

THE DAILY  
**JOURNAL**



**Cookie cutters**  
 ● A2

**That's special**  
 Lawmakers turn down pay raise ● A4

**BEYOND THE BUDGET**

**\$157,759**

Estimated cost to Illinois taxpayers for the special sessions to date.

**5**

Special sessions regarding the budget



**August 13, 2008**

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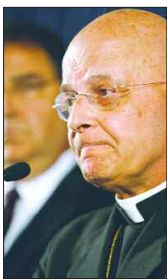
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**Classifieds**

TODAY'S FEATURE



**NANCY DREW**

54 plus originals, pictorial covers, some blue endpapers. 1930 plus. RARE collection.

For this ad and other miscellaneous items, see today's classifieds.

**Obituaries**

A5

Grace Abrassart ..... St. Anne  
 Hugh Chally ..... Herscher  
 James Fifer ..... Kankakee  
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**Weather**

Thursday  
**Cloudy**

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Kathryn Merkle, 15, of Cissna Park, puts a fresh coat of paint on a barn belonging to the Riordan family.

**Soup's on**

Students paint barn for national ad campaign

By Mike Lyons

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Generations of country kids have "souped-up" grandpa's Chevy for satisfying Saturday night swings down small-town Main Streets.

But a group of area FFA high school students this week turned a page on that venerable tradition and instead souped-up "grandpa's" classic, gambrel-roofed barn for participation in a national ad campaign by Campbell Soup Co.

"Campbell Kids" from FFA chapters at Herscher, Crescent-Iroquois, Cissna Park and Tri-Point contributed the 30-plus FFA barn painters who turned out Monday and Tuesday to renovate John Riordan's barn along Illinois Route 17 just west of Union Hill Road in rural Reddick.

Campbell spokesman Kim McGough said it's an effort that will see the company donate \$250,000 this year, and more later, to National FFA coffers, and at the same time remind consumers that the nearly 140-year-old Camden, N.J., firm still relies on farm-fresh produce just as it did when Joseph A. Campbell launched his durable enterprise in the wake of the Civil War.

In fact, several of the farm families who have contracted production for Campbell's over the years have done so for a century or more, she said.

**Symbolic structure**

The barn, said McGough, is the perfect symbol for the family farm.

The money is intended to help fund FFA ag education programs in schools.

The "Help Grow Your Soup" ad campaign, as it's officially called, will begin in early September with magazine and television ads that might include airing on the popular RFD TV (Rural America's most important network), McGough said Monday.

"Beginning in late September consumers can go to www.helpgrowyour-soup.com, click on the red barn icon, and they'll be able to contribute a dollar on their behalf to that \$250,000 contribution," McGough said of the public's opportunity to help the program thrive into the future.

The Riordan barn will be the first of the five vintage barns featured from among the national inventory of classic barns still existing. Riordan is an officer in the state FFA Alumni Association. Campbell's provided the \$5,000 for materials. The local FFA chapters are providing the youthful labor the project requires.

Riordan's family has owned and worked the farm for around 150 years, John said.

According to Norman Riordan, John's uncle, a tornado destroyed the original barn in 1912. The gambrel barn standing today was built to replace it.

But why was the Riordan barn picked from the thousands of relic barns that stubbornly dot the rural landscape in spite of, in many cases, decades of decay and disuse?

Well you can thank Herscher FFAer and veteran cattle showman Chelsi Riordan for that. She's John's daughter and, as it turns out, a pretty good salesperson when it comes to nominating the family barn as a candidate for the innovative Campbell Soup proposal.

Beyond that, for logistic reasons, organizers were interested in finding



Local members of the National FFA Organization paint and restore a barn belonging to the Riordan family. The FFA and Campbell Soup have joined forces for the "Grow Your Soup" project.

a red barn not far from Chicago.

**High praise**

"They've done a great job," said Norman at midday Monday, adding "they just started this morning and just look at it."

Overseeing the swarm of FFA workers clad in red T-shirts provided by Campbell, Frank Saldana of Indianapolis expressed particular appreciation. He's the executive director of the National FFA Alumni Association and a solid supporter of the Campbell initiative.

"This is our pilot program to be sure we're doing it right," Saldana said of the inaugural work at Riordan's.

"Our big push as an association is the community involvement. To bring the past FFA alumni, the students and teachers together to perform a community service — the restoration of the barns, which is major.

"So, hopefully, with Campbell's help, this will turn from a planned \$700,000 project to a \$1 or \$2 million dollar project — that's our hope."

● Kankakee County

**Sales tax increase on ballot**

Referendum will be voted on in November

By Jon Krenek

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The final say on a 1-cent-per-dollar sales tax increase for schools will rest with the Kankakee County Board after voters voice their opinion at the polls.

The County Board on Tuesday voted unanimously to place an advisory referendum on the Nov. 4 ballot to gauge public support for the proposed sales tax hike, which would generate an estimated \$28.6 million for capital projects in local schools.

Kankakee County State's Attorney Jamie Boyd said if the referendum were to pass, the final decision would rest with the County Board.

"You could choose not to implement this tax," said Boyd. "If the general public supports this referendum, it will come back to this board."

The proposed sales tax hike is being sought by several Kankakee County school districts under a new state law. If adopted, it could push Kankakee County's sales tax rate up to 7.25 cents

per dollar to generate money for capital projects in local schools. School districts have long sought revenues to fund capital needs as state funding has evaporated.

**Counting dollars**

The tax increase would cause significant pain for county government.

Kankakee County finance director Steve McCarty said the county could lose an estimated \$4 million annually through the loss of sales tax-sharing agreements with mail and Internet order companies, who can opt out of the contracts if the sales tax rate increases. The city of Kankakee could also lose an estimated \$4 million in those revenues.

County Board member Steve Liehr, a retired Kankakee Community College political science professor, said the potential loss could lead to a reduction in county services and the loss of county employees.

"The education of our children is key to our community and our nation," said Liehr, who expressed sympathy for local schools. "I hope it does pass, but I'm not sure I will be able to endorse it."

Kankakee County Board Chair-

man Karl Kruse said the county has been unable to determine yet exactly how severe the impact will be because the proposal moved through local school boards so quickly. But he largely placed blame on the state legislature for shunning its financial responsibility for schools.

"I can understand why the school districts are doing this," Kruse said. "We shouldn't be voting on this. We should be voting for new people in Springfield."

**Ballot battle**

The County Board shared numerous criticisms of the proposed tax hike and legislation authorizing it during discussion on Tuesday. The proposal also attracted some public comment.

Boyd said the ballot question is required to appear on the ballot under the new law because school boards representing more than 51 percent of the county's student population approved formal resolutions in support. He said Tuesday's vote was strictly to certify that information submitted by local school districts was correct.

"This in no way says we're in favor of this," said County Board member George Washington Jr.

**Briefs**

● WATSEKA

**Lawmakers OK pay hike**

After the November election, Watseka Mayor John Weidert and four of the city's eight aldermen will receive increases in pay.

On Tuesday, the council approved a salary increase to \$12,000 per year for the mayor. The mayor will also receive the same rate of compensation as aldermen for all council and committee meetings. The aldermen's pay was raised from \$35 to \$65 for each regular meeting of the council, claims committee meetings and special meetings. Aldermen will receive \$45 for all other committee meetings attended.

The pay increases apply only to the mayor and the four aldermen's positions that are up for re-election in November. Those seats are currently held by Silas Light, Jim Siebert, L.D. Smith and Pearl Hamilton.

Light said he believed the mayor's current salary is \$6,000 a year. Weidert was out of town and could not be reached for comment.

- Lynn Dill

● MISSOURI

**Evidence brings new murder trial**

A Missouri judge will decide whether former Bradley resident Joshua C. Kezer was wrongfully convicted of murder.

Kezer, 33, has already served 14 years of a 60-year prison sentence at the Jefferson City Correctional Center for the 1992 murder of Angela Michelle Lawless.

Cole County Circuit Judge Richard G. Callahan granted Kezer a bench trial Dec. 2 and 3 in Jefferson City, according to the Southeast Missourian, a newspaper located in Cape Girardeau.

The trial was granted Aug. 5 after Scott County Sheriff Rick Walter, who reopened the investigation two years ago, believed other people may have been involved in the murder, the newspaper reported.

In fact, forensic evidence shows Lawless, who was killed in Benton, Mo., may have been murdered by more than one person, the sheriff reported. Her body was found in an abandoned car.

Moreover, physical evidence at the crime scene never matched Kezer. In addition, a man whose testimony put Kezer near the crime scene, wrote in a letter to the newspaper that he may have identified the wrong man.

- Janet Cremer



**YOU ASKED FOR IT! READER SUGGESTED**  
 If you have an idea for a story, e-mail your suggestion to ideas@daily-journal.com

● BOURBONNAIS

**Bears close Thursday's practice**

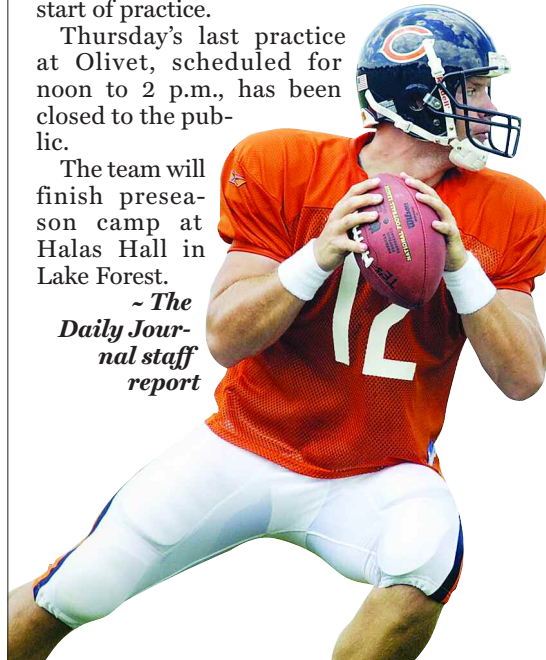
Today's is your last chance to see the Chicago Bears practice in Bourbonnais.

The team practices today from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the Olivet Nazarene University campus. Gates open one hour prior to the start of practice.

Thursday's last practice at Olivet, scheduled for noon to 2 p.m., has been closed to the public.

The team will finish preseason camp at Halas Hall in Lake Forest.

- The Daily Journal staff report



● ECONOMY

**Retail sales fell in July**

WASHINGTON — Retail sales fell in July, the weakest performance in five months, as a variety of economic woes combined to blunt the impact of billions of dollars in government stimulus payments to U.S. households.

The Commerce Department reported today that retail sales dipped 0.1 percent last month, the first decline since sales had fallen by 0.5 percent in February. It was a worse showing than the flat reading economists had been expecting.

The weakness last month came after another big slide in auto sales as Detroit faced its worst sales month in 16 years. Automakers have been battered by the weak economy and record gasoline prices, which have cut into demand for their once-popular sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks.

Excluding the big drop in autos, retail sales would have posted a 0.4 percent increase. While that was a positive reading, it was still the weakest showing for sales excluding autos in five months.

- The Associated Press