

Inside this issue

Return of Sports, Page 6-7

Alumni Spotlight, Page 8-9

Gameball Run, Page 16

709



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MORTON COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709 SERVING THE GROVELAND-MORTON AREA

Safe classrooms, successful outcomes

As we build a bridge back to normalcy this second semester, it can be instructive to reflect on our experience with the pandemic and to learn what we can from it.

Though our due diligence regarding COVID-19 gave us hope that we could safely provide in-person instruction, from the vantage of last summer, before classes started in August, it was impossible to know for sure, of course. There was much deliberation behind the decision at the time. Morton was among the few districts in the region and state to implement a regular schedule and stick with it. We certainly do not claim immunity to what happens in the outside world.

What do the numbers and the perspective that accompanies them tell us now?

Those of you who followed our health and attendance updates, which began in mid-August and have provided a weekly snapshot of our situation since, are aware that there were ups and downs.

The numbers ranged from zero student positives at various points in early October to a high of 31 on Nov. 2. Meanwhile, the number of quarantines ping-ponged from a

low of 17 on Oct. 19 to a high of 348 sent home for remote learning on Nov. 5. The vast majority of these were healthy quarantines, endured by those identified

through contact tracing as potentially being at risk.

The daily average from Aug. 17 until students left for Christmas break following classes on Dec. 18 was 9 positive diagnoses, 138 quarantines.

For staff, we achieved zero positives multiple times, with a high of 13 on Nov. 2. The quarantine peak for employees was 42 on Nov. 5.

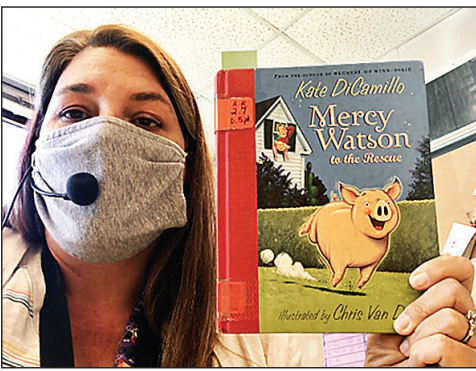
The first three months of the school year were smooth sailing, for the most part, to our relief and satisfaction. That changed in late October, when there were several cases at Lettie Brown Elementary School. District officials moved quickly to temporarily shut down two full grade levels there, then most of a kindergarten class at Ward Grundy, while shuttering Morton Academy to contain the spread. After an initial spike, the numbers settled back down.

Cumulatively, 191 different students received a positive COVID-19 diagnosis during the first semester. With approximately



JEFF HILL

Please see SAFE, Page 2



ABOVE: Beaming into first grade at Jefferson Elementary.
LEFT: Ms. Fisher, Grundy Elementary library aide, reads aloud to quarantined first-graders.

District Calendar

February

3 Early dismissal day

15 Presidents Day,
no school

March

3 Early dismissal day

5 Inservice Half day a.m., no
school p.m.

29-31 Easter Break, no school

April

1-5 Easter Break Continues,
no school

7 Early dismissal day

May

5 Early dismissal day

15 Morton High School

Graduation Ceremony, 10
a.m.

31 Memorial Day, no school

June

4 Last day for students, half-
day a.m.

7 No school: Teacher Insti-
tute Day

*Note: In the event that no
emergency days are used, May
20 would be the last student
attendance day and May 21 a
Teacher Institute Day.*

SAFE

Continued from page 1

2,900 students in our classrooms at any given time, that represents an infection rate of about 6.5 percent. In Tazewell County overall, more than 9 percent of residents have contracted the virus.

Meanwhile, there were 1,719 healthy student quarantines in total. More than a few students dealt with more than one stay-at-home order.

In all, 53 staff members came down with COVID. There were 201 quarantines, also with a few repeats.

In Morton District 709, among our primary goals is to act in the best interests of students for the long-term. From the get-go in this 2020-21 school year, we put into practice our belief that the controlled environment of the classroom is the most conducive to student learning, to student health, and to student happiness.

For the most part, the numbers cited above seem to confirm that the course we charted six months ago was the correct one, *for us*.

Now we must finish strongly, continuing our emphasis on masking and physical distancing while turning our immediate attention to vaccinations for staff.

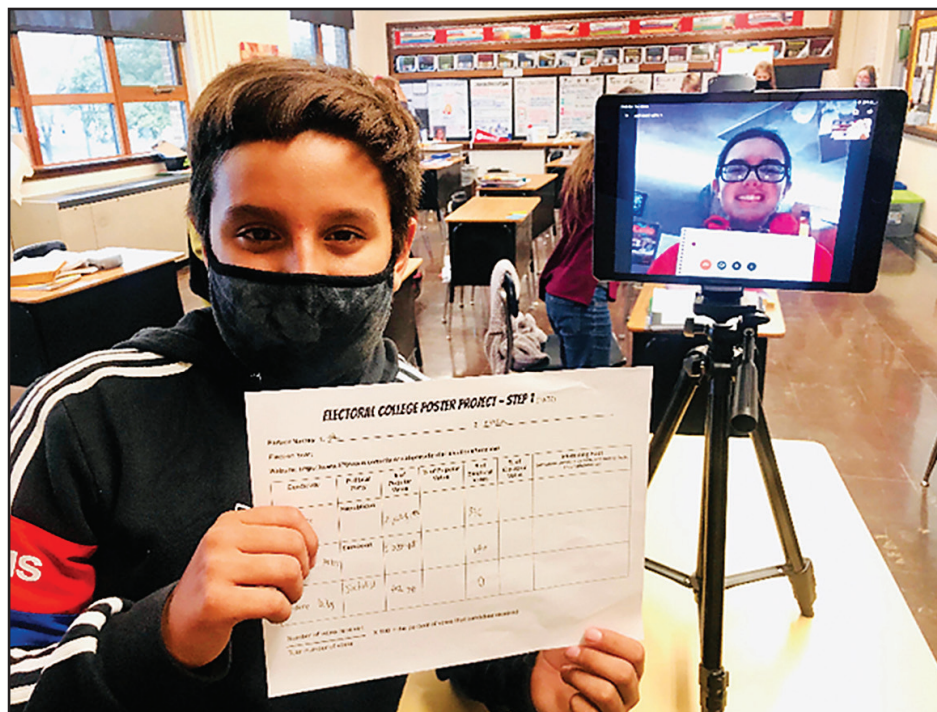
So far, about 80 percent of our employees are pursuing voluntary vaccinations through the Tazewell County Health Department. The process has not been without its hiccups, but as this is written, our teachers and other staff members who have responded admirably to every challenge we've thrown at them are again doing their part to make our classrooms even safer and more productive.

We are realistic but also optimistic that before this school year concludes, we can return to providing our kids the comprehensive educational experience they deserve and have every right to expect. That we have survived and somehow even thrived in this unforgettable school year is something from which we can derive confidence moving forward.

With humility, we note that we could not have done it without the trust, patience and cooperation of this community, for which we will be forever grateful.

Jeffrey W. Hill

Jeffrey W. Hill, Ed.D, Superintendent
Morton Community Unit District 709



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 1. A Jefferson 6th-grader works on Candy Corn STEM project. 2. A Moroccan-style art project at MJHS. 3. Jefferson 6th-graders study the Electoral College. 4. Ms. Bishop reads to 4th-graders at Brown. 5. Spreading the learning blanket at Grundy.

Morton School District 709 Directory

Morton 709 Education and Administration Center: 1050 S. Fourth Ave., Morton, IL 61550 — 263-2581



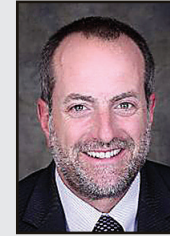
JEFF HILL

Superintendent:
Jeff Hill, Ed.D.
263-2581
(ext. 8099)



CRAIG SMOCK

Assistant Superintendent:
Craig Smock, Ed.D.
263-2581
(ext. 8098)



TROY TEATER

Director of Curriculum and Technology:
Troy Teater, Ed.D.
263-2581
(ext. 8045)



LINDSAY FRANKLIN

Director of Student Support Services:
Lindsay Franklin
284-8097



LISA KOWALSKI

Chief Financial Officer:
Lisa Kowalski
284-8025



RODNEY SCHUCK

Director of Operations:
Rodney Schuck
263-2581
(ext. 8005)



JULIE THARP

Transportation

250 W. Courtland
Morton, IL 61550
263-1086
Director of Transportation:
Julie Tharp

Morton Academy



AMANDA RICKENBERG

260 E. Queenwood
Road, Morton, IL
61550
Principal: Amanda
Rickenberg
Main Office: 284-8033

Morton High School



DEIDRE RIPKA

350 N. Illinois, Morton, IL 61550 — 266-7182
Principal: Deidre Ripka
Assistant Principals: Jamie Adolphson and Matthew Oyer
Assistant Principal/Athletic Director: Scott Jones
Reporting absence: 263-0611
Student Services: 263-0611
Guidance: 263-8585
Food Service: 263-7451

Morton Junior High



LEE HOFFMAN

225 E. Jackson, Morton, IL 61550
Principal: Lee Hoffman
Assistant Principal: Chris Carter
Main Office: 266-6522
Reporting absence: 284-5000

Lettie Brown



FAITH WATERFIELD

2550 N. Morton Ave.,
Morton, IL 61550
Principal: Faith
Waterfield
Main Office: 266-5309
Reporting absence:
284-1000

Grundy School



MICHAEL SAUNDERS

1100 S. Fourth Ave.
Morton, IL 61550
Principal: Michael
Saunders
Main Office: 263-1421
Reporting absence:
284-2000

Jefferson School



KATE WYMAN

220 E. Jefferson St.,
Morton, IL 61550
Principal: Kate Wyman
Main Office: 263-2650
Reporting absence:
284-3025

Lincoln School



JULIE ALBERS

100 S. Nebraska Ave.,
Morton, IL 61550
Principal: Julie Albers
Assistant Principal:
Michelle Peterson
Main Office: 266-6989
Reporting absence:
284-4000

District 709 Board of Education

President: Dr. Shad Beaty

First Elected: 2015; Term Expires: 2023
shad.beaty@mcusd709.org

Vice President: Jeff Schmidgall

First Elected: 2015; Term Expires: 2023
jeffrey.schmidgall@mcusd709.org

Secretary: Kevin Austin

First Elected: 2017; Term Expires: 2021
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Tim Braker

First Elected: 2019; Term Expires: 2023
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Dr. David Cross

First Elected: 2017; Term Expires: 2021
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Tom Neeley

First Elected: 1989; Term Expires: 2021
thomas.neeley@mcusd709.org

Bart Rinkenberger

First Elected: 2017; Term Expires: 2021
bart.rinkenberger@mcusd709.org

Contacting the board

Stakeholders in District 709 are encouraged to contact school board members at any time with questions, comments and concerns. Board members can be contacted by email through their individual email addresses listed above or as a group at **board@mcusd709.org**.

More information

More information about the Board of Education is available on our website – **www.morton709.org**. Board meetings are streamed live on the Internet and posted on Comcast Channel 20 and iTV3 Channel 21. Click on the MPTV logo on our website for a broadcast schedule and to go to the online streaming feature.



Photo Credit: Jacque Austin

District 709 Board of Education: Front row, left to right; Jeff Schmidgall, Dr. David Cross, and Tom Neeley. Back row, left to right; Bart Rinkenberger, Tim Braker, Dr. Shad Beaty, and Kevin Austin.

Mission

The Mission of the Morton District 709 Board of Education is to be a provider of and an advocate for the education of all children.

Goals

Achievement: In order to ensure all students have opportunities to achieve their potential, our academic programs will maintain the highest standards and expectations for learning.

Communication: Provide open and meaningful two-way communication with all members of our community.

Climate: Maintain a cohesive organizational system which facilitates and fosters a productive and trusting climate with a highly qualified staff.

Facilities: Provide facilities conducive to student learning and growth, based on evolving needs, with the support of the community.

Finance: Support student learning (which includes achievement, climate, facilities, and communication) in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Upcoming meetings

All Board of Education meetings are at the District Office, 1050 S. Fourth Ave. The School Board is scheduled to meet on the following dates:

2021

Feb. 2 — 5:30 p.m.
Feb. 16 — 5:30 p.m.
March 2 — 5:30 p.m.
March 16 — 5:30 p.m.
April 13 — 5:30 p.m.
April 20 — 5:30 p.m.
May 4 — 5:30 p.m.
May 18 — 5:30 p.m.
June 1 — 5:30 p.m.
July 6 — 5:30 p.m.

Morton's true 'problem-solver and collaborator'

Meet the person behind the camera bringing you sports, music and more on MPTV

If you hang around Morton schools much, or follow District 709 on social media, or are a fan of Morton athletics or band, it's likely you've encountered Brooke Janes at some point.

Even if you weren't aware of it, which is a testament to the quality of her work. Indeed, Janes, MPTV coordinator for the district, seems to be at everything, everywhere, making things happen while drawing little attention to herself, letting the results speak for themselves.

"Without her, we would not have had the means to produce and distribute all of our concerts, Madrigal, fall play, etc.," said Morton High School Principal Deidre Ripka. "She is a true problem-solver and collaborator."

"I don't think I've ever heard her say, 'We can't do that.' It's more like, 'Have you thought about it this way?'"

Never has that been more necessary than in the midst of a once-a-century pandemic, when new, creative approaches to doing things and going "virtual" became all but mandatory.

"Brooke Janes is *the* connection for our vocal ensembles to their audience this year," said MHS music teacher Heather Berger. "She made it possible for us to have a Madrigal Dinner in a reimagined way. We could not have done it without her. ... The music department and our district as a whole are very blessed to have her as a part of our team."

"She's such an unsung hero," said Morton High School Athletic Director Scott Jones. MPTV "is one of the best showcases for our athletes."

Alas, Saturday Night Live's loss was Morton's gain. Indeed, growing up in the small town of Evansville, Wis. – about a half hour south of Madison – Janes dreamed of someday working on the set of comedy's biggest stage. That



sent her on a search for colleges with a connection to the television networks, NBC in particular.

Lo and behold, Bradley University in Peoria, Ill., came up on a Google search.

"I don't think anybody from my high school ever went to Bradley," said Janes, a devout Green Bay Packers fan who suddenly found herself thrust into hostile Chicago Bears territory.

It wasn't long before TV sports production – "sort of my bread and butter" – supplanted comedy as her career ambition.

Still, when she graduated from Bradley in 2016 and began looking for a job, she never quite imagined that she would land

in Morton. There was a stint at WEEK-TV, then with the Peoria Chiefs baseball organization, all the while freelancing camera work at local sports contests and concerts. That soon led to a part-time gig doing events for District 709, which in 2017 became full-time.

Now she handles Morton's video work, recording and editing everything from sporting events to band competitions to School Board meetings, scheduling the Bertha Franks Performing Arts Center, managing two cable channels, keeping up with ever-changing technology, etc. She's built an elite program, recognized in the highest tier – about 10 percent of all schools –

by the NFHS Network.

Morton administrators "have allowed me to come in and do what I need to do to get the job done. I'm very thankful for that," said Janes, who would like to grow her team of volunteers and provide even more opportunities for students wishing to pursue television or journalism careers.

"We've built a nice little family," said Janes, for whom there's still nothing quite like "crushing a Friday football production" live from the trailer, especially on the road with all the pre-planning and teamwork that requires, and then the satisfaction and adrenaline rush that come after.

Of course, it doesn't always go smoothly.

She recalls being at a post-season girls basketball road game when suddenly the generator powering the trailer went silent during the live broadcast.

"I know so many people are tuning in. My heart just dropped," she said. "There's no time to dwell on it. I used my cell phone to put up a message that we were having technical difficulty. Eventually we got it back up and just held our breath."

Of course, the unexpected is also what keeps the job "interesting."

She marvels at the community support in Morton for the school district's athletic, music and arts programs.

"What I'm most proud of is that I can help this community receive such an amazing showcase of what we have to offer," said Janes. "At concerts, we get thousands of people who tune in. It's really an important thing."

The hours can stack up – "there are a lot of puzzle pieces to put together to make it work" and "I don't say 'no' to things" – but she wouldn't have it any other way.

"It's amazing. I don't know where I would find this anywhere else," said Janes. "I work hard because I love what I do, and I just want to represent the school well."

Let's play ball!

Athletes, coaches, fans thrilled by return of sports

There will be a high school sports season, after all.

With COVID-19 cases down and vaccinations being rolled out, the Illinois High School Association, along with the Illinois Governor's Office, have decided that it's safe for teenagers to play their games. Many surrounding states had already reached that conclusion.

There will be a winter season, a spring season, and a summer season, though some activities -- such as football, normally a fall sport -- will be played out of turn.

Where Morton District 709 is concerned, winter sports include boys and girls basketball, boys swimming, and cheerleading and dance. Those activities will begin immediately and end in mid-March.

Spring sports include football, boys soccer, girls volleyball, and cheerleading and dance. Their respective seasons will run from early March through mid- to late April.

Finally, summer sports will include boys baseball, girls softball, track and field, girls soccer, boys tennis, and wrestling. For most of those, the season will begin the first week of April and end the third week of June.

"We understand the high level of anticipation ... along with the scrutiny that will accompany it," said IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson. "Ultimately, the Board adhered to its stated goals throughout the pandemic: providing an opportunity for every IHSA student-athlete to compete safely this year and maximizing opportunities for traditional IHSA spring sports after they lost their entire season a year ago."

Not everyone will be happy with the outcomes for their specific sports, but the IHSA Board was "conscientious in considering every possibility and I believe their decisions ... are a positive step for the mental, emotional and physical well-being of our students," said Anderson.

The IHSA is considering a postseason state series for traditional spring sports only. That would exclude the likes of football and basketball.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
1. Bob Becker, Morton High girls basketball coach, conducts a recent practice. 2. Leading the cross-country pack at Peoria's Detweiller Park. 3. Preparing to charge on the Morton gridiron.

Please see SPORTS, Page 7

“We’re going to do whatever it takes.” - MHS Athletics Director Scott Jones

SPORTS

Continued from page 6

In particular, the IHSA wanted to do everything in its power “to prevent spring sports from going two consecutive years with no postseason IHSA play,” said Anderson. “There are obviously no guarantees, as risk levels by sport and local region mitigation statuses will factor significantly.”

With the exception of swimming and outdoor events where social distancing can occur, all participants will be required to wear masks during their activities. Shared equipment will be consistently sanitized. Spectators will be capped at 50, in accordance with Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines, though many of those details are still to be worked out. Please stay tuned.

Ultimately, with some 25 sports seasons to be crammed into four months, any solutions were bound to be imperfect, acknowledged IHSA officials. There will be overlapping seasons for multi-sport athletes. There likely will be facility conflicts.

And all of those concerns and reservations pale in comparison to the enthusiasm many feel for just getting the chance to play.

“Extracurricular activities are a critical component of a comprehensive education,” said Morton Superintendent Jeff Hill. “Producing well-rounded individuals is the goal of every school system. I couldn’t be happier for our kids.”

With the shortened seasons,

the priority will be playing conference games, said Morton High School Athletic Director Scott Jones. Teams could play up to three games a week, with home and away games scheduled to maximize the use of available facilities. Given the attendance ceilings, live-streaming of contests will become a much bigger deal, he said.

Conditioning will be key in the limited practice time available, as it’s critical the students be ready to play, said Jones. To the degree possible, there will be coordination with travel programs, especially with the summer sports, he said.

Still, motivation levels are off the charts, and Jones is confident that school officials can pull it off.

“We’re going to do whatever it takes,” he said. “We want to give as many people as possible – athletes and fans alike – this experience.”

“Our whole goal is that none of the kids are going to be left behind,” said Jones. “We’re as prepared as we’re gonna get. The anticipation is killing everybody.”

“Unprecedented circumstances create extraordinary decisions,” said the IHSA’s Anderson. “The IHSA Board of Directors faced one of the most difficult decisions in the Association’s 100-plus-year history.”

“There was never going to be a one-size-fits-all solution ... What did occur was collaboration and camaraderie ... to produce a schedule and plan that we believe will work for our student-athletes.”

Let’s play ball.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Coaching legend Al Carius, '60

As careers in coaching go, few have done it better than 1960 Morton High School graduate Al Carius.

Indeed, over 54 years at North Central College in Naperville, Carius has been a part of 31 national titles – 19 in cross-country, more than any other program in the country, and 12 in track and field. In the year 2000, he was honored by the United States Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association as its “Coach of the Century.”

Alas, the 78-year-old Carius doesn't want to talk about any of that, preferring instead to sing the praises of the people his athletes have become, and of the community that inspired him to devote his life to mentorship.

“Ab-so-lutely,” he says when asked if his hometown played a role in his success. None of it, he insists, would have happened without the “foundational values” he learned as a boy in Morton.

“Most of what I really learned about coaching I learned in Sunday school,” said Carius, who recalls growing up with “a lot of consistency. What I learned in the home through my family was reinforced by the church I attended – the Apostolic Christian Church – on Sunday ... and by what was taking place in school through education.”

He ticks off the teachers who were influential in his life, names likely familiar to many longtime Morton residents – Burdell Hall, Ward Grundy, Roger Tuttle, Bob Carper, Fred Dickman. “We had great teachers from grade school all the way through high school. ... It was a laboratory for learning life's lessons.”



He ran cross-country to get in shape for basketball, participated in track and baseball at the same time, and lettered in football – not because he was good, he jokes, but because flu had benched

most of the team. Five-sport players are virtually unheard of today.

Carius downplays his own accomplishments, but in fact he was a celebrated athlete before he became a

storied coach. He held Morton's school record for the mile, at 4:16, for an astonishing 60 years – it was broken last year by Sam Lange – and won the state title in that event his senior year.

He then went on to a stellar running career at the University of Illinois, where he was an All-American and five-time Big Ten champion before becoming one of the top steeplechasers in America. (Interestingly, Carius may have ended up at Bradley University had its dorms not been full.)

It wasn't all smooth sailing. Indeed, after being heavily recruited, he initially went to the University of Kansas, but soon knew he'd made a mistake.

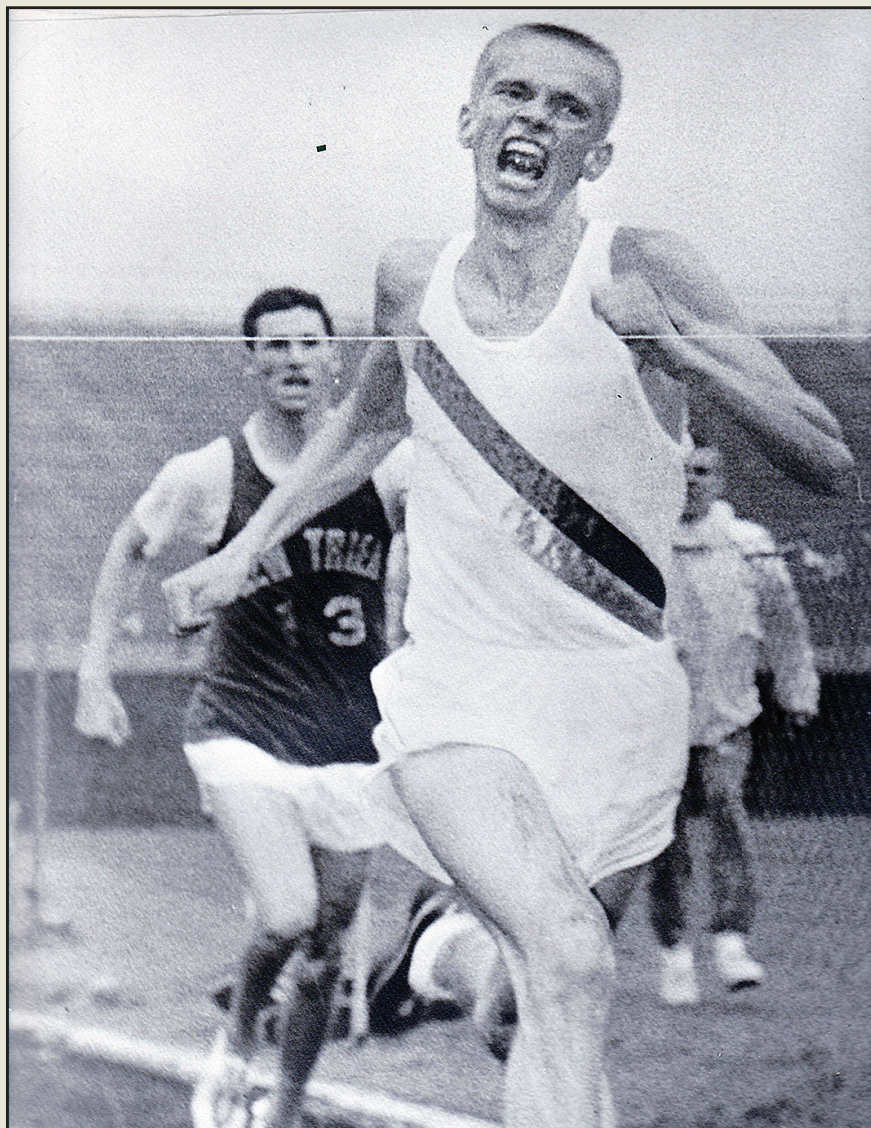
“It was a hasty decision based on me not really understanding myself and not knowing the best place for me to be,” said Carius. “I got homesick. I'd go to the library ... and read about Peoria. My heart was back in Illinois, back in Morton.”

He remembers the kindness and understanding shown to him by Kansas teammate Billy Mills, who'd been sent by legendary coach Bill Easton to talk Carius out of transferring, and who would later achieve fame as the only American to ever win the Olympic gold medal in the 10,000-meter run. “I felt like a failure and quitter,” but Mills “reinforced my decision,” and reminded him there were other considerations every bit as important as accomplishment on the athletic field.

Like so many other events in his life, it would shape the way he viewed coaching and the concept of building “winners in life.”

Continued on next page ►

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Continued from page 8

Though he's trained more than 600 All-Americans and 71 national champions – quite a feat when you consider that North Central doesn't offer athletic scholarships and doesn't usually get the blue chippers coming out of high school -- “the thing we value most is personal improvement,” said Carius. “You're not a better person if you're an All-American and not a

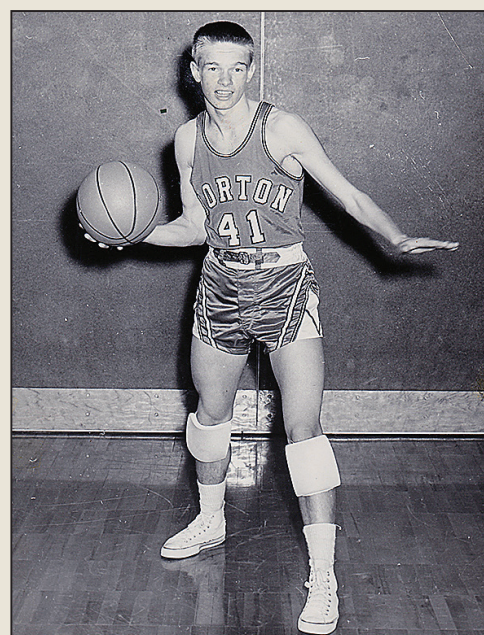
worse person if you're not. Athletics should be fun. It does mean you always give your best. And when you do that, you can live with the results.”

He laments the “trophy society” that has developed, wherein the medals “have become more important than the process. The important thing is the person you become through that process, that's what it's all about.”

He points to an extended coaching tree, with former runners carrying

“You're not a better person if you're an All-American and not a worse person if you're not. Athletics should be fun. It does mean you always give your best. And when you do that, you can live with the results.”

Al Carius, Morton High School Class of 1960



on the coaching baton at schools big and small across the country, from Notre Dame to Texas A&M, from Purdue to Boise State. Over the years he has had many runners from downstate Illinois, with practically a pipeline from Metamora. Dunlap has produced a few. He's coached one athlete from Morton.

“Everybody is here because they love to run, no matter how fast they are,” said Carius.

A year ago, Carius stepped back from the head coaching position at North Central but still works with the team. While his skill set is pretty timeless, he much prefers the one-on-one interaction to communicating with

a new generation of athletes through social media. “I don't want to coach from a distance,” he says.

At home in Naperville, he and wife, Pam, share five adult children and the grandkids who come with them. He gets back to Morton to visit with brother Jim — a role model to him, longtime Tazewell County Board member and owner of Morton's Dairy Queen — and “to reconnect with who I am.”

Ultimately, “it's not about times. It's not about records. It's not about labels. ... Sport is at its best when it helps the student learn and grow as a person. I've been really fortunate to help implement that at North Central College.”

Facility upgrades finishing up, starting again this summer

Morton District 709 hopes to do more than \$1.6 million in building work over Summer 2021, part of the district's ongoing commitment to maintaining and modernizing its facilities.

First, by the start of the 2021-22 school year, the approximately \$8 million renovation and expansion of Morton Junior High School will, at long last, be complete. For the first time in nearly three years, the trucks and heavy equipment will be absent following a dramatic facelift that saw the construction of a new gymnasium and locker rooms, additional classrooms, an impressive, far-more-visible front entrance and offices, a much-expanded parking lot and green space.

Those improvements significantly enlarged the footprint of the junior high campus, and were made possible by a property swap with the Village of Morton, beginning a new chapter of intergovernmental cooperation in the community that is sure to have lasting, positive ramifications for local residents.

The big-ticket item this summer will be the creation of modern STEM labs at Morton High School, expected to come in at just under \$440,000.

Complementing that will be work on the West Gym, specifically refinishing the floor and bringing in new bleachers at a total cost approaching \$300,000.

Meanwhile, roof work is scheduled for Jefferson and Lincoln elementary schools, and the intent is to do the same at the high school. A new drop-off drive also is coming to Lincoln.

"The district has always done a wonderful job of keeping up with the maintenance of its facilities, and many of these projects are in our 15-year capital plan. It's that kind of attention that has kept our campuses viable over many decades," said Superintendent Jeff Hill. "Over the long haul, that keeps facility costs predictable and in line and saves taxpayers money."

"Over the last few years, we have really brought some of our more mature buildings, such as the junior



TOP: The new front entrance of Morton Junior High. **ABOVE:** New STEM labs are coming to MHS to replace older labs like this one. **LEFT:** Inside the new Morton Junior High gym.

high, into the 21st century. Those investments in bricks and mortar have enhanced the education of our

students in some very real ways. The coming modernization of our science labs is a good example of that. It

prepares our students for later life, which has a substantial payoff for the community, well beyond the initial capital investment."

Free developmental screenings

**WHO:**

For children ages birth through 5 years who are residents of Morton School District #709

SCREENING DATE:

Feb. 10, 2021

LOCATION:

Morton 709 District Office 1050 S. Fourth Ave, Morton

**THE SCREENING
WILL ADDRESS:**

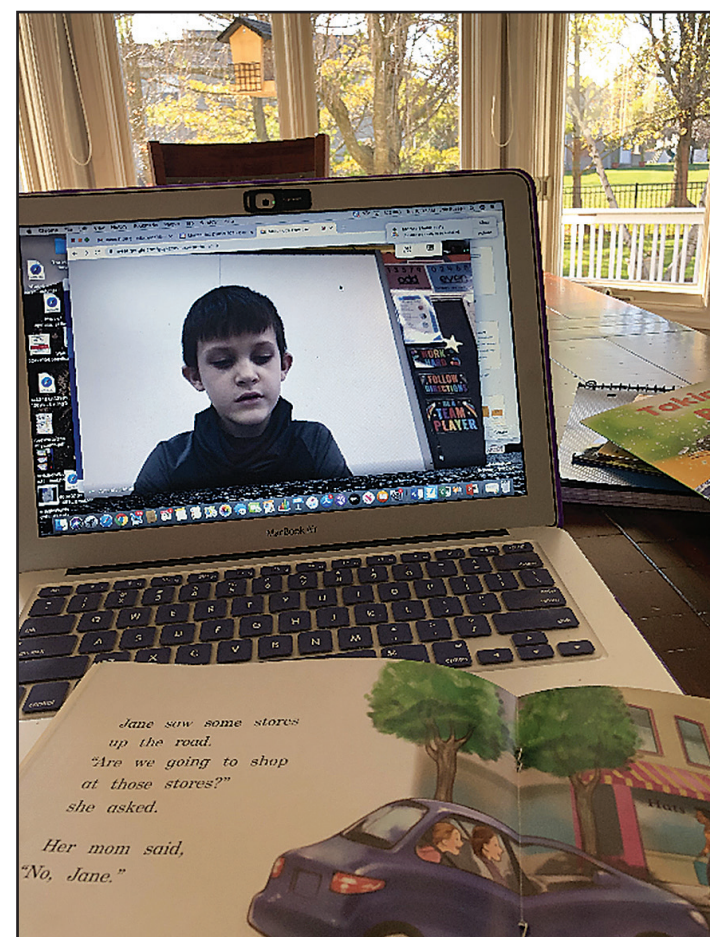
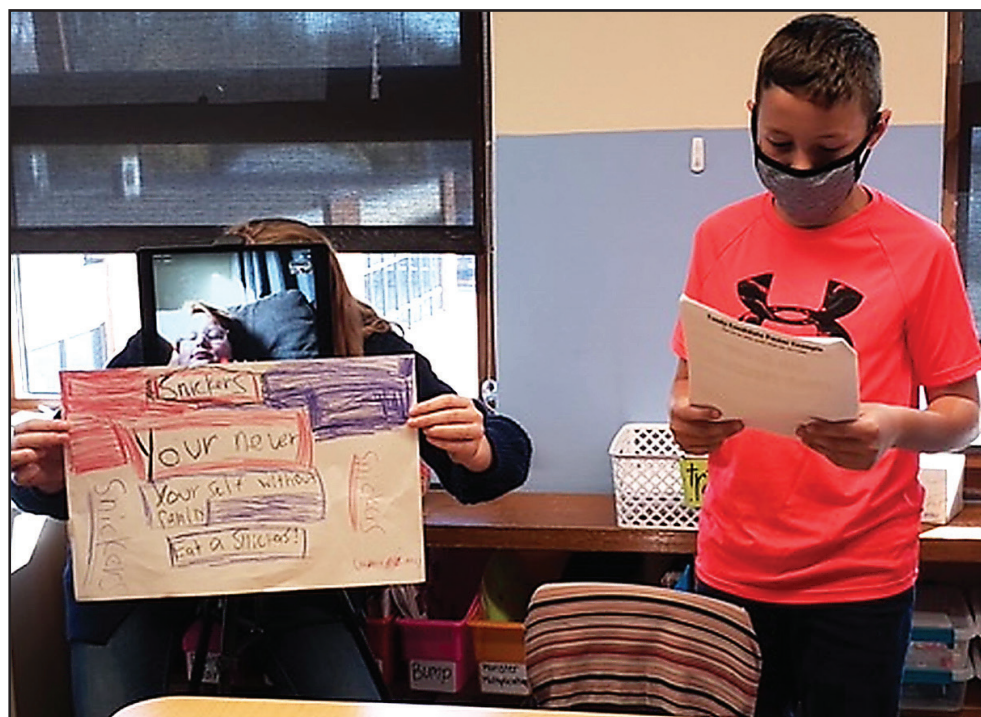
Early Academic Concepts

Motor Development Communication and Language Hearing and Vision

If you are concerned about your child's development and believe that there is a potential for significant delay in the areas listed above, **please call 309-263-0522 to make an appointment before Feb. 3, 2021.**

Sponsored by Morton School District #709 - Special Education Department

Adapting & *THRIVING*



Clockwise from upper left: 1. At-home chemistry experiment for Mr. Williams at MJHS. 2. Brown 4th-graders chat online while in quarantine. 3. Ms. Berger prepares for MHS Madrigal. 4. Ms. Russell works with a 2nd-grader at Lettie Brown. 5. Lincoln 1st-graders learn to read. 6. MHS chess team member plots the next move. 7. Poetry Cafe at Jefferson Elementary. 8. iPad sprouts arms at Jefferson.

A look at learning in the 2020-2021 school year



Clockwise from upper left: 1. Ms. Ralston conducts 1st grade math class at Jefferson. 2. Music fills the air in August. 3. Ms. Friedrich's 3rd grade class at Lincoln has it made in the shade. 4. Ms. Hochstettler gives a spelling test to Jefferson 2nd-graders, wherever they may "bee." 5. Ms. Vastine gets into character for Lincoln 1st-graders. 6. Mr. Gray conducts MHS Orchestra.

PTO Meeting Dates

Morton High School

All meetings are via Zoom at 1 p.m. the second Tuesday of each month. Those dates are Feb. 9, March 9, April 13 and May 11.

Morton Junior High School

Meetings are at 7 p.m. in the new office on the third Thursday of each month, Feb. 18, March 18 and April 15.

Jefferson Elementary School

Meetings are in the cafeteria at 6:30 p.m. March 26, April 26.

Lettie Brown Elementary School

Meetings are in the gym at 7 p.m. on Mondays, Feb. 22, March 15 and April 26.

Lincoln Elementary School

Meetings are through Zoom at 7 p.m. on Mondays, Feb. 1, March 1, April 12 and May 3.

Ward Grundy Elementary School

Meetings are 6:30 p.m. in the cafeteria on the fourth Monday of each month, Feb. 22, March 22, April 26 and May 24.

ADDING COLOR TO YOUR DAY



The Morton High Color Guard under Sara Gray performs over the holidays.

Morton Potter Cards

Potter Cards are now available! For \$10 each, you can get discounts at dozens of local retailers. All proceeds go to the Morton High School PTO, which benefits the school, staff and students.

Potter Cards are for sale at the MHS main office, the Morton Chamber of Commerce, J&J Cleaners, Leaves 'n Beans, Lulu's on Main, Miller Paint Shop, Rudy's Hair Studio, So Chic Boutique of Morton, and Sucre Sweets and Socials.

The Potter Card may be used once per day, per business, per customer, and not in conjunction with any other discounts. Otherwise, enjoy your discount repeatedly throughout the calendar year, in this case valid through Dec. 31, 2021.

This year, 38 businesses donated to our fundraiser, and we want to continue to support them in return.

Further questions may be directed to Cindy Honegger at 309-678-6600 or honegger04@gmail.com.

This year's Potter Card participants are listed below:

Baked Blessings by Lisa - 10% discount, minimum \$10 purchase

The Confectionery, Inc. - 10% discount

Culver's of Morton - \$1 off Regular Size Value Basket

Dunkin' / Baskin Robbins - Buy a dozen donuts at regular price, get 6 free. Morton location only. Limit 1 per customer

Elevate Trampoline Park Peoria/East Peoria - Buy 1 hour of jump time, second hour is free

Em.bel.ish Hair Design & Day Spa - \$10 off a Specialty Massage. Does not apply to the monthly memberships

Firehouse Pizza of Morton - \$2 off lunch buffet, \$4 off pickup or delivery order (\$20 minimum)

First Ascent Climbing & Fitness Peoria - Free rental package with purchase of a day pass (\$10 value)

FJT Office Supplies - \$2 off H-P ink cartridges

Floral Designs, Ltd. - 10% off fresh flowers, minimum \$50 purchase

The Forge Steakhouse - 10% off purchase

Four30 Scones - 10% off total in-shop

purchase, excludes catering or special orders

Garner's Pizza and Wings - Buy 1 extra large pizza, get 1 small appetizer free

Great American Popcorn Co. of Morton - 10% off \$10 minimum purchase

Great Harvest Bread Co. - Buy a medium coffee, get half off a sweet

Grimm's Inc. - 10% off one original-priced item, in stock only

Impact Fitness - Buy any pass, get a free shake

J & J Cleaners - 10% off all services, free home or office pick-up and delivery

Jacque Austin Photography - \$50 off photo session or print order

La Fiesta Mexican Restaurant - Buy 1 make-your-own combo, get a second half off

LaGondola of Morton - 10% off purchase

Leaves 'N Beans of Morton - 10% off purchase

Lulu's On Main - 25% off one regular-priced item (excludes Blue Dot, gift cards and consignment Pieces)

Miller Paint Shop - 10% off regular-priced item

Morton Cinemas - \$1 off any size drink or popcorn, limit 2 per visit

Morton Dairy Queen - \$2 off any DQ cake

Musselman Meats - Buy ribeye two-pack, get 10% off any salad

Nena Ace Hardware (Morton) - 10% off bird seed and feeders, 10% off Automotive Department (regular price)

The Nook at Nena Ace Hardware (Morton) - 15% off one regular-priced item

Pegasus Pizza - \$3 off any 16" pizza or 16" pizza pair, \$2 off any 12" pizza or 12" pizza pair, pick-up only

Pizza Ranch of Morton - 10% off any purchase

Potter's Alley - Free shoe rental with purchase of 2 bowling games

Rudy's Hair Studio - \$5 off one spray tan

Schooner's Morton - 10% off total bill, dine-in only. Excludes weekends, banquets & alcohol

So Chic Boutique of Morton - 10% off entire purchase

Sucre Sweets & Socials - Buy 1 cotton candy, get one free

Thr3ads Boutique - 15% off 1 original-priced item

Upscale Resale - Buy 1 item, get 50% off second of equal value

The queen and king of Fannie May

After five years at the summit of Grundy's annual Fannie May sale to benefit the school's PTO, Nolan Day had pretty much concluded that lofty spot belonged to him.

That is, until fellow sixth grader Chloe Kendall came along with a glint in her eye and an itch for a candy battle.

Chloe surpassed Nolan this year by a handful of boxes, tallying some 140 sales of pixies and Trinidads and vanilla buttercreams and – their favorite – mint meltaways.

Never mind the outcome, as the big winner here is the Grundy PTO, for which the two have raised nearly \$7,000. Grundy Principal Michael Saunders figures that Chloe and Nolan have sold 1,200 boxes between the two of them over the years, prompting him to dub them the “king and queen of Fannie May.”

“In addition to being amazing sellers, Nolan and Chloe are great kids,” he said.

To be sure, selling the Fannie Mays is for a good cause, as the money raised goes to classroom supplies, library books, field trips, teacher grants and the like. But when it comes to motivation, well, you might say that Chloe and Nolan are two very – very – competitive people.

How important is coming out on top?

“Very,” said Nolan.

“Very,” said Chloe.

In short, neither one is messing around.

Indeed, in fifth grade, Chloe threw down the gauntlet, marching up to Nolan following an assembly and telling him, “I will beat you this year,” as Nolan remembers it. Her best friend Sam had come up just short in the previous few years, and she planned on evening the score.

Alas, reigning champ Nolan had no intention of surrendering the crown



Sixth-graders Chloe Kendall and Nolan Day are the top sellers of Grundy PTO's annual Fannie May candy sales.

without a fight.

It wasn't the first time he'd had to up his game against an ambitious newcomer. If it had all started with just knocking on a few doors in the neighborhood and

prevailing upon family members to pony up, that soon evolved into Facebook campaigns and Mom passing the order forms at work. Each year, a new sales record was established.

Then Chloe managed to sell a few boxes near Nolan's neighborhood, a real shot across the bow. “That's salty,” he thought. Still, on the eve of that final selling day, Nolan figured he had once more sewn up the top prize.

Let's just say that even Tom Brady and the Patriots got knocked off their pedestal, on occasion. Nolan had, at long last, met his match.

There has been some good-natured ribbing – “Dude, you have to realize, it's kind of hard” to win the gold every year, he's told friends – but the recognition and the prizes have lessened the sting a bit.

One year there was a visit to Pizza Ranch in a limo. Then a trip to the movie theater “with popcorn and everything.”

Recently, Nolan heard his name over the intercom, his presence requested in the principal's office. For a second, he panicked – “Am I in trouble?” – only to find Chloe in the hallway heading in the same direction. What followed was a trip to Eli's – “in Mr. Saunders' car!” no less – for ice cream and cookies.

Both sets of parents are mighty proud.

“She's got it down to a T,” said Chloe's mom, Michele Kendall. “She really puts full effort into it.”

“It's good for him to go up to strangers and feel confident. I don't think I was that confident when I was that little,” said Nolan's mom, Jamie Hanback. “He's lucky he's got a cute little dimple.”

Neither foresees a career in sales, despite their gift for it. And both head to Morton Junior High next year, which means the Fannie May competition between them has come to an end.

“We're kind of rivals for two weeks,” said Chloe. Then it's back to being pals. Until they find another race to run, anyway.

GAMEBALL RUN 2021

Join us and walk wherever you are!

Gameball Run, our annual fundraiser for Children's Hospital of Illinois, is taking its act to the streets this year due to the pandemic.

When?

4 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11 (If the run is canceled due to weather, there will be no rescheduled date or reimbursement. Thanks for understanding!). A check presentation will take place at the MHS track at 5 p.m.

Where?

Wherever you feel comfortable walking, running or jogging in the streets of Morton

Why?

This is the most important question of all, and again the answer is our Miracle Families, for whom Children's Hospital can be nothing short of a lifesaver.

Each elementary school in District 709, along with Morton's Bethel Lutheran School, chooses a child or children to get behind with their support.

This year's families are the Smallenbergers, with son Henry (Bethel Lutheran); the Chans, with son Hudson (Lincoln Elementary); the Whites, with twins Collins and Bryant (Grundy Elementary); the Collins family, with daughter Anna (Lettie Brown Elementary); and the Gabberts, with twins Kane and Ogden (Jefferson Elementary).

Who?

The run includes the MHS boys basketball teams, employees of Morton District 709, our Miracle Families, and any student willing to contribute \$25 to the cause.

Donations can be made by cash (exact amount) or by check made payable to Children's Hospital of Illinois. Parents may run with their students.

How much?

Since 2013, our Morton community has raised \$606,046 for Children's Hospital of Illinois, with a record \$133,051 in 2020. Every year has been better than the last. **Let's keep the streak going!**

What else?

Event t-shirts cost \$10 and are available in youth sizes (S-XL) and adult (S-XXL). All race bibs will be distributed with t-shirts.

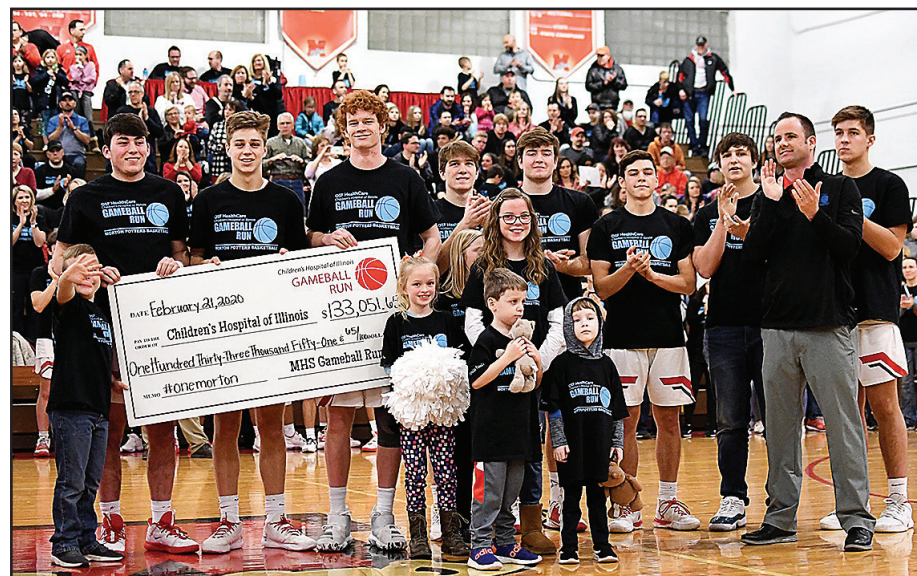
Please follow and like us on Facebook. Please check out our website (www.MortonGameballRun.org). On Twitter, we're at @RunMorton. Please take photos on your run, and tag and share at #CantStopWontStopGBR.



Gameball Run Mission Statement

Gameball Run is a community event to raise money and awareness for Children's Hospital of Illinois by:

- ▶ Involving all schools and students and our community
- ▶ Providing an opportunity for our boys basketball team to serve in a philanthropic role
- ▶ Offering the chance to give back to an organization that has served multiple families and students in the Morton schools



Pictured above is the check presentation at the 2020 Gameball Run.

Our sponsors

It is not possible to thank enough those who help us support this very special event and cause with their financial contributions. This year, they are:

Presenting Sponsor (\$3,500):

Howard & Howard
Morton District 709

Gameball Run Sponsor (\$2,500):

KSA Lighting & Controls
Lovell Orthodontics
Renewal by Andersen

Potterdome Sponsor (\$1,250):

A Perfect Promotion
ANJ Electric
Better Banks
Billy Daniel Excavating
Central Illinois Insulation
Edward Jones
Eigsti Construction
Heartland Bank & Trust Company
Hilltop Wealth Management – Raymond James
Home Instead Senior Care
J.J. Braker & Sons, Inc.
Keach Architectural Design
L&F Electric
Mandy Berg – Maloof Realty
Morton Community Bank
Morton Dental Center
Morton Natural Gas
Pumpkin Place
Stacy Litersky Family
Sue Neihouser – RE/MAX Traders Unlimited
The Unland Companies
Torq Fitness & Performance
Waibel Builders
Gameball Runner Sponsor (\$500):
Mike Murphy Ford
Rotary Club of Morton



MHS mascot Clay is a Gameball Run fixture.

Threads Boutique MHS Basketball Team Sponsor (\$250):

American Pest Control
Betsy & Matt Yarcho
Culvers
J-tec Industries
Knapp-Johnson Funeral Home and Cremation Center
Lighthouse Automotive
LS Building Products
Menold Construction & Renovation
NCI Business Systems Inc.
Pippin Dome Sports and Recreation
SA Moreland Landscaping
Sucre Sweets & Socials
The Krupa Family
The Parlor Hair Salon