

Bypassers brake for bovine brouhaha

■ Most cattle moo(ved) safely

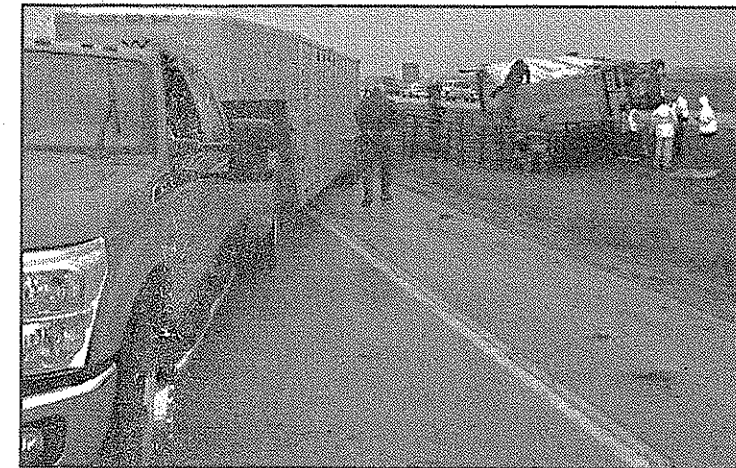
A semi trailer driver was charged with failure to reduce speed to avoid an accident and failure to wear a seatbelt in an early morning accident on May 15 that loosed cows onto the highway. The driver, James Brown of Rome, Ga., took a curve too fast, ran off the road and overturned in the median around mile marker 13 on I-39 between El Paso and Kappa shortly after 2 a.m. last Thursday.

Traffic was delayed because 35 cattle ended up on the interstate and median. I-39 between El Paso and Kappa was closed for about 6 hours southbound and about 7 hours northbound, and traffic was redirected to 251 until about 9 a.m.

A dozen cows had to be euthenized after the accident. The semi held 122 head of cattle.

In addition to causing traffic delays, the cows caused several small accidents before police were able to close all four lanes of I-39. No people were injured in the original or subsequent accidents.

Farmers and first responders answered the call for help as several arrived with trucks to move more than six score cows from the scene. Responders included the El Paso Police Department, El Paso and Minonk firemen, Woodford County Sheriff's Department, Illinois State Police and the Illinois Department of Transportation; all earned some experience in herding cows that morning.



Local farmers, ESDA, State Police, El Paso Police and El Paso firemen all pitched in to help move 122 cows off I-39 after a semi trailer overturned at about 2 a.m. Thursday, May 14. Above, Brent Henkel's truck is backed up to load cows as Dan Hinshaw heads toward the overturned semi. *Courtesy photo*

Writin' Titans shows promise

■ Coaches lead 250 sessions in first year of new program

by Jennie Kearney
El Paso Journal

The El Paso-Gridley School Board learned more about the Writin' Titans program at the April School Board meeting. Junior high English teacher Brian Barton developed the Writin' Titans program and piloted it this year. The program is unique to EPGJH. Although many colleges and some high schools have writing centers, EPG is the first district in Illinois to have developed a junior high writing center.

Corbin Heiken, Paige Mattson and Grace Vinson – all student coaches in the program – helped present the information, and Barton played a YouTube video that was created by the students to promote the program in a fun way. "Ella Blair is a whiz on the iPad, and so she took the lead on that," Barton said.

One of the goals of the program has been to correct the perception that only struggling students need help improving their writing.

"We say actually that only smart kids use this, because if you're smart you know it's a good idea to have someone else look over your work," Vinson said.

There are 22 junior high students who assist others from sixth-eighth grade with writing projects.

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Memorial Day services Monday

American Legion Commander Charles Burton is looking for a few good men ... or women, or children. In fact he'll take any help he can get for a few days. The American Legion, with help from the VFW, will erect the Avenue of Flags on Memorial Day weekend.

The larger American flags will be placed on poles at 8 a.m. Saturday, May 24, at the VFW. Doughnuts and juice will be served to helpers. In addition Burton needs at least six volunteers to help take off the protective hole coverings at Evergreen Cemetery before the large American flags can be installed there. Although the Avenue of Flags and Memorial Day services are sponsored by the American Legion, everyone in the community may help.

It takes many people to help erect the Avenue of Flags, and the number of flags the Legion displays will depend on the number of volunteers available. Anyone will-



The Avenue of Flags, a Memorial Day tradition, is pictured above in this Journal file photo. The tradition depends on the labor of many volunteers.

ing to help should meet at 6 a.m. May 25 and May 26 at Evergreen Cemetery for installation and 3 p.m. on those same days to take down the flags.

The Avenue of Flags will be dis-

played from 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. May 25-26, weather permitting.

The Memorial Day ceremony will take place at 10 a.m. May 26 at Evergreen Cemetery.

For more information, call Bur-

ton at (309) 824-4115.

In case of rain the ceremony will be held in the South Pointe Park Community Building.

El Paso Community Choir

The El Paso Community Choir invites you to join in singing patriotic selections at the Memorial Day Service. If you wish to participate, be at the Good Shepherd Community Church, 135 E. 2nd St., at 8:55 a.m. May 26 to receive music and practice.

Secor

The Memorial Day Service at the Secor Cemetery, on highway 24 near Secor, will be held at 10:30 a.m. May 26.

Gridley

On May 24 flags will be placed on Main Street and the cemetery. On May 26 there will be a parade at 10:30 a.m. At 11 a.m. a ceremony will be held at the cemetery.

Victory Book Campaign brought

BOARD

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 The students consider themselves coaches, and they help other students learn how to avoid plagiarism and help students improve their skills in brainstorming, outlining, researching, composing, revising and editing. The students do not write or fix students' papers for them, do not speak negatively about teachers or their assignments, and do not guarantee an A on papers. A student can request help or receive a referral from a teacher, and coaching sessions take place over study hall or lunch. Since beginning in October 2013, the students have conducted about 250 coaching sessions for sixth-eighth graders, and about 70 sessions with third grade students. So far, feedback has been positive.

"The 22 kids and Mr. Martin are giving up their lunch hours and study halls. They're doing such a great job with this," EPG Junior High principal Robby Tomlinson said.

The program received a \$4,500 grant for next year, and the funds will likely be used on a couple of laptops and materials to promote the program. Martin hopes for a dedicated space at some point, and he hopes a similar program will begin at the high school. He plans to conduct a presentation about the program at a writing conference later this year with the help of a couple of his junior high "coaches," and he expects other junior high schools in the state to begin developing similar writing

programs.

At the April board meeting the El Paso-Gridley School Board approved Bethany McKenney's request for a leave of absence, Amy Thalman's resignation effective May 16, Amy Cople's resignation as assistant high school girls basketball coach effective immediately, Pat Reinkensmeyer's resignation as seventh grade teacher assistant effective June 2. The board also approved Ron Malik as volunteer assistant track coach for high school.

The board approved the following administrative contracts unanimously: Nicole Rummel, curriculum director; Kelly Throneburg, Jefferson Park School principal; Robby Tomlinson, junior high principal; and Tim Fairchild, Centennial Principal and Junior High Athletic Director.

The board also approved the administrative contract for Michael Lindy, district superintendent, with one opposing vote from board member John Hartness.

The board members approved the scholarship recommendations, with one opposing vote from board member David Mool.

The board approved a 5-year agreement for copiers, which includes service and supplies, and the approved vendor provided a bid that will save the district \$12,000 per year compared to the current contract that is about to expire. The low bid included new equipment and a lower cost for color copies, too, while the other bids had fewer copiers, used copiers, and higher costs.

The board approved a change to the student handbook regarding notification for planned absences at the junior high. The policy now requires notice to be given to the office at least three days before a planned absence of a student, rather than the previous requirement of two weeks.

The board approved a contract with CIRBN for Internet at a cost of \$12,000 for Fiscal Year 2015. The bid from Mediacom was \$60,000 for lower bandwidth. "It's rare that you can get more (bandwidth and quality) for a significant savings for the district," EPG Superintendent Mike Lindy said.

The lease on three buses is ending, and the district elected to set up a contract with Midwest Bus Sales. Two bids came in, and both showed an increase compared to the current lease cost, but Midwest Bus Sales' price showed an increase of \$108 per bus, per month, while the other vendor's price increased the cost \$250 per bus, per month. The buses provided by Midwest Bus Sales are also expected to have slightly better gas mileage than the current buses. Lindy said the State has been reducing transportation reimbursements, so the district is "trying to keep ahead of that."

Apology to the board

Mark Whitcomb, a local resident and parent, said he regretted the way he spoke to the board members at the last school board meeting. "I expect my children to speak respectfully even if they

disagree with someone, and I did not rise to the same expectations I hold for them. I am offering each of you my apologies for my approach at the last school board meeting."

Second, he asked the board members to reflect on the standards they hold themselves to as Christians while they make decisions. "I would ask that you consider ways to improve our

VICTORY

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One woman donated a copy of "Gone with the Wind," with a letter attached: "If the first boy that reads this book will write to me, I will send him a chocolate cake." Ralph McCoy, the director for the campaign in Illinois, hand-delivered the book to the librarian at Fort Sheridan, "who agreed to plant the book where it would be found by a cake-hungry soldier."

In an open letter to Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, an alumnus serving as librarian at a training base in Washington declared that "the Victory Book Campaign is wonderful...(the men) are mad for reading material. If a five minute break comes, out come the books and magazines."

Many books were used in academic pursuits. The Charleston letter stated that "the soldiers wanted "to return home with knowledge of the world...Textbooks! We can't keep them on the shelves." The demand included "every branch of mathematics" as well as for

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