

Area

Dining Guide

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Elks Club honors scholarship winners

By Robert Tomlinson
Staff Writer

THREE RIVERS — With the rising costs of tuition at colleges and universities in the United States, scholarships are more important than ever, and receiving them can help incoming college freshman get a head start on paying for classes.

On Saturday, the Three Rivers Elks Club honored three graduating Three Rivers High

School seniors and one TRHS alum who won scholarships provided by the club.

The Elks Club's Scholarship Committee, which is made up of former Three Rivers teachers, selected three graduating TRHS seniors to receive Elks Scholarships, totaling \$1,750 for first place, \$1,000 for second place and \$800 for third place.

Hailey Klimek, who will be studying nursing at Ferris State University, received the first

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COMMERCIAL-NEWS | ROBERT TOMLINSON

The Three Rivers Elks Club held a small ceremony Saturday to honor their scholarship winners for the Class of 2020. Pictured from left to right are Elks Scholarship Committee member Charlie Riley, upperclassman scholarship recipient Cara Smith, third place scholarship recipient Jenna Beach, first place scholarship recipient Hailey Klimek, second place scholarship recipient Brianne Klimek, and Scholarship Committee member Kelly Monahan.

Discussion on school board social

TRHS

ELKS

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place scholarship; her sister Brienne Klimek, who will study biology at Ferris State, received second place; and Jenna Beach, who will be studying biology with a goal to be on the pre-med track at Kalamazoo College, received the third place scholarship.

"It is super awesome to receive the scholarship, I couldn't believe I got it," Hailey Klimek said. "It's going to be really helpful, because college is a lot of money."

The Elks' selection for the upperclassman scholarship, which awards \$1,000 to a TRHS alum who is enrolled in college, went to Cara Smith, a 2017 graduate who is studying physiology at Michigan State University and will be a senior this fall. This is the second year in a row Smith received the scholarship, and she said it's good to have the opportunity to receive scholarships while still in college.

"It is nice to have the opportunity to receive a scholarship later on in college, because a lot of times, it's only available going into your first year," Smith said. "This is helpful, because later on, you're like, 'Okay, where are all my scholarships now?' This is my second year receiving this one, and it is super helpful."

Normally, Saturday's ceremony would have coincided with the Elks' 16th annual Captain's Cruise, a motorcycle ride and fundraiser to help raise money for the scholarships, but it was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Elks Captain Jim Barnes said even without a ride, they had enough to give away scholarships this year.

"We've made enough money through the years where the lodge was able to put the money away in the scholarship fund, and with contributions from members of the lodge, we were able to have the scholarships this year," Barnes said, adding he hopes to pick up the Cruise again next year. "We really wanted to do the ride, but under the circumstances, it couldn't happen."

Barnes said it feels good to give away the scholarships every year.

"This is really great. It's near and dear to my heart, because my daughter got a scholarship years ago from the Elks Club, which was the driving force that got this all started," Barnes said. "It's a fun thing."

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GRADUATION

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for graduating seniors, which was scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 6. The August date was originally a potential makeup date for a July 9 ceremony, scheduled after the postponement of their original May graduation.

Three Rivers Community Schools Superintendent Ron Moag said the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in the state and guidelines from the governor's office led to the decision to cancel.

"The spike in cases was a big factor, and we're still in Phase Four, so we can't have more than 100 people," Moag said. "We already have around 125, 130 graduates. There was just no feasible way with trying to have parents come."

Moag said the district was hopeful to have a graduation, but knew there was a chance that circumstances surrounding other students, whether it was college, military or work, would preclude many seniors from being able to attend an August ceremony either way. To that point, Moag referenced a survey of seniors done by TRHS Principal Carrie Balk.

"When we set the dates, after we canceled the first one, we knew there was a chance we would not have many kids yet around," Moag said. "Carrie had some kind of mechanism, and she found that very few students were going to be around to participate."

Moag mentioned that he was glad the district could do the things they did already for the seniors, such as the Senior Salute and parade through town back in May. He said although it was a tough decision to cancel, the state guidelines ultimately guided the decision.

"There are a few students that are disappointed, and we're very disappointed too. We would have loved to do something outdoors and have more of a traditional graduation," Moag said. "The guidelines that we're expected to follow just wasn't going to make it possible."

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COUNTY

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Administrator Teresa Doehring discussed how the county could balance the budget for the next year.

Steinman said the county originally had a \$414,000 deficit between expenses and revenue, which required them to use fund balances. However, through some cost-saving measures, such as furloughs, a reduction in travel expenses, and other measures, the county is now in a better position.

"I looked at those numbers and then I reviewed the numbers I had adjusted for. I found further savings that haven't been accounted for. Everybody's been given an opportunity to save, so I think the \$165,000 is a good amount of information we have right now."

While no decisions have been made yet, Doehring has talked about ways to reduce expenses. However, she said there are still questions about the budget.

"Obviously, we don't have the full picture yet. We're not sure if state revenue is going to be there, we're not really sure what's going to happen in the long term," Steinman said, adding that some of the courthouse renovation project, short-term projects, are not priorities in the budget.

Doehring said there are many opportunities to save money and balance the budget. She mentioned departments to a 35-hour work week and county employees through the end of the year. Living increases for county employees are also being reviewed.

"The idea is that this is a shared responsibility between us and employees, as opposed to the municipality," Doehring said, adding that not offering raises is one possibility.

Fifth District Commissioner Ken Steinman said his contribution to the Road Commission is being reviewed. Commission Chair Dennis Allen said he will be meeting with John Lindsey to see about what the county can do.

First District Commissioner Allen said he will be meeting with Steinman and Doehring to come up with a plan for the departments, and asked commissioners to eventually present to the board.

"What our county administrator is going to do is with what they're able to negotiate with, what they're able to negotiate with, an open mind when they bring it to the board, realizing that they're doing the absolute best they can."

Towards the end of the discussion, Doehring said she received a secondary road patrol grant that was more than expected. Owing to the financial challenges, grant reductions like these could help.

"I foresee those type of things to happen in the future, going to know if they happen until we get to that level," Doehring said. "This is not the way we want to be in these types of situations, and we don't want to have. You all understand the predicament we're in, moving forward; I sure don't want to be in this from now and have it be a much more difficult situation."

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