

LAKE COUNTY

NEWS-SUN

\$3.50

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5 & 6, 2024

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GRAYSLAKE

Mayor not running for fifth term

Taylor: 'It's not intended for one person to be mayor in perpetuity'

By Joseph States

Village of Grayslake leadership will be seeing a change next year, with four-term Mayor Rhett Taylor announcing last week he will not run again and endorse Trustee Elizabeth Davies for the office.

Taylor, who first came to elected office as a trustee in 2001 and was elected mayor in 2009, will serve until April 2025. He plans to retire

from politics. With nearly 24 years of involvement in local government, Taylor reflected on the state in which he's left the village.

"I feel I've achieved my objectives that I had when I ran for office," he said. "While this is a unique opportunity, and I've loved every day, it's not intended for one person to be mayor in perpetuity."

Taylor highlighted several projects and achievements. The village has kept balanced

budgets and remained debt-free, invested in the Village Center to create a "vibrant" downtown business district, expanded open spaces with the additions of Gelatin Park and the Center Street Nature Walk, opened the Central Range to economic development, and worked with the business community to attract investment and retain businesses in the commu-



Taylor

nity, according to a news release.

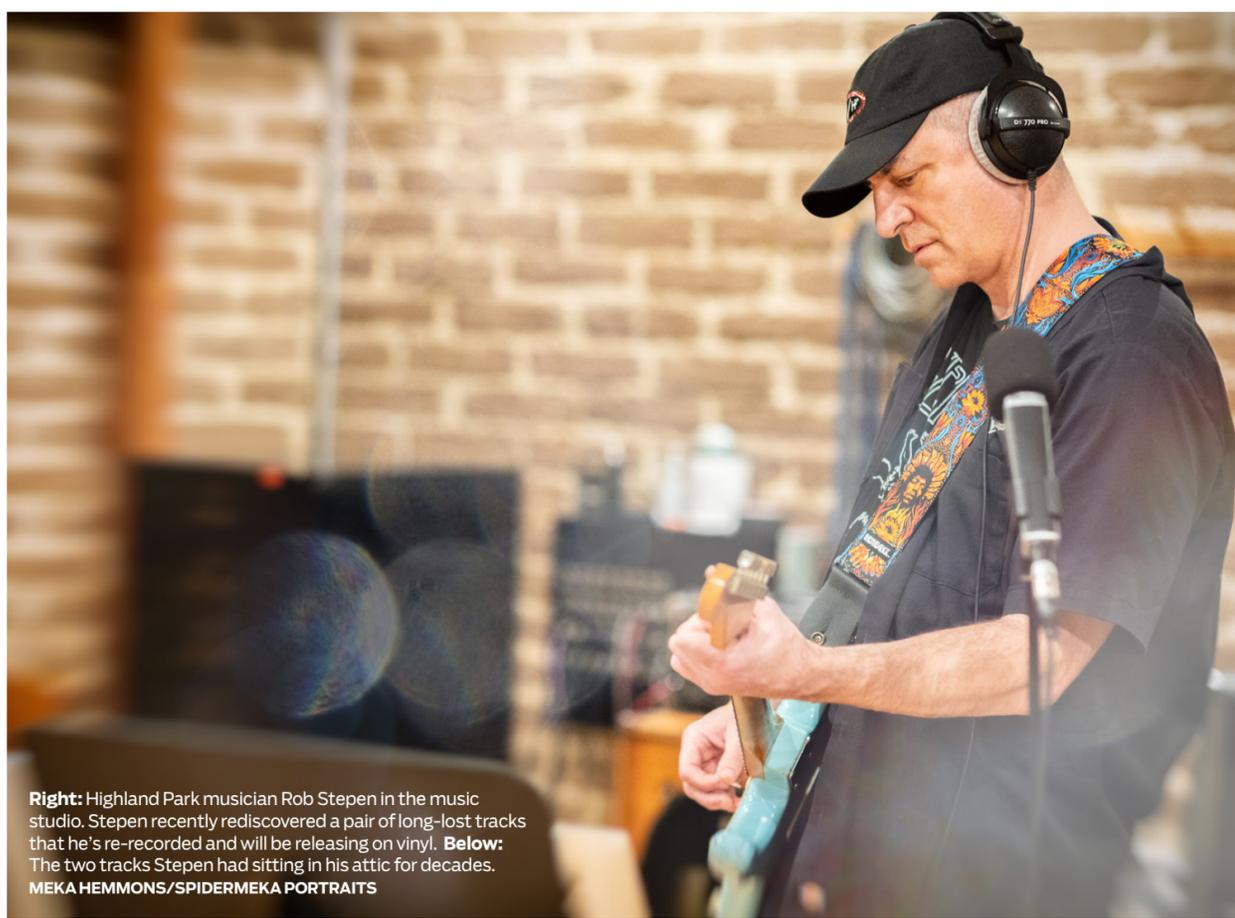
He is especially proud of the work on the water system, establishing a fully redundant system so, "the town will never be without fresh water."

Prior to running for trustee, Taylor said he used to watch Village Board meetings in the 1990s. Seeing the factionalism on the board, he felt he could get involved and, "help smooth some of the tensions and bring some

professionalism to the way the board was conducted."

After several years as a trustee, then-Mayor Tim Perry asked him to run for mayor. Today, Taylor is taking a similar path with his endorsement of Davies. She's been a trustee since 2014, and has served as an alternate director for the Central Lake County Joint Action Water Agency, giving her a "deep understanding of our water system," the release said.

Turn to Mayor, Page 2



Right: Highland Park musician Rob Stepen in the music studio. Stepen recently rediscovered a pair of long-lost tracks that he's re-recorded and will be releasing on vinyl. Below: The two tracks Stepen had sitting in his attic for decades. MEKA HEMMONS/SPIDERMEKA PORTRAITS

OBITUARY PETER FERRY

Longtime writer, educator inspired students

By Rick Kogan
Chicago Tribune

Peter Mundell Ferry was passionately an author and teacher, inspiring decades of students in his English and writing classes at Lake Forest High School, a youthful crowd of many thousands that included such later famous people as actor Vince Vaughn and Dave Eggers, one of the leading literary figures of our time.

"I learned a lot from Dave even when he was a student: If you want to be a writer, you just write," Ferry once told me. "I have long felt that I was compelled to write and so I did."

Yes, he did and people read. Ferry died the morning of Sept. 17. At his side were his wife, Carolyn, and children Lizzie and Griffin (son Asa died in 2015). Ferry died

Turn to Ferry, Page 3

'It was like finding a time capsule of my past'

Highland Park musician releasing lost tracks in new album

By Joseph States

A rediscovered pair of tracks recorded nearly 40 years ago by Highland Park musician Rob Stepen will be officially released on vinyl during a charity event Sunday.

The record-release event will run from 5 to 9 p.m. at Nellie's Gastropub, 180 N Smith St., Palatine. Donations will go to Joey's Song, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting epilepsy research and awareness.

The album was recorded and the tracks restored at Electrical Audio in Chicago, a studio that has seen hundreds of artists and bands including Beach Bunny, with the help of famous audio engineer Steve Albini, known for working with Nirvana and Cheap Trick among many others. Albini died in May.

Electrical Audio Engineer Lauren MacDonald described the album as '80s rock — "post-Led Zeppelin but pre-hair metal" — with "raw rock grit" brought by Stepen. Music fans will likely enjoy the "presentation of the '80s,"

MacDonald said, made with the technology and audio fidelity of the modern era.

Stepen's band, The Generations, includes a mixture of international touring musicians and music educators, with drummer Adam Grais, bassist Stacy McMichael, keyboardist Janet Jones, vocalist Monika Jedrzejek and guitarist Michael Kopstain.

Stepen works at a professional human resources company. Outside of work, though, he has been passionate about music since he was young. His family, always musically oriented, used to put on skits together. His mother played piano, accordion and sang, and his father played upright bass.

Stepen started out playing drums in the basement, but would eventually expand to bass, keyboard and guitar.

"My parents were the influence for myself, my brother and my sister. I got the music gene," he said.

Turn to Tracks, Page 2

Program for planting trees gets underway

Lake County and Waukegan launch 3-year project 'for greener ... stable future'

By Steve Sadin
News-Sun

Planting trees in Waukegan to reduce the city's carbon footprint, retard climate change and make the community more attractive is an ongoing effort receiving a boost from both a new countywide program and a grant from Trees Forever, a not-for-profit organization.

More than three years ago, the city received 125 trees from Openlands with 100 going free to residents willing to plant them on their property and take care of them.

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First graduating New Trier High School class holds 70th reunion

By Richard Requena
Pioneer Press

When New Trier High School welcomed back alumni from the class of 1954 Saturday, they were the first-ever class to gather for their 70th reunion, according to class President Bernard Rinella.

The class, with an average age of 88, is the longest in the school's history to keep celebrating reunions, he emphasized.

The class of 1954 also includes an Academy Award Best Actor nominee, a founder of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie, and a former CEO and publisher who led the Chicago Tribune in the 1990s.

Around 28 alumni attended the event Saturday, according to Rinella.

New Trier East High School Principal Denise Dubravec gave the class a tour of the school, which Rinella said lasted about an hour and boasted facilities rivaling those of major league sporting arenas.

"It's incredible, just incredible," Rinella said.

According to New Trier High School District 203 Communications Coordi-

nator Lia Fahs, prior to 1967, all New Trier students graduated from the Winnetka campus. New Trier West High School opened in Northfield in the mid-1960s, was a separate high school from 1965 to 1981.

Alumni came from all over the country, including California, Ohio and Michigan, for this past weekend's reunion, said Rinella, who organizes the reunions as class president.

The class of 1954 typically has reunions every 10 years and has also done them every five years.

"The tour guides were excellent to answer any questions we had relative to the classrooms," Rinella said. "They took us through all these venues, which were very interesting and certainly two notches up from when we went to school there."

John W. Madigan, retired chairman and CEO of the Tribune Company, as it was called at the time, was also a graduate of the class of 1954. He said he was impressed by the breakout areas, where students can socialize, and the auditoriums.

"The athletic facilities were so much nicer than our old gym," Madigan



New Trier High School's 1954 alumni were the school's first to ever hold a 70th reunion, on Sept. 28, 2024, according to Class President Bernard Rinella. Pictured are, top row from left: Hal Lochner, John Berchem, Jim Borrie. Middle row from left: John W. Madigan, Ann Cone Reed, Minna Greene, Richard Segil, Tom Arthur and Bernard Rinella. Bottom row, from left: John Bogie, Kathie Bogie, Ethel Caro Gofen, Roger Wilson, Barb Bick Niehaus and Sam Harris.

observed.

"As a taxpayer living in Winnetka, I was glad to see the money being put to good use. I was dazzled by all the improvements and wonderful things they've done for the students."

Actor Bruce Dern, who was nominated for an Academy Award for the 2014 movie "Nebraska," was a member of the class of 1954. Though not at the reunion, New Trier's Educational Foundation honored him

in 2022 as a member of the Alumni Hall of Fame.

Sam Harris, a founder of the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie and a Holocaust survivor, attended the reunion.

"We feel privileged

to have gone to such an outstanding school," Harris said.

"At the time, New Trier was considered number one in the country. And after visiting again, all the modern amenities that we have there now, it's just as good and it's even better than most colleges," he said.

Harris said the athletic amenities, like the swimming pool and handball courts, felt like a country club.

Both Rinella and Harris had questions about how the school was reacting to protests concerning the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas.

According to Rinella and Harris, New Trier staff said they took security seriously, and that there is no anti-Semitism on campus.

District 203 Director of Communications Niki Dizon said, "We have committed to making New Trier a place where every student, staff member and family feels welcome and that they belong. We celebrate and support students in their own identities so they can learn and thrive at school, and we do not tolerate any form of hate," she said.

NIU quarterback uses big win and close losses to teach youth



Denise Crosby

When Ethan Hampton strolled onto Aurora Christian's football field Tuesday evening, he was greeted by at least 80 of his most passionate fans.

That is saying a lot because the 2021 AC grad earned plenty of national accolades after quarterbacking the Northern Illinois University Huskies to a dramatic 16-14 upset over fifth-ranked Notre Dame on Sept. 7.

Sportscasters declared it the biggest upset in the school's history — and quite possibly will be the biggest upset to occur this college season. And anyone who watched that game, or at least saw the highlights, could tell what an impressive quarterback this 21-year-old from Elburn is.

But after listening to him speak to Aurora Christian middle schoolers before their football practice earlier this week, it's clear Hampton is not just the kind of athlete but also the kind of person we'd all like our young people to emulate.

For one thing, despite a heavy schedule as a Division I student/athlete — and smack dab in the middle of an intense football season — it was important for him to



Northern Illinois University quarterback Ethan Hampton talks with middle school football teams at Aurora Christian school Tuesday about wins and losses on and off the field. DENISE CROSBY/BEACON-NEWS

return to AC and talk to these kids about what it takes to win, not only on the field but also in life.

"Dedication" was not only Hampton's theme for this motivational chat but is one of the "Seven Pillars of Football" that varsity head coach Dave Beebe uses as the focus for all the middle and high school teams.

Certainly Hampton had that drive early on, according to Beebe, who

introduced the NIU star on Tuesday by pointing out that coaches "dream of guys like Ethan," not just because of "the game he played, but also because of the young man he is."

He was "always about the team," Beebe noted, later adding that "no one outworked Ethan," who could often be found throwing footballs into nets on the field when everyone else was inside on frigid winter days.

"Chose your friends wisely ... enjoy your time now ... don't forget to work hard."

— Northern Illinois University quarterback Ethan Hampton

That no doubt contributed to why Hampton, who excelled his junior year at AC but missed out on football as a senior because of COVID, graduated a semester early from the Aurora school and was already working out with the Huskies spring 2021.

Hampton quickly moved from fourth to second string his freshman year at NIU. Then he waited patiently — and in today's college portal world, loyally — behind Rocky Lombardi, who is now playing for the Cincinnati Bengals, before earning the starting QB position this year.

Hampton, who "always knew we had a chance" against the Irish of Notre Dame, says the headline-making win came because "we executed what we had to do ... kind of out-physicaled them out front" and had no turnovers.

Hampton was not quite prepared, however, for the attention that hit after the upset — which propelled NIU up the rankings to No.

25 in the country.

"That was an awesome experience," he recalled, that led to a bright national spotlight on him that included two interviews a day for nearly a week and a half, not to mention a "few NIL [NCAA Name, Image, and Likeness] deals" that put some cash into his pocket.

But the fall was as quick as the ascension.

Following a bye week, the Huskies lost in overtime to the University of Buffalo before a sold-out home crowd. Then they were defeated again in a close game against North Carolina State.

"That's what is tough ... they will be with you when you are up high, but then you go low," Hampton said to me, noting how "hard it is to maintain" when there is so much pressure and attention after such a monumental upset.

After that Buffalo loss, he told Aurora Christian's middle school teams, "every person who was for us was now, 'wow, these guys are terrible at football, these guys stink ...'"

That is, of course, where character comes into play, noted Beebe, who was in the Notre Dame stadium sitting next to Ethan's father, Jay, who fell to his knees weeping when his son threw that first 80-yard touchdown pass.

"It's that same (dedication) bucket that not only makes him a great athlete and a great student," Beebe continued. "It makes him

want to honor what was given to him ... to come back and talk to these kids."

Hampton certainly had plenty of solid advice to pass along as the young teams listened intently to every word the star spoke. Start creating good habits now, he told the kids, because the work ethic they develop now in middle school will translate into future successes.

And find balance in your life between God, and family and friends, Hampton continued. He admits his faith blossomed as a student athlete at AC and has only grown stronger because he knows that "when you feel like everything is against you ... I know God's got me."

Hampton reiterated the importance of staying "true and dedicated to what you are doing" and to "push through those failures" because "you can't grow without failing."

After he spoke and before the young AC Eagles started their practice, a large group photo was taken. Later, auto-graphed photos of the NIU quarterback during that Notre Dame game were handed out.

Hampton's parting words, however, were meant to extend beyond any one moment in time, no matter how historic.

"Chose your friends wisely ... enjoy your time now," he told the kids, "don't forget to work hard."

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LAKE COUNTY NEWS-SUN

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Mayor

from Page 1

"She'll make a great mayor," Taylor said. "She's very experienced, and she comes in with a lot of knowledge about how the village works."

Davies also, "appreciates the culture" of keeping a balanced budget and debt-free status, he said. As a high school teacher, wife and mother of three, she understands what younger fami-

lies in town are looking for, he said.

After decades as a local leader, returning to being a private citizen will "certainly be a change," Taylor said. But he looks forward to spending more time with family, playing piano and working through a stack of books on his nightstand.

He didn't expect any more politics in his future, but if the village needed something, he said he "would be open to helping out."

Tracks

from Page 1

He'd go on to learn how to write his own music, leading him to a recording studio in 1985, where a young Stephen recorded two tracks, "Your Way," and "Have you Seen My Heart."

"After my session, the producer proudly hands me these two boxes of reel-to-reel tapes and goes, 'Here you go, Rob, I'm so excited for you,'" he recalled. "I said, 'What am I supposed to do with these? I don't have a player.'"

The producer laughed it

off, Stephen recalled, telling him he'd, "figure it out."

It ended up taking longer than either expected. The reels sat in his attic lost among other memories for 38 years, until he stumbled upon them while searching through some boxes last year.

Finding the reels hit Stephen with a wave of nostalgia and excitement.

"It was like finding a time capsule of my past, and it really reignited this piece of me to share these pieces of music," he said.

They were then mastered by Bob Weston at Chicago Mastering Services and the

"I grew up here, I've been committed to the town. I've told my colleagues that I'm certainly around if they ever want an opinion or have a cup of coffee," Taylor said.

For Grayslake's future, he noted the data center that was looking at the Central Range and the potential revenue stream it would bring.

When the state makes improvements around Route 83, the village will be able to do more streetscaping, extending the work it

final product, "Alternate View," was pressed into vinyl at Third Man Records in Detroit, which was founded by Jack White of the White Stripes.

Friends and family have been shocked hearing the story and listening to the recordings. Some have preferred the original 1985 version, others the new one. For Stephen, he finds something unique about each. He noted the reaction of a younger relative who said the '80s are back in style for younger people. MacDonald, deeply involved with the indie music scene in Chicago, agreed.

has done downtown.

He also highlighted the importance of working on Grayslake's downtown.

"Many, many towns wish they had a downtown and a history like Grayslake does. You can't create a downtown. You can't create history. But you can protect, preserve and enhance it," Taylor said.

The mayoral election will be April 1. Potential candidates have to drop off candidate packets between Nov. 12 and 18.

"I see a lot of local bands and up-and-coming artists. The '80s and '90s are definitely circling back," MacDonald said. "It's a little less feel-good. There's power and the grit you hear."

The record-release party will feature a panel discussion about the process of bringing these tracks back to life, a live performance by The Generations, vinyl copies of the album and merchandise.

Donations will go to Joey's Song, named in honor of Joey Gomoll, who died in 2010 before his fifth birthday from a form of epilepsy called Dravet Syndrome.