

Guards lobby legislators for 'super-max' prison

By CERISE MERRITT WATT
H&R Springfield Bureau Writer

SPRINGFIELD — More than 200 prison guards from across the state gathered at the Capitol on Tuesday to urge lawmakers to push for reforms designed to ease prison overcrowding.

The guards called on the legislature and Gov. Jim Edgar to authorize the building of a super-maximum security prison, and to approve changes in sentencing laws that would reduce overcrowding through increased use of boot camps and electronic detention.

"By removing the most disruptive inmates from the general prison population, rewarding inmates entering rehabilitation programs, and making more offenders eligible for alternative sentencing, Illinois can reduce the growth in prison population by thousands in the next few years, making prisons safer and saving taxpayers millions of dollars without jeopardizing public safety," said Henry Bayer. He is deputy state director of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Since 1990, Bayer said, there have been an average of more than 1,000 inmate assaults on prison staff annually, including stabbings, beatings and sexual assaults. Central Illinois guards stressed the need for a super-

maximum security prison.

"We're keeping a more aggressive type inmate now. Before, if you got an inmate that showed violent tendencies, he would be shipped to a maximum (security) institution. But they're so overcrowded now that they can't take them," said Mike Warner, a guard at the Vandalia Correctional Center.

Bryan Chatham, also from Vandalia, agreed. "The super-max facility would work to eliminate that element that incites the violence in the younger inmates."

Terry Wadkins, Taylorville Correctional Center guard, said that even minimum security prisons have problems with violence.

"A month ago we had two gangs get into it over a basketball game. One inmate was struck with a mop wringer. Those prisoners should be moved up to a higher grade level. That's why the super-max is so important."

The guards also said that unless lawmakers are willing to allocate substantially more money to build more prisons, they must re-examine mandatory sentencing laws that have led to a dramatic increase in prison overcrowding in recent years.

Decatur

BRIEFS

Mt. Zion water rates to rise 12%

MOUNT ZION — The Mount Zion Village Board voted Monday to match Decatur's 12 percent water rate hike, the first such increase for the village since 1989.

"We would not be doing anyone any favors if we did not," Village President Harry Ashworth told the board. The increase takes effect June 1, the same date as Decatur's increase.

The purchase of water from Decatur covers half of the village water department's operating cost. Failing to raise the village's water rate to match Decatur's would result in a negative operating fund balance at the end of the year, the board was told.

The 12 percent increase will raise a family of three's monthly water bill about \$2.25.

Hamburglar beefs up reading program

DECATUR — The Hamburglar will appear at South Shores School at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 20, to hand-deliver a summer reading challenge from Ronald McDonald to students and parents.

This is the second year for the summer reading challenge

Charge

Decatur man faces attempted murder case after chase

By JUDY TATHAM
H&R Staff Writer

DECATUR — A 22-year-old Decatur man was charged Tuesday attempting to murder a police officer during a chase that followed a drive shooting Monday night on the north side.

Charles E. Gardner, of the 500 block of East Grand Avenue, will appear in Macon County Circuit Court today. Macon County State's Attorney's Office will ask that bond be set at \$300,000.

He was identified as one of four young men in a car that circled the 800 block of North Edward Street while one

