



Your Award Winning Hometown Newspaper

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Home in time for Christmas

Briefly -

Columbus Junction State Bank to celebrate 85 years

The Columbus Junction State Bank will be celebrating their 85th Anniversary on Friday, January 6th with an open house. Refreshments will be served. The public is invited to come and help us celebrate our anniversary.

FCCLA requests addresses of active service personnel

FCCLA is looking for active servicemen's addresses as a service project. The FCCLA would like to make up packages to send to area soldiers who are in active duty. If you know someone please contact Lois Mincks, FCCLA Advisor, at Lois.Mincks@columbuscd.org or 319-728-2231 ext. 3332 with their name and address. We will try to get packages to send for Valentine's Day.

School Board to meet

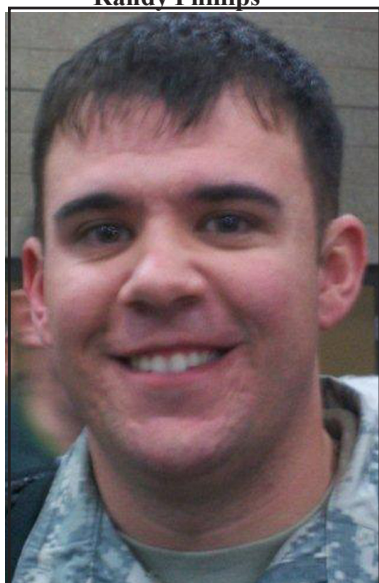
The Board of Education for Columbus Community School District will hold a public meeting on Wednesday, January 4, 2012, at 5:30 PM.

Gazette New Years Deadline

Due to the New Years Holiday, the Gazette deadline for news and advertising will be Noon on Friday/



Randy Phillips



Tyler Travis

With the recent return of our troops from Iraq, a wonderful Columbus Junction Homecoming was held last week in Middletown. Two of our local young soldiers, Randy Phillips, son of Jeff and Jane Phillips, and Tyler Travis, son of Eric and Tina Travis arrived home from their tour of duty in Iraq.



Pictured in the top photo are the Phillips Family awaiting Randy's arrival and in the lower photo are the Travis Family awaiting Tyler's arrival.

It is great to have our young service personnel returning home. The Gazette offers our wishes for a safe trip to all of our service men and women who are returning home, and our prayers for the safety of those who are still overseas. Photos from Earlene Lekwa.

New Teacher makes a difference

By Mary Masonholder Wilson

Mr. Eric Field, new teacher at Columbus Community High School, replaced a teacher who had been there for thirty-four years and already he is making a difference. One noticeable change is in the Advanced Performance Speech Class.

Mr. Field has started the students going to National Forensic Speech debate contests with other schools. So far they have competed at Davenport West High School and Oskaloosa High. According to Field, the students did quite well. "It was a David and Goliath situation with our small school against some very large schools. We beat Dubuque Hempstead and Pleasant Valley." This is quite a feat for a small school, especially in its first year.

Students on the Lincoln-Douglas debate team were Alex Llamas, Kallie Gartzke, and Erin Rush. Students on the Public Forum Debate team were Sarah Ramirez, Becca Duttlinger, Dakota Wood, Robert Wood, Natalina Sents, Ashley Stagner, Andrea Meza, Delaney Howell, Dalton Howell, Adrian Ramos, and Luis Jaramillo.

Mr. Field also explained that debate takes a lot of travel. Many tournaments are in Des Moines. Next semester there will be some closer tournaments in Iowa City. He also would like to get some contests going with more local schools. He has already talked to the debate coach at Muscatine High and that looks like a possibility for the future.

Mr. Field wants to make sure his program compliments that of the Iowa High School Speech Association, which is another division of competitive speech in which Columbus competes. Second semester he will concentrate on this area, especially preparing for individual contest.

Another area Mr. Field has made a difference is Student Council. Mr. Field took over this student organization this year. He has made many changes, however one of them is that he has had the group do more fundraising. He is unsure of the goal of the money. However, he does want to take some of the leaders of Student Council to a meeting in Chicago of the National Association of Student Councils. He wants these students to learn skills that will not only impact our school, but also our community.



Eric Field making a difference in his classroom

Some of the Fundraisers have been a Haunted School in the fall which brought in \$60, and there were various money-making activities at homecoming. This Christmas season a Candy Cane delivery purchased for friends in junior and senior high netted \$45. Then on Tuesday, December 21, a volunteer group went to Barnes and Nobel in Iowa City after school to wrap packages for the store. Some of the students got tips, and this venture brought in \$73.

Two students commented on this experience. Dylan Perez said, "I think it was fun. It was a good way to learn to wrap presents, and I didn't know how." Magally Soloria responded, "It really made me feel like Christmas time, watching people buy presents."

Both felt it was a good time. Mr. Eric Field concluded, "This year is a learning year for student council because we are doing it differently. I think overall the students are learning to be good leaders. Everyone is expected to help, not just the 'execs.' This way no one gets burned out. This kind of experience also speaks volumes on their resumes."

New teachers bring new ideas. These are definitely ideas that will benefit the Columbus students.

Less than one month remains to apply for Conservation Stewardship Program

Center for Rural Affairs Offers Farm Bill Help Line to Assist Producers

USDA's National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently announced that the deadline for producer applications for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) will be January 13, 2012.

While CSP is a continuous sign-up program and producers can apply to enroll at any time of the year, NRCS applies a cut-off date for applications to be considered during a particular fiscal year. Once the cut-off date is past, producers may continue to apply for the program, but they will not be considered for entry until the spring of the following year, in this case spring of 2013. In order to enroll in 2012 applications must be filed by January 13.

The Conservation Stewardship Program is a voluntary stewardship incentives program, administered by USDA's NRCS, designed to reward farmers, ranchers, and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation, as well as for the adoption of additional conservation measures

that provide multiple environmental benefits that run beyond the farm or ranch. This program pays producers for clean water, better soil management, improved habitat, energy efficiency, and other natural resource benefits.

"The ranking cutoff leaves NRCS with less than a month (during the busy holiday season) to publicize the program and conduct outreach through its state and local offices," said Traci Bruckner, Assistant Director of Rural Policy at the Center for Rural Affairs. "We hope that this will be enough time for NRCS and partners to reach out to producers."

CSP is one of the most popular conservation programs. In 2010 alone, nearly 21,000 applicants enrolled in CSP, putting additional conservation on 25.2 million acres, about the size of the state of Kentucky. Farmers and ranchers interested in applying should contact their local NRCS office as soon as possible to meet the deadline.

To sign up, producers should visit their NRCS local service center (<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locat>

tor/app?agency=nrcs).

Bruckner is encouraging farmers, ranchers and others to call the Center for Rural Affairs' Farm Bill Helpline with questions about the application process and to share their experiences, both positive and negative. "We know the previous sign-ups have yielded some great success stories for farmers and ranchers, but also some disappointments and frustrations."

"We want this program to work for all farmers and ranchers employing conservation-based farming systems, and firmly believe the CSP is a step in the right direction for policy to financially reward historical commitments to conservation, as well as encourage further adoption," Bruckner continued. "This is a far better approach than paying to clean-up problems."

Bruckner commented that it would be most useful for producers to have specific information available when they call, including a complete copy of their application materials, and more specifically the Conserva-

tion Measurement Tool responses and ranking information for their state or ranking area. The NRCS office will provide only a summary, unless specifically asked for a complete print out that includes their ranking information, the highest scores in their state or area, and how far down the ranking list NRCS was able to provide contracts before the money ran out for the last sign-up period. "One of the main goals for our Farm Bill Helpline is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of programs such as the CSP," said Bruckner. "It is only with that information that we are able to push for any needed changes and improvements."

Producers can also receive guidance for applying for other conservation programs. "Through our helpline you will speak to someone who is knowledgeable about the program rules to help you understand how to participate in the program," Bruckner added. Producers can call (402) 687-2100 and ask for the Farm Bill Helpline or send an email to tracib@cfra.org.

To all of our readers: Please have a very Safe, Prosperous, and Happy New Years 2012