

# SUNDAY NEWS-DEMOCRAT

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## MESSAGES OF HOPE

By BRIAN BRUEGGEMANN  
News-Democrat

A family member is hospitalized. Friends and relatives from across the country want constant updates.

You're trying to keep everyone informed, but the phone calls are overwhelming, and you need to focus on your loved one's recovery.

The answer: the Web.

A Belleville man sent out daily e-mails updating the condition of his son, who was badly burned when fuel for a remote-control car exploded.

The husband of a Breese native turned to a Web site — [www.caringbridge.com](http://www.caringbridge.com) — where he blogged about his wife's recovery from serious health problems and the birth of their son.

More and more people are turning to e-mails or putting up their own Web sites in order to keep large numbers of friends, family, church members and co-workers informed when someone has a serious illness or injury.

Their efforts have a common theme: They don't have to spend hours on the phone repeating the same information again and again, but still, their friends and relatives get up-to-date, accurate information.

And their writings, and the electronic responses they get, make them feel better.

Steve Glauber of Belleville sent the first e-mail about his son, Daniel, at 1:09 a.m. on April 12, a few hours after 15-year-old Daniel was burned in an explosion of fuel used to power his remote-control car. Steve reported that Daniel had severe burns on his face, arms, chest and stomach, that he was on a ventilator, and that his lungs had been burned.

"At this point we do not know what to expect," Steve wrote. "More later."

Glauber, who is a former Belleville alderman, said he and his wife, Lynn, were juggling multiple cell phones at the time.

"People would call, and I'd just ask for their e-mail address," Steve said. "That way, they could get daily updates, and it's worked out real well."

He added, "One of the problems we had was remembering to call people. We've had hundreds and hundreds of phone calls. It's hard to remember to call every one of them back to tell them what's

Please see HOPE, A7



Jan Mueller, left, and Gina Rehkemper with their son, Leo, in a Wisconsin hospital.

### Blog helps Breese native reach out to loved ones

A sample of postings by Jan Mueller and Breese native Gina Rehkemper on their CaringBridge.com Web page during Gina's hospitalization for pancreatitis and volvulus, and the birth of their son, Leo:

#### April 2

Friday started with a vision of moving out of ICU where, although the standard of care is the best, the activity is non-stop and makes it hard to really rest. The vision ended when I arrived at the hospital at 9 a.m., when Gina was being brought back to her ICU room after an emergency CT scan to see if she had had a pulmonary embolism. Apparently the nurse was helping her walk a bit when she felt very weak again and they returned to the room. Almost instantly she went white and began having blurred vision, lack of comprehension and an inability to move with coordination.

#### April 18

It has been five days now since my entry about the planned homecoming we envisioned last Thursday. The earth still turns, the sun and the moon have continued to rise and set, yet still our eyes search for freedom on the horizon.... We believe today will bring that freedom. Certainly this could change, but our confidence and determination is strong.

**Web extra:** Go to [www.bellevillenevnewsdemocrat.com](http://www.bellevillenevnewsdemocrat.com) to read excerpts of e-mails sent by Steve Glauber about the recovery of his son Daniel, burned in an explosion April 12, and Web journal postings of Jan Mueller and his wife Gina Rehkemper during her recent hospitalization for illnesses and the birth of their son.

Communicating to loved ones about a seriously ill or injured relative or friend can be overwhelming, but e-mails and Web pages have made it easier to get the word out.



Steve Glauber sent the first e-mail about his son, Daniel, hours after his son was injured.

### Glauber family uses e-mail to inform people about boy

E-mails sent by Steven Glauber since his son, Daniel, was severely burned when a container containing fuel for his radio-controlled car exploded:

#### April 14

We got through another day with Daniel and I have to tell you while it has been only two and a half days, it feels like weeks. Yesterday was my hardest day so far. I had not slept and every time I closed my eyes, I saw Daniel sitting in the alley all burned up. I called my doctor and told her I needed help sleeping. The only problem was I could not stop crying while I was talking to the nurse. They said they would get me a script. For all I knew, they were going to tell the pharmacy to have me hauled off. Well I got the pills and I did sleep last night.



Daniel Glauber

#### April 24

Daniel had a very good weekend, and as you read Friday's and Saturday's notes ... you will see that Daniel is continuing to improve. He is off the paralyzing drugs, and was able to open his eyes a little on Sunday afternoon. Since his face is still swollen, he could only open them a crack. The phrase, "The lights are on but no one is home," crossed my mind.

## Teacher seemed a normal youth

Parents' divorce may have been turning point for him

By BETH HUNDSORFER  
News-Democrat

Before Samson "Sam" R. Shelton was accused of choking and breaking the neck of a former student, he appeared to be the All-American boy.

He grew up playing baseball in a small town, attended a local college on an academic and athletic scholarship and followed his mother into the teaching profession.

"It looked good on the surface, but no one knows what's going on underneath," said Dr. Lawrence Jeckel, a forensic psychiatrist from Champaign.

On April 27 everything changed for Shelton. Police said that's when Shelton snapped 17-year-old Ashley Reeves' neck with his forearm and choked her with a belt — allegations his lawyer said will be vigorously challenged —



Shelton

Please see SHELTON, A2

## Eckert creates a campaign committee

By LISA P. WHITE  
News-Democrat

BELLEVILLE — Mayor Mark Eckert has three years left on his term before he will be up for re-election, but already he has started raising campaign cash.

On Thursday, the newly-formed "Citizens for Eckert" committee held an inaugural fundraiser. About 200 people joined Eckert for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres at Panorama Lanes. At \$100 per person, the committee could have taken in about \$20,000, but Eckert said he is not sure how much the event raised because expenses had yet to be deducted.

"The purpose was to establish a political fund that I can use as I continue to stay active in the community, and I can support civic groups, charities and other individuals who are running (for office)," Eckert said.

For months, a group of Belleville residents had encouraged him to start a political committee, he said. As mayor he is expected to attend fundraisers and other functions that he said have come out of his pocket because there

Please see ECKERT, A2

## Efforts to remove eyesore gas stations frustrated

Finding owners was difficult until recently

By MIKE FITZGERALD  
News-Democrat

They're eyesores and environmental time bombs. And — to the great frustration of Belleville, O'Fallon and Swansea leaders — they're also orphans.

They are five Clark gasoline stations that shut down nearly six years ago when their owner, St. Louis Petroleum and Marketing Inc. went bust, defaulting on a \$1 million federal loan. The corporation's major shareholders included state Sen. James Clay

borne, D-Belleville.

Since then, leaders in the three towns have been searching for someone to take responsibility for the derelict properties. Until that happens, they remain in legal limbo — thwarting civic efforts to obtain state grant money to pay to remove their aging fuel tanks and use the properties

for parks, for parking or for expanding businesses.

In March, the Illinois state fire marshal joined the hunt for the stations' owners and is pushing to get the underground gas tanks and any gasoline-laden soil removed.

Swansea leaders have been trying to convert the shuttered

Please see STATIONS, A7

### At a glance

**The issue:** Belleville, O'Fallon and Swansea leaders have spent five years trying to find the owners of five derelict Clark gas stations.

**The problem:** Until the Clark stations' owners are located, these towns can't get court approval to tear down the

stations, remove their aging fuel storage tanks and make them productive again.

**The locations:** 1905 North Belt West, 830 Centerville Ave. and 913 Sherman St., Belleville; 1341 N. Illinois St., Swansea; and 102 E. State St., O'Fallon.

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**POWERBALL** Game: 12-23-25-32-38 Powerball: 27 Power Play: 2 Jackpot: \$73 million