

## GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Okaw Valley faces Central A&M for region title **SPORTS, PAGE B1**

## THEFT SENTENCING

Woman accused of stealing from Walmart three times in one week sentenced to prison **LOCAL, PAGE A3**



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**KEVIN KILHOFFER, JOURNAL GAZETTE & TIMES-COURIER**

School resource officer Shane West pictured outside Mattoon Middle School in Mattoon on Thursday.

# West serving as additional school resource officer

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**MATTOON** — Shane West has started transitioning into his role as the second school resource officer on duty on Mattoon school district campuses.

West, who has served nearly 20 years as a patrolman with the Mattoon Police Department, recently began working part time as a school resource officer and he is scheduled to go full time on March 19.

The new school resource officer has been assigned to focus on Mattoon Middle School, where West will have an office, and on nearby Williams Elementary School. Both sites are located along South Ninth Street, on the east side of town. Kasey Alexander, who has served for six years as a school resource officer, will focus on Mattoon High School and Riddle Elementary School on the west side.

School resource officers, part of a program that began in 1998, are provided by the police department and funded by the school district. They serve in this position during the school year and return to their regular duties during breaks.

West, a Mattoon native, said he looks forward to interacting with students and being a positive role model for them as he maintains a presence on the two school campuses.

“(School resource officers) are basically a bridge for law enforcement to try to steer kids away from the juvenile justice system, while at the same time providing a service to the school district for safety and security,” said Police Chief Jason Taylor.

The police department and the school district established an additional school resource officer position last fall following the Sept. 20 shooting in the high school cafeteria. One student was shot and wounded. Officials have reported that the alleged shooter, also a student, was subdued

by a teacher and then disarmed and arrested by Officer Alexander.

West said he was on patrol with the shift that responded to the shooting, an experience that “opened my eyes” to school security needs. West said this interest led him to apply to serve as a school resource officer when the additional position was created. West said Alexander has been a big help in helping him prepare for serving in this new role.

Chief Taylor said West has been willing to take on a lot of extra duties over the years, including serving as a firearms instructor and as a firing range and armory manager. He said West is ready to work full time as a school resource officer, but his replacement officer in the patrol division will be at the police academy until mid-April.

“(West) is not in the schools full time now because we can’t staff our shifts without him,” Taylor said, adding that the police department has a tight budget and is short staffed.

Middle School Principal Jeremie Smith said he has been pleased to see West already visiting students and staff. Smith said West’s most important role in this post will be to build positive relationships with students at Williams and the middle school. Smith said this will help students see West as a trusted adult they can turn to if they need help in the schools or in the community.

Smith said West also will assist the staff with the school’s conflict resolution program for students and with crisis planning, including for fires or natural disasters. Smith said having an additional school resource officer will ease the work load on Officer Alexander and provide more coverage for the two Ninth Street schools. He thanked the city and school district for making this possible.

“I think it’s a huge statement to our community and our kids that we care about them,” Smith said.

# For US in Syria, end game gets murkier

**ROBERT BURNS**  
AP National Security Writer

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The closer the U.S. gets to its original goal in Syria of defeating the Islamic State group, the murkier its end game. New layers of complexity are descending on a shifting battlefield, as demonstrated by a deadly barrage of American air and artillery strikes on a shadowy attacker.

The Pentagon insists it is keeping its focus on defeating IS, but Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Thursday U.S.-backed fighters in eastern Syria faced a “perplexing” overnight assault by about 300 pro-Syrian government fighters whose nationalities, motives and makeup he could not identify. A number of U.S. military advisers were present alongside local allied forces, and the Americans led a punishing response that other officials said killed about 100 of the assailants.

Mattis asserted the episode was an aberration that should not be seen as an expansion of the U.S. war effort. But Trump administration critics disagreed. The Pentagon boss also dismissed any suggestion that Russia, the Syrian government’s most powerful military ally, had any control over the mysterious attacking force.

“I am gravely concerned that the Trump administration is purposefully stumbling into a broader conflict, without a vote of Congress or clear objectives,” said Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat, who has challenged the legal grounds on which American troops can operate in Syria for post-IS operations.

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# How the market’s turmoil could affect Fed’s rate decisions

**MARTIN CRUTSINGER**  
AP Economics Writer

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Wall Street has thrown a rather sour welcoming party for Jerome Powell.

On Monday, Powell’s very first day as Federal Reserve chairman, the Dow Jones industrial average suffered its worst percentage drop since 2011. The selling has raged on in the days since, fueled partly by fear that higher inflation will lead the Fed to accelerate its interest rates hikes and weaken the economy and the stock market. On Thursday, the Dow plunged over 1,000 points, bringing the index’s losses from its January highs to more than 10 percent.

All of which has left investors wondering what the Fed and its new leader might do now. Have they grown concerned about inflation? Will they step up their rate hikes — or perhaps slow them now in the face of investor anxiety and lower stock prices?

The worry that has seized investors is merely one of the issues Powell faces as he succeeds Janet Yellen as head of the world’s most influential central bank. Before becoming chairman, Powell had indicated he was inclined to follow the cautious stance toward rate hikes that was a hallmark of Yellen’s tenure. Yellen’s Fed kept rates near record lows and bought long-term bonds to lower borrowing rates for consumers and businesses and energize an economy leveled by the 2008 financial crisis.

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# Congress debates budget as shutdown approaches

**ANDREW TAYLOR**  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — With a mid-night government shutdown creeping closer, both Republicans and Democrats grappled with internal party divisions as they tried to push through a massive budget deal Thursday night.

Frustrations mounted — and the risk of a shutdown increased — as GOP Sen. Rand Paul held up voting on the broad measure in hopes of obtaining recorded votes on reversing spending increases.

“I ran for office because I was very critical of President Obama’s trillion-dollar deficits,” the Kentucky senator said. “Now we have Republicans hand in hand with Democrats offering us trillion-dollar deficits. I can’t in all honesty look the other way.”

The No. 2 Democrat in the House, Steny Hoyer of Maryland, said his side would support a brief, 24-hour stop-gap spending bill to stave off a partial agency closure, but Republicans rejected the offer.

The Trump administration, which favored approval of the broad budget

measure, was preparing for a “lapse” in appropriations, an official with the Office of Management and Budget said, commenting only on condition of anonymity. That suggested a short shutdown, if any, less than a month after the three-day interruption last month.

Agencies brought out now-familiar contingency plans. The partial shutdown would essentially force half the federal workforce to stay home, freeze some operations and close some parks and outposts. Services deemed essential would continue, including Social Security payments, the air traffic control system and law enforcement.

Approval in the Senate seemed assured — eventually — but the situation in the House remained dicey. In that chamber, both progressive Democrats and tea party Republicans opposed the measure, which contains roughly \$400 billion in new spending for the Pentagon, domestic agencies, disaster relief and extending a host of health care provisions.

However, House GOP leaders were



**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

In this image from video from Senate Television, Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., speaks on the floor of the Senate Thursday on Capitol Hill in Washington.

confident they had shored up support among conservatives for the measure, which would shower the Pentagon with money but add hundreds of billions of dollars to the nation’s \$20 trillion-plus debt.

House Democratic leaders opposed

the measure — arguing it should resolve the plight of immigrant “Dreamers” who face deportation after being brought to the U.S. illegally as children — but not with all their might.

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