

New highway head comes with experience

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

One of the last acts of 2008 by Carroll County Commissioners was to sign a contract with a new highway superintendent/engineer. And since that time Paul Coats (pronounced 'Coats') has applied his many years of engineering experience to help the county.

Coats began his engineering career in 1971 after graduating with a Masters Degree in Civil Engineering from Purdue University, while supporting a family and raising two children. Coats held positions in Dayton, Ohio, and Lafayette before starting his own consulting firm in 1978. He became the West Lafayette City Engineer in 1980 and worked there until 1991 when he returned to the private sector.

Coats said he missed the "hands-

on" work of "making things happen" when he applied for the Carroll County job.

"Job satisfaction is very important to me," he said. "Engineering is in me. I love that work."

"I really want to use my experience and be of benefit to those I serve," he added noting the intangible rewards of the position.

Coats said he does not know exactly what he said or conveyed at his interview with commissioners Loren Hylton, Bill Brown and George Mears that led them to offer him the position. He said he tried to be genuine and honest and open with them.

"I'm a very practical person," he said. "And we just need to do as much as we can for the residents."

Coats said the Carroll County job is more hands-on in day-to-day projects than his previous work ex-

periences because the operations of the department are different. He said his goal would be to do as much work in-house and use all resources available to the department to provide the best service.

"I'm a public servant," he said. "I



Paul Coats

am here to provide service."

According to Coats working closely with the overall department budget would present more of a challenge than he has had in the past. He explained he has budgetary experience, but not with restricted funds. He said after three weeks on the job, he is trying "to get a handle on it" and would develop an overall spending plan for the future. Coats added that he planned to work closely with the county council to develop a realistic department budget.

Coats said he would explore ways to improve the operations and method of doing the business of the department. He said the driver-specific district system seemed to work well and no changes were planned for that component of the operation. However, he said he consulted with other local highway experts about

better prices for road salt and other consumable items. He said a collaborative effort could work with other communities to achieve better prices for Carroll County.

Coats emphasized he considered his role with the county as a public servant. To that end he said he has an open-door policy.

"That is an important part of the job," he said. "If a resident has a complaint, I want to talk to them."

"Maybe I can't solve everything, but I'll get back with them when they call and see what we can do," he concluded.

Coats can be reached at the county highway garage in Flora at (574) 967-4244 or by E-mail at highway.dept@ffni.com. His hours in the office on most days are Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Delphi ISTEP scores signal change

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

State-mandated ISTEP testing measures what students know and are able to do at each grade level in core academic subjects, according to the Indiana Department of Education Web site. The tests take between four-and-a-half to five-and-a-half hours depending on the grade level and are generally administered over the course of three mornings.

Teachers, administrators and most parents know it is important for elementary students to be able to do mathematics accurately and to read and understand language in order to graduate from high school. The State of Indiana decided at least 90 percent of all children in each grade level will achieve passing grades, in both math and English, by 2012 using ISTEP testing as the yardstick. For the Delphi school corporation that mandate means there is work to be done in order to achieve the goal.

The latest round of ISTEP scores for Delphi Community School Corporation students in grades three through eight were explained at Monday night's school board meeting. Although many of the English Language and math scores were either acceptable or very good, some were noted as below acceptable. Those were the scores that will produce changes in what is taught, how subjects are taught, and perhaps a review of the specific instructors who teach the subjects.

Delphi Community Schools Curriculum Director Carol Coon presented the latest findings with interpretations. She said the school corporation had to "go a long way past the state average to satisfy No Child Left Behind" requirements. She explained the highest recent ISTEP score in

the school corporation was 89 percent in seventh-grade math. All other grades had to significantly take steps to improve scores to reach the stated state goal. Coon said administrators are examining all factors to determine how to remedy the situation.

Coon developed a series of graphs which followed the same grades throughout the student testing history to help board members assimilate the information. The graphs also indicated trends that would indicate upward or downward scores in different grades with the same children.

"Basically, these are the same kiddos," she said.

Coon said in a follow-up interview, administrators are developing a corporation-wide improvement plan. She said the plan would take as long as five years to reach full fruition. Coon further explained programs have been added using different instructional strategies designed to

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Highway preparedness



Tom Shockley, Carroll County Highway Dept. employee, repairs a snowplow carrier by welding on a new brace cut from square tubing. He said the cold weather is hard on equipment. More snow flurries and frigid temperatures are expected this week. Comet photo

Desperate for justice Jefferson Township resident speaks out

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Patricia Alford has lived in Jefferson Township in Carroll County for the past 12 years. She was aware of her properties' inclusion in the Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District (TLRSD) and was a founding member of the Free Jefferson Township Citizens (FJTC). However she stayed in the background and let the more vocal FJTC representative Pat Robertson speak for her and the group.

Alford is now stepping forward to actively oppose the sewer district and more specifically, the board of directors and the decisions they make on behalf of the customers. Alford said Friday those who spend public money should be voted into office, not appointed as currently allowed for by Indiana Code. She said for residents to be forced to connect to a sewer district and pay monthly service fees determined by an appointed board of directors is taxation

without representation. "This becomes a little ridiculous," she said. "They do nothing but hassle you. It's going to be their way and that's all."

Alford decided to fight the sewer district by refusing to pay the monthly bills for service. The district placed a lien on her property, which was reflected on her property taxes after she paid them for 2008. She received a second tax statement for both the spring and fall installments.

Alford said it was worth the cost of a penalty to keep money from the sewer district for part of the year. She said she would do the same thing until another lien is placed on her property at which time she will pay the bill and the penalty. She encouraged all TLRSD customers to do likewise, even though the end result will be a paid bill.

"I swear to God, there's got to be justice," Alford said in desperation. "As long as my septic is in good

working order, why do I have to connect?"

Alford said she understands the Indiana Code allowed for the sewer district to be established. She understands her representatives in Indiana government must work to change the law for change to happen for her and the members of FJTC.

"The commissioners at the time were tricked into this," she said. "But people make the law and people can

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Time to talk to legislators

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Most Carroll County citizens now understand decisions about state allocations to the county with which to fund services is decided in Indianapolis by their representatives, through legislation.

Gov. Mitch Daniels has said he would like a large number of the recommendations in the Kernan-Shepard Report released a year ago be written into bills and adopted

in the 2009 legislative session. Township trustees and advisory boards are interested in which recommendations are adopted and which are not. Whatever recommendations are adopted could significantly affect how county government is managed in the future.

Other examples include property tax reform, school funding and the continued objection to sewer districts in Carroll County and across the state.

Elected officials want and

need input from citizens in order to make more informed voting decisions. The White County Kiwanis Club Community Services

Committee will provide such an opportunity, called "Third House," to Carroll and White counties residents Jan. 17 at 9:30 a.m. at the Brandywine Inn and Suites, 728 S. Sixth

St., Monticello. Third House provides local citizens with an open venue to learn about legislation being considered during this legislative session. Participants Sen. Brandt Hershman and Rep. Rich McClain, along with representatives Don Lehe and Doug Gutwein, will pro-

vide an overview of the legislative session. Audience members will be given the opportunity to ask questions about issues.

Third House will meet every month on a Saturday at 9:30 a.m. at the same location until the end of the legislative session. Dates for further meetings are Feb. 21, March 21 and April 18. The public is encouraged to attend. Committee chair Mary Walters can be reached for further information at (574) 583-5518.



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