

# Harvard, July 4, 1948

by Burke Cochran

This image was taken in Harvard, during a Fourth of July parade in 1948.

Even though this image depicts events seventy years ago, it draws strong similarities to events held today. Belvidere's Heritage Days Parade, lining State Street with floats, is reminiscent of the flowing white float showered with flowers in this picture. The women on the float are reminiscent of Boone County Fair Pageant winners, who attend community events throughout the year. Both parades are followed with fireworks shows at dusk. Heritage Days, however, was not celebrated back in 1948. The only holiday event in Boone County was a community picnic held in Poplar Grove, that was organized by religious and social groups at the time. One of the closest firework displays was in Harvard.

The car, the most prominent feature in the image, boasts a banner promoting fireworks hosted by Starline, a former manufacturer in Harvard. The factory has long been repurposed, but at the time this picture was taken, Starline manufactured over 50 products used in the surrounding agricultural area. The original name of the factory was Hunt, Helm, Ferris & Company, but it was renamed after local farmers started calling it the "star line" of farming equipment. The company held over 250 patents on machinery used to streamline work on the farm. Today, after being saved from demolition, the factory is a destination for artists, and is used for weddings and other gatherings. In 2017, Belvidere North High School hosted its prom there.

It's surprising to see that the Starline Factory, an important part of young people's lives in the 1940s

by hosting the fireworks display, continues to be present in the lives of the youth today, by being the site of a dance. This is especially true when compared to the fates of the other businesses showcased. The building that housed Gambles, the furniture store to the far left of the photograph, is currently home to an Ace Hardware Store. Vilmain's, a small, locally owned grocery store run by Clifford Larson of Belvidere and Joseph Vilmain, is now occupied by a company that produces awards. None of the businesses in the picture are still present in the area today, yet the Starline Factory still plays an important role some seventy years later.

Perhaps more enticing, however, is the steadfast and unchanging nature of the event itself, beyond location or other specifics. There is a comfort that is presented alongside tradition. The notion of a continued participation in such a celebration conjures a nostalgic feeling that the activity being participated in is one that has been done for generations, and will continue to be done for many more. But this same thought process tends to overlook and be complicit in many things which, arguably **should** have changed. While the jovial atmosphere of community traditions keeps everything homelike, it also can oppose progress. Maybe the similarities seen between then and today aren't always a good thing.

One tradition that comes most to mind is that of the beauty pageant. One tradition that comes most to mind is that of the beauty pageant, particularly those with swimsuit competitions. Proponents of these pageants often hail it as a way for teaching young women to build confidence; nevertheless, pretty much every piece of writing on the subject has shown the exact opposite. Experts agree that it negatively impacts self-esteem, body image, and self worth. This is corroborated by a study in 2005 which also found that former beauty pageant contestants had higher rates of body dissatisfaction well into adulthood. These activities have been proved to have negative outcomes, and the beauty pageants continue on for the sake of tradition.

These old-time traditions bring about questions about traditions, even ones as simple as a parade on the Fourth of July. Is it a positive sign that these traditions are so recognizable? Should traditions, too, be subject to the some of the same drastic changes that day-to-day life has seen in the past decades? Or are unwavering events important to remember what led life to where it is today?

# BOONE COUNTY LOCAL NEWS, OPINION & HISTORY JOURNAL

Real Journalism for a Real Democracy

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## Draft Comprehensive Plan Released

A Draft of the Boone County 2028 Comprehensive Plan was released Monday, June 25 by Hillary Rottmann. The document is posted on Boone County's website at <http://www.boonecountyil.org/content/boone-county-comprehensive-plan-2028>. Comments from the public are solicited and may be sent to the planning department by mail or by email to [complan2028@boonecountyil.org](mailto:complan2028@boonecountyil.org). After feedback is compiled from the review period, the final draft of the document will go through the formal adoption steps of the Boone County Planning Commission including a public hearing before the Commission. It will then be considered by the County Board. Public meeting dates for review and discussion have yet to be determined.

The Journal will present an analysis of the plan in a subsequent issue.

## Solar Energy In Boone County

By Sofi Zeman

By the year 2050, the population of Earth is expected to reach 9.7 billion people. Compared to today's approximately 7.3 billion, this is a substantial increase within a very short time frame. In a continuously growing world, the use of electrical energy has become vital to modern society. Nonrenewable resources are limited and cannot be expected to sustain an entire planet of consumers in the long run. The use of renewable resources has been on the rise in the past few decades in hopes of bringing clean, efficient, long-lasting energy to the world. Among the various forms of renewable energy is solar, which draws on energy from the sun to generate electricity. Solar energy has become a popular alternative to nonrenewable energy in communities across the globe. A common form of channeling solar energy is by placing panels on top of homes. However,

this is typically a project performed by an individual household rather than an entire community. In an agricultural communities such as our own, solar farms have become a popular method of obtaining clean energy in Midwestern communities.

Solar farms are able to service both agricultural and city life styles by generating energy that can be purchased by the public. In many cases, solar farms are community funded projects. To begin a project such as this, members of a town branch out within their communities, partially funding the installation themselves and seeking others to help pay for the cause. Investors receive credit for the energy that is produced from the installation they funded. This credit is typically put towards reducing the cost of their electric bills. This gives entire communities an opportunity to take part in the building of the farms and benefit from the produced energy. Solar farms have also proven to be a much cleaner source of energy, because they do not give off non-disposable waste, unlike coal or nuclear energy.

What does any of this have to do with us?

Recently, Boone County has caught the attention of two solar power engineering companies. Both ForeFront Power and Syncarpha Solar have devised plans to place two separate solar farms in the Bonus and Spring townships, respectively. The construction process is expected to take two to three months and will be performed by both the companies and local contractors. Both farms are expected to generate about 2 megawatts of energy, which is enough electricity for each solar farm to fully power approximately 300 homes. Similar to other community solar programs, the public will be able to utilize the energy by subscribing to an installation. ForeFront presented their case at the Boone County Planning Commission on June 19, where they requested a special use permit for the land that they wished to build and operate their solar energy development on. Syncarpha also requested a special use permit at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting on June 26, where they answered the public's questions on the impacts of solar farms in Boone County. Two major concerns came from the noise that would be generated from the farms, as well as the impact that

*continued on page 3*

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## Morton Irving Silver

Morton Irving Silver, age 95, life-long resident of Belvidere; Owner of Louis Silver Scrap Iron & Metal Yard past away on June 26, 2018. He served honorably in the United States Army during WWII and was the beloved husband for 57 years of Elaine, nee Katz formerly of Chicago; loving father of Jay (Maida) Silver and Loren Silver; adored grandfather of Noah Benjamin and Zoey Esther Silver; devoted son of the late Louis and the late Dorothy Silver; cherished brother of six, who preceded Morton in death. The Silver Family will receive condolences at their Belvidere residence on Sunday, July 1st, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.. In lieu of flowers, contributions to The ARK, [www.arkchicago.org](http://www.arkchicago.org). For address or additional information contact The Goldman Funeral Group, [www.goldmanfuneralgroup.com](http://www.goldmanfuneralgroup.com) (847) 478-1600.

❧ **Obituaries** ❧

Gardner, Craig, 59, Belvidere, June 16  
Mielke, Rhonda, 63, Belvidere, June 20  
Schrader (Emanuel), Karen, 64, Belvidere, June 18  
Silver, Morton, 95, Belvidere.



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*David Grimm April 1938 - Dec. 2000*  
*Richelle Kingsbury Aug. 1955 - June 2013*

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Each week, the Journal seeks to present a variety of voices.  
**Letters.** Every attempt will be made to print all letters received with the exception of those that are libelous or obscene. Letters should be signed and include an ID or phone number, so that we can contact the author prior to publication to verify authenticity.  
**Guest columns.** Community leaders are encouraged to submit guest columns consistent with our editorial guidelines for possible inclusion in the Journal.  
**Opinions.** The opinions expressed in the Journal are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Boone County Journal management or ownership.

## Sister Cities Ambassadorships a Learning Opportunity

by Burke Cochran

Every year, Belvidere's Sister Cities Association holds a youth exchange program between Belvidere, Vaux-le-Penil, France, and Schwieberdingen, Germany.

Students from any Boone County school are eligible to apply for the youth ambassadorship position in January. After submitting an application that includes recommendations from teachers or peers, as well as a personal essay to indicating the applicant's motivation for applying for the position, students are given an interview at the city hall.

The pool of applicants is narrowed to four students. Two of the students will serve as youth ambassadors to France, and two to Germany. Each will stay for two weeks a host family in the country. To fund travel, the Belvidere Sister Cities Association also awards a stipend of \$1,500 to each ambassador.

Schwieberdingen, Germany is a small German town in the state of Baden-Wurttemberg. It is only a short distance from Stuttgart, the capital of the state. Schwieberdingen has around 10,700 citizens and the city was founded in 1304.

Previous ambassadors to the city do a variety of activities to learn more about the culture and history of the town. Ambassadors attend a meeting at the mayoral office of the town where they greet the town's representatives and are given different memorabilia of Schwieberdingen. The Sister Cities chair from Germany also takes the students on a day trip to the French town of Strasbourg, where the ambassadors take a boat tour viewing several of the famous landmarks located in the city. Also organized by the German chapter, the students explore a castle called "Hohenzollern" which used to be home to a dynasty of different ruling families in German history. Even day-to-day activities like grocery shopping or eating meals integrate students into German culture with their host families.

Vaux-le-Penil, France is a town in France located along the Seine River, which also flows through Paris. Vaux-le-Penil has a population of around 11,400 and is only an hour trip to Paris.

Previous ambassadors to spent several days touring around Paris and its famous landmarks. Last year's ambassadors visited the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, Champs-Elysées, and the Arc de Triomphe. Outside of Paris, the students went to local beaches, and took a group trip to an indoor obstacle course with French teenagers.

Ben Maxey, a youth ambassador who went to France in 2017 said, "The trip was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. It was a great educational opportunity to be exposed to a different culture like that, and I made lifelong friends with Alex, the French student, who I stayed with."

After the students from Belvidere finish their trips abroad, they return along with youth ambassadors from Schwieberdingen and Vaux-le-Penil. Two teens from each of the cities spend time in Belvidere with another host family. Normally, the host families are the families who had students sent abroad, thus completing the exchange.

The students from Europe spend time meeting the Mayor of Belvidere and exploring its Belvidere's many attractions, most notably the Boone County Fair. They also attend a trip, along with the Sister Cities Association, to Chicago to see landmarks, such as Navy Pier and Water Tower Place.

This year four more students will be headed off to the two European nations. Going to France are Alex Avila, a rising senior in the running start program through Rock Valley College, and Theresa Weiss, a student at North Boone high school. Going to Germany are Chelsey Recendez, another running start student, and Ana Valenzuela, a recent graduate from Belvidere North High School.

This program is an important experience for the students of Belvidere. Many students don't get the opportunity to even travel across the United States, much less go to another country. These experiences help a student grow as a person and become more culturally aware. Ambassadors walk away from the program with an advanced knowledge of the workings of another culture, and ties that will last a lifetime.

## Letter to The Editor

Editor,

A summary at the presentation we made at the City council meeting Monday, June 18, 2018:

I thanked the Council, elected and appointed officials and volunteers and General Mills all working together to make a park happen at Christi Lane and High Line Drive.

I asked the Council to name the park for Mayor Francis "Dutch" Whalen. If Dutch were alive today he would've been at Christi Lane and High Line Drive helping make the park happen.

He was a hands on person

He was of the people

He was for the Community

He was a good man.

Concluding I answered the question of what I wanted to see happen by stating:

1) Name the park for "Dutch"

2) Develop the park fully- have a plan- hire an architect.

3) Get the Park District to accept the park, maintain it and provide programs-NOW!

City Government works well. It saw a need and has stepped up making a park happen. Thank you to all the people involved in making a park happen. If you'd support naming the park for Dutch call the Mayor, call your Alderman- let them know!

Thank you,

Andrew Racz

Belvidere Illinois

### Wants to Do What?

Several years ago, Joe Sosnowski focused his legislative efforts on cutting in half the number of days Illinois residents could visit tax-exempt museums in Chicago for free. Now Sosnowski is urging Congress to make Chicago the 51<sup>st</sup> state. He is supposed to represent and help the people of his district and this is the best he can do? There is important work that needs to be done in his district and in the state and rather than take on those issues and resolve them, Joe wants to avoid them altogether and gerrymander state boundaries.

This idea would be an extremely large administrative undertaking and a much bigger expense. In case he slept through the discussions in Springfield regarding Illinois' financial situation, the state owes \$83 billion in pensions, \$15.5 billion in bonds, and \$54 billion in retiree health benefits. Illinois can't and will not be able to afford this idea for a long time, so why bring it up?

Illinois' population is 12.8 million, Chicago's is 2.7 million. Cook County would still be Illinois' most populated county and one of the most populated counties in the nation with 2,522,000. Why doesn't he want to make Cook County the 52<sup>nd</sup> state? Populations are similar.

The real reason Sosnowski wants to gerrymander state boundaries is because the largest percentage of people leaving the state are from downstate counties. We need to get him out of office and bring in new leadership that will do something productive.

Wayne Borchardt

## Library Appoints Interim Director

The Ida Public Library has appointed Ashley Bryant as Interim Director. A search is being conducted for a permanent Director. Bryant has been with the library since September 2017, when she became the assistant director. Prior to coming to Belvidere, she was a technical services and interlibrary loan librarian for the St. Louis College of Pharmacy. She is the former Youth Services Manager for the Wood River Public Library.

Bryant lives with her husband and pets in McHenry. She will receive her Master of Library Science this December from the University of Missouri.

**Solar***from page 1*

the glare from the panels would have. Both companies reassured their audiences that the sound generated would be barely audible to nearby residents. They also pointed out that the material that the panels are made out of has been developed to produce little-to-no glare, which raises no safety concerns.

Due to some minor revisions to the general plans, both projects are still up for further discussion. It seems that the county has not yet made a definite decision, but is willing to move forward with the project, given that some modifications are made.

## Community News & Events

**“Summer Madness” One-Man Show by Richard Meeks-** Saturday, June 30, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. Located at Emanuel Lutheran Church (920 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Rockford, Illinois. \$5.00 donation at the door. Contact 815-621-5329 for more information.

**Games, S’mores & The Great Outdoors it’s Time For Summer Day Camp-** Summer is just around the corner! At the Genoa Park District, we create an exciting, safe environment for kids to have an unforgettable summer. Canoeing, Gardening, Library Visits, Hiking, Kids in the kitchen and so much more. Contact Doug at (815)784-5612 or email at [dougk@genoaparks.com](mailto:dougk@genoaparks.com) for more information

**33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Heritage Fair-** The McHenry County Historical Society & Museum will host its 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Heritage Fair from 9 a.m. To 4 p.m. Sunday, July 8, at the museum, 6422 Main Street. For additional information, visit [www.gothistory.org](http://www.gothistory.org) or call 815-923-2267.

**Summer Football and Cheer Camp-** July 9, 10, 11 & 12 at the Athletic Barn (13251 Walnut Street, Genoa, Illinois) from 5-8 PM. Come join football and cheer coaches and players for some summer conditioning before the season starts! Cheerleaders learn some of our cheers and motions. Save your spot by emailing or texting Kirsten Mcpeek 630-926-7006 or [gkmcfootball@gmail.com](mailto:gkmcfootball@gmail.com). Open to all teams/players & cheerleaders. Need not be enrolled in our regular season program to participate.

**Come Kayak & Canoe The Kish!** Saturday, July 14, 2018. 9:00-3:00 P.M. Come join us for free community event brought to you by the Kishwaukee Valley Wanderers, along with the city of Genoa and the Genoa Area Chamber of Commerce. Email [info@genoaareachamber.com](mailto:info@genoaareachamber.com) for more information.

**St. John’s United Church of Christ** – Members of St. John’s will be volunteering on July 16 and 21<sup>st</sup> at the Burlington Hampshire Food Pantry in Hampshire.

**Homegrown & Homemade Genoa Market-** Buy Fresh, Buy Local. Located in the City Parking Lot (Corner of Route 72 & S. Genoa St.) Live Music, Fresh Produce, Kids Activities, Tastings and More! 4th Saturday Of every month starting : July 28, August 25 and September 22<sup>nd</sup>. From 9:00am-2:00pm.

## Not Just Sewing Machines – The Eldredge Bicycle

*By Jeri Durley*

In early 1894 National sewing machines were rolling off the assembly line at a steady pace. From the company’s move to Belvidere some six years earlier, the constant innovation, improvement, perfection and popularity of its sewing machines had grown to the point of having earned an incomparable reputation with both dealers and the general public. So when the idea of diversifying and adding another type of product was considered, it was this reputation that gave the National Sewing Machine Company the confidence to begin the manufacture of bicycles.

Having moved beyond a “novelty”, by 1894 the bicycle had evolved into a fairly popular form of transportation – for daily use as well as for sport. The first fledgling efforts into this new product for the National were “looked upon with favor by both the big dealers and the public.” As a matter of fact, they were so cordially received that “the company concluded to at once commence their manufacture on a large scale.

In August, 1894 the Freeport Bicycle Manufacturing Company was purchased by the National and moved

to a three-story brick building just east of the foundry. The company’s one idea was in manufacturing the two wheeled product that it should be “near the acme of perfection, from a mechanical standpoint, as it were possible to make.”

The bicycles sold “like hotcakes”. As a matter of fact, the “wheels” sold so well that it became necessary to increase the number of employees utilized in this enterprise from 25 to 100 – but even so, the company could not keep up with the orders.

In 1895, the National manufactured and sold 10,000 bicycles. The product was mentioned in “leading newspapers” of the time and dealers who handled the National bicycle were enjoying record sales. It quickly became obvious that more space was needed for manufacture.

A “mammoth three-story building fronting on State Street, with wings at each end connecting with the old building” was built specifically for the manufacture of bicycles. The building added 100,000 additional square feet of floor space and allowed a production capacity of “60,000 bicycles per year, if run year around. Orders were booked ahead for 38,000 bicycles to be “made and delivered between November 1, 1895 and July 1, 1896.

The bicycles manufactured at this time were the “Belvidere” and “Eldredge”(male and female version). The two bicycles came in fifty different styles and varying weights. NSMC bicycles were some of the highest quality bicycles made at this period.

In 1898 an Eldredge bicycle won the National Six-Day Bicycle championship at Madison Square Garden in New York. According to a brochure put out by the National – “they were always quality machines, one that a man could be as proud to work on as he was proud to own.” Attesting to this statement was the price of the wheeled product – up to \$150. Not exactly chump change for the time.

## Plan Adds Administrative Spending to State Report Card

*By Benjamin Yount | Illinois News Network*

Illinois’ State Report Card has all sorts of information about students and schools. It doesn’t have much information about school administrators. But that could change.

Illinois’ State Report Card can tell parents all sorts of things about students, from reading proficiency and math scores to how many are chronically absent.

When it comes to principals, superintendents, and other administrators, the Report Card only shows one salary and two ratios.

State Rep. David Olsen, R-Downers Grove, wants to change that. His plan to have schools publish the true costs of administrators made it through the Illinois House and Senate this spring.

“If administrative costs are more than in other districts, why is that? There may be a good reason,” Olsen said. “But let’s prompt those questions so they can be asked.”

Olsen said parents, particularly those new to a school district, use the Illinois State Report Card to help them find the best school. He also wants parents to be able to use the Report Card to make sure they are getting the most out of their schools.

“I think, absolutely, we need to do more to make people aware of the State Report Card,” Olsen said. “Because it is a great wealth of data that helps the public hold their school boards and school districts accountable.”

L a w m a k e r s unanimously approved the plan, SB3236, in the spring legislative session. Gov. Bruce Rauner’s office has not yet said what he will do with the legislation.

## Part of the Solution

By Scott Reeder

SPRINGFIELD – There is no more depressing place to be than in a prison visiting room when children come to see their mom or dad.

During my 30 years as a journalist, I’ve found myself in many state prisons waiting to interview inmates. Watching youngsters run across a room to hug a father or mother they haven’t seen for months is heart rending.

Thirty years ago, I spent Mother’s Day in a women’s prison working on a feature on the children of the incarcerated. The children visiting their mothers that day wanted the same thing all kids want: love and attention.

Unfortunately, with a parent behind bars, attention is hard to come by.

There may be some hard-hearted souls out there who say, “Who cares? These people committed a crime and they deserve to suffer.”

But here’s the deal: Their children didn’t commit a crime. And they, too, are suffering.

In recent days, a lot of attention has been paid to what is happening on the Mexican border. The abhorrent policies being pursued by the federal government have resulted in many shattered immigrant families.

What is happening there is tragic and wrong, a national shame.

I am in no way trying to create a “yardstick of pain” comparing the suffering of one group to another. Any time a child is separated from a parent, it is heartbreaking.

But this tragic situation highlights the problems with forcibly separating parents and children.

I’ll be the first to admit that there are some violent people who belong behind bars. But this nation locks up entirely too many people. In fact, we lock up a higher percentage of our citizens than any other country.

“It’s taking a financial, emotional and societal toll,” says state Rep. Kelly Cassidy, the leading criminal justice reform advocate in the Illinois General Assembly.

The Chicago Democrat knows the pain incarceration brings to families all too well. Her sister and two nephews have been locked up on drug charges.

“It’s critical that families be kept intact. When inmates leave prison, they need a support system that will keep them from re-offending,” she said.

Not only that, but the kids benefit from continuing the relationship.

Perhaps the best option for fostering these parental bonds is to reduce the number of people being incarcerated.

For many, mental illness has contributed to minor brushes with the law. For some, community-based mental health care may be an appropriate option. For others who have committed non-violent offenses, in-home detention may be a worthwhile alternative.

And let’s face it, we live in a nation that has too many laws on the books.

The Wall Street Journal has cited the work of Boston civil-liberties lawyer Harvey Silverglate, who contends the average American unwittingly commits three felonies a day because of vaguely written laws.

It’s time Illinois addresses meaningful criminal justice reform, if not for the incarcerated, for their families.

Scott Reeder is a veteran statehouse journalist. He works as a freelance reporter in the Springfield area and produces the podcast Suspect Convictions.

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# THE BOONE COUNTY JOURNAL

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## --In Our Opinion--

Picking up a copy of the Rockford Register Star on Father's Day left us feeling as if we had a pit in our stomachs. We read that only 17 percent of third graders in Rockford are reading at grade level. That means that more than four of every five children in Rockford can't read!

The numbers in Boone County aren't much less dismal. In both Boone County school districts, well over two thirds of third graders are reading below grade level. Twenty years from now, this group will represent the largest cohort of the 28-year-old working population of Belvidere, Illinois. Two-thirds of whom can't read.

What is to become of Boone County? The prognosis is grave and the forecast says "ghetto."

Today, we preach to the choir. Those reading this editorial can read. We know the importance of literacy. Sadly, a majority of our fellow Boone Countians apparently do not.

A recent editorial in the Register Star recited the consequences of illiteracy. They noted that this is not a new problem in this region; it is one that has been troubling Rockford for decades. Their editorial staff concluded that fixing this problem will require a long-term commitment. We agree wholeheartedly.

This one can't be blamed on the school district. The schools and teachers aren't responsible for the development of a child before he or she sets foot on the schoolhouse steps. If a child has not been read to by the time he or she is age five, nor taught the basics of reading by the time Kindergarten rolls around, even the best school district is being asked to work miracles.

So who is to blame?

The problem lies squarely with the parents. As a group, they have not read to their children and have not taught them the basics.

They'll tell us they are too busy, as they fidget with their cellphone, looking at pictures of cat tricks on the Face Book, or that they are too tired as they crash in front of the boob tube. Or worse, they tell us that they are "not into reading," which is usually accompanied with a nervous, hyena-like giggle.

For making the problem worse, we can fairly blame Boone County for denying library cards to about half the county's children.

We can also lament that we are stuck with the Rockford Television Market. Honestly, who ever heard of an American city that didn't have a single PBS station available over the airwaves? Can we even pretend with a straight face that the license holders of the Rockford TV stations are broadcasting in the public interest? Airing 1960s sitcom reruns instead of quality children's television programming? Chicago, by contrast, has more than a half-dozen PBS offerings. Madison has four. Oscar the Grouch isn't the only unhappy camper.

It is going to be up to us, the readers in Boone County to make the difference. We can work diligently to remediate our children's current reading deficiencies, but that alone is not going to solve our problem:

We have to change the culture.

□ We must convince our fellow Boone Countians that emulating the traditional factory culture of the Rockford Region is not an option. In the Twenty-first Century, "there's always the trades" won't work. Factories expect their employees to be able to read. Skilled tradesmen are expected to be literate and often have more than a Grade 12 education. Jobs that don't require an education have largely been automated.

□ In today's paper, we are publishing an article to help parents teach their children to read. We are taking a positive tone and have listed several sources of help. While we realize that the parents we are speaking of are not necessarily reading a newspaper, it's at least a start.

□ We have one advantage. Teaching a child to read costs next to nothing. It doesn't require fancy equipment (other than something called a "book"). It doesn't require overpaid consultants or million-dollar programs. It is the most efficient economic development initiative that we could possibly implement.

□ As we desperately search for an effective means to persuade the Boone County populace to read to their children, our elected leaders, officials, schools, the library and the business community must stand together on this issue. This should go without saying.

□ Finally, the library is our first and best defense against the illiteracy that is threatening our prosperity. We have said it before, and we will say it again. Boone County needs a unified library district with universal access. It amazes us that this proposition is at all controversial.

Right now, Belvidere has a library with about 15,000 square feet. A city of Belvidere's size should have a library of 25,000 square feet. Boone County needs about 60,000 square feet of library space. While we make do with what we have, there is no reason why we should not have adequate, modern library facilities for both children and adults. Compared to the cost of illiteracy or what is spent on other functions of government, the cost of providing a library is a pittance.

We reiterate that it's up to us who can read to make the difference. No amount of grandiose planning will do any good without reading literacy. The children of Boone County are depending on us.

and have generously-sized children's departments. Naturally, children's books can also be purchased online.

But the best resource of all? The Library. The librarian's services are provided free of charge, and those with library cards can borrow books for their children without breaking the bank. Even those who live outside of a library district can use the library's facilities and are generally welcome to attend and participate in library programs.

To help with this article, we reached out to the Ida Public Library in Belvidere. It should come as no surprise that the Interim Chief Librarian, Ashley Bryant, recommended a book for advice! Mem Fox's *Reading Magic* is a helpful, easy-to-read manual that explains reading to children and gives great advice to parents who are eager to read to their children. This book is a very-popular guide and widely available, including at the Ida Public Library. Also, the librarians are always there to help parents teach their children to read and have many, many other resources available.

Like Mem Fox, Ashley Bryant recommends using voices for the characters in a story. Be dramatic. Teach rhyming skills. It builds vocabulary and helps children learn words like cat, hat, rat, mat and sat.

Angela Bennett, Ida Public Library Manager of Youth Services, recommends singing songs to and with your children. Your preschool child who loves you is not going to be critical of your off-key solo. She also suggests playing games with your children. Count the monkeys in the picture. Ask "Can you find the 'o' in that word?" Make it fun. If they don't like a book, put it down and try another. If they are throwing a fit, do something else. And take a book along to the doctor's office. An otherwise boring wait can be constructively used as a chance to read and goes a long way toward calming an anxious child.

Ms. Bennett says to read everything to your children: signs, cereal boxes, the menu at McDonald's. (Yours truly learned his letters and numbers on the juke box at the coffee shop across the street.)

Reading needs to start long before school. Once children go to school, it's almost too late. Children should be used to being read to by age 5. Many children will already be able to read simple things at that age.

The Ida Public Library has a battery of year-round programs for children under 6 years old. In addition, summer reading programs are in full swing for older children. These programs do not require a library card. Other libraries have similar programs. And you can always read to your children at the library.

Ms. Bennett says not to stop just because a child is in junior high. Get into *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games*. Set an example--read to yourself!

But what if parents read and write a language other than English? Read to your children in any language. While mastery of English is important to fully participate in the life of Boone County, it's even more important to read. Every day, Quebec children in grade 4 read about the history of Canada. Whether they read it in English or French is irrelevant. You can't learn if you can't read.

After third grade and reaching age eight, reading to learn begins. At this age, one starts reading to learn who discovered America, and learn to find America on a map or globe. At this point, a child who can't read at grade level is at a serious disadvantage.

In a school setting, it quickly becomes obvious that the "bluebirds" can read better than the "redbirds." When a child can't read as well as his or her peers, the humiliation can turn off a child to reading for a lifetime.

If a child falls behind, and cannot read at grade level, all is not lost. Apparently, the majority of children in Boone County find themselves in this predicament. The library has many resources to help them. At the library, materials that will interest an older child, but written at a simpler level, are available.

The general strategy is to offer topics that will interest the child. Sports, cars, crafts or nature, for example. Perhaps captivating adventure stories. At a library, such materials can be borrowed or otherwise accessed in privacy. There is no rushing or pressure to complete a book. Gradually, reading deficiencies can be remediated.

### Help for adults

If you have trouble reading, or know someone who struggles, help is available for people of any age.

The Literacy Council offers confidential help free of charge. One-on-one tutors are available for those who read below high school reading level. For those who have reached that level, programs for higher-level learners are available through Rock Valley College and Goodwill.

If you, or someone you know speaks a different language and wants to learn English, the Literacy Council can help there, too. Classes are offered at a variety of learning levels.

To contact the literacy council, phone 815 963 7323.

The Literacy Council also appreciates donations and is always seeking volunteers.

## How To Teach Children To Read

by Charles Herbst

Teaching a child to read is one of the more pleasurable duties of responsible parenthood. It is a wonderful opportunity for children to bond with their parents for a lifetime.

Children do not come with an owner's manual. Being a parent can be a daunting task. So many sudden responsibilities. It's not necessarily always obvious what a good parent should do.

Mothers and Fathers teach children to read by reading to them. Every day. It's never too early to start. You can read to them right after they are born. It will set you in the habit and they will get used to hearing your soothing voice.

You don't have to be an expert or super parent. Your goal here isn't to create a little Einstein. You're reading simple things to your children, not giving a recitation on stage! All it takes is the love you have for your child and some dedication.

The most important thing to remember is that you are a parent--a friend--not a teacher. It's paramount that reading be kept fun and pleasurable. The quickest way to turn a child against reading is to make it a chore or force a child to read.

How long to read? Ten minutes at night is minimal. Twenty minutes a day is ideal. Bedtime is a good time to establish the habit. Have children read to you, especially if you are busy cooking or with some other chore. Or at least they can show you the pictures.

Where do you get material to read to your children? Many bookstores cater to youthful, beginning readers

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