

Press Clippings 10/02/2017

---Courier News--- 10/2/17

Supplies, money donated to school in Hanover Park

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO



Donated school supplies are carried into Ontarioville Elementary School in Hanover Park at a presentation. The Meemic Foundation donated \$2,400 to the school in supplies and funds for playground equipment. (School District U46)

Ontarioville Elementary School in Hanover Park received a welcome surprise in the form of approximately \$2,400 in school supplies and playground equipment, School District U46 announced.

On Wednesday, members of the nonprofit Meemic Foundation for the Future of Children gave the Ontarioville community about \$1,400 in school supplies and the school a check for \$990 to purchase a seesaw for the playground.

The foundation that provides funding to teachers through gifts and donations aided three schools in the state this fall as part of its Schools in Need program.

About 87 percent of Ontarioville Elementary School students are low-income, according to the most recent data from the Illinois Report Card.

The donation also helped teachers avoid out-of-pocket costs to properly supply their classrooms.

The district said research shows public school teachers in the United States spend \$1.6 billion each school year on classroom supplies and instructional materials.

That amounts to about \$945 per teacher annually.

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---Daily Herald--- 10/02/17

FOIA requests in Illinois grant access to public documents

BY JANELLE WALKER

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Since the state of Illinois enacted its [Freedom of Information Act](#) in 1984, reporters, the general public and businesses have used the law to look at what government does and how it spends public dollars, experts say.

Interpretation of that law has developed over the years as technology has changed. It covers emails, voicemails, text messages and — with the advent of police car and body cameras — video of officers' interaction with suspects and the general public.

Last week, the way the media uses the law known as FOIA to check on police came into focus in [Aurora](#).

After the Illinois attorney general's office ruled that the Aurora police improperly denied a petition by The Beacon-News for a dashcam video, Aurora police Chief Kristen Ziman accused the paper of making unnecessary requests.

The statement was related to an October 2016 traffic stop during which an 18-year-old passenger exchanged fire with police and fatally shot himself after trying to flee into a nearby house.

After the ruling, Ziman released the video via Facebook and included a message likening the reporter's requests for information to "fishing expeditions." She said some requests failed to result in a story based on data received.

But Don Craven, an attorney with the Illinois Press Association, said many requests do not result in a news story. Businesses, residents, insurance companies and others use the law to access information.

"The purpose of the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act is to allow citizens and taxpayers the opportunity to learn what their government officials are doing, how they are doing it and how they interact with citizens and taxpayers," Craven said.

Companies, for instance, use the law to determine how to best bid for government contracts or to see where money is spent, said Molly Center, communications specialist for the city of Elgin.

Craven said the laws that provide access to public records — commonly known as sunshine laws — are not designed to play "gotcha" with police or public officials but to help the public and media act as watchdogs.

Residents can use the law to check on budgets, compare tax bills to neighboring homes or find out why there were police squad cars down the street, Craven said.

"You can file a FOIA for that police report ... and find out a whole bevy of things," he said.

For local government bodies, researching and completing FOIA requests takes staff time.

For instance, Kim Dewis, Elgin city clerk, said the city has received 2,580 requests so far this year. Fulfilling those requests has taken 1,303 staff hours, or 162 workdays. Last year, Elgin received 3,545 requests and spent 2,110 hours, or 264 days, fulfilling them.

Naperville receives a similar number of requests. Communications manager Linda LaCloche said the city received 2,178 in 2015 and 2,554 requests in 2016. In addition, Naperville responded to thousands of insurance company requests for information during that time.

School districts also are subject to the law. In Naperville School District 203, the staff received 43 requests in 2015 and 45 in 2016, according to district spokeswoman Michelle Fregoso.

In Elgin-area School District U46, the FOIA officer and support staff spend an average of "at least seven hours a week to process and respond to FOIAs," said Mary Fergus, communications director.

Sometimes, one interested party will file multiple requests resulting in a mountain of documents. That's the case in Aurora-based Indian Prairie School District 204, where, of the 105 FOIA requests this year, 66 are from one individual, said Doug Eccarius, assistant superintendent for human resources. The district spent 341 hours — equivalent to over 40 eight-hour days — responding to that person's requests so far. And there are five the district is still working to complete, Eccarius said.

Craven acknowledges that there are costs involved in fulfilling the requests.

"All of that is a balancing act performed by the General Assembly in the Freedom of Information Act," he said.

The law was changed a few years ago to give public bodies more time to respond to commercial requests, but not media requests like the one Ziman was challenging.

"This was an everyday, ordinary, run-of-the-mill request from the newspaper and the reporter," Craven said.

Open-records laws played a significant role in the revelation of what happened during the 2014 shooting death of Laquan McDonald in Chicago, said Jack Doppelt, a professor in Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

In that case, the Chicago Police Department refused to release the video until a court ordered it. The officer involved in the shooting was then charged.

When police do not want to release video, the knee-jerk reaction is to assume officials are attempting to hide bad officer conduct, Doppelt said.

But police also could be thinking about the privacy of people not directly related to the incident. This is something Aurora cited when it improperly denied The Beacon-News' request.

In the Aurora case, Ziman said the department did not have the software needed to blur part of the video to protect the driver's privacy. The department purchased the tools and released the video with some information blurred only after the decision from the attorney general's office.

Aurora Mayor Richard Irvin could not be reached for comment regarding the police chief's conduct on social media. Instead, city spokesman Clayton Muhammad issued a response attributed to the city of Aurora. When asked for comment, Ziman also issued the statement from the city.

"The City of Aurora and the Aurora Police Department absolutely respects the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and follow the rules of the law," the statement said. "We strive to respond to all FOIA requests in a professional and timely manner while upholding an individual's rights guaranteed by the same law."

The statement did not specifically address Ziman's Facebook post criticizing local media, but, in a post on her personal blog, Ziman said her complaints do not mean she opposes FOIA.

"I believe that my transparency on behalf of my police department as well as my very public views on holding police officers accountable speak to this truth," Ziman wrote.

Janelle Walker is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News. Naperville Sun reporter Suzanne Baker and Beacon-News reporter Steve Lord contributed.

---Kane County Connects --- 10/02/17 Walk to School Day 2017 in Kane County set for Oct. 4

September 29, 2017 · by [kanecountyconnects](#) · in [Communities](#), [Education](#), [Government](#), [Health](#), [Schools](#)



Hey, Kane County parents!

Are your kids walking to school on Wednesday (Oct. 4, 2017)? Are you planning to walk with them?

Walk to School Day on Oct. 4 in Kane County is a great way to get connected with your children, get yourself out of the office and into the fresh air and encourage physical activity and good health practices that can last a lifetime.

Last year, 72 Kane County schools participated, representing eight school districts. Nearly a third of all participating schools in Illinois were from Kane County.

International Walk to School Day is an annual global event involving communities from more than 40 countries walking or biking to school on the same day. In the United States, Walk to School Day is expected to include more than 5,000 events across all 50 states.

As a local host of Walk to School Day for the eighth year, **Making Kane County Fit for Kids** invites Kane County elementary and middle schools to participate and provides funding to PTOs or Schools to organize walks. Walking to school incorporates the regular physical activity children need daily while igniting a routine culture of healthy habits at school and home.



- [Click Here For The 2017 WTS Day Registration Form!](#)

Making Kane County Fit for Kids goal to reduce childhood obesity includes guiding efforts on the local level through countywide mobilization. Fit for Kids strategies affect all of Kane County children, families, and communities.

A Making Kane County Fit for Kids Board leads and funds these efforts and includes the United Way of Elgin, Fox Valley United Way, Rush-Copley Foundation, Kane County Health Department, Kane County Division of Transportation and Northwestern Medicine. Working with schools to create environments that support healthy behavior is proven to not only make kids healthier, but it also helps them become better learners.

A strong countywide group of sponsors supported Walk to School Day 2017. Making Kane County Fit for Kids applauds title sponsor: **ALDI**, one of America's leading grocery stores. Supporting this initiative builds on the Batavia-based company's commitment to helping children and families live healthy lives.



“At ALDI, we believe all kids deserve access to resources that encourage healthy living,” said Laura Branneman, Batavia division vice president for ALDI. “We're proud to work towards that goal in partnership with Making Kane County Fit for Kids by sponsoring this year's eighth annual Walk to School Day.”

Making Kane County Fit for Kids thanks additional sponsors who augmented Walk to School Day 2017's impact to be at its greatest level yet: Shodeen Family Foundation, city of Elgin, Advocate Sherman, city of Aurora, Presence Health, Rotary of Aurora, Rotary of Geneva, Rotary of Batavia, Noon Rotary of Elgin and Noon Rotary of St. Charles.

For all Kane county elementary or middle schools, there is still time to sign up for Walk to School Day! Register at www.makingkanefitforkids.org.



About Making Kane County Fit for Kids

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that promotes community based initiatives of healthy eating and active living to reduce childhood obesity. **Making Kane County Fit for Kids** collaborates with community organizations, schools, municipalities, and other partners by funding implementation projects that support the Fit Kids 2020 Plan, a blueprint to create a Kane County that is “Fit for Kids.”



- [Click Here to Download The Fit Kids 2020 Plan Booklet.](#)

Strategic Action Principles affect all Kane children and families with particular attention to children most vulnerable and disproportionately affected. Since 2009, Making Kane County Fit for Kids has supported more than 100 projects, such as community gardens, bike racks, refrigerators at food pantries, nutrition workshops, Link Card accessibility at farmers markets, safe route education, demonstration wellness kitchens, heart rate monitors and salad bars at schools, playground equipment, and hosting eight annual International Walk to School Day events.

For more information, visit makingkanefitforkids.org