

Community involvement foils scam artists

Comet staff report

Two rural Carroll County brothers, with the same Monticello address, were incarcerated in the county jail April 17 following a fraud investigation. The crime involved an 80-year-old rural Monticello woman victim.

Michael Thomas Cunningham, 18, of 11542 N. US421, was jailed on a preliminary charge of fraud, a Class D felony.

His twin brother, Bryan Edmond Cunningham Jr., was incarcerated on an initial charge of attempted theft, also a Class D felony. Each bond was set at \$5,000.

Carroll County Sheriff's Deputy Grant Davidson and Det. Kevin Hammond received information stating the two brothers were utilizing a bank debit card and checks belonging to the elderly victim without her knowledge.

The suspects also allegedly performed household jobs for the victim

and charged her an exorbitant amount of money as payment for the work.

The suspects admitted to sheriff investigators they were involved in the crime, which defrauded approximately \$7,800 from the victim over an eight-month period of time.

"Again, through information re-

ceived from the community, we were able to successfully follow-up and complete this investigation which involved a senior citizen," sheriff Tony Burns said. "This is yet another positive example of the community and our office working hand-in-hand to fight crime."

Trike-A-Thon for St. Jude



Children at First Step Preschool at the Flora First Brethren Church had a Trike-A-Thon to raise funds for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The event went along with their lesson on helping people. The 29 children in the nursery and preschool classes raised nearly \$1,000. Linda Isaacs is director/teacher, and Jane Edging is assistant. Pictured in the above photo are Brady Miller and Madison Dyke. Children shown at right are: Foreground, l-r - Sydney Bordner, Rachel Leimer, Bailey Cable. Background - Emma Hardin, Elizabeth Houser. Comet photos by Jennifer Archibald



Property tax bills stalled

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Carroll County residents will experience a delay in receiving property tax bills this spring, according to county treasurer Jane Brewington, auditor Beth Myers and assessor Doris McLeland. Tax bills are usually mailed out by April 25. No one can be certain when the statements will get into the mail.

"It's not going to happen on time this year," Brewington told the *Comet* Thursday. "We are hoping to get a collection date by the end of June."

"Whenever the collection date is, we will make sure the public is aware of it," she added.

Brewington said her staff monitors a map of the state on the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance Web site daily. The map depicts each county's status in the procedure. She said her staff has fielded several telephone calls from property owners this

spring.

Brewington said the problem lies with the new property tax assessment method called 'trending.'

McLeland agreed. A total of 439 assessment appeals involving 169 property owners have been heard since the first of the year.

She said property owners received assessments in late November, several months later than normal. The assessor was required by law to allow 45 days for appeals to be received by her office before any paperwork could be forwarded on to the auditor's office.

"It took us a long time to get everyone finished with their appeals," McLeland said.

After the appeals were completed, forms were sent to the auditor's office.



Brewington



McLeland



Myers

Myers said her office is now waiting on tax rates to be set by DLGF. Rates are expected by mid-May, at which time additional calculations will be completed. Within two weeks from the time the tax rates are received, it is expected that statements will be printed.

Although Myers' timetable is more optimistic than Brewington's, it is a fact the statements will not be sent out at the normal time.

Myers said property owners will have the standard 15 days to pay the spring installment after they receive the statement.

No consensus about spending Council approves additional appropriation for courthouse AC

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Faced with a possible lack of air flow in the courthouse very soon, Carroll County Council members had a difficult decision to make at their Friday morning special meeting. The news of the replacement and repair of the cooling system came soon after council members deduced a significant reduction in county reserves had occurred over the past four years.

There was no consensus among the six voting council members about when to remedy the air problem.

In a four-to-two vote, courthouse custodian Sheryl Shockley's request for a \$32,875 additional appropriation was granted.

Jerry Hendress, Nancy Cripe, Ron Slavens and Carl Abbott voted to approve the additional out of the cumulative capital project fund. Steve Ashby and Ann Brown voted

against the action.

"I know we have to do it,"

Brown said in a follow-up interview, "but with our unknown financial condition and until we get the state's early audit results and we have more answers, I wasn't prepared to vote for it. It was my statement that we need to be more informed about our spending."

Ashby said he was present at the inspection one of the companies conducted in order to formulate their quote for the job. Ashby stressed the need for a comprehensive



Brown



Ashby

sive courthouse maintenance plan.

"The reason I voted against spending cum cap money was because I think there was money in riverboat gambling we should have used instead," he told the *Comet* Monday. "In my opinion, we should have borrowed the money or taken it out of the riverboat money, but we weren't given that option."

"I'm not sure what we have in unrestricted funds, but I know we spent more money than we took in last year and I want to be sure this problem is fixed before we spend more money," he added.

After the appropriation vote, Brown asked council president Rob Baker if the issue of the budget reduction was going to be addressed at the meeting.

Baker responded the matter had been taken care of. County auditor Beth Myers said it was an auditor issue.

Director of budget division of the Department of Local

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Delphi School patrons visit Carroll School Board

By Jennifer Archibald
Staff writer

Two parents from the Delphi Community school district addressed the Carroll School Board at its April 17 meeting.

Mark Justice from Liberty Township and Shawn Ashby from Jackson Township said they were each speaking for themselves, and were not at the meeting to represent others in their townships.

Justice said he doesn't have children in school yet, but he is looking ahead for a better educational environment for his children.

"It appears that Delphi is

more interested in athletic facilities than educational programs," he said.

Justice said if Carroll would be open to accepting students from the Burrows and Camden areas, it could be a business opportunity for Carroll and could mean higher ISTEP scores and lower tax rate for the parents of those incoming students.

He added that in talking to other parents, they are concerned about the cost of tuition if their children went to Carroll.

Ashby said there are approximately 220 to 270 students K-12 in Jackson and Liberty Townships.

He said adding 250 children could bring in a million dollars to the corporation.

Ashby asked the board members if they were interested enough to at least look into the matter.

"If not, there is no need in doing any more leg work," he said.

Carroll superintendent John Sayers said he wanted to make it clear that the school corporation is not soliciting nor recruiting any students from another school corporation.

He said he has read about the reorganization of the elementary schools in the Delphi school corporation, but he doesn't have any first-hand knowledge about it.

"It would be more appropriate for the two school boards to talk or the two superintendents to talk," Sayers said.

"It's my understanding that it would begin with a referendum process on the local level," Sayers continued. "Then we'll talk about it."

Both Sayers and Ashby said the process would be subject to legal interpretation.

Board president Sam Zook said there needs to be information gathering, and discussions with involved parties before any decisions are made.

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Sprinkle found guilty of attempted child exploitation

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Leon Sprinkle, 48, learned his fate when a jury of his peers found him guilty of attempted child exploitation April 18 late in the afternoon in Carroll Circuit Court. Judge Donald Currie read the verdict, which was the result of a three-hour deliberation by the 12 jurors.

After polling the jurors at the request of defense attorney Patrick Manahan, Currie said the final decision was a "true verdict of this jury."

"I felt a sense of justice with the verdict," Carroll County Prosecutor Tricia Thompson said. "The system worked."

"I have nothing personal against the defendant," Carroll

County Sheriff

Detective Steve Mullin

said after the verdict was read. "What he did and intended to do was wrong. Our community will be a safer place for children as a result of this verdict."

The trial began April 16 with jury selection. Testimony commenced the next morning and concluded at noon on April 18.

The young victim testified during the three-day trial and at times, struggled to maintain composure while on the witness stand.



Sprinkle

"I was pleased to be able to stand up for someone who has been victimized," Thompson said after court adjourned.

"This is the type of case I feel very strongly about," she added. "I agreed with the verdict. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to do the job that I do."

This was the first of two trials for Sprinkle. He is charged with five counts of possession of child pornography stemming from the same June 2006 investigation and will be tried for those allegations in a separate action tentatively scheduled for early June.

An omnibus hearing, an opportunity for the defendant to plead guilty to the additional

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The delay in opening is due to the cold weather at the being of April. (we lost our crop)

