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Miss America Organization bans Sweetheart participation

First runners-up of state scholarship pageants will have to forego the National Sweetheart Pageant if they want to stay in the Miss America system.

National Sweetheart Pageant officials learned Friday that the Miss America Organization (MAO) has prohibited anyone affiliated with its program - as contestants, judges, emcee or staff - from participating in the local pageant.

Miss America notified state pageant executive directors, who in turn notified local pageant organizers and volunteers.

Local officials have not had discussions with MAO America officials to learn why the change has been made, said Callie Lankford, 2016 National Sweetcorn Festival chairman and 2009 Miss Hoopeston. "We are fervently hoping that we can begin an open dialog with MAO in the coming days and weeks to learn more," she said.

Lankford just unveiled her festival logo, "Living the Sweet Life Sweetcorn and Sweethearts," at the Hoopeston Community Awards ceremony held February 7.

News of the change hit social media like a storm over the weekend. Taking to Facebook, Michelle Crabtree, who, with her husband, Cliff, are executive directors of the Sweetheart pageant, wrote on the National Sweetheart Pageant page about the emotions involved with contestants over the years, the distinguished judges who have served the pageant and thanked state executive directors for allowing their contestants to visit Hoopeston.

For their part, former contestants, and those who weren't, expressed displeasure at the decision. Most cited the experience they gained from the Sweetheart pageant, some saying it was especially useful for young women from smaller states where pageant experience was less available. Young women from across the country re-

ferred to the decision as "sad," and "short-sighted" and vowed to try to get the decision overturned.

Though not an official part of the Miss America program, the National Sweetheart Pageant has, for many years, been a stepping stone for young women pursuing the Miss America crown.

Attracting first runners up from state pageants across the country, the National Sweetheart Pageant boasts five Sweethearts who went on to become Miss America, with back-to-back winners in 1992 and 1993, as well as 1982, 1990 and 1997. In addition, four other contestants went on to win the coveted crown in 1970, 1974, 2002 and 2010.

It is unclear how MAO's decision will affect this year's National Sweetcorn Festival. Acknowledging the large role the pageant plays in the total festival, Lankford said the Hoopeston Jaycees, festival sponsors, "are committed to pursuing options that will maintain the integrity and tradition this pageant has cultivated over the years.

"The The National Sweetheart Pageant has allowed countless visitors from across the country to visit our little corner of the world here in Hoopeston, and support our local businesses as well as our Jaycees chapter and festival as a whole. We have received many messages of support since this news has broken, and I know that we will find a way to continue making a difference not only in our community through the festival, but on a national scale as well," she said.

As the Jaycees explore their options, Lankford said the group will communicate with Hoopeston of any plans of action that need support. "We know that the National Sweetheart Pageant has not only touched our chapter, but so many community members who volunteer throughout the week," she said.

See PAGEANT on other side

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SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 2016

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Hosted by Treasured Roots Flower Shop

Meet with local vendors to style your upcoming prom!
 Tuxes, Dresses, Hairstylists, Nails, Spray Tanning, Jewelry, Photography, Limo Service, Corsages, Boutonnieres & more!

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 February 28-March 5
 Get tips at
www.weather.gov/ilx/severe-prep
 Public Service Announcement

Briefly

At the Library

- Legos Club, for kids in grades K-6, will meet from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Thursday.
- Coffee and Coloring for adults will be held at 10 a.m. Monday, March 7. Supplies available or bring your own. For information, call (217) 283-6711.

WMD winners

February winners in the Women Making a Difference drawing are Nat Sweeney, \$50; Pat Lange, \$30; and Mary Ann Bertram, \$20.

Coaches sought

Hoopeston Hornets is looking for coaches. Applications are available at Razor's Edge until the end of March.

Early signup for football players and cheerleaders will be held at the WHPO Expo, April 2-3. Fees are due at signup.

VFW seeks members

Are you a veteran of a foreign war? Buddy Egnew Post 4826 wants you to join! Stop in and talk to any member on how to join and what the VFW can do for you, or call (217) 283-5025.

HIRING FAIR

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From the Blotter

Public Safety Building in Danville.

No tickets or injuries were reported in an accident at 8:39 p.m. Thursday at Silgan Containers in the 200 block of West Main.

Police said Brent Prochnow, of Colfax, Wis., backed a 2000 Peterbilt into a parked 2012 Ford Focus, owned by Lucinda Overlander, of Hoopeston.

Lunch Menus

Hoopeston Area Grade Schools

MONDAY: Chicken patty/bun, corn, applesauce, Tropical Twist juice, milk

TUESDAY: Sausage pizza, salad, baby carrots, peaches milk

WEDNESDAY: Country fried steak, mashed potatoes, celery sticks, pears, bread, butter, milk

THURSDAY: Beefy fiestada, refried beans, chips & salsa, salad, pineapple, milk

FRIDAY: Hamburger/bun fries, cucumber slices, mixed fruit, milk

Hoopeston Area Middle/High Schools

MONDAY: Chicken wrap or ham & cheese, salad bar, corn, applesauce, milk, juice

TUESDAY: Pork roast or Hot Pocket, mashed potatoes, green beans, pineapple, milk, juice

WEDNESDAY: Ravioli or BBQ rib, Max Stick, salad bar, pears, milk, juice

Pageant continued from other side

Lankford thanked the community for its support of the festival and pageant. "Thank You, Hoopeston," she said. "Thank you for loving and supporting our chapter, the National Sweetcorn Festival, and the National Sweetheart Pageant. You are why we do what we do. You are why we will continue to make a difference in this community and across the country in any way possible."

When Hoopeston's pageant began, it was a local affair, with local judges selecting a local girl to be the Sweetcorn Queen. In 1941, the inclusion of girls from neighboring canning states necessitated changing the name to the National Sweetcorn Festival and Miss Sweetcorn became the National Sweetheart.

A contest for first runners-up from MAO-affiliated state pageants began in 1952. It was then that judges

THURSDAY: Grilled cheese or cheeseburger, soup, salad bar, peaches, milk, juice

FRIDAY: Pizza or fish sandwich, salad bar, mixed fruit, milk, juice

Fire Calls

Hoopeston Fire Department was called at 12:59 p.m. Friday to the 900 block of Wilson for the smell of something burning, possible due to a possible electrical short or fire in a wall. Firemen determined the cause to be a faulty furnace. No injuries were reported.

Firemen were called at 1:10 p.m. Friday to the 800 block of East McCracken for an activated carbon monoxide detector that kept going off. The detector and home were checked out. There were no reports of illness at the time of the call.

from Miss America system began critiquing contestants in swimsuit, evening gown and talent, similar to the Miss America pageant.

What the future will hold for the pageant is uncertain. A predominant suggestion made online by those with experience with MAO state pageants is to shift the focus from first runners-up to those who have aged out of the Miss America system.

Miss America officials, contacted for information about the decision, did not respond before press time.

Weather

Mostly sunny, breezy today. High 55. Tonight, cloudy, chance of rain. Low 37. Tomorrow, rain likely. High 42, low 21.

Tonya Edwards, 39, of Hoopeston, was cited for a nuisance animal after a dog allegedly owned by her was running at large at 9 a.m. Friday in the 900 block of East Young. Edwards was mailed a notice to appear in Hoopeston City Court.

Obituaries

REYNOLDS - Sharon Kay (Craig) Reynolds, 73, of Hoopeston, died at 10:15 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2016, at Heritage Health, Hoopeston. She will be cremated. Visitation will be 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at Antioch Church of Christ, Rossville. Memorial service will begin at 1 p.m. at the church. Burial will be at a later date. Memorials are suggested to the church, 37604N. 1900 East Rd., Rossville IL 60963.

Express Employment Professionals is now accepting applications for the following positions in the Hoopeston area:

**Machine Operators Forklift Warehouse
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Please contact **Kevin Nelson, 217-283-7771 ex. 236** to schedule your appointment.

Classifieds

HELP WANTED

Social Service agency in Hoopeston, IL has immediate opening for the position of Executive Director. Qualifications include experience in program management including youth and senior programs, supervision of staff, fundraising, grant writing, and an Associate's Degree or more is preferred. Salary is commensurate with experience. Send resume and cover letter to the Hoopeston Multi Agency, c/o Wade Meranda, 206 S. First, Hoopeston, IL 60942 by March 1, 2016.

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