

## Johnston City native named commander of Fort Drum's Soldier Recovery Unit

FORT DRUM, New York – Fort Drum's Soldier Recovery Unit welcomed its new commander and bid farewell to the outgoing senior leader during a change of command ceremony at Fort Drum's Magrath Sports Complex, July 17, 2025. During the ceremony, Lt. Col. Lisa M. Heiss relinquished command of the SRU to Lt. Col. Jacob G. Ragsdale.

Ragsdale, a National Guard officer and Johnston City, Illinois native, comes to the SRU from his previous assignment in Arlington, Virginia, where he served as the National Guard Bureau's branch chief for the Collective Training Branch. Speaking to the Soldiers in

attendance, Ragsdale said, "My goal is to be a leader who will support you, listen to you, and work with you to achieve the goals you have set for yourself. You are the reason I am here in this position."

Overseeing the ceremony was Col. Christina M. Buchner, commander of the U.S. Army Medical Department Activity – Fort Drum, the SRU's higher headquarters. As part of the traditional change of command, Heiss ceremonially passed the unit's flag, or colors, to Buchner, signifying the end of Heiss's tenure as commander.

Buchner then passed the colors to Ragsdale, signifying her confidence in the

new commander's capabilities as a leader, officially starting his tenure as commander. Ensuring the col-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jacob G. Ragsdale, the new commander of the Soldier Recovery Unit - Fort Drum, speaks to attendees during a change of command ceremony at Fort Drum, N.Y., July 17, 2025. During the ceremony, Ragsdale, a Johnston City, Ill. native, officially assumed command of the SRU from Lt. Col. Lisa M. Heiss. (U.S. Army Photo by Warren W. Wright Jr., Fort Drum MEDDAC Public Affairs)



## Legence Bank retiree will miss coworkers, customers

BY TIM HASTINGS

Legence Bank Assistant Branch Manager Deb Paris said she'll miss her coworkers and customers in her retirement.

"I will definitely miss my branch crew," Paris said. "They were like family and still are. I also will miss the customers. It seems like you build a friendship."

"I love Johnston City," she added. "They're a good group of people."

Paris completed a 31-year banking career on Friday, July 11, with an open house in her honor at the Johnston City branch of Legence. Paris worked seven years for Legence. Previously, she worked 24 years with Mid Country Bank at their branches in Benton, Thompsonville, Galatia, Harrisburg, and Shawneetown. Her last position at Mid Country was personal banker.

Paris, who lives in Thompsonville and is a Thompsonville High School graduate, said she's also worked in other fields. "I worked as an assistant to a chiropractor," she said. "That was my first job. I also worked in a drug store as a pharmacy tech."

- es, and welding and electrical systems courses.
- Added dual credit classes in art and foreign language.
- Created two Career Pathway Programs: a social worker pathway and a construction craft management pathway.
- Started freshman orientation evening event for all incoming ninth graders.

Pietrantoni and his wife, Tessa, have been married for more than 20 years. They are the proud parents of two kids (Sydney and Noah) and a dachshund (Bella). Sydney is a 2025 graduate of JCHS who played volleyball and softball, was a member of the National Honor Society, senior peer mentor, and student council president. Noah is entering his sophomore year at JCHS, where he plays football, basketball, and baseball for the Indians.

The retiree plans to spend time with family in retirement. "I plan to spend more time with my grandchildren and my husband," she said. "My father passed away not very long ago, so

I plan to spend more time with my mom."

Her plans also include travel. "I foresee some trips to the Kansas City area," Paris said. "That's where my four grandchildren live."



Deb Paris, local assistant branch manager, retired July 11, ending a banking career of more than three decades.

## Mike Dean Memorial Blood Drive coincides with Back-to-School Bash

The Mike Dean Memorial Blood Drive will be held Friday, August 1, 2-6 pm at Johnston City High School. Sponsored by JCHS HOSA, the drive honors beloved JCHS alum and Sesser educator Mike Dean.

The drive supports the local blood supply and also funds scholarships for JCHS students. Community members who donate will be entered into a special giveaway at the Back-to-School Bash downtown Johnston City the same day, 5-8 pm.

Dean was a 1999 graduate of Johnston City High School. After graduating from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, he became a teacher at Sesser-Valier High School.

The "Mike Dean Memorial Park and Playground"



An annual blood drive at JCHS pays tribute to Michael James Dean (1980-2006)

located near Scout Cabin is named in his honor.

Dean died July 22, 2006, as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. His father Jimmy Dean is a former mayor of Johnston City and regular columnist for Arrow News.

## School Board appoints Pietrantoni as superintendent

BY BROOKE SCHLYER

JOHNSTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Johnston City Board of Education has named Josh Pietrantoni as superintendent of the Johnston City Community Unified School District #1, effective July 1, 2025. Pietrantoni brings more than 20 years of experience to this role, having served the district as an educator, coach, and administrator.

"On behalf of the Johnston City Community Unit School District #1 Board of Education, I am proud to share our full support for the appointment of Josh Pietrantoni as the next Superintendent of Schools, following the retirement of Kathy Clark," says Chris Cullum, Johnston City School Board President.

Pietrantoni received his Associate's degree from John A. Logan College, his Bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, and two Master's degrees from McKendree University. The first 13 years of his career were spent working as a special education teacher at Johnston City High School, where he also coached football, wrestling, and track.

Since then, he has held numerous leadership roles, including assistant principal at Johnston City High School and Washington Middle School, athletic director at JCHS and WMS, and principal at both JCHS and WMS.

Most recently, Pietrantoni served as assistant superintendent, working closely alongside Superintendent Kathy Clark over the past year in preparation for her retirement on June 30, 2025.

"Over the past year, Josh has demonstrated outstanding leadership, a deep commitment to student success, and a collaborative spirit that aligns perfectly



Newly appointed School Superintendent Josh Pietrantoni

with the values of our district," Cullum adds. "We are deeply grateful to Kathy Clark for her dedicated service and the positive impact she has had on our schools and community. As we transition, we are confident that Pietrantoni will continue this legacy while bringing fresh energy and ideas to support our students, educators, and families. We look forward to working closely with Josh as we continue to advance excellence in education across the district."

Pietrantoni is excited to serve our students and their families in this leadership role.

"I am truly blessed and humbled by this wonderful opportunity, he says. "I've had the privilege of being part of this district as a teacher, coach, parent, and administrator for over 20 years. During that time, I've witnessed tremendous growth in both our school district and community. I'm grateful to be a part of that journey and look forward to continuing to build on the strong foundation we've set in motion."

During his tenure at Johnston City Schools, Pietrantoni has made significant contributions to the school district:

- 2023 IPA Shawnee Regional High School Principal of the Year
- Expanded the high school Career Technical Education programs by adding a greenhouse course, food courses, marketing courses,

## Life without power

BY JIMMY DEAN

I watch a lot of old western TV shows—"Gunsmoke," "Laramie," "The Rifleman," etc.

How people lived back in those days has always intrigued me. No power, no running water, no indoor plumbing, going without heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer, yet somehow, they survived and made do.

The reason I bring this up? On July 6, at about 6:45 pm, the power went out, affecting approximately 13,000 plus Ameren customers.

I was watching the Cardinals-Cubs ballgame, when, all of a sudden, my television and my lights went off, and my fan stopped running. I immediately started getting calls from friends and neighbors asking if we had power.

We are so trained to expect it to be cool inside when it's hot outside and vice versa. With a flip of a switch, we can watch our favorite show and have light to read a book.

This was all taken away in a matter of seconds, with the estimated time of a return to normal unknown. Admittedly, I was annoyed, because I wanted to watch the ballgame in the cool confines of my man cave.

Now, if we'd lived back in the "olden" days, this would not have been a problem; because none of the things we view as normal would have been available. If the lanterns had run out of coal oil, or if it had gotten too cold at the jail, Matt, Chester and Doc would have just strolled to the Long Branch and tossed a few down.

In our times, we take these luxuries for granted. When they're not there, we often go into panic mode, expecting someone to wave a magic wand and immediately bring things back to normal.

On July 6, people were texting, "Power is out here." "Power is on in this town." "Has anyone contacted Ameren?" I was on hold 27 minutes, trying to report it.

The reason for that wait, I was told, was because so many other people were also trying to report outages at their residences.

After about 30 minutes without electricity, I started feeling a little irritated. It was hot outside. I thought about how miserable it would be sleeping without air conditioning if the outage was long. And what about our freezer full of food?

These are fears that people in our great grandparents' days would have rolled their eyes at and just shook their heads.

Finally, after about an hour, everything returned to normal. Power was restored, clocks reset, and the television was back on—all staples in this guy's element.

Could we have survived back in the day, without all the comforts we have now? I really don't know, but I highly doubt it. I just hope we never have a situation where we have to find out.



Jimmy Dean is a freelance writer and former mayor of Johnston City. He can be reached at jrdean@mchsi.com.

## 'Judee' Zanotti remembered for good deeds

BY TIM HASTINGS

The ancient physician and historian known simply as Luke told the story of a Christian disciple named Tabitha who was known for her good works—especially her sewing. Luke wrote in chapter nine of "Acts of the Apostles," that the Apostle Peter visited Tabitha's home in Joppa soon after the saint passed from this earth. Widows in the community came to mourn Tabitha's passing and showed Peter some of the coats and other garments Tabitha had made for them.

Peter famously went to the side of the bed where Tabitha's body lay and said, "Tabitha, get up." Tabitha's natural body miraculously came back to life!

The many talented deeds of Judith Dee "Judee" Zanotti, a longtime teacher at Johnston City's Jefferson Elementary School, remind me of Tabitha. Judee passed on July 3, at age 77, fully trusting her Lord to one day give her eternal life in a resurrected body. Like Tabitha, Judee left behind many beneficiaries. These include:

- WSIL-TV viewers in the 1950s who saw young Judee and other Johnston City girls dance on live television;
- Students at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale in the 1960s to whom Judee delivered birthday cakes from her father's bakery;
- Jefferson Elementary students from the



1970s-1990s who heard her historically accurate discussions of the first Christmas and the first Easter;

- Women and youth who heard her Bible lessons based on her graduate studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City;
- Staff and visitors at Campus Crusade for Christ's headquarters at Arrowhead Springs near San Bernardino, California, who enjoyed Judee's work as a volunteer landscaper one summer in the late 1970s or early 1980s;
- Women in the former Soviet Union who tasted her homemade desserts over coffee and conversation during her year as a volunteer with CoMission, a Christian outreach to people residing in former Soviet bloc countries in the 1990s;
- The woman in the former Soviet Union who asked for and received American jazz recordings Judee purchased and shipped

after returning to the U.S.:

- Women who had a glamour shot made after receiving one of Judee's Mary Kay Cosmetics makeovers;
  - The microbusiness owners Judee encouraged when she visited Uganda as a representative of The Tentmaker Project, a word and deed ministry based in Murphysboro;
  - Her sister Darlynn Zanotti, resident of a nursing home near Herrin, whom Judee visited most days to insure she be well nourished;
  - Students at Child Evangelism Fellowship's Good News Club at Jefferson School who memorized scripture under Judee's supervision;
  - Donors to Five Loaves, a feeding program for impoverished Ugandans, who received elegantly handwritten thank you notes from Judee;
  - Children rescued from abortion because Judee advocated for the health of men, women, and children;
  - And, worshipers at Grace Presbyterian Church in Carbondale who heard her gracefully playing hymns on the piano.
- Someday, Jesus himself will stand beside Judee and say, "Judee, get up!" Judee will then arise in her forever body. She will receive a well-earned crown for her many deeds done in Jesus' name. Then she'll take off her crown, as will many others, and place it at the feet of her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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Larry Stevens, pastor

**\*First Christian Church**  
505 E. Broadway Blvd.  
Johnston City, IL 62951  
618-952-2591  
Adam King, pastor

**\*First United Methodist Church**  
400 W. Broadway  
Johnston City, IL 62951  
618-983-5150  
Paul Jacob, pastor

**\*Heritage Fellowship**  
(Church of God of Prophecy)  
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Johnston City, IL 62951  
Pastors Gaylon & Dawn Stewart

**\*JCity Church**  
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618-983-5254  
Dr. Randy Carney, pastor

**Johnston City United Pentecostal Church**  
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618-983-5938  
Brandon Abernathy, pastor

**\*St. Paul's Catholic Church**  
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Johnston City, IL 62951  
618-983-5073  
Father Brian Barker

**\*Stiritz United Methodist Church**  
Paul Jacob, pastor

**\*Washington Ave. Baptist Church**  
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Johnston City, IL 62951  
Barry Robertson, pastor  
618-694-2995

### Other Ministries

**\*JC Kids' Lunch Bunch**  
c/o JCity Church  
(see above)

**\*JCity Center for Hope and Renewal**  
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*\*Active members of Johnston City Ministerial Alliance*

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR



### August Events

AUGUST 1  
Mike Dean Memorial Blood Drive, JCHS, 2-6 pm

Back-to-School Bash, downtown, 5-8 pm

AUGUST 3  
Free Movie Night, "Overcomer," JCity Church, 5 pm

AUGUST 5  
JC Business Meet N' Greet, Andresen's, 9 am

Lions Club, JCity Church, 5:30 pm

AUGUST 6  
Rotary Club luncheon, Andresen's, Noon

AUGUST 12  
City Council, Scout Cabin, 5 pm

AUGUST 12  
First day of school

AUGUST 19  
Lions Club, Andresen's, 9 am

AUGUST 20  
Rotary Club, Indigo Realty, 4 pm

AUGUST 21  
School Board Mtg., Unit Office, 6 pm

AUGUST 22  
Meet the Indians, JCHS, 4 pm

AUGUST 26  
City Council, Scout Cabin, 5 pm

AUGUST 31  
Fifth Sunday Night Community Sing, Washington Ave. Baptist, 6 pm

### Weekly Events

**THURSDAYS**  
Food pantry open, First United Methodist, 9 am-1 pm (Commodity distribution on the 3rd Thursday each month)

Food pantry/clothes closet First Christian, 3:30-5:30 pm

**FRIDAYS**  
Farmers Market, 7-11 am

For calendar updates, please see Facebook or watch our video podcasts. To submit an event, email date, time, and details to [jcitycenter@gmail.com](mailto:jcitycenter@gmail.com).

## PRAY FOR THE PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF JOHNSTON CITY

*"And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you. . . . Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare." (Jeremiah 29:7 NLT)*

Did you know the Bible instructs God's people to pray for the city they live in? Not all *Arrow News* readers are people who pray, but if you are, please consider this. The Bible instructs us to pray for the place where we live.

The prophet Jeremiah witnessed his people being deported to a strange land hundreds of miles away. The Holy City of Jerusalem would soon be in ruins, even the Temple destroyed. Jeremiah was unpopular, to say the least, because he didn't sugarcoat the truth—God's judgment was coming to His own people. There was no one to turn to, even once-powerful Egypt could not protect the Jews from the instruments of God's correction—Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom of Babylon.

Those with money, influence, skills, or intelligence were deported to Babylon. The poor, weak, and sickly were left to manage as best they could to keep the land from being overgrown. Those forced to go to Babylon were expected to lose their national identity in the midst of that idolatrous culture.

God's plan was for them to be a light in a dark place. They were to buy property, build houses, and reflect God's glory. They were to be a positive, uplifting force in

their new country.

The Jews found this task extremely difficult, due to the strong emotions they felt for their homeland. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs. . . . How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?" (Psalm 137:1-6 NIV)

Here's the thing. Christ-followers should never feel

at home in this world. Our citizenship truly is in heaven. But God has placed us here in this time and place for a purpose. Simply stated, that purpose is to glorify Him by reflecting His grace to those around us. If God's people live God's way and love others the way God loves us, we will be a blessing to our community, even if it doesn't feel like home. Our prayers and presence can change our city for the better.

## Commander (FROM P. 1)

ors are always in someone's hands throughout the passing of the colors signifies that the unit and its Soldiers are never without leadership.

The SRU accomplishes its unique mission by providing high-quality healthcare case management for Soldiers in recovery, promoting an environment that facilitates healing and enables Soldiers' timely return to their units or transition to civilian life.

"For more than a decade, the Soldier Recovery Units, formerly known as Warrior Transition Units, have stood as a beacon of hope and healing for our nation's most precious resource; our

wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers," Buchner said. "Born from the imperative to provide dedicated care and support during the most challenging times, the Fort Drum SRU has consistently adapted and evolved."

"(The SRU) serves a critical role within the broader Army Recovery Care Program, ensuring that those who have sacrificed so much receive the comprehensive care they need to heal, reintegrate, or transition successfully," Buchner added. "Our mission here is unique in its breadth, managing the care for the total military force within our reach."

## Arrow Distribution Points

Each month, volunteers distribute at least 1,000 copies of *Arrow News* to more than 30 local establishments. Here is a partial listing of places to pick up your copy:

Andresen's	JC Community
Ark Insurance	Health Clinic
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Bandy Drugs	JCity Church
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Blondie's Bakery	Legence Bank
Casey's	Manna Mission
City Hall	McDonald's
Dollar General	Moonshine Run
Down Home	The Painted
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## SUMMER HOURS at JCity Center

Until August 25, JCity Center will be open only for scheduled counseling appointments (call 618-952-1272, leave message). Take Action Today personnel are available in the Johnston City office, Mon.-Thu., 9 am-1 pm, or as scheduling permits (call Take Action Today, 618-212-3171).

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**Varsity Football Schedule**

A 08/22 vs W. Frankfort (Pre-Season Scrimmage)  
 A 08/29 vs Carmi-White Co.  
**H 09/05 vs Christopher**  
**H 09/12 vs Edwards Co.**  
**H 09/19 vs Eldorado**  
 A 09/26 vs Flora  
**H 10/03 vs Fairfield**  
**H 10/10 vs Hamilton Co. (Homecoming)**  
 A 10/18 vs Red Hill (1:00 pm)  
**H 10/24 vs Sesser-Valier (Senior Night)**  
 Unless otherwise indicated, all games start at 7:00 pm.

**Boys Middle School Baseball**

**H 08/12 4:30 PM vs Crab Orchard**  
 A 08/13 4:30 PM vs Ewing-No.  
**H 08/15 4:30 PM vs Massac Co.**  
 A 08/18 4:30 PM vs Unity Point  
**H 08/20 4:30 PM vs Unity Point**  
**H 08/27 4:30 PM vs Christopher**  
 A 08/29 4:30 PM vs Christopher  
**H 08/30 9:00 AM JC Invitational**  
**H 09/02 4:30 PM vs Hamilton Co.**  
 A 09/04 4:30 PM vs Hamilton Co.  
**H 09/08 4:30 PM vs WF**  
 A 09/10 4:30 PM vs WF  
**H 09/12 4:30 PM vs Goreville**  
 A 09/13 9:00 AM ZR Invitational  
 A 09/15 4:30 PM vs Goreville  
 A 09/17 4:30 PM vs Sesser-Valier  
**H 09/19 4:30 PM vs Sesser-Valier**

**Girls Middle School Softball**

**H 08/14 4:30 PM vs Carterville**  
**H 08/15 4:30 PM vs Massac Co.**  
 A 08/16 TBA Marion Invitational  
**H 08/18 4:30 PM vs Unity Point**  
 A 08/19 4:30 PM vs Unity Point  
**H 08/25 4:30 PM vs Crab Orchard**  
**H 08/27 4:30 PM vs Christopher**  
 A 08/29 4:30 PM vs Christopher  
**H 08/30 9:00 AM JC Invitational**  
**H 09/02 4:30 PM vs Hamilton Co.**  
 A 09/04 4:30 PM vs Hamilton Co.  
 A 09/06 TBA Oasis Softball Tournament  
**H 09/08 4:30 PM vs WF**  
 A 09/10 4:30 PM vs WF  
**H 09/12 4:30 PM vs Goreville**  
 A 09/15 4:30 PM vs Goreville  
**H 09/17 4:30 PM vs Sesser-Valier**  
 A 09/19 4:30 PM vs Sesser-Valier

**AUGUST 22, 2025**

**MEET THE INDIANS**

4:00-6:15pm  
 BBQ fundraiser, pictures, and SHOPPING!

- RHouse Sports
- Honeysuckle Holler Boutique
- Sunnie Daze
- Shooting Star Sports
- Kleah Company

5:00pm  
 Introduction of all Fall Athletes

**SCRIMMAGE AT W.F. @ 7:00PM**

**Meet the Indians**

This year's Meet the Indians will include time to shop for Indian gear. School leaders are inviting the community to the athletic complex, August 22, 4:00-6:15 pm to purchase spirit wear for the upcoming year. Vendors will display shirts, hats, cowbells, yard signs, jewelry, etc. for sale. Vendors will also take orders for customized items. BBQ sandwiches and BBQ nachos will be sold beginning at 4:00 pm.

Fall athletes will be introduced on the football field at 5:00. After photo ops with the athletes, fans are encouraged to carpool to West Frankfort High School for a scrimmage at 7:00.

**JOHNSTON CITY SCHOOLS**

**IMPORTANT DATES**

AUG. 6TH WEDNESDAY	AUG. 7TH THURSDAY	AUG. 8TH FRIDAY	AUG. 11TH MONDAY	AUG. 12TH TUESDAY
WMS 6TH-8TH GRADE ORIENTATION: 5 TO 7 P.M.	JCHS FRESHMEN ORIENTATION: 7:50 AM TO 1:30 PM (LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED)  WMS 5TH GRADE ORIENTATION: 5 TO 7 P.M.	JCHS 10-12TH GRADE SCHEDULE PICK-UPS:  -SENIORS 9:00 - 10:00 AM. -JUNIORS 10:00 - 11:00 AM. -SOPHOMORES 11:00 - NOON.	LINCOLN 3RD & 4TH GRADE OPEN HOUSE: 4 TO 6 P.M.  JEFFERSON PRE-K - 2ND GRADE OPEN HOUSE: - LAST NAMES A-M: 6 TO 6:45 PM. - LAST NAMES N-Z: 6:45 TO 7:30 PM. - INCOMING PRE-K: 6 PM TO 7:30 PM.	- FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL: DISMISSAL AT 11:30 AM

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