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Superintendent reviews security measures for student safety

Key changes to improve student safety were implemented in Hoopeston Area schools during the last school year, Supt. Suzzette Hesser reported at Thursday's district board meeting.

First, all staff were trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid and trauma-informed practices. "We know that strong, caring, trauma-informed relationships with our students and their families are central to a positive school climate and school safety," Hesser said in her monthly report.

This study will continue in the new school year with online trauma-informed academy modules, followed in 2019-20 by a district-wide book study of the same author, she said.

Another step started with sending five faculty members to become certified ALICE (Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate) training. In turn, those staff and Hoopeston Police Department trained all district staff. Hoopeston Area is now an ALICE-certified organization and will continue regular training.

The district crisis plan was also revised, to combine each school's plan into one district crisis plan that is in line with model plans around the state. Before the plan was finalized, district personnel sought feedback from area first responders and implemented suggestions, including to update handheld radios so administrators and key staff may communicate within buildings and

See SECURITY on other side

Health officials refute bacterial meningitis reports in county

DANVILLE – The Vermilion County Health Department and local hospitals are collaborating to alleviate public concern after receiving several unsubstantiated reports of bacterial meningitis in the county.

"Currently we are aware of two patients from Vermilion County who are being treated for viral meningitis, and two other suspected, who are awaiting confirmation from the lab," said Douglas Toole, department Public Health Administrator.

Viral meningitis is generally more common but not as serious as bacterial meningitis. People with viral meningitis appear acutely ill and are uncomfortable – commonly experiencing headaches, stiff necks and low-grade fever -- but most people recover within a few days.

Viral meningitis is one of most common types of meningitis. Any age can be affected by it, but young children and those with compromised immune systems are the most susceptible. While it is important to seek medical care when experiencing fever, headache and a stiff neck, patients usually gets better on their own with rest and hydration.

Toole said health officials are not aware of any cases of

the more serious, contagious strains of bacterial meningitis – such as Neisseria meningitidis – in Vermilion County.

Those strains of bacterial meningitis can initially involve the same symptoms as viral meningitis, but can progress to include permanent disabilities such as brain damage and hearing loss, and can be life-threatening.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, between 10 and 25 cases of meningococcal disease (causes by the bacterium Neisseria meningitidis) are reported in Illinois each year. The last time a Vermilion County patient was reported to have that strain was 2011. Simple precautions can reduce the risk of contracting meningitis.

Toole suggested that the best method of prevention is the meningitis vaccine. Most children receive an initial vaccine at 11, and a booster shot at 16, so check shot records and contact health care providers and health departments with questions about the vaccine.

In addition, people should practice good handwashing, avoid sharing utensils and drinks, cover coughs and sneezes, and stay home when sick to avoid spreading diseases.

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Security continued from other side

throughout the district in case of a crisis.

Finally, she said, Hoopeston Area is adding two apps to enhance security next year. The first is Crisis Go, which provides staff mobile access to the district crisis plan; alert signals in crises; the ability to share information in a crisis; and methods for reporting student attendance in the event of an evacuation.

The second app, Stop It! Is an anonymous reporting system that allows students and families to report safety concerns directly to administration. Completely anonymous, users may attach screenshots, pictures and videos while also having the option for a secure chat with administration, she said.

“At Hoopeston Area, we understand that safety and security is our number one priority,” Hesser said. “As we serve our students, families and entire community, we welcome feedback and conversation regarding our ongoing efforts to continually improve safety and security at Hoopeston Area.”

Several personnel changes were approved by the board, most in 6-0 votes, with member Chris Small absent. They include:

- Moving Emily Carter from John Greer classroom/

- paraprofessional to the school’s secretary. She will replace Dana Knoll, who retired.
- Naming Wade Clemmons as building and grounds supervisor, effective July 1. Formerly Maple custodian, he replaces Curt Spaur, who retired.
- Hiring Carolyn Lander as Maple special education paraprofessional starting August 16.
- Moving Tina Jackson from John Greer personal aide to John Greer classroom paraprofessional.
- Approving the retirement of Stephen Mastin, John Greer custodian, effective August 17.
- Approving Marc Campbell’s resignation as high school principal, effective June 30. “Being part of Hoopeston Area this year has really been a pleasure,” Campbell told the board, adding he had good support from board members, fellow principals and staff who “should be commended for how hardworking they are.”
- Approving Michelle White and John Klaber’s resignations as high school and middle school student support services coordinators, respectively. White was

named middle school principal and Klaber was named high school principal earlier this month.

- Approving Bryan Brown’s resignation as fifth grade teacher and fifth grade boys basketball coach. Ryan Jones was hired as the new fifth grade PE teacher.
- Approving Patrick Brooks’ resignation as high/middle school band director. Steven Kurk was hired in the position.
- Approving Wendy Ochs as high school ag teacher.
- Approving Rachel Zick’s resignation as John Greer fifth grade teacher/library coordinator.
- Hiring Jennifer Gaddis as fifth grade teacher.
- Approving the resignation of fifth grade teacher Kristin Powell. Jayde Gress was hired as a fifth grade teacher.
- Hiring Jennifer Robinson as John Greer special education teacher.
- Approving resignations of Hannah Duke, middle school boys track coach; Janna Fesser, middle school girls track coach; and Jeff Alexander, high school assistant baseball coach.

- Transferring Kevin Root from high school assistant soccer coach to head coach.
- Hiring Jena Schaumburg as John Greer library coordinator. Board President Mark Schaumburg abstained on the vote.
- Approving Brook Walsh’s move from sixth grade girls basketball coach to high school assistant girls basketball coach; hiring Ross Bryll as sixth grade girls basketball coach; Tom Sage as high school assistant golf coach; and Nate Allison as high school assistant soccer coach.
- Named Mark Eighner as district treasurer, a position he has held since 2014.

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Hoopeston man sentenced to 20 years for 2016 shooting death

A 33-year-old Hoopeston man was sentenced to 20 years in prison in the 2016 shooting a Danville woman at the Fair Oaks housing complex in Danville.

Johnnie Lee Sampson Jr. was sentenced after pleading guilty to second-degree murder in the August 5, 2016 shooting death of Mary Thompson, 30, of Danville.

Sampson must serve 50 percent of that sentence and 85 percent of a five-year sentence handed down after he pleaded guilty to aggravated discharge of a firearm

from the same incident.

Ms. Thompson was shot in the head at about 9:40 p.m. as she drove into Fair Oaks for a visit.

Sampson was arrested August 15, 2016 at his home in the 1200 block of Daisy Lane, originally charged with four counts of first-degree murder. He was held on \$1 million in the woman’s death and will receive credit for time served in the county jail.

Sampson was set to face a jury on June 18 prior to pleading guilty to the charges.

From the Blotter

A 61-year-old Florida woman filed a criminal damage to property report at 2:05 p.m. Thursday. Officers discovered damage to the home in the 300 block of West Chestnut, estimated at more than \$500.

Amanda Roberts, 25, of Hoopeston, was arrested after a traffic stop at 12:35 a.m. Saturday at West Penn and First Ave. She was charged with driving while license revoked and released on a notice to appear in Vermilion County traffic court.

Police are investigating a hit-and-run accident reported at 10:35 a.m. Saturday in the 200 block of East Lincoln. Police said an unknown vehicle hit a parked 2017

Honda owned by Steven E. Hupp, of Des Plaines.

Brian Kinnaird, 37, of Hoopeston, was ticketed for restriction for burning trash after police were called at 5:03 p.m. Saturday in the 700 block of East Thompson.

Hoopeston Fire Department responded to put out the fire.

Weather

Partly sunny then chance of thunderstorms today, tonight. High 82, low 69. Tomorrow, chance of storms. High 84, low 71.

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