

Solon TIMES

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Study shows wages lag for city workers

By MICHELE COLLINS

Solon Human Resources Director Yolanda Guzman recently received the results of a wage study for the city's employees which reinforced what she already knew. Solon lags behind other comparable cities in pay rates and pay ranges, she said.

A pay-scale adjustment is needed for city employees who are not covered by a collective-bargaining agreement or are not union members, she said. And City Council is poised to pass the new wage rates at its Feb. 18 meeting.

Ms. Guzman, who took on her new role in human resources in 2021, said that, during her first weeks on the job, she went around and introduced herself to the city's many employees. When she asked if there was anything she could do for them, she was told one answer over and over, she said. "People said that they hadn't gotten a raise in a few years, many times because they had topped out on the city's pay range for their job classification. I heard over and over that we needed to look at our wages."

As a result, she worked with Mayor Edward Kraus, the City Council's Finance Committee and the Archer Co. to conduct what the company calls an Equal Compensation and Classification Study.

"They compared our wages with 17 other entities," Ms. Guzman said. "This included 15 other cities." What they found was that Solon's wages were lower than other comparable cities,

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Prisoners add art to Solon after-prom

By MICHELE COLLINS

As the Solon PTA's after-prom committee gets ready for the culmination of their year's Solon High School event on May 13, one member, Michelle Shene, is taking a trip to the Grafton Correctional Institute. There, she will pick up a bundle of king-sized sheets painted with themed murals that will serve as decorations for the after-prom.

Why travel to the prison? Because some of the men incarcerated at Grafton are airbrush artists who create giant works of art that will serve as the backdrop for the Solon High School event.

According to Eric Guardenhire, an activity therapist at Grafton, the men who work on the murals are part of the Creative Hands, Caring Hearts community-service program at the prison.

"There are about seven men who are involved in creating the murals," he said. "The program provides an outlet for them to serve others while they are here." The art-based program has been in existence for at least the past 10 years.

Samantha Wright, a former Solon PTA member, started working with the Grafton art program in 2014, enabling Solon High School to have the murals created by the men at the prison.

Since then, the incarcerated men have created a multitude of murals for the school's

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Photo by Michael Steinberg

Xiaolun Zhang on accordion, Hai Huang on violin, center, and singer Wenyan Vivian He entertained the nearly 80 attendees at the Solon Senior Center's Chinese New Year celebration with Chinese musical selections. The event included a celebration of Chinese culture, music, activities and food all that are supposed to bring good luck in the New Year.

Chinese New Year highlighted in Solon

By MICHELE COLLINS

Chinese New Year 2023, a two-week celebration that will culminate with the Lantern Festival on Feb. 5 in China, also is being celebrated in Solon.

The local Lunar New Year celebration started with a Jan. 20 event at the Solon Senior Center. Planned by the center's Chinese Group, which meets on Thursdays for social and recreational activities, and members of the senior center staff, the event provided a fun day for the nearly 80 attendees who enjoyed a smorgasbord of Chinese arts, music and, of course, delicious food.

Kathy McQuaide, an activity coordinator at the senior center who works with the Chinese

Group, said she wanted to provide an opportunity for its members to share their culture and their New Year celebration activities with the other members of the senior center.

She said she used the help of translators to share her goals for the event with the Chinese Group members, many of whom only speak Chinese. They were very excited to share their traditions and culture, she said, wanting to do a two-hour program of activities. She bargained with them to get the program down to about one hour, a more suitable time frame for their audience, and the event planning was underway, Ms. McQuaide said.

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