

Golden Gophers handle Hawkeyes **1B**

Shopping for 'a great cause' **3A**

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High 17° Low -9° Cloudy, morning snow, **8B**

MONDAY

January 28, 2019 • Dubuque, Iowa • \$1

Investigators reflect on ED murder case

Law enforcement officials share details of the investigation into the 2011 disappearance of 14-year-old Chyenne Kircher.

BY BEN JACOBSON
ben.jacobson@thmedia.com

GALENA, Ill. — It wasn't difficult for law enforcement officials to believe the note.

In what experts later would confirm was her handwriting, 14-year-old Chyenne Kircher had bid farewell to her family, urging them not to look for her. She was gone, she promised, off to seek a better life.

Based on the squalor in which her family lived, as well as what investigators described

as an "uncommon" home life, it wasn't hard to imagine the teen girl wanting an escape, according to Casey Folks.

"You have a 14-year-old girl that doesn't have a lot of friends, whose home life is absolutely terrible," said Folks, a detective with the Jo Daviess County Sheriff's Department, during the 100 Club's annual dinner Saturday evening. "Has to go home to that every night. No wonder she wants to leave. No wonder she wants to go to the library to hang out. So you have this note, 'I'm gonna run away,' I can see that. You can understand why she didn't want to be there."



Casey Folks

Folks and FBI Agent Wayne Jackowski

TH see for yourself
Watch video from the 100 Club presentation, TelegraphHerald.com

shared details of the harrowing investigation into the East Dubuque girl's disappearance with more than 100 members of the club on a chilly, snowy Saturday evening.

Using pictures and their own memories, the duo painted a portrait of a sad, neglected girl who was violently, horrifyingly betrayed by a member of her own family.

Saturday's event, held at the DeSoto House Hotel in Galena, also served as the club's annual Honors Dinner, during which local law enforcement, firefighting and emergency medical services personnel are recognized for their accomplishments.

"People don't really understand or appreciate that of the 560, give or take, emergency service workers (in the county), about 480 are volunteers," said John Cooke, a member of the 100 Club and an organizer of the Honors Dinner. "So when you pick up the phone because grandma fell down last night at 12 below zero and you call the EMT to come and get her, this is the group that supports that."

THE INVESTIGATION

Chyenne Kircher disappeared in October 2011, leaving behind her phone, her clothes and the handwritten note. Local police would spend the next 18 months interviewing the family, chasing leads and investigating

See **CHYENNE, PAGE 2A**

biz buzz



JESSICA REILLY • *Telegraph Herald*

Autumn Danielsen restocks salt bags Thursday at Gasser Hardware and Farm Supply in Cascade, Iowa.

Small-town hardware store right at home in Cascade

Gasser Hardware and Farm Supply opens 7th location in the tri-state area.

BY JEFF MONTGOMERY
TH staff writer



Biz Buzz shares business tidbits from around the tri-state area. This week, we highlight developments in Cascade and Dubuque, Iowa.

Just days after opening the business, the owners of a new Cascade hardware store already are feeling at home.

Gasser Hardware opened on Wednesday at 128 Industry Park Road. The store is the seventh loca-



Gasser Hardware and Farm Supply.

tion in the family-owned chain.

Co-owner Dan Schmidt believes the community of about 2,300 will be a perfect fit for Gasser Hardware.

"We don't really do big cities," he said. "We are small-town people. We like those small communities."

Gasser Hardware sells plumbing and electrical supplies, paint, power tools, hardware, fencing and farm supplies. It was founded in 1923 and

business tips sought

Do you have an interesting story or news tip to share about a local business? Story ideas can be shared with Jeff Montgomery by calling 563-588-5753 or by emailing jeff.montgomery@thmedia.com.

has locations in Boscobel, Brodhead, Hazel Green and Lancaster, Wis.; Galena, Ill.; and Maquoketa, Iowa.

Schmidt co-owns the Cascade store with his brother Rob and his father, Bob.

He said the family long has had its eye on Cascade.

"We were looking to expand, and Cascade made sense because of the

See **BIZ BUZZ, PAGE 2A**

people who make a difference

DuRide volunteer driven to help

81-year-old Mary O'Hea values personal connections made while driving for the Dubuque organization.

BY ANTHONY FRENZEL
tony.frenzel@thmedia.com

Mary O'Hea is humble when it comes to her volunteerism.

"There are 160-plus drivers that do as much as I do," she said.

But her longstanding dedication to donating her time to DuRide is one reason why she makes a difference.

"I think volunteering evolves," said the 81-year-old Dubuque resident. "You see your parents volunteering at church or in the community. You start doing it at a young age.



Mary O'Hea

Mary O'Hea

Age: 81
Hometown: Lore, Iowa (present-day Asbury)
Family: Widowed, with five children
Profession: Retired for 17 years. Formerly of Frank Hardy Advertising, where she worked for 30 years.
Hobbies: Walking and reading

And when opportunities present themselves as you go to church and school, it's just a natural progression. You do what you can do at the time."

Seventeen years ago, after finishing her career with Frank Hardy Advertising, O'Hea knew volunteering was going to be an important part of post-retirement life.

"Now I had time, and I needed to fill my time," she

See **RIDES, PAGE 2A**



NICKI KOHL • *Telegraph Herald*

Mary O'Hea (left) assists Elizabeth Engbrecht out of her vehicle recently. O'Hea is a volunteer driver for DuRide.

today's TH



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White House dangles threat of another shutdown **10A**



Despair grows in wake of Brazil dam disaster **5B**

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almanac

Today is Monday, Jan. 28, the 28th day of 2019. There are 337 days left in the year.

ON THIS DATE:

- In 1547, England's King Henry VIII died; he was succeeded by his 9-year-old son, Edward VI.
- In 1956, Elvis Presley made his first national TV appearance on "Stage Show," a CBS program hosted by Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey.
- In 1973, a cease-fire officially went into effect in the Vietnam War, a day after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords.
- In 1986, the space shuttle Challenger exploded 73 seconds after liftoff from Cape Canaveral, killing all seven crew members.

The Associated Press

lotteries

IOWA

SUNDAY EARLY

Pick 3-Midday: 7-8-9
Pick 4-Midday: 4-3-6-8

SATURDAY EVENING

Pick 3-Evening: 4-4-7
Pick 4-Evening: 1-2-9-8
Lotto America: 4-11-23-31-35
Star Ball: 9 **Bonus:** 3
Jackpot: \$14.43 million

ILLINOIS

SUNDAY EARLY

Pick 3-Midday: 1-7-1
Pick 4-Midday: 6-4-1-6
Lucky Day Lotto-Midday: 16-20-24-34-42

SATURDAY EVENING

Pick 3-Evening: 0-0-3
Pick 4-Evening: 1-1-2-3
Lucky Day Lotto-Evening: 16-33-35-37-45
Lotto: 3-8-9-17-20-39
Extra shot: 19
Jackpot: \$7.75 million

WISCONSIN

SUNDAY EARLY

Daily Pick 3: 9-0-8
Daily Pick 4: 0-3-5-4

SATURDAY EVENING

5 Card Cash
JC-KD-10C-10H-6S
Badger 5: 8-9-11-13-29
Supercash: 11-19-30-31-35-37
Doubler: N
Megabucks:
4-21-22-32-36-44
Jackpot: \$1 million

POWERBALL

8-12-20-21-32
Powerball: 10 **Powerplay:** 4
Jackpot: \$161 million

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people, etc

'Glass' is No. 1 again at box office, McConaughey's 'Serenity' flops

NEW YORK — Matthew McConaughey notched one of the worst debuts of his career, Oscar nominees saw only modest bumps and M. Night Shyamalan's "Glass" easily remained No. 1 on a quiet weekend in movie theaters. The weekend's two new wide releases — McConaughey's tropic noir "Serenity" and the

updated King Arthur tale "The Kid Who Would Be King" — both flopped with moviegoers who instead continued to flock to "Glass." Shyamalan's sequel to "Unbreakable" and "Split" sold \$19 million in tickets according to estimates Sunday, down 53 percent from its opening weekend.

The Associated Press

HAPPY BIRTHDAY actor Alan Alda, 83 • actress Susan Howard, 77 • former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, 64 • singer Sarah McLachlan, 51 • humorist Mo Rocca, 50 • singer Joey Fatone Jr., 42 • singer Nick Carter (Backstreet Boys), 39 • actor Elijah Wood, 38 • actress Ariel Winter, 21

CHYENNE: Stepdad apparently planned crime for months

Continued from page 1A

rumored sightings of the missing girl, all to no avail.

In March 2013, the newly formed Critical Incident Response Team was called in to bring some fresh eyes to the case. The team consists of members of multiple Jo Daviess and Carroll county law enforcement officials, as well as personnel from the FBI.

Jackowski said team members immediately began retracing the East Dubuque Police Department's steps, hoping to shake loose a lead worth chasing. They started with a forensic examination of Chyenne's battered cellphone.

"It had never been analyzed because people considered it to be inoperable," Jackowski said. "They didn't think they could get anything out of it. So we started there."

The phone revealed that Chyenne, an active user of YouTube and the internet, had been in communication with people as far away as Florida, Texas and Alaska.

"The first job was to identify, who are these people?" Jackowski said.

Thanks to the FBI's nation-spanning resources, the people with whom Chyenne had been in contact were identified and interviewed. But nothing

panned out.

Chyenne had no dental records, meaning that if a body were to be found, those records couldn't be used for identification.

Additionally, Chyenne loved school. But it also could be another source of unhappiness for her.

"Chyenne did like school, but the kids at school didn't treat her the best," said Folks. "She would come to school and she would be disheveled. She would come to school and she would smell. She would be picked on by the other kids."

Investigators also learned that Chyenne had suggested to several people that she had been abused by her stepfather, Terry Abbas.

"In July of 2011, Chyenne had disclosed to a friend that Terry Abbas might have been molesting her, was sexually abusing her," Jackowski said. "She was interviewed (by law enforcement) related to that, but did not disclose any kind of abuse."

BREAK IN THE CASE

Eventually, all members of Chyenne's family agreed to be interviewed and subjected to polygraph examinations. But Abbas failed to show up at the scheduled time for the interview. Jackowski, who was one of the pri-

mary liaisons between law enforcement and Kircher's family, tracked Abbas down in East Dubuque and brought him to the local police station for questioning. It was there that Abbas began to crack.

"The polygraph examiner who administered Terry's test sent me a text message that had three words that I'll never forget: 'Get in here,'" Jackowski said. "I didn't get in the room immediately and it was about 30 seconds later, 'Right now.'"

Abbas admitted strangling Chyenne and burying her in a wooded area behind the family's house. But he also claimed it was an accident, that he had "blacked out" and woken up to find her dead body, Folks said.

Folks flicked to a slide showing the site where investigators soon would find Chyenne's body, where it had laid for nearly two years as investigators scoured the country, hoping to find her alive.

"This is where he buried Chyenne," Folks said. "These flags mark the four corners of the depression he pointed out to us. And now we started our excavation."

But for a long time, as layers of dirt were peeled away, inch by inch, no evidence of Chyenne's body was found. "I'm starting to freak out," recalled

Folks. "Is the body not here? Is he lying to us? What's going on? Finally, we find a shoe. There's no reason on the face of this earth that the shoe is here except Terry Abbas put it there."

From there, the pieces fell into place. Months before he killed Chyenne, Abbas had her write the runaway note, ostensibly as a "joke" to trick her other family members.

The day before he killed her, Abbas dug the deep hole about 75 feet away from his squalid home.

"This is what's huge," Folks said. "Up to this point, yes, he confessed he committed the murder. He killed her. But it's not first degree. ... It's not as serious until he says he dug the grave the day before."

Abbas ultimately confessed to everything, refusing representation from an attorney throughout the court process. In December 2013, he was sentenced in Jo Daviess County Circuit Court to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

"Without all the cooperation of these amazing investigators and all the people in law enforcement that were involved, I don't think we would have reached this conclusion as quickly as we did," said Folks. "I can't say enough for the amazing people who worked this."

RIDES: DuRide gives opportunity for 1-on-1 conversation

Continued from page 1A

said. "You can only play so much bridge. You can only read so many books or travel or whatever it might be."

When she discovered it nine years ago, DuRide seemed a great option to her for a major reason.

"The flexibility is No. 1. If you like to drive, that's No. 2. If you want to do something that's very satisfying and very much appreciated, that's No. 3," O'Hea said. "Whatever fits for you is what you do with DuRide. So some days if I'm driving, I might do six, seven or eight drives. And sometimes I might do one. You can do one drive a month if that's all you can fit in."

DuRide is a nonprofit that got its start 10 years ago last month. Its founder, Sue Balsamo, found her aging mother in need of transportation help and decided to explore opportunities that could benefit other elderly people in the community with similar needs.

"She ran across this concept that was happening in a town in Maine," said DuRide Executive Director Greg

Orwoll. "She went and took a look at it, and it was very similar to what we ended up structuring here."

Last year, DuRide provided 11,850 rides. Many of the volunteer drivers, like O'Hea, have been around for either that whole time or most of it, according to Orwoll.

"(O'Hea) has been around a long time and she has context and perspective," he said. "She's also very committed to the mission and very articulate. And she's not shy about (talking about) it."

For O'Hea, talking with her passengers — or members, as DuRide refers to them — is a benefit that keeps giving year after year.

"I've done other volunteer things, but you many times don't have opportunities for one-on-one conversation or repeated conversations," she said. "Over nine years, I've driven one person 50 or 60 times, maybe, because he goes to the same place all the time. You always have that opportunity to evolve the relationship. It's great."

And those rides aren't just confined

to doctor visits and grocery shopping. Many times, DuRide volunteers are driving members to their own volunteer opportunities.

One such member is Marjorie McDonough, 74, of Dubuque, who retired from nursing, but continues to volunteer at Mercy Medical Center-Dubuque because she "likes to work with people who are patients."

"I just think it's a nice position to be in," she said. "I like to help people out and I like to be one of the people who gets helped out."

And for O'Hea, who has the benefit of repeated rides with McDonough and others, there is a great sense of community among volunteers and members.

A community connection is important not just because of the rides, but because social isolation among older adults is on the rise and is associated with increased health risks, according to studies by the AARP Public Policy Institute, Stanford University, Harvard University and more.

"I like to drive on the weekends

become a volunteer

- To become a DuRide volunteer you need:
- A valid driver's license and proof of insurance.
 - A vehicle. Volunteers are reimbursed for mileage, can bank miles for future transportation needs, or can donate miles to someone else.
 - A routine background check will be completed.
- To volunteer, call 563-451-4999 or email info@duridedbq.com.

because they can be long," O'Hea said. "I'm a widow and I live alone. So weekends can be long if your family isn't around. And for senior citizens who don't drive, weekends are especially long."

It's a continuation of a lifelong dedication to giving back.

"I was thinking, one of the first volunteer things I did was work the bingo at our parish picnic," O'Hea said. "And that was 70 years ago."

BIZ BUZZ: Dubuque store closing; fitness studio coming

Continued from page 1A

farm market," he said. "There are a lot of farmers around here, and that is our niche."

Gasser Hardware occupies the former home of Cascade Chevrolet. Schmidt said the facility had to be remodeled prior to opening, primarily by removing offices and "opening up" the building.

Gasser Hardware has hired a dozen workers, Schmidt said.

The business is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. It can be reached at 563-852-7725.

CON-SIGNING OFF

A longtime Dubuque consignment shop with a benevolent mission soon will bid farewell to its loyal customers.

Second Chances, 2600 Dodge St., will close in March, according to manager Holly Cox. A specific closure date has not been determined.

The store sells home decor, furniture, art and a variety of other items. The merchandise is either donated to the store or sold on a consignment basis, and all proceeds are given to Holy Family Catholic Schools.

During its 14 years of operation, Second Chances

has raised \$500,000 for Holy Family Catholic Schools.

The shop opened in 2005. Over the years, many have developed a close connection to the operation.

"Some people are very saddened to hear it is closing," Cox said. "There were some people who shed some tears when they found out."

Cox said multiple business factors compelled leaders to close the store, specifically noting the growing number of consignment stores in the market.

Cox noted that many people shopped at Second Chances because they supported the store's mission and wanted to provide funds for Holy Family. Others were drawn to the store by the promise of finding unique items, she added.

Cox said she is the lone paid

employee at the business. Operations are supported by more than a dozen volunteers.

"We have amazing volunteers, and many of them have been working here for a long time," she said.

Second Chances will maintain its regular hours until closing. The store will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays. It is closed Sundays.

The business can be reached at 563-583-5474.

FITNESS STUDIO

A new fitness center in Dubuque will provide customers with another way to get in shape.

Orangetheory Fitness will open this spring at 2515 Northwest Arterial, according to the location's marketing manager,

Kelly Voges.

She noted that the interior of the location is being built out. While an opening date has not been established, officials are aiming for late March.

Voges expects the studio will be a big hit in the tri-state area.

"I think people are really going to enjoy it," she said. "There really is nothing like this in Dubuque."

Orangetheory is a fitness franchise with more than 1,000 locations worldwide. It was founded in Florida nine years ago.

The studio specializes in one-hour, full-body workouts that are led by personal trainers. Customers wear heart-rate monitors that allow them to track progress in real time.

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