to have a lasting impact on a child in need," Schafer said.

Anyone interested in becoming a mentor can call Mid-Illinois Big Brothers Big Sisters at 217-348-8741. More information about the program can be found at this group's website, www.JoinSomethingBig.org.

White House grappling with fallout from resignation

JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Reeling from the downfall of a senior aide, the White House was on the defensive Sunday, attempting to soften President Donald Trump's comments about the mistreatment of women while rallying around the embattled chief of staff.

Several senior aides fanned out on the morning talk shows to explain how the White House handled the departure of staff secretary Rob Porter, a rising West Wing star who exited after two ex-wives came forward with allegations of spousal abuse. And they tried to clarify the reaction from Trump, who has yet to offer a sympathetic word to the women who said they had been abused.

"The president believes, as he said the other day, you have to consider all sides," said senior counselor Kellyanne Conway. "He has said this in the past about incidents that relate to him as well. At the same time, you have to look at the results. The result is that Rob Porter is no longer the staff secretary."

On Saturday, Trump tweeted that "lives are being shattered and destroyed by a mere allegation. Some are true and some are false." And the day before, he pointed to Porter's assertions of innocence and wished him a great future.

Conway also delivered what she said was a vote of confidence from Trump for chief of staff John Kelly, who has come under fire for his handling of the Porter matter. Kelly initially defended his right-hand man before later offering a version of the week's events that puzzled aides and did not line up with the White House's earlier timeline.

Budget director Mick Mulvaney, among those mentioned as a possible Kelly successor if Trump were to make a change, also downplayed the speculation about Kelly's standing, suggesting those stories "are mostly being fed by people who are unhappy that they have lost access to the president." He said talk of Kelly's departure is "much ado about nothing."

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Lake Land board to hear spring enrollment report

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MATTOON — The Lake Land College Board of Trustees is scheduled to hear a report on student enrollment for the current spring semester during its meeting tonight.

The report provides information on total headcount and full-time equivalent (FTE) credit hour enrollment at the 10th day of the spring semester, as well as related figures for various categories of students and academic courses.

Enrollment at Lake Land has been declining in recent years, a downward trend that Lake Land officials have reported that many other Illinois community colleges are experiencing.

The spring 2017 report showed that Lake Land's total headcount decreased by 4.6 percent to 5,369 students and FTE credit hour enrollment declined by 1.6 percent to 3,204.7 from the previous spring. The fall 2018 report showed that total headcount decreased by 2.8 percent to 4,966 students and credit hour enrollment decreased by 1.9 percent to 3,153.3.

Lake Land has stepped up its marketing and student recruitment programs in an effort to increase enrollment, and the college has seen increases in some categories of students.

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Trump support vital as Congress tackles immigration issue

ALAN FRAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate will open up a rare, open-ended debate on immigration and the fate of the "Dreamer" immigrants on Monday. But the most influential voice in the conversation may be on the other side of Pennsylvania Avenue.

If the aim is to pass a legislative solution soon, President Donald Trump is a crucial and, at times, complicating player. His day-to-day turnabouts on the issues have confounded Democrats and Republicans and led some to urge the White House to minimize his role in the debate for fear he'll say something that undermines the effort.

Yet his ultimate support will be vital if Congress is to overcome elec-

tion-year pressures against compromise. No Senate deal is likely to see the light of day in the more conservative House without the president's blessing and promise to sell compromise to his hard-line base.

Trump, thus far, has balked on that front.

"The Tuesday Trump versus the Thursday Trump, after the base gets to him," is how Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., a proponent of compromise, describes the president and the impact conservative voters and his hard-right advisers have on him. "I don't know how far he'll go, but I do think he'd like to fix it."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., scheduled an initial procedural vote for Monday evening to commence debate. It is expected to

succeed easily, and then the Senate will spend days or weeks — no one knows how long — sorting through proposals.

Democrats and some Republicans say they want to help the "Dreamers," young immigrants who have lived in the U.S. illegally since they were children and have only temporarily been protected from deportation by an Obama-era program. Trump has said he wants to aid them and has even proposed a path to citizenship for 1.8 million, but in exchange wants \$25 billion for his proposed U.S.-Mexico border wall plus significant curbs to legal immigration.

McConnell agreed to the open-ended debate, a Senate rarity in recent years, after Democrats forced a government shutdown last month and would supply enough votes to reopen agencies

with a promise of a debate and votes on immigration. They'd initially demanded a deal toward helping Dreamers, not a simple promise of votes.

What's certain is that to prevail, any plan will need 60 votes, meaning substantial support from both parties is mandatory. Republicans control the chamber 51-49 but GOP Sen. John McCain of Arizona has been home for weeks battling brain cancer.

It's unclear who will offer what. Some version of Trump's plan and a bipartisan proposal to give Dreamers a chance at citizenship — with no border security money or legal immigration restrictions — seem likely to surface. Both are considered certain to fail.

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