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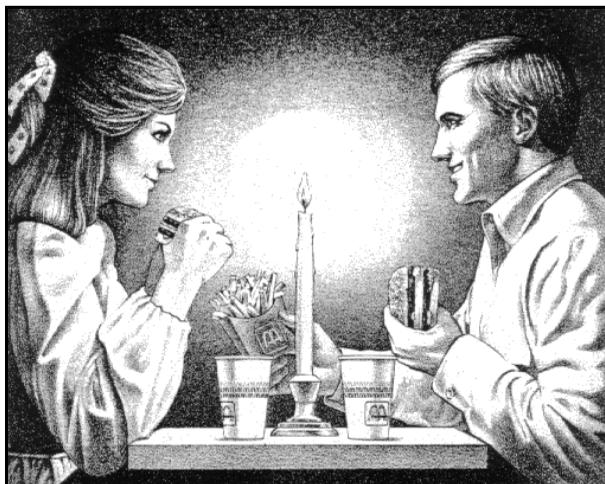
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**Wednesday, Jan. 21 1998**

Hoopeston's only locally-owned daily news publication

**P.O. Box 441, Hoopeston, IL. 60942 www.advancenet.net/~lflorek**

**Roller coaster ride ends as Stokely employees learn plant to close**

Employees of the Stokely USA plant in Hoopeston are still reeling after learning Monday the factory will close.

"It was a surprise to everyone," said plant manager Bill Nicholls. "A lot of us are still in shock."

Friday Canning, a subsidiary of Chiquita Brands, announced Monday that the Hoopeston plant, along with those in Waunakee and Pynette, Wis., will close.

Chiquita acquired Stokely USA in a deal announced Sept. 24, 1997. The deal was on hold until Stokely's board of directors approved it earlier this month.

Twenty-eight full-time employees will be affected at the local plant, while 60 people will be affected by the three closings, according to a Friday Canning news release.

Approximately 250 season employees will be out of work during next season's pumpkin pack.

The announcement ends what Nicholls called a roller

coaster ride that began in 1992, when a fire damaged the plant.

After the fire, Stokely officials were unsure if they

**See STOKELY on other side**

**Express yourself**

Residents who wish to express their opinion of the closing of the Hoopeston Stokely USA plant may reach Chiquita Brands in several ways.

Letters may be sent to Chiquita Brands, 250 E. Fifth St., Cincinnati, Ohio, 45202. The company's telephone number is (513) 784-800. Faxed responses may be sent to (513) 784-8030.

Those who wish to e-mail an opinion may go to the company's web site at [www.chiquita.com](http://www.chiquita.com), which has an e-mail selection.

**City officials vote not to pay portion of paper's legal bills**

Hoopeston officials have refused to pay half the legal bill of a local paper.

In a 5-3 vote Tuesday, the Hoopeston city council voted not to pay nearly \$3,300 to the Hoopeston Chronicle.

The Chronicle had requested the city pay half the legal fees incurred when the paper took the city to court over violations of the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

The act governs when meetings of public bodies may be closed to the public.

A Vermilion County judge ruled last year that the revolving loan committee violated the act when it closed portions of meetings to discuss applicants' personal financial information.

After the ruling, the Chronicle paper \$3,292.25 in legal fees. In a letter to officials, Chronicle publisher Howard Hewitt said failure to pay the amount could result in the paper taking the city back to court for the full amount.

While the judge ruled the city violated the Open Meetings Act, no judgment was issued concerning payment of legal fees.

Under the act, a judge may impose the petitioner's legal fees against the public body, although such action is not mandated.

Aldermen David Borders, John Haughee and Harold Cox voted to pay the fees, while Mark Drollinger, Mike Eckersley, Susan Comstock, Drew Allen and Bill Goodwine voted against payment.



**New Arrivals**

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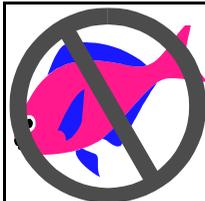
You worked for it, why wait longer than you need to?  
You owe it to yourself to get the highest refund possible, as quickly as possible. So ask about Rapid Refund at a convenient location near you.

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this Friday  
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Hoopeston  
American Legion**



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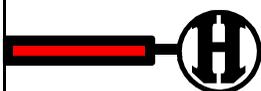
Black Belt Instructors:

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room for new items  
arriving from  
the gift show in Atlanta.**

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KEEPER** Come in and  
see what's new  
**For Keeps**

**Stokely** continued from other side

would rebuild. After the decision was made to repair the facility, Stokely announced it would halt corn-canning there. That order was later rescinded, but was reinstated the following year.

"I guess the only consolation is we know what's going on," Nicholls said. "We can get on with our lives and get going."

Friday Canning officials are expected to talk with local employees Wednesday and Thursday about job opportunities within the company, as well as severance packages, Nicholls said.

Whether employees will transfer to other plants is undecided. "I don't want to leave here," said Nicholls,

who has been at the Hoopeston site for 24 years.

Nicholls said he is unsure why officials decided to close the plant. "It's a numbers game," he said.

Neither Friday nor Chiquita officials toured the Hoopeston plant before making the decision.

"It really ticked me off that nobody came through to see the place," Nicholls said, citing the good condition of buildings and good work force as reasons to keep the plant open. "If there's one thing that makes me mad about this, that's it."

Equipment at the Hoopeston plant will be taken to the company's Princeville, IL. pumpkin-processing plant, Nicholls said.

Closing the plant will take somewhere between one and three months, he added. "I guess we'll bottom the place up and offer the building up for sale," he said.

**Briefly**

**Lists sought**

The Hoopeston Public Library is asking all John Greer High School alumni and all graduates of area schools to consider placing class lists with names at current addresses at the library. The information will be on display in the Illinois Room and also added to the data base.

Anyone interested in forming a John Greer Alumni Association should call the library at (217) 283-6711, fax (217) 283-7077 or e-mail xlou@verm.rurilnet.org.

**Weather warning**

Hoopeston Area school officials ask residents to listen to WHPO for information on school closings. WHPO is contacted before other area media. Residents are asked not to call the schools or radio station.

**DSA Banquet**

The annual Hoopeston Jaycees' Distinguished Service Award Banquet will be held Jan. 23 at the Hoopeston American Legion. Social hour begins at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7.

Tickets are \$10 and are available at the Hoopeston Chamber of Commerce office or from any Jaycee.

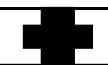
**Sweetheart Dinner**

Reservations are being taken for the Feb. 11 Sweetheart Dinner for senior citizens, sponsored by Hoopeston Area High School. To make reservations, call (217) 283-6668 by Jan. 30.

**Tiny Tots**

"Penguins" is the theme of this week's Tiny Tots story program at 10:30 a.m. Friday in the children's room of the Hoopeston Public Library. The program is open to children ages 1-4 who are accompanied by an adult.

**In the Hospital**



**Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital**

**Jan. 19, 1998**

**Admitted:** Alice Hardwick, Hoopeston.

**Discharged:** Florence McCalla, Earl Gaffney, Ann Martin, Virginia Olson.

**Weather**



Chance of snow today, possibly changing to rain or freezing rain. Accumulation of 1"-3" possible. High 33. Tonight, snow showers. Low 28. Tomorrow, chance of snow. High 34, low 25.

For current weather conditions, call the **Hoopeston Weather Line** at (217) 283-6221.

**Police News**



**Eric Norris** of Hollywood Video reported Tuesday that owners of the business learned no money was missing from a cash register.

Norris had reported Sunday that someone took cash from a register.



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