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Retirement plan gives Hoopeston woman rollercoaster ride

Judi Pierce got to ride a rollercoaster last week and didn't leave Hoopeston to do it.

From laughing during an interview to crying when Officer Ephriam Bolin touched her shoulder, Pierce was on an emotional rollercoaster all week, leading up to her last day Friday.

Pierce is retiring after serving for 30 years as a Hoopeston Police Department dispatcher. She was honored Friday with a retirement open house attended by family, friends and co-workers.

Pierce began her career with the police department in 1973. A new mother, she was scheduled to work one day a week. That turned into two, three and more, so she quit, returning to the job Dec. 31, 1975.

She didn't plan on staying for 30 years. "It just kind of happened," she said.

When Pierce started, dispatchers had one phone to take police calls, a red phone for the fire department, a box with a toggle switch to talk to officers in the cars and a typewriter to make the police log.

That is a far cry from the multi-line phone, four computer stations and myriad buttons to talk to not only police and fire personnel but also ambulance crews and Vermilion County Sheriff's Department. "It's expanding all the time with everything," she said.

Over the years, several incidents stand out in Pierce's mind, all frightening. The first occurred when a man shot himself while on the phone with her. The second was when she was at home and heard on the scanner that an officer had been shot while on duty.

The third hit close to home when, while working, she received a call about an accident. "It was the only time I ever asked who was in a wreck and it was my son," she said. "I swear that's the only time I ever asked." Darrin, her son, was involved in a motorcycle accident and had broken his foot in three places, she said.



Judi Pierce, right, gets a hug from Jean Griner at Pierce's retirement open house Friday.

"That's the stuff that sticks in your mind more than the good stuff," she said.

It's not that there hasn't been any good stuff. "There was good people that came in here," she said, adding that helping people, whether they were in trouble or needed medical help, was a bright spot of the job.

It is the people Pierce will remember most from her job. "Everybody that's here working came in after I did," she said. "To me, this is just a second family."

With some co-workers, like Brenda Gaither, the rela-

See RETIREMENT on other side



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— Briefly —

Support group to meet

The Caregiver Support Group will meet at 2 p.m. Thursday at Hoopeston Nursing Home community room. Caregivers are encouraged to share their feelings or listen to ideas others have used. Friends and family of caregivers are also invited. Refreshments will be served. Those receiving care may attend or take part in nursing home activities. To make arrangements, call Tanya McVicker, 283-8247.



Hoopeston Lions Club
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Rossville working with residents on gas bills; residents may see slight decrease in gas rate

ROSSVILLE—Soaring gas prices are hurting village residents’ budgets—and that of the village, as well.

At Monday’s regular board meeting, Collector Chris Pearson said village utility accounts receivable total more than \$93,552, primarily from unpaid gas bills.

The village is the gas provider for residents there.

“We’re trying to avoid shutting people off as much as possible,” said Mayor Terry Prillaman. While some residents have made arrangements to pay in installments, with a credit card or in another manner, others “blow us off,” he said.

So far, only two residents have been shut off for lack

of payment. Under village guidelines, to be reconnected, residents must pay the amount owed plus a \$25 recon-nect fee.

The good news is that the gas price may drop for Janu-ary, payable in February. The current price of \$1.25 may decrease two or three cents, said Trustee Scott Sprague, gas committee chairman. The final figure will not be known until the end of the month.

Last month, the village’s gas supplier increased the rate by 13 cents at the end of December, causing the village to raise the price.

While the price per therm may go down, Sprague said an increase is predicted for March.

In unrelated action, trustees:

- Learned ConAgra will pay to have sanitary sewer lines videotaped quarterly to try to eliminate problems in the lines.

- Approved an increase in the aggregate value of raffle tickets, to \$250,000. A request to increase the raffle li-cense fee to \$25 did not pass. However, ordinance word-ing will be changed so that the current fee of \$10 will be paid per event.

- Approved a Fair Housing ordinance.

- Tabled action on changing the amount of purchase or-ders after trustees could not agree on the need for them.

- Heard from resident Bill Smock about drainage in his yard. The village will work with him to fix the problem, Prillaman said.

Obituaries

ANDERSON - August “Pete” Anderson, 86, of Mil-ford died at 9:17 p.m. Saturday Jan. 14, 2006 at Iroquois Memorial Hospital, Watseka. Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Wednesday at Milford Christian Church. Burial, with military rites, will be in Maple Grove Cemetery, Milford. Visitation was 4-7 p.m. Tuesday and will be one hour before services Wednesday at the church. Me-morials are suggested to Milford Christian Church or Prairie States Christian Service Camp. Knapp Funeral Home, Milford, was in charge of arrangements.

Retirement continued from other side

tionship goes back a ways. The two have been friends since they were 11 years old. “We had our differences but we got through them,” she said.”

Others, like the new officers, have only recently come into her life but feel like long-time members of her fam-ily.

Besides her job, Pierce is also giving up her position as treasurer of the Hoopeston Area Sports Boosters. An avid Cornjerker fan, Pierce has been a regular attendee at sporting events, especially those involving her grand-children.

In leaving the department, Pierce plans to spend more time visiting her children. Besides Darrin, who lives in Pontiac, the couple has four other children: Lisa of Cali-fornia, Misti Kaag of Hoopeston, Amber Cramer of Watseka and Mandy Tinch-er of Robinson.

She is also a proud grandmother of nine, including

Police News

A 15-year-old girl reported Monday that someone took her 20: blue Mongoose bicycle from the 300 block of East Seminary.

Craig D. Page, 44, of 820 N. Eighth Ave., was ar-rested at 5:26 a.m. Tuesday in the 200 block of North Fourth St.

Page was charged with aggravated stalking and viola-tion of order of protection on a complaint from a 45-year-old Hoopeston woman.

Katie Kaag of Florida, Courtney Lane of Decatur, Kali Lane of Bloomington; Afton and Darin Pierce II of Pontiac; Keri Kaag of Hoopeston; Tavor and Troy Tinch-er of Robinson and Summer Cramer of Watseka.

She also hopes to travel with her husband, Danny, to Arizona, to the Redwood Forest and “just enjoy life.

“I’m really going to miss all the people,” she said. “I know that. It’s going to be hard. After 30 years, I think I’m going to miss everything, good or bad. I think I’ll miss it all.”

Weather

Breezy today. High 37. Tonight, partly cloudy. Low 29. Tomorrow, partly cloudy. High 48, low 37.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston Weather Service, (217) 283-6221.

He was taken to the Public Safety Building in Danville to await arraignment.

Classifieds

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hoopeston Auxiliary Police is now accepting applications. Ap-plicants must be 21 years of age. Applications available at Hoo-peston Police Dept., 301 W. Main, anytime.

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