

PIONEER

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WEEKEND

February 17-18, 2018 | ISSUE 254

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\$1/\$1.50 weekend



In this file photo, lab technologist Sharda Modi tests a patient's swab for a flu infection at Upson Regional Medical Center in Thomaston, Ga. (AP Photo/David Goldman)

Flu season shows signs of leveling off

BY MIKE STOBBE AND CARLA K. JOHNSON
AP Medical Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — This nasty flu season, which has been worsening for months, may finally be leveling off.

Health officials on Friday said about 1 of every 13 visits to the doctor last week was for fever, cough and other symptoms of the flu. That's no reason for health officials to celebrate yet: That level is among the highest in a

decade. But it's no worse than last week, and flu activity had been increasing each week since November.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the number of states reporting heavy flu patient traffic also held steady at 43.

"I thought I was going to die, I really did," said Ben Bland, a 39-year-old event planner in Kansas City, Missouri, who was hospitalized this week with pneumonia on top of flu. "My lungs felt like

they were going to blow out of my esophagus every time I coughed. My body ached head to toe."

This season started early and has been driven by a formidable type of flu that tends to put more people in the hospital and cause more deaths. Making a bad year worse, this year's flu vaccine is estimated to be only 25 percent effective against that type.

Preliminary data released last week indicated patient traffic

SEE FLU PAGE 9A

Ferris named to list of safest college campuses

BY EMILY GROVE
Pioneer Senior Staff Writer

BIG RAPIDS — Ferris State University recently was ranked within the top 25 safest college campuses in the nation.

Ferris, which has a student population of more than 13,000, came in at No. 23 on the list of the 100 safest campuses. The list was compiled by the National Council for Home Safety and Security.

To come up with the list, the National Council for Home Safety and Security looked at the most recent data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting and the Campus Safety Security Survey put out by the U.S. Department of Education. Nearly all accredited institutions were considered in this project, except for those with enrollment under 10,000 students, and others for which a significant amount of data was unavailable.

Bruce Borkovich, director of the Ferris State University Department of Public

SEE FERRIS PAGE 9A

Abel updates Mecosta County officials about parks

BY BRANDON FOUNTAIN
Pioneer Staff Writer

BIG RAPIDS — Recently completed and ongoing improvements to the Mecosta County Parks have contributed to an overall upward trend in attendance at the seven parks.

During Thursday's Mecosta County Board of Commissioners meeting, Parks Superintendent Jeff Abel provided an update to officials, covering the last two years of promotions, improvements, programs and growth at Brower Park, School Section Lake Veteran's Park, Paris Park, Merrill-Gorrel Lake, Tubbs Lake Campground, Haymarsh Lake Campground and Davis Bridge Park.

Abel said the focus of the Mecosta County Parks Commission staff has been to improve facets of every park, including structures, amenities and promotion.

SEE PARKS PAGE 2A

The Price Sisters live in concert



(ABOVE) The Price Sisters, made up of Lauren Price (left) and Leanna Price (right) perform a bluegrass tune in the University Center Ballroom at Ferris State University on Friday. The twins, originally from Sardis, Ohio, play traditional bluegrass in the style of Bill Monroe and other similar artists. In addition to playing original music, the Price Sisters covered a few Bill Monroe songs, as well as other traditionals like "Silver Tongue and Gold Plated Lies." (LEFT) On this occasion, the sisters were backed by members of the McLain Family Band. (Pioneer Photos/Ryan Yuenger)



Students participate in glowing games

BY MEGHAN GUNTHER-HAAS
Pioneer Staff Writer

WEIDMAN — An effort to encourage good behavior at a Chippewa Hills elementary school in Weidman has youngsters looking forward to their half days.

On scheduled early release days, Weidman Elementary students who have upheld the school pledge to think respon-

sibly before acting or reacting can participate in STAR parties. STAR represents Stop, Think, Act Responsibly. Students who have been sent to Principal Starr Lederer's office during the month spend their morning hours working on homework.

"This is a way to promote good behaviors. Out of about 288 students in kindergarten through fourth grade, we only had

11 students who couldn't participate," Lederer said on Friday.

Lederer also noted STAR parties have increased attendance on half days, as students are excited to come to school and see the party theme for the month. The night before a party, staff and community members decorate the halls, gym and cafeteria to fit the new theme. Friday's games and activities had a glow-in-the-dark theme.



WEEKEND WEATHER

Mix of Sunshine and clouds with highs in the upper 30s and lows in the mid 20s. Chance of snow Saturday.

FRIDAY'S LOTTERIES

Midday Daily 3: 2-9-3 **Fantasy 5:** 4-15-16-17-36
Midday Daily 4: 9-7-3-8 **Keno:** 10-20-22-28-29-32-2-6-4
Daily 3: 36-39-41-43-44-45-50-52
Daily 4: 7-5-8-4 54-56-63-70-72-76-77-78

OBITUARIES PAGE 3

Elsie Mae Crowley
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