

## LeRoy-Gridley USD 245 confirms positive COVID-19 cases

LeRoy-Gridley USD 245 has confirmed positive COVID-19 cases in a staff member and a student and will be ending the first semester earlier than originally scheduled.

On Thursday, Dec. 10, the district confirmed a Southern Coffey County High School staff member had tested positive for COVID-19. The Coffey County Health Department (CCHD) completed contact tracing, the staff member is in isolation and CCHD staff contacted those who were in close contact with the positive individual and placed them into quarantine when it was deemed necessary. At the time, no further isolation or quarantine measures were advised, and classes and extracurricular activities contin-

ued on schedule.

On Friday, Dec. 11, the district announced its schools will end the first semester on Thursday, Dec. 17. After a full day of school Dec. 17, all students will be dismissed and begin their Christmas and winter break. Students will return Jan. 4. The change departs from the original schedule by a couple of school days, as under the original schedule, while there was no school Friday, Dec. 18, there were to have been classes Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 21 and 22, with a 1 p.m. dismissal Dec. 22.

On Sunday, Dec. 13, the district confirmed a student at SCCHS had tested positive for COVID-19. The district indicated in a post on its Facebook page that the student is

a member of the SCCHS Lady Titan girls' basketball team, which requires the team be placed in quarantine 10 days. CCHD completed contact tracing, placed the student in isolation and contacted those who were in close contact with the student and placed them in quarantine when it was deemed necessary.

At this time, the Lady Titan girls' basketball team will be in quarantine, and there will be no high school girls' basketball games this week. All classes will continue and extracurricular activities will be monitored on a day to day basis. The district is closely monitoring the situation and will notify families if additional actions need to be taken in the near future.

## Amber Jewell, LMSW

LeRoy-Gridley USD 245

Grief. Sheesh, I hate having to say that word. I don't hate the word ... it is a diligent, softly toned one for the times it is used. I hate that we have times when we have to say this word, implying a history of the strongest emotion of love.

More than that, the holiday season resonates as a time of assumed joy and jolly while there so often is a looming emotion of grief, mourning and worried hearts. The year, more than any year before, we face a worldly time of uncertainty, insecurity and risks. Life is tough.

We all know this. And in no way do I ever want to diminish the intensity and genuineness of hard times. However, I also don't want the life story to end there.

Grief is a process. There is really no end to it, rather the format changes. And, amazingly, eventually, slowly, new flowers can bloom over the rotting, wrenching, wrecked roots of life. Not better, but different - because in times of hardship, life becomes different.

The question is still, how do we water the crappy roots? How do we persist on the garden of life when it is flooded with grief? How do we grow anything in a cold season? To help tough times become tolerable, here are a few tips.

1. Find your people. Grief and even holidays can be what feel like the most lonely times of our lives. However, it is the most essential time to find "your people." These are those people that won't judge

you. They get you. They hear you. They support you. Sometimes these people suddenly shine as they did not before. Greet that light in the darkness and find cushion in the people who offer it.

It is never the number of people we are or are not around. It is the relationship with those people that matter. If they reach out to you, sometimes we instinctively try to isolate ourselves and, unintentionally, separate from those we need most at the time. Fight that urge with acknowledging the difficulty in opening your door to them. Your people are the ones who will get that most.

2. And, value your alone time.

Being with your people does not mean you shouldn't allot time for yourself. Grief and loss is such a personal experience, sometimes it requires personal time. Find a place and time that feels safe for you to declare as time for you. And set a specific amount of time.

Appoint that time as time for whatever may come from you. It may be tears, memories, anger, quietness, contentment and so many more things. Be mindful of the moment and your worthiness of having that moment. When that time is over, remind yourself of having that time and place to return to but not live in.

3. Remove standards. Stigmas and standards can be the biggest downfalls of our uniqueness. When the pressures to try to meet them try to creep in - verbally, mentally, emotionally - push them away. Grief is not a straight line. Your feelings are not to be parallel to any others. Ac-

cept your feelings without guilt and process your choices and options in your own time. Acknowledge that while most have good intentions, that does not mean they are right. Quit trying to follow "the healing process" and instead comfort yourself in knowing the process is your own.

4. Set limits.

Think about what word you are most comfortable with ... is it yes or no? And then, consider welcoming the other a bit more. Be okay not being okay. Be okay in needing support and people and basic items. Be also okay with saying no - no to people or items that you do not need or want. Say no to people helping or coming over when you need a break. Say no to traditional family holiday expectations or desires of others. Your time is just that, yours. Take ownership for your wellbeing.

5. Seek help.

Sometimes grief or hardships are more intense than one person should handle independently. Help and support for them can come in many ways. Grief groups, therapeutic services, medications, friends, and grieving resources are all examples of things that can be considered. Since the stronger emotional bonds between people can increase the intensity of the grief one experiences, it is natural to have times when outside interventions are needed. Sometimes people not immediately impacted by the loss or crisis can help identify needs and coordinate services. Seeking and accepting help is one of the most challenging yet healing steps toward healing from hardships and loss.

## Remote

Continued from Page 1

reconsider their support of suspending all high school activities, in particular boys' basketball. At a very minimum, please allow them to practice."

Later in the meeting, Marshall addressed the topic during his superintendent's report. He had included information concerning going remote in his report he finalized Dec. 9, two days before the decision was made for BHS to go remote. He said a week before his report went out, the high school attendance was terrific, with one or two staff member illnesses and a very small percentage of absences. But a week later, things had changed and the percentage was up as high as eight percent. The rising percentage of absences prompted discussions to begin between Marshall, BHS Principal Stacy Reed, BHS Assistant Principal/Activities Director Dave Watkins, school nurse Laurie Hermon and other administrators.

"We started to talk, we started to see the trend line not going well," Marshall said. "That's when we felt like we all agreed that remote learning was a must, because we were seeing numbers that were going in the wrong direction. We were just very concerned about the health safety of the whole building."

After making the decision to go remote, Marshall said administrators waited a day to discuss activities. His initial thought was if school is not on-site, then there are no activities, but his thought changed after he surveyed other superintendents via the statewide superintendents' list serve and found about 50 percent would allow activities to continue and 50 percent would not. Many who would allow activities to continue pointed out that if the reason for going remote is illness among staff members, it's unfair to suspend activities.

"When we looked at the attendance piece when we met Friday, we had some staff illness but we didn't have to go remote because of the staff illness so much," Marshall said. "It was the kids' illnesses that we were seeing, 6 percent, 7 percent, 8 percent. And we were told that 10 percent, the health officer would be looking to shut us down if we got to 10 percent."

Marshall said he and other administrators considered all programs as a whole and also considered the boys' basketball program individually and separately because that team was in quarantine.

"Everybody was involved in that decision ... we were all in discussion and we could fight it both ways," Marshall said. "When we got down to the final call ... I just had to do what I thought was best for the health safety of everybody. I don't want kids to be quarantined, I don't want families to be quarantined over Christmas break. I can tell you it wasn't easy. This is no fun at all, but you sometimes have to make decisions with the emotion taken out of it and you have to do what you feel like is best for everybody in regards to that health safety."

Board member Shane Fejfar asked about the school getting shut down if 10 percent of the student body was out sick. Marshall said Hermon said it was indicated to her in discussion. Coffey County Health Department Administrator Lindsay Payer, who attended the school board meeting, said it is not a policy.

Fejfar also asked if the student absence number was all sick kids or if quarantined kids were included. Marshall said it was all sick kids, and quarantined kids are not counted in that number.

Fejfar said it is reasonable that the high school went to remote learning but that he would like to see kids still play.

"They have done what we asked them to do and their risk is the lowest," Fejfar said.

Marshall said he's not had any emails, phone calls or visits from people upset about the change to remote learning at BHS. He also noted the kids' situation is not the only one to be considered in the decision.

"We have adults in the building that have health compromised issues," Marshall said. "I've got to be very careful of not only the kids but our staff. I've got to look out for everybody. Our students and our staff are the most important things for us. I didn't want anybody to go into the break with COVID-positive or potential quarantine situations."

Marshall said administrators chose to go remote and suspend all activities and it was agreed upon unanimously. He said after talking to parents, he spoke with Reed and Watkins.

"We did not waiver or change our thoughts,"

Marshall said. "If you guys decide to allow the practices to happen, that's fine. You can do that. It's not our recommendation to do so. If you change it and something bad happens - we have COVID positives, we have kids that are quarantined, or families, there's nothing good about that whatsoever."

Board member Stacy Augustyn remarked no matter which way you go, there will be somebody that's upset with whatever decision is made. She also said she trusts and respects the administrators' decision.

Board member James Higgins felt that, as board members, he and the board have responsibilities to the students and the staff and that administrators are hired for a reason - to make these decisions.

"They're on the ground floor, they're at the battlefield fighting that battle every day," Higgins said. "We're not. We're just out here having to have them give us the feedback and if they are doing something that is just absolutely out there, then it's time for us to step in and say no. I don't think right now at this point that they've done that. I think they've made some hard decisions. Unfortunately, it's not easy for anybody, and everybody is going to suffer."

"I hope that we don't end up circumventing our administrators on athletics because that's not right," board member Mike Thorp said. "I don't want to be put in that position. They made the decision because they thought it was best."

Reed indicated a lot of discussion went into making the decision and that his biggest thing was making things as normal as possible for the kids.

"That's what I've tried to do from day one, and I will continue to do that," Reed said. "I want their games, I want all of that ... and I think that's been shown with volleyball, football, all of those sports. The worst thing that's going on at that school right now is the club organizations are not able to do what they do because most of our schools aren't doing those. Everything else has kind of hovered along and then all of a sudden, it just hit, so there had to be some decisions made."

"I think you guys should be commended with how far we have made it because many districts have had these hard conversations weeks if not months before we've had to," Augustyn said. "You guys have done something right, and I really appreciate everything that you've put into this year so far keeping it as normal as you can for our kids. You guys have done a tremendous job."

Reed said the kids and staff have also done a tremendous job, and he's optimistic for the future.

Payer told the board there are some small changes that, if made, could reduce the number of kids in quarantine, such as having kids distanced or masked when not being physical and sprinting or having drills time-limited in practices, keeping kids together in the same group at each station in weightlifting and finding a solution to the diameter of the lunch tables being four inches short of the social distance requirement of six feet.

Watkins said he has met with coaches, and some protocols are being adjusted and masks have been purchased for wrestlers due to some scheduled events requiring a mask for the wrestlers to even step on the mat. He also reported all the affected games have been rescheduled, and an adjusted wrestling schedule is in the works.

"COVID is not a one size fits all decision," Marshall said. "You've got to constantly evaluate and reevaluate everything that we're dealing with and choices. We just had too many kids that were ill and that was going to jeopardize not only our kids but also our staff."

Both Marshall and the board indicated they appreciated parents giving them feedback and talking to them.

On-site learning and activities at Burlington elementary and middle schools continue as scheduled. BMS held its' Winter Concert for choir and band Dec. 14, with participants receiving four vouchers per family, and precautions including temperature checks, social distancing and requiring masks in place. The BHS Winter Concert was postponed and will be 6:30 p.m. Jan. 11, in the high school gym.

All seven board members were present for the discussion, Augustyn, Fejfar, Higgins, Thorp, Selena King and, via StarLeaf, Monique Hart and Lucas Allen. Along with Marshall, Reed, Watkins, Payer and Sloyer, others present were Board Clerk Tracey Moerer, Special Education Director Lindsey Graf, Assistant Technology Director Craig Kuhlmann, BMS Principal Matt Spring, BES Principal Darla Long and a few patrons.

## Tips on managing strong emotions this holiday

Amber Jewell, LMSW

LeRoy-Gridley USD 245

Grief. Sheesh, I hate having to say that word. I don't hate the word ... it is a diligent, softly toned one for the times it is used. I hate that we have times when we have to say this word, implying a history of the strongest emotion of love.

More than that, the holiday season resonates as a time of assumed joy and jolly while there so often is a looming emotion of grief, mourning and worried hearts. The year, more than any year before, we face a worldly time of uncertainty, insecurity and risks. Life is tough.

We all know this. And in no way do I ever want to diminish the intensity and genuineness of hard times. However, I also don't want the life story to end there.

Grief is a process. There is really no end to it, rather the format changes. And, amazingly, eventually, slowly, new flowers can bloom over the rotting, wrenching, wrecked roots of life. Not better, but different - because in times of hardship, life becomes different.

The question is still, how do we water the crappy roots? How do we persist on the garden of life when it is flooded with grief? How do we grow anything in a cold season? To help tough times become tolerable, here are a few tips.

1. Find your people. Grief and even holidays can be what feel like the most lonely times of our lives. However, it is the most essential time to find "your people." These are those people that won't judge

you. They get you. They hear you. They support you. Sometimes these people suddenly shine as they did not before. Greet that light in the darkness and find cushion in the people who offer it.

It is never the number of people we are or are not around. It is the relationship with those people that matter. If they reach out to you, sometimes we instinctively try to isolate ourselves and, unintentionally, separate from those we need most at the time. Fight that urge with acknowledging the difficulty in opening your door to them. Your people are the ones who will get that most.

2. And, value your alone time.

Being with your people does not mean you shouldn't allot time for yourself. Grief and loss is such a personal experience, sometimes it requires personal time. Find a place and time that feels safe for you to declare as time for you. And set a specific amount of time.

Appoint that time as time for whatever may come from you. It may be tears, memories, anger, quietness, contentment and so many more things. Be mindful of the moment and your worthiness of having that moment. When that time is over, remind yourself of having that time and place to return to but not live in.

3. Remove standards. Stigmas and standards can be the biggest downfalls of our uniqueness. When the pressures to try to meet them try to creep in - verbally, mentally, emotionally - push them away. Grief is not a straight line. Your feelings are not to be parallel to any others. Ac-

## SOUTHERN LYON COUNTY USD 252

### Audit report approved

OLPE — President Kevin Flott called the regular meeting of the Southern Lyon County USD 252 Board of Education to order at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 9 at the Olpe High School business classroom in Olpe.

Board members present included Flott, Steve Redeker, Emily Darbyshire, Gene Winkle and Charles Steffes. Board members absent were Jon Breshers and Rich Sleezer. Others in attendance were Superintendent Michael Argabright, Board Clerk Cassie Dieker as were Shane Clark, Doug Hes and Nick Orear. Visitor Harold Mayes attended via ZOOM.

Nick Orear answered technology questions from board members about equipment and remote learning.

The audit report was approved as presented by Harold Mayes from Agler & Gaeddert Chartered. Mayes answered questions from board members and Argabright.

Resignations from Lilly Stol-

fi and Rebecca Welcher as part-time Early Childhood Paras effective Dec. 1 were approved. Shambrea Stelle, part-time Early Childhood para without benefits, and Kelsey Kaemerer, full-time Early Childhood Para, were approved for hire. The motion to renew Argabright's contract was tabled to the January meeting. A total of 50 minutes were spent in executive session to discuss personnel pursuant to non-elected personnel exception under KOMA, with the Board and Superintendent present.

There were no changes made to the 2021-22 Crisis Plan presented by Argabright. The Crisis Plan will be in the January consent agenda for approval. Google Classroom continues to be down in the district. The problem is being worked on by engineers at Google and alternative platforms are being considered. If the district adopts a new delivery platform, an additional in-service day(s) may be added to the January calendar

to help staff transition.

The district is in the approval process to become a rapid testing site. The priority at this time will be symptomatic staff and their families. CARES money expenditures approved included the purchase of upgraded technology equipment for remote instructional delivery in the amount of \$89,049.00 and cleaning and disinfecting equipment in the amount of \$38,657.70.

Consent agenda items approved included minutes from the regular board meeting held Nov. 10, bills payable in the amount of \$616,654.34, payrolls for Nov. 20 in the amount of \$162,989.89 and for Dec. 4, in the amount of \$175,484.63, financial reports, pledged securities, journal entries, board goal updates, SLCEF account balances, petty cash and activity reports, grant updates, Flint Hill Pest Control Contract for the 2020-21 school year, Parents as Teachers report and therapy dog information.

## Counseling center hosts effective fundraiser

CrossWinds Counseling and Wellness hosted its fourth annual Celebrate CrossWinds fundraiser "hybrid-virtual" style Nov. 5, bringing the total amount of donations strictly from individuals and businesses in the area to a total of \$103,375 for the nonprofit cause of mental health programs and services in Osage, Chase, Coffey, Greenwood, Lyon, Morris and Wabaunsee counties.

The fundraiser has been held annually to support the nonprofit mission of "providing the most dynamic, culturally sensitive, high-quality behavioral health care to the residents of the seven county area in the most effective, caring and efficient manner possible," according to Mi'Chielle Cooper, development specialist

at CrossWinds Counseling. "CrossWinds Counseling and Wellness, a nonprofit Community Mental Health Center, has demonstrated its commitment to improving mental wellness and making the community stronger together since 1960. CrossWinds providers and staff believe a client's care is not just the guidance provided but also the relationships built with them over time," Cooper said.

CrossWinds provides individuals with the tools they need to manage the circumstances of everyday life and during the "Year of COVID-19," that task has been daunting for providers, staff and clients alike.

"The center implemented programs, services and protocols to help clients and com-

munity members cope with these stressors in a healthier way, with the intention of making the people we all care about and our community more resilient," Cooper said. "This virus has sparked global concern about the mental health crisis and the call to action to address the psychological suffering brought on by the pandemic. The funds raised this year have been instrumental in keeping key programs and services operational and shoring up other reserves where losses were experienced because of the virus."

For additional information, or to make a donation to CrossWinds Counseling and Wellness, call (620) 208-3027 or email mcooper@crosswindsks.org.

