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WEDNESDAY

SEPTEMBER 23, 2015

Career minded



Serena Black's second home is the billiards table, and the Warrensburg woman has a national championship to show for it. Her college plans include plenty of pool. **Sports B1**

Photo memories

Southern Illinois man devotes life to collecting, exhibiting pictures that draw visitors seeking out family members. **Life D1**

Hurting Illinois ag

Agriculture is being bled dry by ignorant state legislators, farm observer Stu Ellis explains. **Money A4**

College aid backed

Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs brings his campaign for saving Monetary Award Programs grants to Eastern Illinois University. **Local A3**

today's deal

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Lake Decatur level watch

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Yesterday's level614.65

YOUR WEATHER



HIGH **82** LOW **53**

Today: Mostly sunny
Tonight: Clear
Details/XX

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School board passes hopeful budget

Funding level from state remains unknown

VALERIE WELLS
H&R Staff Writer

DECATUR — The budget news at the Decatur school board meeting on Tuesday was cautiously optimistic. Todd Covault, chief operational

officer, told the board that the tentative budget was prepared with no information on what the general state aid level would be, and that had to be estimated. He learned shortly before the board meeting that the district is slated to receive \$2.9 million more than he anticipated, though that amount is not guaranteed. "I want to remind you that the

General Assembly has still not finalized a budget," he said.

The tentative district budget had a \$4.6 million deficit, which is now reduced to \$1.6 million if the state does approve the general state aid amount and if it is paid in full. In the past several years, the state reduced the amount actually paid. The board approved the final budget,

as required by state law, even when the General Assembly has not yet adopted a state budget.

In other business, the board approved a change in health coverage for district employees. The current health plan has a \$350 deductible and \$1,850 out-of-pocket expense, and Covault said

BOARD/A2

NEW HEALTH RESOURCE



Crossing Healthcare employees are reflected in the windows of the new facility while applauding during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the center.

Herald & Review photos, Jim Bowling

Pope raises plight of poor on U.S. visit

Will address Congress, U.N.

NICOLE WINFIELD AND RACHEL ZOLL
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — Pope Francis arrived Tuesday on the first visit of his life to the United States, bringing his "church of the poor" to the world's wealthiest superpower and a country polarized over issues closest to his heart: immigration, social injustice and economic inequality.

According a rare honor to the pontiff, President Barack Obama and his wife and daughters welcomed Francis on the red-carpeted tarmac at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, just outside the nation's capital, after the pope's chartered plane touched down from Cuba. Presidents usually make important visitors come to them at the White House.

Emerging from the plane to boisterous cheers from a crowd of hundreds, the smiling 78-year-old pontiff removed his skullcap in the windy weather and made his way down the steps in his white robes.

He was met by a military honor guard, schoolchildren, politicians and Roman Catholic clergymen in black robes and brightly colored sashes of scarlet and purple.

From there, the pope rode in a small Fiat as part of a motorcade bound for the Vatican diplomatic mission in Washington, where Francis will stay while in the capital.

During his six-day, three-city visit to the U.S., the pope will meet with the president, address Congress, speak at the United Nations in New York and take part in a Vatican-sponsored conference on the family in Philadelphia.

The Argentine known as the "slum pope" for ministering to the downtrodden in his native Buenos Aires is expected to urge America to take better care of the environment and the poor and return to its founding ideals of religious liberty and open arms toward immigrants.

During the flight, Francis defended himself against conservative criticism of his economic views. He told reporters on the plane that some explanations of his writings may

POPE/A2

More room to serve

Crossing Healthcare patients enjoy first glimpse

EMILY STEELE
H&R Staff Writer

DECATUR — For more than a week, Crossing Healthcare has been welcoming and directing patients around its new building. But on Tuesday, the community had a chance to celebrate the \$6 million facility that doubles access to health care for Macon County's low-income residents.

A large crowd gathered for the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony outside the new home of Crossing Healthcare, formerly CHIC, at 320 E. Central Ave. Area politicians, health care providers and community members came to see the state-of-the-art facility in person and tour the Schrodt Community Health Center.

"A lot of people don't get credit for helping us, but in one way or another, everyone who was here helped," said Dr. Joseph Schrodt, the building's namesake.

Inside, the center opens up into a large, centralized



CROSSING/A2 Visitors tour the extensive hallways of the new facility.

Governor holds off on 100 layoffs

Matter is left unsettled until court resolution

KURT ERICKSON
H&R Springfield Bureau Chief

SPRINGFIELD — Gov. Bruce Rauner is backing off plans to lay off more than 100 state workers next week as part of the

lingering budget standoff.

In an agreement with two labor unions representing the workers, the administration said it is waiting for the matter to work its way through the court system before deciding the next step.

"The administration believes legal proceedings will confirm that the agencies have properly followed the law in

executing these layoffs. We hope to reach a final resolution very soon," Rauner spokeswoman Catherine Kelly said.

Rauner had planned to jettison the workers Sept. 30 after he and Democrats who control the Legislature were unable to agree on a spending plan for the fiscal

LAYOFFS/A2



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