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TUESDAY, December 23, 2014

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THURS
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NEWS IN BRIEF

Lights display

The City of Olney would like to express their appreciation to everyone for their support with donations at the Christmas light display. Due to a successful season, the Christmas lights display is now able to be extended through January 1.

Because of the extension, the city is now seeking additional Bucket Brigade volunteers for December 29, December 30, December 31 and January 1 from 5-9 p.m. Please call (618) 395-7302 to reserve a night as part of the Bucket Brigade.

City Hall closed

Olney City Hall will be closed Wednesday, December 24 and Thursday, December 25 for the Christmas holiday.

The brush dump will also be closed Thursday, December 25, but will be open on regular schedule for the remainder of the week on Friday, December 26 and Saturday, December 27. Hours of the brush dump for those days are from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Curbside recycling is on holiday break and will resume its regular schedule Monday, January 5.

Republic Services will also observe the Christmas holiday. Trash collections on and after Thursday, December 25 will fall one day behind schedule. For example, Thursday's regular trash pick up will be taken on Friday, and Friday's regular trash pick up will be taken on Saturday.

Illinois travelers could see rain, snow

CHICAGO (AP) — Rain or snow could fall across a big swath of the nation's midsection as holiday travel gets underway.

National Weather Service meteorologist Amy Seelye says parts of Illinois area could see rain switching over to snow on Christmas Eve, but it's impossible to predict yet where or how much will fall.

She says various computer models are showing differing forecasts and "aren't in agreement yet."

The National Weather Service says on its website that showers and thunderstorms across the Mississippi Valley are expected to strengthen Tuesday into Wednesday and move to the southeast, Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England.

PRICE OF OIL

\$48.25/barrel

The price of crude oil in Illinois is \$48.25 per barrel as of December 22. (COURTESY OF COUNTRYMARK COOPERATIVE)



Olney Central College Welding and Cutting students, from left, Ashley Fitzgerald, Ashton Boles-Shreve and Dawn Severson are encouraging other women to enroll in the program. PHOTO SUBMITTED

Students encourage other women to explore welding program

Students Encourage Other Women to Explore Welding Program

Women have been a rarity in Olney Central College's Welding and Cutting Program, but Ashley Fitzgerald, Dawn Severson and Ashton Boles-Shreve are hoping to change that. The three enrolled in the predominantly male program this fall and are encouraging other women looking for a career with numerous job openings and good wages to do the same.

"I really want to encourage women to look into welding," Fitzgerald said. "This isn't just a male program. It's a great opportunity for everyone."

Fitzgerald had been a

stay-at-home mom until she decided to return to school following her divorce. The Florida resident, who had previous experience welding, chose to continue her education with the two-semester certificate.

"I was always interested in welding and it is something I enjoy," Fitzgerald said. "I like it because it is more hands-on. You're learning while you're doing it. Now is a great time to get into the welding field because a lot of older people are retiring and they need younger welders to take over. As a single parent, I need a job that will allow me to provide the life I want for my daughter."

According to the U.S.

Department of Labor, skilled welders with up-to-date training can expect good job opportunities in coming years. The average salary for an entry-level welder is \$17.45 per hour.

Severson was used to working a non-traditional job as the only female drawing operator at Southwire Co. in Florida.

When she found herself out of work due to layoffs at the power cable manufacturing plant, she decided to return to school.

"I was married to a farmer and at one point he taught me how to weld on an old AC Welder," she said. "I always liked doing it. When I decided to come to OCC, I had to choose between this or

the automotive program. I chose welding because women in the welding field are slim and the job opportunities in welding are much better for women."

Severson, who currently works as a bartender, is looking forward to completing her certificate in May and getting a job in the field.

"I'm 32 and I see this as my last chance," she said. "I definitely don't want to slinger beer for the rest of my life."

Severson, who is originally from Delaware, said there it isn't uncommon to find women working as welders or boilermakers.

"I have friends on the East Coast who are working in all kinds of non-

traditional jobs," she said. "It seems like women in this area are sticking to traditional gender roles. Women really need to step out of their comfort zones and explore other options."

Both Severson and Fitzgerald are trying to set an example for their children that women can succeed in any career.

"The message is we can do it," Fitzgerald said. "You may get a little dirt under your fingernails, but it's nothing you can't wash off. It's definitely a good career choice. It's very creative and women welders are some of the best because they are more attuned to detail."

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International student selected for internship

Olney Central College international student Mathias Weber, of Germany, has been selected to serve as a six-week congressional internship.

Weber is one of only five students participating in the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX) to be selected for the opportunity. He will leave January 3 for the nation's capital where he will be working in the office of U.S. Rep. John Shimkus (R-Illinois).

"I am really looking forward to going to Washington and I am excited about the experience," Weber said.

Weber arrived in the U.S. in August and has been attending classes at OCC this fall. When he returns to Olney in mid-February, he will begin an internship with First National Bank and will continue working there through the end of June.

"I like OCC," Weber said. "It is very different

than the University of Munich which has 30,000 students. Here, you know most of the teachers personally. At my university, it was almost impossible to get an appointment with them."

Weber is studying in the U.S. through the CBYX Program for Young Professionals. Founded in 1983 and annually endorsed by members of the United States Congress and the German Parliament (Bundestag), the program has enabled more than 3,500 young professionals to trade countries with their counterparts to live, study and work for a year in a foreign environment.

The CBYX is designed to strengthen ties between the younger generation of the United States and Germany. The program receives financial support from the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, under the authority of the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 and the German Bundestag. During the yearlong program, students complete



an internship in their career field as well as a community service project.

Weber is enjoying the experience of living with his host family, Jeremy and Geneva Forsy, and their sons, Dylan and Levi, and meeting local residents. His community-service work has included volunteering for the Master's Hands Inc., and serving as an assistant coach for youth soccer and basketball.

"It is fun coaching the kids," he said. "I fell in love with the kids. I have so much fun with them. I have met my 40 hours of

community service and now I'm doing it just because I like it."

Weber also is a member of the OCC Student Senate and has played in a recreational basketball league.

"I grew up in Munich which has 1.3 million people. Olney is much different," Weber said. "It is really easy-going here. I like the community and the people. You get an experience that is so different than Munich."

Weber originally planned to stay in Olney only through the end of the fall semester before traveling to New York to complete a pre-arranged internship at a Manhattan bank. But while working with William Alexander as an assistant coach, the First National Bank employee arranged an interview for Weber with the financial institution and he was offered the local internship.

"I didn't want to leave here or move to Manhattan," Weber said. "I'm so happy I found a job here. I love being able to stay in Olney."

After completing his

internship, Weber will return to Germany and finish his degree.

He encourages OCC students to consider participating in the CBYX Program and spending a year in Germany.

"It is a chance to see another country, meet other people and broaden your horizons," he said. "It is such a nice experience. After you begin working, you will never have time so you need to do it now."

Information about the CBYX Program is available at www.cbyx.info.

Weber said he always wondered why his brother-in-law enjoyed returning each year to the small Kansas town where he stayed as an exchange student.

"When I'm talking to my sister on Skype, I tell him, 'Now, I understand. I know why you go back every year. You make friends and you want to know what has been going on.'"

Weber said his experience in Olney is something he will never forget and he hopes to return in the future.